

Black Sun

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Gregory cradled his scoped rifle and watched the fly trace the outline of the dimly-lit, sweltering room. The buzzing insect skirted the dust-laden silhouettes of a dentist's chair with overhanging lamp, shelves of cracked bottles and empty canisters. A half-open window belched with an oven's breath (the only wind on a most hot and dry day) and the yellow, torn shade flopped restlessly against the sill, splashing lazy waves of sunlight against Gregory's sweating brow. The fly now detected the portal to freedom and zipped away into the glare.

"Good luck, chap. Don't let no one catch you. Froggies have long tongues, you know," whispered the fly's audience in a British accent.

Gregory was a tall, thin man with fashionably-long, thick red hair, the gift of a Scottish father of noble lineage. Or so did Sister Mary Ann tell him, although she really did not know since the orphanage received him from a trash can in the Soho. The orphanage became home until Hitler stormed into Czechoslovakia, and the tall, noble Scotsman marched off for the King. In the royal infantry Gregory learned to kill. He killed with skill and without pity, and he beamed with boyish joy at Sister Mary Ann's letters praising him for his many decorations. He became so terribly proud! After the war Gregory returned—not to the orphanage but to the Soho, and the noble Scot no longer received shiny medals but shiny pounds.

He glanced out the window into the hot glare—so far now from England.

A procession of glimmering-golden coins rolled ceaselessly in his brain, and Gregory could almost see himself frozen and shining on the face of each. He smiled with boyish joy.

The door behind him creaked open and shut. Gregory's head darted to his right and broke into a smile of greeting.

"Hallo, Jim. Bloody warm today, don't you think?"

"Sure is, Greg. In more ways than one," whispered a nervous, squat, white-faced American businessman.

Jim sat down next to Gregory, and both lapsed into a long silence.

"You know, Greg," explained Jim after several minutes, "I used to come to this dentist all the time."

"Before the revolution?"

"Yeah . . . before," answered Jim tapering off into reflection. "We never had that much trouble with the Blacks. They seemed to know their place. Then all of sudden boom—riots, assassinations, war. Somehow these Goddamn Africans got guns and a few breaks. Com-mies probably. Anyway they ended up on top. But with their leader gone, maybe the old order can be restored. There're still a lot of white people in this country . . . Anyway my corporation can't afford to shut down our plants here or, worse yet, hand them over to those black bastards!"

Jim finished his little oration and Gregory merely nodded approval, for it was the fiftieth time he had heard it.

"Well good luck, Greg," said Jim extending his hand.

"The plan is a good one. I will not fail. Goodbye, Jim." Gregory took the offered hand.

At the thump of the closing door, Gregory inched back the shade and watched the proceedings on the street below. Crowds of people had begun to line the pavement. Clusters of mothers and fathers reprimanded little, squirming children who wanted to play "tag" and not particularly see their president. Students debated government policy and the changes since the revolution, while old men shaded their eyes and waited patiently.

Gregory noted the absence of almost all white faces. Those that he could see were like Jim—disturbed, nervous, bitter.

Shouts vibrated the clinging heat. The crowd roared; children waved tiny flags.

As the motorcade rolled at parade speed into view, Gregory brought his rifle to the window sill. Through his scope he flirted from car to car in search of his man. He found him!

"Yes . . . so that's their president. Even uglier than his pictures, by Jove!"

The cross-hairs played with the shining black head.

"No, no, mustn't there. Too much gore. Got to make it according to plan. In the heart," whispered Gregory to his gun without emotion. "Clever chaps, these Americans. Silencer, full metal-cased cartridges. No noise, tiny holes, little blood. And even that blood not likely to come through my boy's vested-suit. Just like a heart attack, by Jove!" thought the noble Scotsman amusedly.

The rifle was aimed, the trigger pulled, and Gregory successfully caught the next flight to Switzerland and several thousand pounds.

For the crowd below, the sight of their slumping president catalyzed an ordered succession of emotion—silence, gasp, scream, wail.

The limousine accelerated swerving desperately through the crowds of shocked people mobbing the path. Squealing around a corner, the car lurched to avoid striking a little black girl, only to smash to the earth a white man. (The chauffeur felt no guilt, only relief at missing the girl.) Ironically the second victim of that afternoon was whitefaced, nervous Jim. His last reflex was to put up his hand to fend off the car, and in so doing he had ripped the small banner from the right bumper. And now he lay on the hot asphalt, his insides shattered and bleeding, staring at the little flag in his hand. In his brain burned the words "Seal of the President of the United States of America." His eyes twitched bitterly to meet the antagonistic stare of the black crowd which gathered around him. He looked down again at the seal; a tear rolled down his quivering cheek.

"Black Bastard!"

That night white hands dug the sandy soil of Fenwick Cemetery in Virginia. James Appleton was buried the next morning, August 10, 1974.