

## BEAUBOURG

I stepped out into the warm spring Parisian sunshine. Rue Saint-Martin was its usual ugly façade. The Art Deco so loved by Perret still mocks the city's planners and rightly so. Like all architectural statements, it tells its story of a time and place. The bulldozers could sweep it away, but it will be lost forever and my French cousins would not have anything to get angry about. At least, not in Beaubourg.

I had agreed to meet London's latest recruit, Johnson, at Café Le Fusee at eleven hundred. Hum, the Café seems rather full this morning.

'Un tasse de café, monsieur?' said Henri the proprietor.

'Oui'

I shall read *La Figaro* whilst waiting for Johnson. He is new to the game, so he has so much to learn. The first, how not to stand out in a crowd. I had called Jeanette Varillois last night just to ensure Johnson made it to his hotel. All seemed well. Best I just hold my position. I can at least gaze down Rue Saint-Martin without being blinded by the sun. Who is that man behind me? Not someone I have seen before. His phone didn't ring, but he's talking. He is American. Surely, he is not on the Russian job?

'Hi, Pascal. No, no one is here yet, but I'm sure I am in the right place. He flew in last night. Schapinsky is there watching. No, nothing found. Later.'

Henri's coming over to me. 'Un tasse de café, monsieur, croissant?'

'Merci'

I have known Henri for years. We have, shall we say, a code. A croissant means that I am being followed. If the croissant is placed on the plate with the horns pointing outward, the person following me is outside; if placed toward me, the person is in the café. Henri would then bring over a butter knife pretending to forget earlier and place this on the table pointing in the direction of the follower, and a sugar bowl if he felt I could be in immediate danger. The sugar bowl did not arrive. I stirred my coffee slowly. Henri laid the knife on the table pointing behind me toward my American friend.

The café door opened and in walked the unmistakable figure of Johnson. Why does he look like a spy of the cold war? This is not Tinker Tailor!

'Table pour un, monsieur,' said Johnson in his broken French accent. Henri pointed to the table to my right and Johnson sat down. Our American friend immediately struck up conversation with Johnson.

'You Johnson?'

'Pardon, monsieur?'

'For heaven's sake Johnson, your cover whatever that is, has been blown.' I said, turning to the American. 'What's your business friend?'

'Don't you know me, Harris?'

I looked hard into his eyes. I couldn't place him.

'Cuba!'

'What's going on?' shouted Johnson.

'Your rookie Johnson here is a double agent, damn it,' said the American.

Johnson got up from the table and bolted for the door. Henri stood in Johnson's way of escape.