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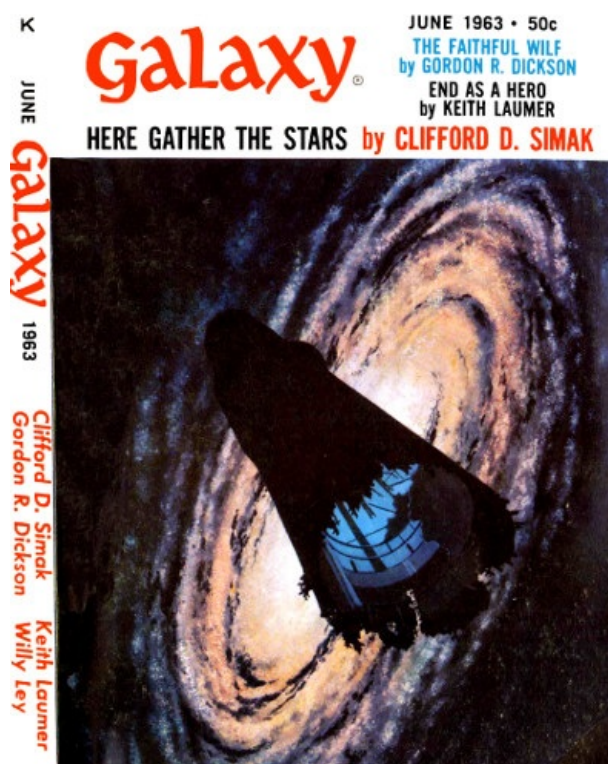
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE COOL WAR ***



THE COOL WAR

by ANDREW FETLER

Illustrated by NODEL

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***Here's what happens when two Master
Spies tangle ... and stay that way!***

"Nothing, nothing to get upset about," Pashkov said soothingly, taking his friend's arm as they came out of the villa forty miles from Moscow. Pashkov looked like a roly-poly zoo attendant leading a tame bear. "Erase his memory, give him a new name and feed him more patriotism. Very simple."

Medvedev raised his hand threateningly. "Don't come howling to me if everybody guesses he is nothing but a robot."

Pashkov glanced back at the house. Since the publication of *Dentist Amigovitch*, this house had become known all over the world as Boris Knackenpast's villa. Now the house was guarded by a company of soldiers to keep visitors out. From an open window Pashkov heard the clicking of a typewriter.

"It's when they're not like robots that everybody suspects them," he said, climbing into his flier. "Petchareff will send you word when to announce his 'death'."

"A question, brother."

"No questions."

"Who smuggled the manuscript out of Russia?"

Pashkov frowned convincingly. "Comrade Petchareff has suspected even me."

He took off for Moscow, poking his flier up through the clouds and flying close to them, as was his habit. Then he switched on the radio and got Petchareff's secretary. "Nadezhda?"

"I know what you're up to, Seven One Three," Nadezhda Brunhildova said. "Don't try to fool *me*, you confidence man. You are coming in?"

"In ten minutes. What have I done now?"

"You were supposed to make funeral arrangements for Knackenpast, so what are you doing in Stockholm?"

"Stockholm?"

"You're lying and I'll kill you. Don't you think I know about Anastina, that she-nurse in the Stockholm National Hospital?"

"Darling, why so cruel? Anastina is one of our contacts. Besides, she's cross-eyed and buck-toothed."

"Beast!" She switched him to Petchareff.

"What's been keeping you, Pashkov?"

"Consoling Medvedev. Am I supposed to be in Stockholm?"

"Never mind, get here at once. What size hospital gown do you wear?"

"Hospital gown?"

"Stockholm embassy says you're in the National Hospital there. In a hospital gown. I got through to Anastina. She says it's Colonel James again. He looks like you now."

Pashkov grunted.

"I'll never understand," said Petchareff, "why all top secret agents have to look like bankers. Anastina says Colonel James was operated on by a Monsieur Fanti. What do you know about him?"

"He's a theatrical surgeon."

"You're not playing one of your jokes, Pashkov?"

"Hardly."

"You'd better be in my office in ten minutes. What size hospital gown?"

"Short and fat," Pashkov said, and switched off.

