

ANGEL 0024

As I turned the last page of my latest spy novel acquisition, I was struck with a thought. I should consider writing a spy story with an angel as the assigned operative. Perhaps it's been done before, but I've never encountered such a work. So -o, I gave it a go. When finished, I let my wife read it. Her comment fell somewhere in the area of 'Don't quit my day job'. I'm giving you an excerpt anyway.

Pastor Arnold Schmidt

My assignment took me to Elmersville, Illinois. What danger could lurk in an innocuous little farm town surrounded by seemingly endless fields of corn? Of course, even if I knew, I could not tell you until it had passed through 14 layers of bureaucracy. Nevertheless, I invite you to accompany me on the trip.

My contact is a man by the name of Horace Martin. I have committed his real name and description to memory, so no record can fall into the

wrong hands. We arranged to meet in the third booth on the left inside the Country Café on Main Street. I opened the door to the sound of a quaint little bell that hung from the inside handle of the door. Walking to the third booth, I made a visual on the man fitting Martin's description.

"Angels seldom wear wings," I said.

"Squirrels have fluffy tails in the winter," replied the man sitting in the booth.

"You have information for me?" I asked.

"Yes ... yes," replied M., nervously. "I belong to Riverview Baptist Church and ..."

"Relax, Mr. Martin. No one knows that I am here. My life depends on not being followed."

"Okay ... okay. I guess I'm just a little nervous. Last Sunday, I was sitting in the fourth row from the back of the church, and I saw him."

"Saw who?"

"He looked ordinary, kind of like he would fit in anywhere. Maybe he was a farmer. I don't know. But he also had a sinister look about him. We don't get too many strangers in our little church, you know."

“And you felt you had to tell someone?”

“Yes ... yes. I wouldn't want to risk something happening and I not do something about it.”

“Did the man do anything suspicious?” I asked.

“Yes. When Pastor Brock announced that Lilah Thompson had passed away, the man ... he crossed himself.”

“Do you mean like this?” I asked, as I made the sign of the cross.

“Yes, do you think he could be a foreign spy or something?” asked Horace.

“I don't know.”

“Or ... oh, no. Do you think he could be a Lutheran or Catholic?”

“It's possible,” I said. “Did anybody talk to him?”

“No, sir. Not that I know of, him being a stranger and all.”

“So, nobody in the church talked to him?”

“No, but John Watters said he saw him writing stuff down during the service. Do you think that means anything?”

“Hard to say. Anything else?”

“Yeah,” said Horace. “Fred Collins said he saw him get into his car and leave. As he was pulling away, he looked at the church, waved to us, and smiled. Fred got the license plate number if that helps.”

“Yes, that is very helpful. We appreciate your diligence and your patriotism.”

I contacted my handler at headquarters.

“Scramble 341. 777, Nemesis 2 viable in ZN 684-555. Need ID on L.P. HLL 666. 0024.”

About thirty minutes later, I received a reply.

“Scramble 879. 0024, read Nemesis 2 viable. L.P. Shadow Enterprises, Inc. Proceed to ZN 831-1049. Recon 1000. 777.”

A light mist veiled the city. I gave the cabbie my destination, St. Peter’s Catholic Church on 42nd Street. With relatively light traffic on a Sunday morning, we arrived at 0930, which gave me time

to get oriented. It was a big church. Filled to capacity, I would say it probably held 700 to 800. They reserved the last two rows for parents with small children, so I took a seat in the third row from the rear. My intel said the subject would be tall, wearing a bright red tie and a black suit. He would be carrying a small, black leather notebook. I went back outside and waited on the front steps. I did not have to handle any questions as no one sought any answers. I finally got a visual on the subject. He entered the church and sat down in the tenth row from the back of the church. I, too, sat on that row, but at the other end. When the service began, the subject opened his notebook and began writing. When the service ended, he closed his notebook and headed for the door. He walked down the steps and hailed a taxi. At no time did anyone make contact with the subject. When he got into the cab, I saw him turn towards the church and smile. Oddly, the license plate of the taxi was FIRE 666.

Once again, I contacted my handler at headquarters.

“Scramble 659. 777, subject live—no contact. Need ID on L.P. FIRE 666. 0024.”

Ten minutes went by when I received a reply.

“Scramble 234. 0024, read subject no contact. L.P. Shadow Enterprises, Inc. Proceed to ZN 816-285. Code 99. Contact R. Smith. 777.”

