

THE LIFT DRIVER

BY LLOYD NELSON

ONE

Bevan Hoag comes back to the U.K. in the cargo hold of a RAAF transport plane. Just walking wounded really, they couldn't sit him up in a plane seat due to gun shot wounds to his right knee.

Bevan has been out in Cyprus where the British Army has the biggest polyglot mixture of Jews the world has ever seen, rounded up behind barbwire in camps, pending some solution to the exodus of world Jewry to the promised land of Palestine. It was promised by Balfour, in his famous declaration, as a Jewish homeland. The Brits have been back footing on this ever since and at the time Bevan was there it was all a huge question mark and a dreadful problem to the British Army.

Bevan has been out there with a parachute regiment. He never expected to be in the Army, he was reading languages at Cambridge when his National Service call up dropped in his letter slot. He expected to be able to weasel out of it but the Army were adamant. Report to camp in Lincolnshire they say, or else. And so it went.

After basic training he goes straight into the Para's, despite intense competition from Army Intelligence who always want language people and who have been talking closely with Bevan's Cambridge tutor.

He sees service in Yemen, Jerusalem, Belfast and was underground in Iraq for a while during the Iraq, Iran Wars inspired by old Saddam. But his main duties were in Cyprus, where the problems were so complex that it was handy for the Army to have troops versed in Greek, Turkish and of course Hebrew.

He is in the camps a lot too, which is a great training spot for a language man. Every dialect going in the sun soaked Mediterranean is spoken there. He strikes up a close friendship with a Jewish girl, later high up in the Haganah and she fills him in on what they want him to know, but of course not all of what is going on. The Jews are all headed for Jerusalem the golden and they are not going to share any intelligence that may delay this in any way.

Bevan gets his collateral damage in a mismanaged effort by the Army to round up the people re-igniting the Turk Cypriot fires. It runs on like the Provo problems in Northern Ireland. Bevan thinks that the plan was leaked, whatever he finishes up in hospital at Limmasol and several days later is on the plane home.

He is hardly out of the anaesthetic at Guys Hospital when his wife Janie blows in. Janie similarly is a top language type. They have no kids and she works for the Foreign Office. She is well salaried by U.K. standards and her land owning parents in Gloucestershire keep a benign and loving eye on her well being.

After Guys, Bevan goes back to Lincolnshire, he's well but not very mobile for a while. The Army let him out for a while on sick leave. He stays at his in-laws estate and Janie comes out on weekends.

Over the next few months Janie spends Foreign Office time at the United Nations in New York and they end up offering her a three year posting there. Quite a step up in fact. She accepts and Bevan goes over with her for a while. He hasn't anything better to do at this time while his leg is mending.

TWO

He looks around for something to do and lands a job as a lift driver in the old Woolworth's building in Manhattan. By New York standards this is quite an antiquated building, but it's well located and well regarded and a huge number of companies work out of this address. The work is easy and being in the lift (or the elevator as the Yanks term them) is like working in a beautifully panelled office.

Bevan keeps a very low profile, wears polyester trousers, shirt, tie and jumper to work. In and out to work he wears an old Burberry and cap, leans on his stick, wears big horn rimmed plain glass spectacles and aims at looking neat, down market and harmless.

Bevan thinks this is the safest way to move around this huge and somewhat dangerous city. He carries in his Burberry pocket a bit of left over ordnance, a knurled steel short club, a squirt can of nerve gas disguised as a tobacco tin and always a stun grenade, known as a flash bang, very effective things in a pinch.

The job is not devoid of interest. It pays \$7 per hour and he works 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. It's typical of the low paid work that keeps the Big Apple running. He enjoys the diversity of the languages spoken by his passengers, the fast argot of the city is perhaps the hardest to adapt to, but he soon gets used to this. Spanish is much spoken, as is German, not so much French and its American French at that.

He studies his passengers in an unobtrusive way. Manuel Sayana is one such. His office is high in the building and he always travels with a stolid and solid bodyguard at his brief case carrying elbow.

Bevan listens to all the conversations and never lets on that he understands them. There's no reason why he can't chat in any language that they use in his proximity, but his intelligence training in the field has been so intense that he never gives anything away of himself.

