

A Lime a Day Keeps Herr Doktor at Play

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by [FictionIsntReal](#)

Summary

Harry Lime led many lives, most of which would be unpalatable to a midcentury radio audience. In this lost episode, our rakishly amoral hero assists a war criminal settling into a new life in South America, causing all manner of mischief in the process.

Notes

I normally try to write something in the spirit of the source material, something that "could have" been written by the same author. Here I'm deliberately making an episode that would have never been included in the rather sanitized radio show, playing up just how awful the Harry Lime of *The Third Man* could be. At the same time, I hope the cheeky sense of humor which was appropriate to that more light-hearted fare is echoed here for a different effect.

Did I ever tell you about the time I inadvertently founded an orphanage? Oh, of course I did, how could I have forgotten. I won't bother you with that story of the blasted music boxes again. But as the wise men of the Orient say, all things must balance, although sometimes I wish they'd tell that to my checkbook. On one such occasion I had an opportunity to repair some of my finances and take a vacation in a warm, exotic place far from my creditors. Even the best con men need the occasional holiday, and any day I'm alive and free is a day worth celebrating.

The destination was in South America; the opportunity was that someone needed my help getting there, seeing as how he was wanted in Europe. I find the whole notion of "war crimes" fit for a laugh, for the whole conduct of war consists of what is otherwise a crime. This means that your war criminal is a lower class of criminal, as he hasn't gotten by his life of dishonesty honestly. But I'm not one to turn down a job, at least when I don't have any other options. The client in this case was known as Dr. Kindermörder, and the fee was a share of the gold he and an assortment of comrades had reappropriated during the war. Their agreement was that nobody was to access it until they were all accounted for. It's really heartening to hear of people animated with such solidarity and trust, at least if you're someone like me always on the lookout to take advantage.

"Ach, I am nervous, Herr Lime. Diese documents vill fool zem, ja?"

"Of course, they're made by the best forger I know. He's never done me wrong, nor I him."

That latter bit was just because one of my plans fell through before I could carry it out, but that's a story for another time. And he wasn't the best forger I knew, because I'd already burned my bridges with that one, but let's get back to the story at hand.

"Herr Lime, mein accent ist pure Prussian. Who vill believe I am Schweiss?"

"Nobody whose native language isn't German knows how a Swiss accent differs. It's all Greek to us."

As it happens, I can detect a Swiss accent, but I'm not an indifferent conscript manning a border. I also have a fondness for cuckoo clocks. As it happened, the conscripts manning the borders we passed through were indifferent and willing to believe he was an innocent Swiss, which is just as well, because in my experience indifference evaporates on a large scale once you have to start killing them. In a reasonable amount of time we arrived at our destination, whereupon I was to take my payment and my leave. And that's where things got messy.

"Nein! Standartenführer Geldstehlen ist missing, und ze bank says ve have been cleared out!"

"A shame. Who could have expected that from such an upstanding fellow. Now how are you going to pay me? I know you weren't able to bring much in the way of funds, but you'd better think of something or interested parties will know your identity and location."

The doc wracked his brains for some time before coming up with something. You see, he had been in the information extraction game. Near the end of the war, he had gotten a Soviet

agent in his hands involved in logistics for their international operations, and more specifically transporting currency to their operatives. The good doctor had exercised his discretion in not informing his superiors about everything, seeing as how a comrade of his could make use of that information and his friends could all make use of the money. Unfortunately for them and fortunately for me, they hadn't gotten the chance to benefit before needing to flee Europe, but if the Russians hadn't been burned yet, the code-phrases used to identify operatives might still be good.

"Ist das gut enough für you? Ve square, as you say, ja?"

"Well, that's an opportunity for gain in the long term, but I was hoping for a little something in the way of the short term. Can't you and your pals scrounge something together?"

"Vell, ve have begun processing cocaine, und you may have ein share of die first batch."

"Just what the doctor ordered."

As it happened, the last people I sold drugs to would be wary of my wares. As you may recall, I was facing too much heat in Tangiers to retrieve some heroin, and shipped out a parcel hiding confectioner's sugar. Good addictive stuff, but not what my former friends were expecting. If my old friends wouldn't buy, I was sure I wouldn't have too much trouble coming across someone willing to take candy from a stranger.

