

A Spy by any Other Name

Tofer Carlson

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tofercarlson@me.com

Cast of Characters

ERIC:

Male, age indeterminate, wears formal clothing and perhaps glasses. A square, but not to the point of farce.

MARTA:

Female, age indeterminate, a spy.

SAM:

Agent 23, age indeterminate, a spy. Marta's superior.

The stage is empty except for: three cubes set as a park bench, a tree; SAM is preset, hidden from view of the audience, but as close to ERIC as is possible.

Lights come up as ERIC enters with a bag lunch containing a sandwich, an apple and a box of Yoohoo. He walks to the bench, opens his lunch and carefully sets it out next to him on the bench. He spreads a napkin on his lap and prepares to eat.

ERIC sighs, takes a bite of his sandwich, and smiles. MARTA enters, sneaking up to hide behind the tree (it does not hide her). ERIC tries not to notice. MARTA is impressed with herself, and desires to communicate with her superiors.

MARTA

(Touching her ear) I've got a visual, sir. (beat) No, sir. There's no risk of exposure. (beat) Just one, sir. (beat) That won't be necessary, sir. He's just eating his lunch. (beat) Sir, I don't know what kind of sandwich he's eating. (beat) No. I don't know, sir. (beat) Understood. Agent out.

MARTA returns to very obviously hiding behind the tree, and pulls out some kind of elaborate gadget that she proceeds to point at the audience and attempt to take a reading. She looks puzzled. During this, ERIC continues to eat, but is finding it hard to focus, and begins watching MARTA do whatever it is that she is doing. ERIC should look awkward and confused, but he doesn't stop eating his sandwich.

MARTA drops the elaborate gadget and gasps.

MARTA

It can't be!

ERIC

Are you OK?

MARTA gasps again.

MARTA

How did you see me?

ERIC

Excuse me?

MARTA looks once more at the audience before doing an awkward spy roll to arrive at her new hiding place: the side of ERIC's bench.

ERIC

What are you doing?

MARTA

Are you my contact?

ERIC

I have no idea what you're talking about.

MARTA

Right! Umm... The sky is terribly... cloudy... today.

MARTA nods knowingly, having just given her passphrase.

ERIC

(Looking up) Actually, it looks pretty clear to me.

MARTA

(Confused) What? No. The sky is terribly CLOUDY today. *(She winks, and continues to nod knowingly, giving ERIC 'the eye')*

ERIC

I think you're confusing cloudy with something else. I don't see a single one.

MARTA

No. Listen to me closely. *(She jumps up to sit next to ERIC on the bench)* The sky is terribly CLOUDY today. *(beat)* The sky is terribly cloudy TODAY? *(beat)* The SKY is terribly cloudy today?

ERIC

Ummm...

MARTA

Nothing?

ERIC

(Shakes his head slowly)

MARTA

(Defeated) OK. When I say: The sky is terribly cloudy today, you say: But the penguins are still singing.

ERIC
Penguins?

MARTA
It's your half of the passphrase. That's the only way to let me know that you're my contact.

ERIC
Contact? I'm sorry, I really have no idea what you're talking about.

MARTA
Jeez Louise! You're supposed to remember these things.

ERIC
That the penguins are singing?

MARTA
Right! But say it after I say my half!

ERIC
OK...

MARTA
The sky is terribly cloudy today.

ERIC
(*beat*) Now I say the thing about the penguins?

MARTA
YES! (*beat*) Well?

ERIC
Well, what?

MARTA
Say your half!

ERIC
OK! But the penguins...are still... swimming?

MARTA
(*sighs*) It's singing, but that's close enough. Do you have the files?

ERIC
(*unsure*) The files.

MARTA
Good... can I have them?

ERIC
What?

MARTA
The files.

ERIC
The files?

MARTA
The files!

ERIC
What are you talking about?

MARTA
(groans and slides off the bench) Seriously?