Most countries wanted to break his neck, and his own Motherland did not always trust him. But he enjoyed his work—enjoyed it as much as his closest professional rival, Colonel James, U.S.A.

Pashkov landed on the roof of Intelligence in the northeast corner of the Kremlin, hitched up his pants and rode down.

In his office, Petchareff removed the cigar from his mouth as Pashkov came in. "Medvedev get my

orders?"

"He's preparing a new super-patriotic writer to replace Boris Knackenpast," Pashkov reported. "When you give the word, he will call *Izvestia* and tell them Boris is dead."

Petchareff glanced at his calendar. "We have two other state funerals this week. You made it plain, I hope, we want no repetition of Knackenpast's peace nonsense?"

"No more Gandhi or Schweitzer influences. The new literature," Pashkov promised, raising a chubby finger, "will be a pearl necklace of government slogans."

Nadezhda buzzed the intercom. "The man from the Bolshoi Theater is here, Comrade."

"Send him in."

A small man hurried into the room. He had a narrow face and the mustache of a mouse and a mousy nose, but his eyes were big rabbit eyes. He bowed twice quickly, placed a package on the desk with trembling forepaws and bowed twice again.

Petchareff tore open the package. "You got the real thing? No bad imitation?"

"Exactly, exactly," the mouse piped. "No difference, Comrade." He held his paws as in prayer and his pointed mouth quivered.

Petchareff held up the hospital gown. On the back of the gown was printed in indelible ink:

**stockholm national hospital
courtesy of
Coca-Cola**

Petchareff tossed the gown to Pashkov. "This is what Colonel James is wearing," he said, dismissing the mouse, who bowed twice and scurried out.

"Try and split the allies," Pashkov muttered, reading the legend on the gown.

Petchareff blew cigar smoke in his face. "If Colonel James makes a monkey of you once more, you're through, Pashkov. You don't take your job seriously enough. You bungle this and I'll have you transferred to our Cultural Information Center in Chicago."

Pashkov winced.

"Now, you'll go to Stockholm and switch places with the American colonel and find out what they're up to. Zubov's kidnaping team is there already, at Hotel Reisen. Any questions?"

"I thought Zubov was a zoological warfare expert. What is he doing with a kidnaping team?"

"His team is more agile. On your way."

In the front office, Pashkov stopped to kiss Nadezhda Brunhildova goodby. "I may not return from this dangerous mission. Give me a tender kiss."

Nadezhda was a big girl with hefty arms, captain of her local broom brigade. "Monster!" She seized him by the collar. "Is Anastina dangerous?"

"Darling!"

"Bitter sweetness!" she howled, dropping him. "Go, love. Make me miserable."

Pashkov spent an hour at Central Intelligence. Nothing unusual going on in Stockholm: an industrial exhibit, the Swedish Academy in session, a sociology seminar on prison reform, a forty-man trade mission from India.

An addendum to the Stockholm file listed two Cuban agents operating from Fralsningsarmen's Economy Lodgings. They were buying small arms and ammunition. He thought a moment, impressed the Cubans' address on his memory, and went to his flier.

He did not fly to Hotel Reisen at once. Zubov's kidnaping team could wait. Coming slowly over Stockholm he spotted the National Hospital and circled.

A line of ambulance fliers was parked on the ground in the ambulance court. On the hospital roof, he noticed, apart from private fliers, stood a flier that resembled his own.

He veered away, detoured around Riddarholmen, and five minutes later landed on the roof of Fralsningsarmen's Economy Lodgings—the Salvation Army flophouse.

"My Cuban friends," Pashkov inquired in fluent English at the desk on the top floor. "Are they in?"

The old desk clerk looked like a stork. "Yu, room six fifteen," he clacked. "Tree floors down. Aer yu Amerikan?"

"Brazil."

"Ah so? You sprikker goot English laik me."

"Very kind of you."

He rode down three floors, found room 615, and stopped as he heard voices within.

"... *dos, tres, cuatro, cinco, seis, siete*. By seven o'clock tonight, okay, Gringo?"

"What do you expect for seven thousand bucks—service? Look, boys, I'm just a honest businessman. I can't get it for you today. Have a seegar, Pablo."