Before that could occur, I had another opportunity cross my path. In the local hotel popular with expats I saw someone I remembered from my travels in Europe, more specifically the eastern part of it. He had gone by the name Ilya Petrov then, though I had long suspected he worked for Soviet intelligence. After determining his room number, I invited some backup from Obersturmbannführer Wehrkeit, the comrade of Kindermörder with the most military experience, to wait just out of sight until I achieved entry. Then, in accordance with the protocol, I knocked on his door to the rhythm of the State Anthem of the USSR, and awaited his question.

"Почём опиум для народа?"

"Торг здесь неуместен."

"Получишь у Пушкина."

I'm not going to translate any of that for you listeners, because that would be giving away secrets, and I'd never do something so low. Nor will I relay the conversation we had before I gave the signal for Wehrkeit to burst in the door I'd ensured was unlocked, with a gun at Petrov's back. Anything useful he had to say could be retrieved by Kindermörder, once we transported Petrov's unconscious body via the garbage truck we'd stolen and parked outside his window. In one man's trash is another's treasure, as they say.

The next morning I swung by to see if the doctor had gotten anything other than fun out of his new friend.

"Wunderbar! He is being Bolshevik spy just as I said, ja? Und he has been so talkative with encouragement, listen!"

"AUGGGHHHHHHH! Боже мой!"

"Vell, he vill tire from das screaming, und den he ist ein great help."

"I'd think so. That's certainly one way to loosen a tongue. Pincers and tongs are another."

"I vill be using such things on das tongue later."

"You need to learn when a Yankee is telling a joke, Herr Doktor."

"Ach, my mistake."

"Well, nobody's perfect. What nuggets have you pulled out of our golden goose?"

"Der Russian tells me of no money, but he ist being ein supplier for ein partisan gruppe. Diese peasants, how you say, lying low? But in small time may become ein threat."

"A wonderful idea just occurred to me. I think I can help you endear yourself to the local authorities and ensure your safety here."

"Fantastische! You do me a favor asking nozing in return? Truly ein selfless friend!"

"Well don't go telling anybody, I have a reputation to maintain. Does he have any documents to confirm any of this activity? Reports to be sent back to HQ?"

"Ja, in ein secret compartment in his room. What für ein plan have you?"

"Don't you trust me?"

"Oh, of course I do. Auf wiedersehen!"

And I thought doctors were supposed to be smart. "Auf widersehen."

When I retrieved the documents, I couldn't make head or tail of them, and I speak every kind of Slavic dialect under the eastern sun. They had obviously been written in some kind of code just in case they fell into foul hands. Personally, I tend to wear gloves to absorb all the foul I stick my hands into, but I'm not above getting them plenty dirty when the situation demands. Having someone else do it for you is always preferable though, as long as you can rely on the sap.

"I can't understand any of these, Doc. But you can."

"I am reading in Russian, but diese words ist gobbly goop."

"Gobbledy gook is the phrase, and you've got a translation machine."

"Machine? I know not ein machine like that."

"It's red, and you operate it with pincers and tongs. Makes a lot of noise though."

"Oh, hoho. You are ein funny man, Harry Lime. I get it!"

"Yes, you go about getting it. And if there's anything useful he foolishly forgot to write, the machine just requires an input of paper and ink. Try to make sure he keeps the handwriting consistent. But don't do anything too extreme, and once you're done I'll need you to allow enough time for any evidence of your work on his body to be unnoticeable. Nobody would believe he'd have the fortitude to do anything but curl up in the fetal position if they'd known what fun games you've played."

"Much fortitude still für screaming! Listen zu recording!"

"AUGGHHHHHHH!"

"Ein hearty scream. Und has he much screams still in him! I am vishing you had been telling about das plan before, so I would not have drilled tooth. No gut material für capping!"

"Oh, I'm sure he won't mind whatever substitute you come up with. It might even look more Russian that way. Also, I'd like you to make another recording. Have Petrov tell his contacts among the partisans that he had to flee the country in a hurry, but Moscow has sent me as a replacement and they are to follow my instructions. Tell him if he doesn't give a convincing performance, or I don't return happy, you'll make sure he is very, very unhappy."

The next morning I found the good doctor had indeed translated the material into unencoded... German. I suppose it was my fault for not specifying the language. No bother. I quickly got the gist of his operations, and any gaps I could blame on him not having enough time to bring me up to speed. Taking the recording and mocking up an incriminating facsimile of instructions to his local assets (using the same encoding, only in Spanish), I went off to meet with his chief lieutenants. They were a couple of campesinos, a grizzled old farmer and his wife, the most beautiful woman I'd ever... aw, who am I kidding? You've heard that about a different woman in every one of my adventures. She was an old, undernourished and overworked peasant woman, and looked like it. But you can pretend she was Greta Garbo if it makes the story more interesting. They were initially wary despite me following their secret protocol, and the specific knowledge Petrov had passed on to me, but the recording was sufficient to bring them around. With those ducks lined up, we could proceed to the next step of the plan.

