

A SIMPLE PICK-UP

by Dana DeVries

The noon daylight poured through the second floor window, slowly baking the heat from the limp mattress upon the floor and the man standing beside the window. A fly lazily buzzed about his ear as Steiger turned his neck slowly in an effort to ease his tension. The insect landed upon his ear and then began buzzing again. Lightning fast, Steiger's hand reached up, closed around the fly and crushed it. Releasing his breath, he glanced at the watch upon his wrist. Nodding slightly, he stooped and lifted the rifle from the floor beside him and crouched down beneath the window. The sunlight beat down upon his bald head, but he ignored the sweat and brightness as his eyes focused upon the small mirror set up in the corner of the window. The front of the Elijah Theatre across the way was clearly visible in the mirror.

Several tall pillars of ancient marble were covered in neon spray paint that no amount of martial law could ever prevent. Centuries of blowing sand had polished the stone, but could not significantly damage it. In front of the scattered bullet holes studding the theatre's walls, six men dressed in expensive suits held automatic weapons and waited. Their eyes were cold and unemotional as they maintained their silent vigil. Before them, the marketplace between them was thronged with men and women dressed in the dark clothing the conservatives in Badran had forced upon the people. Pox marked beggars weakly pleaded for charity while their open sores leaked noxious fluids. The women's faces were covered and their eyes were downcast as they shopped for the meager wares available.

The doors of the theatre opened right on time. Dressed in long flowing black robes, the Prophet Mudar emerged from the theatre amidst a throng of bodyguards. A golden watch flashed upon the Prophet's wrist while he chatted with Keith Rugan, a short man in an ill-fitting blue suit beside him. An armored limosine slowly pulled up to the curb while Mudar's personal ambulance idled a few yards back. Several of the guards stepped forward and opened the car door. They immediately began checking beneath the car for bombs while the other guards scanned the crowd. Mudar stared towards a black garbed woman a few feet away and motioned her forward. She approached hesitantly, still holding a bunch of grapes in her hand. The Prophet reached out and took the grapes as a poor beggar man looked on hungrily. Mudar languidly bit off several of them and grimaced. The fruit's juices ran down into his thick black beard as he casually backhanded the woman and hurled the grapes towards her.

While the grapes were still in the air, Steiger stood up, lifted the gun smoothly to his shoulder and fired. Beside the Prophet, a red splotch splashed amidst the blue suited man's chest. He staggered back while four bodyguards rushed for Mudar. Steiger continued firing shots towards the mass of flesh as they hustled the Prophet into his limosine. More of the guards rushed for the building Steiger hid in as the Prophet's ambulance pulled up in front of the theatre. Several men emerged and rushed to the blue suited man lying bleeding upon the sidewalk. They lifted him up and carried him quickly towards the ambulance. Steiger pulled a grenade from his pocket and hurled it across the marketplace. It exploded with a sharp crack next to one of the ancient pillars. The pillar shattered and part of the roof collapsed upon a trio of guards.

Steiger pulled back from the windows as bullets began flying through the

window. He left the rifle on the floor as he ejected the clip and pocketed it before taking several running steps towards the next room. Without even slowing, he leapt through the window overlooking the alleyway. A pile of discarded bedding cushioned his fall and he rolled to his feet without slowing. Dashing down the alleyway, he lifted his watch to his mouth and urgently called into it, "Point to Square, target acquired?"

The voice emerging from the watch was calm, but the sounds of a racing engine and a siren could be heard in the background. "They picked up on what was going on faster than I thought." The sounds of gunshots hammering into armor punctuated his words. "Plus there's another problem. Circle was unable to acquire objective. Bells came early."

Steiger groaned for a moment as he heard more gunshots from the building he'd abandoned, he dodged into another alleyway and continued running. "Target know?"

"Affirmative. Refuses to continue without objective."

"Acknowledged. Give me 10 minutes and meet me at Bells."

"Affirmative." The voice from the watch paused and then quietly added, "Good luck."

Steiger nodded but did not respond. In his mind, he relived part of the conversation he'd had with Keith Rukan. The Prophet's chief economic advisor had insisted on meeting in private, despite Steiger's warnings that public meetings would attract less attention. The filthy back room of the bar had been filled with the smell of opium and death.