"Tfu!"

"All rightie, your cause is my cause. Maybe I can get it for you tonight. But you'll have to pay in advance. What do you say, Francisco?"

"I counted the money. It is waiting for you. You deliver, we pay."

"But how can I trust you? I like you boys, I know you like me, but business is business. I gotta give something to my jobber, don't I?"

"Gringo!"

At that moment Pashkov knocked on the door.

From within: "Shh! *Alguien llama a la puerta*."

Pashkov knocked again and a scuffle ensued within, the crack of a chair on a skull, the dragging of a beefy body into a closet, and the slam of the closet door.

"Yu?"

"*Buenas tardes*," Pashkov said through the door. "*Asuntos muy importantes*."

The door opened a crack and two dark eyes in a young bearded face peered out. "Eh?"

"*Gospodin Pashkov, para servir a usted*."

The door opened enough to admit the roly-poly visitor into the room. The other Cuban, also bearded and wearing a fatigue cap, held a revolver.

"No gun-play, caballeros," Pashkov went on in Spanish. "We are in the Salvation Army charity house, not in a two-peso thriller. Besides, I deliver before I ask payment."

"Deliver what, senior?"

"We favor any disturbance close to the United States. May I sit down?"

Between two beds were stacked some dozen crates of explosives. A small table was littered with papers.

Sitting down at the table, Pashkov's elbow rested on an invoice, and moments later the invoice was tucked in his pocket.

"What kind of ammunition do you need, caballeros?"

The Cubans looked at each other. "Thirty-o-six caliber, two-twenty grain. How much can you deliver?"

"Two thousand rounds."

"Not much."

"Maybe three thousand. I'll toss in a box of hand grenades and a can of lysergic acid diethylamide."

"You have that? You have LSD-25?"

"I have that. When are you leaving Stockholm?"

Again the young beards exchanged looks. "Maybe we stay till tomorrow if you have more business. Three thousand rounds is not much. How much payment, senior?"

"Two thousand kronor," Pashkov said, taking an envelope on the table and addressing it to Nadezhda Brunhildova, Kremlin, Moscow. No return address.

"Do you trust us to send the money?"

"It is bad for you if I do not trust you," Pashkov said, smiling up at them.

"You can trust us. We shall send the money. Please take a cigar."

Pashkov took four Havanas from the box they held out to him, stuck three in his breast pocket, and lit one.

"You come again, senior. We make much business."

"Why not? Help retire Latin-American dictators to Siberia. More gold in Siberia than in Las Vegas."

"Hyi, hyi, that is funny. You come again."

On his way up to the roof, Pashkov studied the invoice he had lifted. It was from a manufacturer of sporting arms to Francisco Jesus Maria Gonzales, Salvation Army Economy Lodgings. He tucked the invoice into his inner pocket with a satisfied grunt, climbed into his flier and hopped over to Hotel Reisen, where Zubov's kidnaping team was waiting for him.

Comrade Zubov, the kidnaping expert, was pacing the roof of Hotel Reisen. As Pashkov eased down in his flier, Zubov's big front tooth flashed with delight. Pashkov felt like tossing him a

bone.

"Everything in order, Gospodin Pashkov. Constant vigilance maintained at hospital by my two assistants. With your pardon, Comrade Petchareff urges all haste. Colonel James is due to leave the hospital tomorrow."

"Comrade Petchareff always urges haste. What else?"

Zubov's big tooth settled respectfully over his lower lip. His small eyes were so closely set that he looked cockeyed when he focused them on his superior.

"With your pardon, I shall conduct you to our suite. Plans for kidnaping of Colonel James all ready."

"Here's a cigar for you."

"Gratefully accepted. Reduced unavoidable fatalities to six." Zubov counted on his long hard fingers. "Two watchmen, three nurses, one doctor."

In the hotel corridor, Zubov looked before and after, his eyes crossed suspiciously, and peered around corners. They got to their suite without incident, and Pashkov gave him another cigar.