The campesinos were disheartened to hear that the same suspicion which had caused Petrov to flee meant the munitions cache needed to be relocated somewhere safer. Somewhere where I could be safely paid for it, I didn't add. I wasn't so greedy as to take everything, of course. In fact I encouraged them to keep a couple SKS carbines close at hand in their hovel. I insisted upon them that it was vital to La Revolucion that they not be taken alive to divulge any vital information, and that if any police or soldiers came to their home they should immediately shoot their way out and flee. Any police investigating the place would also find some of those aforementioned instructions and a copy of the Communist Manifesto I hid there when they weren't looking shortly before I bid goodbye so I could update Kindermörder on my progress.

"Take good care of your patient, doctor, because he needs to lead his gang of wreckers on an assassination attempt against one of your friends. A friend attempting to obtain asylum from the Church. I'm thinking St. Andrews Home for Foundlings and Orphans, run by the Little Sisters of Charity. I've inadvertently done them a good turn before, so I figure they owe me. The authorities here are well aware of what the godless communists got up to in Spain, some even have pictures of Franco in their office. When a story is just what a man likes to hear, he doesn't feel like checking too thoroughly."

"How will he do dies thing? Und you vant me zu let him go?"

"His body just needs to be found at the scene, along with some incriminating documents. Documents of the sort a friend of mine with connections will have heard you might have learned to decrypt during the war."

"Wunderbar! Und may I make ein request? I have being studying die progression of addiction during der war, und hope zu continue meinem studies on kinder."

"Children? You mean orphans? The one good thing about them is there's surplus of them. Of course I'll get you some lab rats, what are friends for? I will be expecting another round of your product for my trouble, though."

"Gratitude would allow no less. Truly ein prima kamerad!"

"Oh, stop it, I'm blushing already."

When the time came, Kindermörder drugged Petrov so he wouldn't make any trouble. Wehrkeit and I rode over to the orphanage with Petrov in the trunk. Wehrkeit could have taken out every barreled fish in the place with just his officer's Luger, but why do something if you're not going to do the best job you can? So I lent him a very distinctively Russian RPD light machine gun from my supply to make a more convincing scene. It's much faster too, and when you're living in this miraculous century, why not make use of the wonders of modern technology to allow yourself more time for living? No man on his death bed wishes he'd spent more time at work killing nuns. Unless he went to Catholic school, I suppose. But I'm rambling now. I had my own job to do, as I'd promised. Early on, Wehrkeit let a few orphans slip out, not worried that they'd be able to serve as witnesses, because I was there to rescue them in the car. Long car rides with children are tiresome, but the isolation of the orphanage meant plenty of time for Wehrkeit to do a really thorough job. Germans are sticklers about that, you know.

By the time I got back with the orphans safely in Kindermörder's hands, Wehrkeit was waiting impatiently and had a lot of rather impolite things to say about my punctuality which I won't relay to sensitive listeners. Who needs any of that unpleasantness? He was unwilling at first to plant the machine gun back in Petrov's hands, despite his drugged state, but I demonstrated how incapacitated the Russian still was by how feeble his reaction was to my pinching his nose and shouting "Wake up!" in his ear. Haha, it was actually very funny, although I suppose you just had to be there. It was the perfect opportunity for Wehrkeit to heroically bring down this dangerous man with just his pistol.

"Very good, Wehrkeit. But you know what would be an even better story? If Petrov succeeded in his mission."

"GOTT IM HIMMEL!"

Before Wehrkeit could react his chest had already been raked by the blood-stained RPD. Quickly checking that there was nobody around to see me, I placed the documents which would connect Petrov to his lieutenants on the Russian's corpse, somewhere they wouldn't get too soaked in blood. It really wouldn't do for them to be illegible and let all that work go to waste. I found out later that everything worked out just as I'd hoped: the campesino couple I'd talked to were killed while attempting to flee. Many of their neighbors were picked up and handed over to the locality's new interrogator. Most didn't know anything, but a man has to make a living. That was nice for the doctor, but I need to make a living too, so I went off looking for any parties interested in his location. Don't think too ill of me for betraying his trust, that cocaine he paid me with was cut so thin you'd get a nosebleed before you got a buzz. And just remember, he was giving such substandard stuff to children. Really, think of the children.

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