ERIC
I'm sure you mean well, but I don't think...

MARTA
OK, OK. This is how it works *(pulls out a reporter style notebook and flips through pages)* First, I need to identify my target. Check. Second, make contact. Done. Third, confirm identity... the sky is terribly cloudy... yaddah, yaddah, yaddah. We did that.

ERIC
I guess?

MARTA
Which leaves step four: collect top secret files from the target. *(beat)* And, *(beat)* step five. But that's not important. So, you see? I need the files.

ERIC
Step five?

MARTA
What?

ERIC
You mentioned a step five...

MARTA
I did?

ERIC
I'm pretty sure you did.

MARTA
I don't think I'd do that.

ERIC
What can I say?

MARTA
About what?

ERIC
What?

MARTA
You asked what you could say--I'm sure you could say a lot of things... say about the weather, or maybe the Red Sox... or about the top secret files I need!

ERIC
Look, I don't know who you are-

MARTA
But we've already confirmed-

ERIC
Let me finish. (*She sits back*) I don't know who you are-

MARTA
But-

ERIC
(*holding up a hand*) I don't know who you are. I don't know anything about any files. I'm here eating lunch.

MARTA
Lunch?

ERIC
I work over there. (*beat*) In the office building across the street?

MARTA
That's just your cover though.

ERIC
I wish. Do you think as a kid I dreamed that I'd grow up and be an actuary?

MARTA
What's an actuary?

ERIC

(beat) An actuary is... well, it's like... so, insurance companies use probability... *(beat)* I use a computer a lot. And math. But I don't even like math anymore.

MARTA

Sounds boring.

ERIC

It is.

MARTA

So... you're not my contact?

ERIC

Sorry.

MARTA

Why did you say you were?

ERIC

I don't think I did. You kind of-

MARTA

(touching her ear again) Sir? *(beat)* Yes, sir. There's a problem. *(Beat)* No, I don't have the files. He doesn't have them. *(Beat)* Well, sir, he's not my target after all. I was wrong.

At this point, SAM leaps up from her hiding place. She is furious. ERIC jumps up in surprise at her appearance and loses some of his food, or perhaps his briefcase.

SAM

Wrong!?

ERIC

(Simultaneously with MARTA) Where did...

MARTA

Yes sir, wrong.

SAM

How on Earth did you let this happen? You could have compromised the entire mission, agent!

MARTA

I know, sir. I'm sorry, sir.

SAM
Do you want this to turn into another Providence Incident.

MARTA
Sir!

SAM
I didn't think so.

MARTA
This is nothing like the Providence Incident!

SAM
Isn't it?

MARTA
There's not even an elephant! *(beat)* Unless...

SAM
You see my point!

MARTA
It won't happen again, sir!

SAM
Just take care of it.

MARTA
Sir?

SAM
Clean up your mess and be done with it.

ERIC
Ummm...

MARTA
You mean...

SAM
What do you think I mean? Follow the plan, agent.

MARTA
Yes, sir.

SAM
(storming off) The incompetence I have to put up with. *(beat)* Spies!

ERIC
Wow...

MARTA
I'm so screwed.

ERIC
That was your boss?

MARTA
She's in charge of my division, yea.

ERIC
And since you've talked to me...

MARTA
I've got to, well, you see-

ERIC
Clean up you mess?

MARTA
Yea...

ERIC
Which means?

MARTA
That's step five.

ERIC
Excuse me?

MARTA
You asked what step five was.

ERIC
I don't think I want to know.

MARTA
You really don't. (*She sits. Long beat as ERIC takes a bite of his apple*) I have to kill you and dispose of the body. (*ERIC does a spit take, covering MARTA in apple*) What was that for?!

ERIC
What was that for? You said you were going to kill me!

MARTA
I'm going to kill you?

ERIC
That's what you said!

MARTA

I really don't think I'd say something like that. That sounds awfully mean.