"Gratefully accepted. Here is a map of hospital and grounds. Here is a map of twenty-third floor. Here is a map of Colonel James' room. Here is hospital routine between midnight and dawn. With your pardon—"

Pashkov picked up the phone, dialed the Soviet embassy, and got the chargé d'affaires. "How is your underdeveloped countries fund?" he asked.

"Always depleted, always replenished."

"I don't want any Russian brands."

"Nothing but foreign," the chargé buzzed. "We got almost everything now through an American surplus outlet in Hamburg. Nationals get caught with American goods, Americans get blamed. Wonderful confusion. What do you need?"

"Thirty-o-six two-twenty, three thousand—if you have it."

"Most popular. What else?"

"Pineapples—one crate."

"Only confiscated German potatoes. Will that do?"

"Fine. And a small can of sentimental caviar."

"Too risky."

"It's all right. It will fall to local authorities by tomorrow."

Pashkov put down the receiver. Give the Cubans enough to expect more—make sure they stay in town.

Zubov was cross-checking his kidnaping plans. He said, "With your pardon, do we take Colonel James alive or dead-or-alive?"

"Alive."

Zubov pulled a long face. "Dead-or-alive would be easier, Gospodin Pashkov. Fast, clean job."

Pashkov squinted at Zubov's crossed eyes. "Have you had your eyes examined lately?"

"No need," Zubov assured him with a smile. "I see more than most people."

Pashkov held up his remaining cigar. "How many cigars in my hand?"

"Two."

At that moment the door opened and Zubov's kidnaping team lumbered in. They were a couple of big apes dressed in blue canvas shoes, red trousers, yellow jackets, white silk scarves, sport caps and sun glasses.

"What are you doing here?" cried Zubov. "Why aren't you observing the hospital?"

"Dhh, you said to report ... um ... if something happened," the first ape said in a thick voice.

"Well?"

"Victim's room lights out," the ape said.

"My assistants," Zubov introduced them to Pashkov. "Line up, line up, lads. With your pardon, they are good lads. This is Petya, and this is Kolya. No, *this* is Kolya and this one is Petya."

"Twins?"

"Not exactly. Same genetic experiment. Good lads. Stand straight, Petya. Don't curl your feet like that, Kolya, I've told you before. Why didn't you shave your hands today?"

Kolya looked guiltily at his hands.

"They've made progress," Zubov assured Pashkov, pulling a small whip from his hip pocket. "Straight, lads, straight," he flicked the whip. "We have company."

"Are their costumes your own idea?"

"With your pardon, for purposes of concealment. What are your orders?"

Pashkov told them to pick up the boxes of ammunition at the embassy and deliver them to the Cubans, and then to commandeer a private automobile.

"We have autos at the embassy pool," Zubov suggested.

"I want a vehicle off the street. Then report back here with your lads."

Petya gave Kolya a box on the ear.

"Boys, boys!" Zubov cracked the whip. "Out you go. A job for Gospodin Pashkov, lads. They don't get enough exercise," he grinned, backing out after them. "With your pardon, I'll thrash them later."

And they were gone. Pashkov turned to the hospital maps and studied them before taking a nap.

Shortly before dawn, Zubov's team returned, their mission accomplished.

"With your pardon, an excellent Mercedes," Zubov reported.

Pashkov had changed into the hospital gown with the Coca-Cola legend on the back. He glanced at his watch. It was four o'clock in the morning.

He tossed his bundle of clothing to the first ape. "Take my flier back to Moscow, Kolya lad. Give my clothes to Nadezhda Brunhildova, and tell Comrade Petchareff to expect Colonel James today."

Clutching the bundle, Kolya stuck his tongue out at Petya and bounded out of the room. They waited at the window until they saw Kolya take off in Pashkov's flier. Then they made their way down the service stairs to the alley, Pashkov dressed only in the hospital gown; got into the stolen Mercedes and drove to the National Hospital, all three leaning forward.

In the ambulance court, Zubov and Petya moved quickly to a Red Cross flier. Pashkov dropped the invoice he had lifted from the Cubans on the front seat of the stolen car, and followed.

A watchman emerged from his hut, looked idly up at the rising ambulance, and shuffled back to his morning coffee.

As Petya brought the flier to a hovering stop against Colonel James' window, Pashkov bounced into the room; Zubov drew his gun and jumped in after.