His eyes darting from side to side nervously, Rukan's voice had been harsh with fear. "I cannot stall him for much longer. If you do not get me out within the next few weeks, he's going to find out that we have had a working prototype for weeks. Do you have any idea what he'll do to me then?"

"I am not saying that I cannot get you out before that happens. Just that your insistence on getting both your daughter out at the same time is complicating matters."

"I will not leave without her! If you want to ensure that Mudar doesn't get his hands on my work, you'll just have to work something out."

Steiger sighed silently. "Are you certain that she even wants to leave? You said yourself, you haven't spoken to her in over a year."

"I know what I said. Ever since Mudar forced her to marry that thug, Kasadin. But I saw her veil slip at the church services the other day. Her face was swollen and red from the beatings she's endured. This country's treatment of women is too brutal for her. I brought her here, I have to get her out."

Steiger remained silent. There were far worse places a woman could find herself. That didn't make this one any less of a living hell.

Rukan shook himself and continued. "When Mudar holds his meetings in the Elijah Theatre, the advisors' wives go to church services a few blocks away. Can't you get us out then?"

"I'll handle it. What time does she leave for the church?"

"Eleven A.M."

"No later?"

"No."

Steiger shook his head as he continued down the alley and said to himself.

“That’s what I get for trusting that idiot! I’ll have to get in, get her and get out in time to catch our ride. What else could go wrong?” In answer to his question, several of the Prophet’s bodyguards turned the corner into the alley and immediately opened fire upon him. He pulled another grenade out and dropped it behind him. The bodyguards continued firing blindly through the billowing smoke from the grenade. As the bullets spanged all around him, he continued sprinting towards the spires of the Church of the Respite and muttered, “Get me to the church on time.”

GAME SET-UP:

Objective : Having staged a fake assassination attempt, Steiger and his team must get the Prophet’s chief advisor and his daughter out of the country. Steiger starts on foot in the marketplace. He must get to the church and obtain the daughter by turn 5. The rest of the team starts at the marketplace with the advisor and an ambulance. They must exit the board with Steiger and the daughter by turn 10.

Components: All tiles except the Mastermind Lair.
foil, Disks: Street obstacles, two trap disks, henchmen, tough guys, mastermind and vehicle disks.

Set-Up: Place the tiles so that there is the longest possible continuous road through all the tiles, in one line (7 tiles long), starting with the market place, then the casino, cathedral, generic building, govt building, agency HQ and the second generic building disks.
wheelman), Place the agent's vehicle and half the agents (including the second rounded down, in the vehicle on a roadspace furthest from the space. generic building tile. Place a random other vehicle on the same the Place the other agent's in the marketplace in the building closest cathedral.
Mix the outside obstacles with the tough guys and henchmen and randomly place on the "!" on the road spaces of each tile.
Place the vehicles in a pool off to the side.
Place the Mastermind, the foil disk and two trap disks in the cathedral.

Game Play: One of the Agent's on foot goes first (who must keep track of number of turns). They must reach the cathedral and rescue the daughter (foil)in 5 turns. They must turn over the disks in the street. If they are street obstacles, they are just

turned back over. If they are an adversary, combat takes place as usual.

On the Wheelman's turn, he must try to lose the vehicle that is following him via car chase, before he can go to the cathedral to help rescue the daughter. When a tough guy or Henchmen are turned over in the street, the other agent's in the car can attempt a ranged attack. The tough guy and henchmen will make a ranged attack against the car. Roll dice according to their attack TN level (if it is a 3S, roll 4 dice). If they roll a 3S, the tire is hit and the agent's vehicle movement is halved. If they roll a 3K, the driver is hit and the agent's vehicle comes to a halt.

Once the daughter is retrieved, all agent's must get into the agent's vehicle (or another random one) and get off the edge of the board within 10 turns. The mastermind, if not killed will automatically follow in another random vehicle.

Winning condition: The game is over once the daughter and advisor are driven off the edge of the board or 10 turns have elapsed.