

And when all was over, and everything was said, the Gulfstream rose in the sky of St. Eustatius. He knew Ann would be waiting for him at the landing strip in Eleuthera and they would retreat to the private cay in Fleming Straits for a week-end of fishing, snorkeling and love-making.

He could smell the bag of Alkmaar cheeses that he would always bring back from the Dutch islands; they were a link to the misty mornings of his early youth, when their aroma would fill his village church. But this time, hidden deep in the cheese itself, was the Intel chip where the Organizatsya's take on next month's petroleum shipments out of Aruba was carefully detailed. This was encoded of course, and Ann had the key, which she secured regularly on her monthly jaunts to Panama.

He took the call on his satellite phone as the sun was setting over the British Virgins. The voice sounded vaguely familiar, with the accent Central European, Hungarian perhaps. The reknown conductor Laszlo von Kövesligethy had died, she said, of a heart attack at the opening of the Atlanta Olympics, and would he, Jeroen van der Lijk, please join in a memorial concert. For he had played under him with the Philharmonic, his cover in the days when he was posted at Berlin Station and had become one of Bill Haydon's boys, and he could remember the crossings at the Friedrichstrasse, the week-end outings on the Havel, and the passionate nights with Trödi, even after he had learned her name really was Natasha.

He could divert to Miami, she added, and they would fly him to Georgia direct. And of course, his cello was being sent right now, and yes, Ann would be there, and actually she was already on her way to Atlanta.

They met him at Hartsfield in one of these new luxury vehicles, neither exactly car nor van, that had become a craze in America, long after the first Range Rovers were made in England, was it two decades earlier. As he settled in the back leather seat, the passenger in front turned back towards him, his face obscured by the generous headrest above the seat. "Thank you so much, Mr. Van der Lijk"; the voice was unmistakable, for he had known George Smiley for so many years, "we all know how difficult it is to find good Dutch cheese in America".

And as Jeroen nervously lit a cigarette, it seemed a quick saccade agitated Smiley's eyebrow as he caught a short glimpse of the engraving on the lighter,

*"From Ann to George in eternal love".*

John LE CARRÉ

*The Little Dutch Altar Boy*