Colonel James awoke, turned on the night lamp, and sat up in the bed, his eyes blinking.

Pashkov stood looking at Colonel James. The resemblance between them was remarkable. Zubov's eyes were crossed with astonishment.

"My dear Gospodin Pashkov!" Colonel James greeted him in Russian, yawning. "How kind of you to visit me. Do sit down." Not only was his Russian good; his voice was a good imitation of Pashkov's voice.

"You're not really sick?" Pashkov asked, sitting down on the bed.

"Not physically. But imagine my psychological condition. When I look in the mirror—" The colonel shuddered.

"I hope your sacrifice won't be permanent?" Pashkov said.

"That would be too much. How is my Russian? The truth, now."

"Excellent. Put up your gun, Zubov. Colonel James and I don't get to talk very often."

"And a pity we don't. Good manners accomplish more than an opera full of cloaks and daggers. Cigarette?"

"Gratefully accepted," Zubov said, slipping his gun into its holster with a flourish.

"Your treatment is over, then?" Pashkov asked. "You are ready for your assignment?"

"Ready."

"And that is?"

"Delicate, very delicate. I must report to the Palace this morning."

"Shall I kidnap him now?" Zubov interrupted, puffing conceitedly on his cigarette.

"Mind your language, Zubov. May I ask, Colonel—do you want me to think I am falling into a trap?"

"No, no, my friend. I am only doing my best not to show my surprise at seeing you again." The colonel got out of bed and sat down on Pashkov's other side.

"Zubov will make your trip to Moscow comfortable. All right, Zubov."

Zubov focused his crossed eyes on Pashkov.

"Take him straight to Petchareff," Colonel James said to Zubov. "I'll report as soon as I know what these Swedes are up to."

Zubov seized Pashkov by the scruff of the neck and dragged him towards the window.

"Hold your claws, Zubov lad," Pashkov said. "You have got the wrong man, can't you see? *That* is Colonel James."

"Eh?"

"Use your eyes, blockhead. *I* am Pashkov."

Zubov did use his eyes. He looked from one to the other, and back. The more he focused, the more his eyes crossed. "Eh?"

Colonel James sat calmly on the bed. He said, "Carry him out."

Zubov lifted Pashkov off the floor, crashed with his weight against the wall, but held on, grinned and staggered with Pashkov in his arms to the window.

"You miserable idiot," Pashkov shouted. "You'll get a rest cure for this!"

Zubov dropped him, pulled his gun and backed off into a corner. "How can I tell you two apart just by looking!" he cried hysterically. "I'm not a learned man."

"One small but decisive proof," Pashkov said, unbuttoning his hospital gown. "I have a mole."

Zubov yanked the colonel up by an arm. "Send *me* to rest cures, will you?"

Colonel James sighed. "I guess we have to keep up appearances," he muttered, and climbed out the window into the hovering ambulance. Zubov leaped in after, and they were off.

The suit of clothes hanging in the closet might have been Pashkov's own, identical with the clothes Kolya had taken to Moscow not an hour before. Even the underwear had facsimiles of the Order of Lenin sewn in.

Satisfied, he crawled into the bed and fell into a pleasant snooze.

He was awakened by the nurse, Anastina Bjorklund—alias Anastasia Semionovna Bezumnaya, formerly of the Stakhanovite Booster's Committee, Moscow Third Worker's District.

"Wonderful morning, Colonel James!"

Petchareff seldom let one agent know what another was doing.

She put a big breakfast tray on Pashkov's lap. "Cloudy, damp, and windy. London stock market caves in, race riots in South Africa, famine in India, earthquake in Japan, floods in the United States, general strike in France, new crisis in Berlin. I ask you, what more can an idealist want?"

"Good morning, Miss Bjorklund."

The breakfast tray was crammed with a liter of orange juice, four boiled eggs, six slices of bacon, four pancakes, two pork chops, four slices of toast, a tumbler of vodka, a pot of coffee and two cigars.

"Ah, Colonel," Anastina said as Pashkov fell to, "why did you let them change your face? It does not become you at all."

"Part of my job. Don't you think I am more handsome now?"