ERIC

So, I misheard you?

MARTA

(casually) And, if I was going to kill you, I wouldn't tell you anything, I'd just do it.

ERIC

What!?

MARTA

I'm a spy. That's what we do. Spy stuff.

ERIC

You're going to kill me!

MARTA

What? No!

ERIC

But you said...

MARTA

Technically, Agent 23 said.

ERIC

Agent 23?

MARTA

My... supervisor.

ERIC

Then, you're not going to kill me?

MARTA

No! That's gross! Plus... you're pretty cool.

ERIC

I am?

MARTA

I mean you convinced me that you were a spy--I'm not easily fooled, you know. *(beat)* I'm kind of a pro.

ERIC

Really?

MARTA

Yeah. I'd say that makes you totally cool.

ERIC

I don't think I've ever been called cool before. Nerdy. Weird. Nope, never cool.

MARTA

How come?

ERIC

Actuaries aren't exactly known for their...

MARTA

Cool-ocity?

ERIC

Actually, I don't think that's a word.

MARTA

(aside) I see what you mean.

ERIC

What?

MARTA

Never mind.

ERIC

Being cool isn't something that comes easily to me.

MARTA

I mean, I'd never have guessed that.

ERIC

Really?

MARTA

Really.

ERIC

Thanks.

MARTA

For what?

ERIC

Making me think that maybe I'm not just a dorky math nerd.

MARTA

Then why do you do it?

ERIC
Excuse me?

MARTA
Why do something that you clearly don't like?

ERIC
It's my job.

MARTA
Seems like a pretty lame excuse to me. I mean, I get all these cool gadgets, and an awesome watch. Ooh! And these totally badass glasses.

ERIC
I have a laptop.

MARTA
Mine is linked up with the SASWSN (said as a word). *(ERIC doesn't respond, MARTA clarifies because everyone should know this)* The Super Awesome Spies Worldwide Satellite Network?

ERIC
You guys have your own satellite network?

MARTA
Of course! And you should see my SpyBook profile! *(goes to pull out an electronic device, but stops herself)* But...

ERIC
But, what?

MARTA
I guess, I can't actually show you.

ERIC
Why not?

MARTA
Because you're not, well, you know, actually a spy.

ERIC
Oh.

MARTA
Sorry.

ERIC
It's OK. But you know, it *sounded* really cool and all.

MARTA

It totally is. You can click on one of the tabs and it takes you to a section about my favorite weapons, and known aliases and eliminated targets. I have seven!

ERIC

You've killed seven people?

MARTA

No! I have seven known aliases. I'm more of an information spy. It's because I'm good at hiding and being wicked secret.

ERIC

Wicked secret?

MARTA

Yep. *(beat)* You know, you should come out sometime.

ERIC

Come out?

MARTA

Totally! I'm hitting up Cyprus next week to check on some eco-terrorists.

ERIC

Wow. That sounds pretty exciting.

MARTA

You should come with me!

ERIC

What?

MARTA

I can just tell Agent 23 that I recruited you!

ERIC

I can't.

MARTA

Why not?

ERIC

I mean it sounds great and everything, but I can't just leave work--

MARTA

You don't even like work!

ERIC

And I don't even know your name.

MARTA

It's Marta, and that's my real name, not even an alias. Come with me!

ERIC

Look, we can't all be spies!

MARTA

Why not?

ERIC

Wait, what?

MARTA

Why can't we? It's not like your world has much to offer.

ERIC

But it's real!

MARTA

Hey!

ERIC

I mean I actually have to do real work. I mean... I don't mean you don't have real work to do. It's just...shit, I don't know what I mean.

MARTA

(annoyed) I can see that.

ERIC

I mean I wish I could just get up and leave work and go on adventures.

MARTA

So...do it.

ERIC

Don't you see? I've got commitments here!

MARTA

What commitments?

ERIC

Commitments!

MARTA

You married?