Louisville was always beautiful in the fall, and today it lived up to its reputation. I pulled into Resurrection Lutheran Church’s parking lot with my rental car at 1300. I walked into the church office and asked the secretary if I could speak with R. Smith.

“Oh, you mean Pastor Ronald Smith,” said the lady. “Who should I say is calling?”

“Ed Himmel,” I replied. “He’s expecting me.”

The secretary led me back to Pastor Smith’s office.

“Welcome, Mr. Himmel,” said Pastor Smith. “I talked with your boss this morning, so he told me to be expecting you.”

“I need to ask you a few questions about a recent visitor to your congregation.”

“Yes, your boss said you would be making some inquiries,” said Pastor Smith. “How can I be of help?”

“This man visited here last Sunday. He’s tall, probably wearing a bright red tie and black suit. He also carried a small, black leather notebook.”

“Yes, I remember him. He seemed to be in a hurry, and he got caught in a crowd of people that wanted to get out the door. By the time he got to me, he seemed quite agitated. He said nothing. Just shook my hand and made a beeline to his car. It was odd, though. When I shook his hand, it was very warm, almost hot. He never said where he was from to anyone, and a few others near him in the pew said they had the same sensation as I did when they shook his hand.”

“That’s very interesting, Pastor. Did anyone notice anything else?”

Opening a desk drawer, Pastor Smith handed me a card.

“This is an attendance card we put in the pews for visitors if they would like to leave their name and where they’re from. As you can see, it is

quite odd. I can only assume it is from the man in question.”

“The word contact is circled and a line leading from it down to the number 77. Then we have a vertical line with a cross line leading down from the 77 to the bottom where the number 666 is crossed out. Very interesting.”

“As I’m sure you know, according to Hebrew numerology, the 666 is a sign of Satan,” said Pastor Smith. “I’m not sure what the number 77 represents in this brief appearance at our church. The number 77 also had a whole list of meanings in the Bible, many referencing the Glory of God.”

“May I have this card, Pastor?” I asked. “I’d like to have it further analyzed.”

“Certainly,” answered Pastor Smith.

“Thank you, Pastor. You have been a big help.”

I contacted my handler.

“Scramble 456. 777, contact made, intel gathered, await instructions. 0024.”

Five minutes later, I received my instructions.

“Scramble 123. 0024, abort, return. debrief. 777.”

When I returned, I turned in all the intel I had gathered and after thorough questioning, they sent me home to await my next assignment. They deemed the resulting analysis classified. Ten years later, they declassified the file. I can now share with you what it all meant.

Apparently, it took ten committees and divisions to completely analyze everything in my intel report. The final report concluded that the subject remained at large, conducting a complex surveillance operation. Subsequent data showed increased negative activity in all areas where he had been. One analyst noted how the subject seemed to avoid the general masses (most likely because his influences were already firmly entrenched there) and concentrate his efforts on religious institutions. A communique was eventually issued to religious leaders in those areas, but the bureau never received any feedback.

I felt I should give my friend and colleague, Pastor Fred Anderson, an opportunity to review and comment on my literary endeavor. He wrote thus:

Arnie,

It does raise some interesting questions. Do angels and Satan ever take on a physical form and mingle with humans? There was a time when Jesus said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me; for you are not on the side of God, but of men." Peter, the Rock of the Church, undoubtedly, was not Satan, but Jesus saw Satan using Peter as a tool, so to speak. I must confess, sometimes I wonder about some of my flock sitting in the pews, whether Satan is using them as a tool. Sometimes, I wonder about myself, but then I know that Jesus was strong enough to command Satan and if we faithfully follow our Lord, Satan will not prevail over us and continue using us as a tool against the Lord.

On the flip side concerning good angels, Billy Graham once wrote about a missionary who had hostile natives bent on destroying the mission and killing his wife and him. They surrounded the

mission, intent on burning it down, but then during the night the would-be killers left. About a year later, the chief of the hostile tribe converted to Christianity. The missionary later asked him why they suddenly left that night and didn't continue the attack. The chief answered him and said they feared the hundreds of men with mighty swords who were guarding the mission. It had to be angels in physical form because the missionary had no armed guards at the mission.

Hard to grasp or explain sometimes, I believe God allows the spiritual beings to take on physical form when he needs them to. Of course, I doubt He gives them clandestine names like Angel 0024, but then who can be sure.

Fred