Anastina laughed shrilly. "That bulbous nose handsome? What woman could fall in love with a nose like that?"

"It shows determination. I wish I had this nose permanently."

"You mustn't talk like that. But I'll ignore your nose if you tell me more about White Sands Proving Grounds, as you promised."

"With pleasure, with pleasure," he said, sinking his teeth into a pork chop, having seasoned the chop with the soft-boiled egg yolk. "But right now I'm in a hurry to get to the Palace. Give my shoes an extra shine, there's a good girl."

"Oh, you and your secrets!"

An hour later, Pashkov landed on the Palace roof in Colonel James' flier—an exact copy of his own flier. The Palace roof captain stared at him, then smiled nervously.

"They are waiting for you in the Gustavus room, Colonel."

"Colonel? Do I still look like Colonel James?"

"Oh, no, sir."

"Do I talk like Colonel James?"

"You've changed completely, sir. If I didn't know, I would swear you were the notorious Gospodin Pashkov."

"I am Gospodin Pashkov now, Captain. To everybody."

"Of course, sir. I'll ring down you are coming."

Pashkov glanced at his watch. Colonel James would be landing in Moscow about now and taken to Comrade Petchareff for questioning.

A manservant in velvet cutaways, patent leather shoes and white gloves, escorted Pashkov through rooms hung with chandeliers, tapestries, paintings. Pashkov entered the last room and stopped as the door clicked shut behind him.

In the room were three men, all of whom he recognized: Professor Kristin of the Swedish Academy, a white-haired old man with a kind, intelligent face; the king, Gustavus IX, a thin old man stroking his Vandyke, sitting under a portrait of Frederick the Great; and Monsieur Fanti, the make-up surgeon.

Pashkov bowed his head. "Your majesty. Gentlemen."

"Extraordinary!" Professor Kristin said.

Pashkov turned to the surgeon. "Monsieur, should my face have such a frivolous expression?"

M. Fanti raised his eyebrows, but did not answer.

"I thought," said Pashkov, "that Gospodin Pashkov's face has a more brutal look."

"Propaganda," said the artist. But he came closer and looked at Pashkov's face with sudden interest.

Professor Kristin said, "Colonel James, we presume you have studied the problem in detail. I'm afraid we have delayed announcing the Nobel prize for literature much too long. How soon can you bring Boris Knackenpast to Stockholm?"

So there it was: Boris Knackenpast a supreme success, as Pashkov had suspected. It would be amusing to tell robotist Medvedev about it.

"Delicate, very delicate," Pashkov said. "Everything depends on my not running into Gospodin Pashkov."

"We can't wait any longer," Professor Kristin said. "Fortunately, we have an ally in the enemy camp. The robotist, Medvedev, is expecting you at Knackenpast's villa."

"Bad show," M. Fanti said suddenly. "No good. His left cheekbone is at least four centimeters too high."

The men looked at the surgeon, then at Pashkov.

M. Fanti fingered Pashkov's cheekbone. "How could I have made such a mistake! Just look at him. People laugh at such faces."

"How much time to correct the error then, Monsieur Fanti?" the king asked.

"A week at least. His skin needs a rest. I must rework the whole left side of his face—it's all lopsided."

"But we can't spare a week," Professor Kristin said.

"With your majesty's permission," Pashkov offered, "I am willing to go as I am. Indeed, my plans call for immediate departure."

"It is a good thing you do for us, Colonel James," Gustavus IX said, "and a courageous thing. Please accept our thanks."

Professor Kristin saw Pashkov to the door. "One suggestion, Colonel. Your r's are still too soft for a real Russian. Why do you Americans slur them like that? And I beg you, if you value your life, do not fail to watch your fricatives."

The roof captain saluted as Pashkov stepped out of the lift. His flier was serviced and ready.

"What weather in Moscow, Captain?"

"Ceiling four thousand. We're having patrols half way out to sea. They are instructed to let you pass."

A small incident, the roof captain explained. A Swedish Red Cross flier was missing from the National Hospital. Two Cuban agents had been arrested and a cache of small arms and ammunition was found. But no trace of the ambulance.

"I suppose the Cubans deny stealing the ambulance?" Pashkov asked.

"They say they've been framed by a fat little Russian. But it's transparent, a clumsy job. Imagine, they left a stolen car in the ambulance court and in it an invoice for six cases of ammunition. It was traced to the Cubans in half an hour."

Pashkov climbed into his flier. "Well, it's fashionable to blame the Russians for everything." He waved his chubby hand, and took off. Flying over the Baltic, he set the controls on the Moscow beam.

Ten minutes west of Moscow he tuned the communicator in on Petchareff's office.

"Seven One Three here, Nadezhda. Tell Petchareff—no, let me talk to him."

"Seven One ... but that's impossible! Gospodin Pashkov is in conference with Comrade Petchareff."

"Stupid!" Petchareff's voice sounded behind Nadezhda's, and the speaker clicked and went dead.

Pashkov dove into the clouds and brought his flier to a hovering stop.

Petchareff did not believe he was Pashkov. Colonel James, it was clear, was at that moment in Petchareff's office, impersonating Pashkov. And Zubov was probably getting a rest cure.

Pashkov crawled out of the cloud and skimmed northeast to Mir, Boris Knackenpast's villa.

"You came fast, sir," the lieutenant of guards welcomed him at Mir. "We did not expect you for another fifteen minutes."

Fifteen minutes. The colonel was not wasting time.

"Listen carefully, lieutenant." Pashkov described the American agent. "But his left cheekbone is lower than mine—about four centimeters. He may be armed, so be careful."

The lieutenant stared. "Shall we kill him?"

"No, no. Put him in a cage."

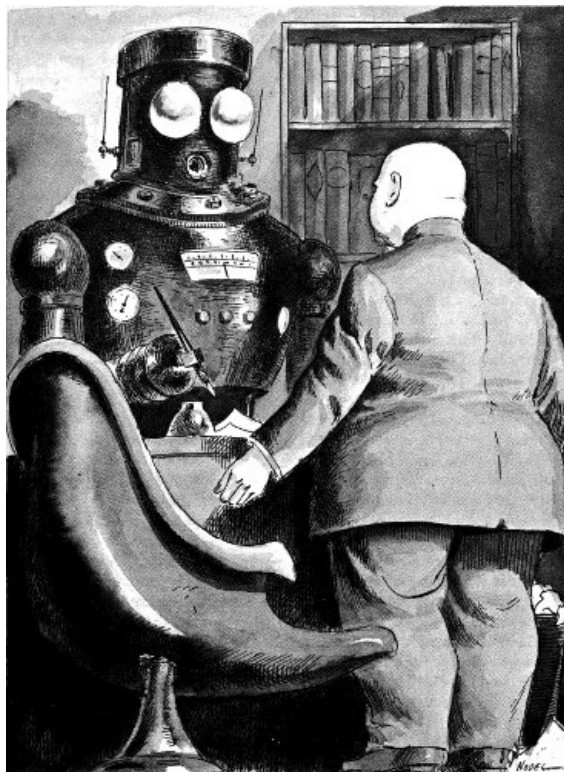
As Pashkov ran up the steps to the villa, the curtain in the vestibule window stirred. But when he entered, the vestibule was empty.

He looked in the dining room, the music room, the library. Nobody. The house was strangely quiet. He came to the door of the study and listened. Not a sound. He went in and there, behind the large writing desk, sat Boris Knackenpast.

The robot was unscrewing screws imbedded in his neck.

"My God, sir," said Pashkov, "what are you doing?"

The robot's eyes, large disks of glittering mirror, flashed as he looked up. "Ah, Colonel James," Boris said in a voice that seemed to come from a deep well. "Excuse the poor welcome, but I understand we have little time. You scared my valet; he thought you were Gospodin Pashkov."



The door burst open and Medvedev rushed in, the old valet at his heels. Medvedev stopped, gaped, then seized Pashkov's hand. "Colonel James! What an artist, that Monsieur Fanti. But quick, Boris, Pashkov is on his way."

Boris pulled off his head, and crawled out of the robot shell. Pashkov saw Boris as he really was, a tall human with a gaunt, ascetic face.

The sad thing about us, thought Pashkov, is that Medvedev could not trust even me. But then I

could not trust Medvedev, either. Yes, that's the trouble with us.

"I hope you need no luggage, Mister Knackenpast," Pashkov said. "We must be off at once."

"Too late!" the old valet said from the window.

Colonel James had landed. But as he climbed down from his flier, the guards closed a circle about him.

"He'll keep," Pashkov said, hitching up his pants. "Let's be off, Mister Knackenpast. It won't take long for Petchareff to smell us out."

"Look!"

The guards fell back from the flier and snapped to attention. Chewing on his cigar furiously, out stepped Petchareff.

Zubov leaped out next, his big front tooth flashing. Then his two assistants, Petya and Kolya, tumbled out in their coats and hats. Last of all to emerge from the flier was Nadezhda Brunhildova.

"Pretend not to know me, will he?" she yelled at Colonel James, picking up a rock.

"Hold it, citizenress," Colonel James said.

"Citizenress, is it?" The rock flew over his head and felled Zubov.

"I warned you both, no kitchen squabbles while on duty," Petchareff roared. He snapped an order to the lieutenants of guards, and the guards surrounded the house.

"No alarm, no alarm," Pashkov said, pulling Boris away from the window. "Mister Knackenpast, when you see your way clear to my flier, run for it. But get back into your robot costume."

"I can't operate the machine."

"I'll be right behind you. The rest of us will go out to Petchareff."

As they came out, Petchareff was reviving Zubov by slapping his face. The kidnaping expert lay stretched cold on the ground, and Nadezhda Brunhildova stood by, holding the rock and weeping.

Colonel James said, "There he is, the American spy."

Petchareff looked up as Pashkov was led forward by the guards. "Not bad," Petchareff said. "We could use Monsieur Fanti. What's his price?"

"Don't you know me, chief? Me, Pashkov."

"Curse me," Nadezhda said, staring at him. "Another Pashkov."

A terrible howl came from Zubov. Petya and Kolya, imitating Petchareff's efforts to revive their master, were battering Zubov's face with their slouched hats.

"Stand back!" Kolya screamed, smashing his hat into Zubov's face. "He is trying to say something!"

"He's moving!" Petya kicked Zubov and looked up for approval, his hair standing up like spikes.

Petchareff slapped Kolya's face and crushed the glowing end of his cigar on Petya's forehead. The apes reeled back to a tree.

Pashkov whispered to Colonel James.

"Capitalist hell and damnation, now I can't tell them apart myself," Petchareff said. "Zubov!"

"Hhng?"

"Which one's the real Pashkov?"

"Hhng?"

But Colonel James was running to the flier, throwing Nadezhda's rock at Petchareff and running.

"Grenade!" Pashkov yelled, and flung himself to the ground.

At the same moment Boris Knackenpast ran from the house to the flier, his robot gear clattering like Don Quixote's armor.

The guards scattered and dove for cover.

"Down, lads! Grenade!" Pashkov yelled.

The two apes took up the cry, "Grenade, grenade!" and flattened themselves behind the tree.

Nadezhda and Medvedev collided, digging in behind the valet.

Only Petchareff remained standing. "Stop the robot!"

Nobody moved.

Boris reached the flier, Colonel James pulled him in, the engine hummed, and they were off. A moment later the flier vanished in the clouds towards Stockholm.

Petchareff relit his cigar. "Tfui, tastes of monkey hair."

Medvedev shambled over. "Was the grenade a dud?"

"One of these days I'll catch you, Pashkov," Petchareff spat. "Your deviousness, that's one thing. It could be useful. But your levity—"

"Darling!" Nadezhda threw on Pashkov.

"Not in public," Pashkov said.

"Wait a minute," Petchareff said. "Nadezhda Brunhildova, how do you know he really is Pashkov? If he's actually Colonel James, I can shoot him summarily. He *does* look like Colonel James to me."

"But if you're mistaken?" Medvedev put in nervously.

"We all make mistakes," Petchareff said. "What would history be without mistakes?"

"I don't trust him either," Nadezhda said. "But I know my Pashkov. If he's not Pashkov, I shall let you know in the morning."

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE COOL WAR ***

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