Another part of his training is always to watch people's eyes. They're the dead giveaway. In the Middle East the locals may be dreadfully or ethnically dressed and all look the same on the surface in the teeming flesh pots, but one glance at the eyes proves or disproves this. He has pulled people out of entry points in Jerusalem and in street checks in Cyprus and found this criteria never to be wrong. Sharpness of intellect just can't be disguised if a quick observer can see the eyes. Of course, if they're wearing shades it can go either way, but watchfulness is paramount.



THREE

Bevan judges that Manuel Sayana is very calm and quite contented with life, meaning that he has money in the bank. His bodyguard shows no spark of initiative and Bevan sums up that he earns his money by just being there, a deterrent in fact.

Sayana is quite a nice guy. Every Friday evening, rain, hail or shine, he passes Bevan a \$10 note as he leaves the lift at days end. Bevan's English soul rebels at the U.S. of A tip system, but this doesn't stop him enjoying a pint at Murphy's Bar, up the street a bit on his Friday windfall. This particular Friday evening he's bringing Sayana, bodyguard and two thirtyish women office workers down without too many stops.

It's a long weekend and most of the working world has been gone an hour earlier.

The bell dings at the 37th floor, unusual as there's only apartments on that floor. Bevan stops and trouble walks in the lift door, he's seen these guys before, probably casing their job. They're very well dressed hard men. They step in, totally, really totally ignore Bevan, as if he wasn't there. One of them shoots the bodyguard in the forehead, silenced pistol, the other puts his piece almost up Sayana's nose, the guard crashes to the floor, the women shriek and retreat to the back of the lift.

The baddies are concentrating on what they're about. Bevan dips into his Burberry pocket, it's hanging on a hook right next to him. In a millisecond flat he long arm crashes his steel club onto the shooter's temple and reverse swings it into the pistol hand of the other. The latter's gun goes off and he retracts his hand from the blow and one of the women is hit in the leg and falls to the lift floor screaming. Bevan gives the second man an almighty bash on the head and follows up with a squirt of nerve gas to both miscreants' nostrils. They're out of it for now.

The lift is yet to leave the 37th level, there's a hell of a jumble of people in it in various stages of disarray. Bevan marshals himself like a triage nurse. He pulls off his tie and tourniquets the shot girl's leg.

He speaks quickly to Sayana in Spanish argot, "quick now, there's bound to be back up, let's get the bodies out."

They haul the dazed, unconscious and the dead out into the hallway. Bevan exchanges his Burberry and cap with Sayana, removing some of his ordnance from the pocket, he takes Sayana's brief case, the latter hesitates just a fraction.

Bevan grins, "this is like Rhett Butler says in 'Gone with the Wind' quick now, it is life or death."

Sayana chuckles, "yes, I've read it. What do I do?"

Bevan gives him his stick and glasses, "get out at two, when I stop, use this key to get through the fire stairs exit. Limp away on East Street, grab a cab and get the hell away. I should be able to distract them."

Bevan just automatically knows there's bound to be back up. He gives Sayana the silenced pistol, "just point and shoot if you have to" he says.

Sayana goes quickly at two. Bevan shovels the girls out in the foyer and then just as quickly takes the lift down to the car park. A long town car is idling near the car park lift approach. A sharp looking fellow springs a pistol and crashes hard when Bevan's stun grenade envelops him. Bevan tosses

another into the car and it's starting to ignite nicely when he exits the car park, carrying Sayana's brief case.

Bevan is working on a fake green card, which he got from British Intelligence prior to coming over. He has a loose arrangement to do a bit of work for them on request, hence the card. Its main use is that it doesn't give his proper address away, always a plus in a dangerous city.

He doesn't go back into the Woolworth's building, now or later. It's all too complicated to explain and they would ship him home anyway. He takes it easy for a few days and drops quietly into Murphy's Bar the week after on a Friday night.

Murphy grins and comes over. "Your drinks are paid for" he says. "For a lift driver you seem to have highly placed friends, one of whom wants you to call him."

He gives Bevan a business card of Sayana's with a note on the back, 'this number late evening'.

They obviously want their hand tooled leather brief case back and in his spare time Bevan uses his well used Jerusalem lock pick to have a look at the contents. There are a number of contracts that seem O.K. and \$387,000 in used notes. The embassy checks these for him, all quite normal good paper money.

Next Bevan phone tracks down the shot lady to see how she is faring. She's recovering nicely from surgery and will be going home in a few days. Bevan finds the details from her on her treatment and pays off the hospital and surgeon in Sayana's cash. Tells her he will check on her later to see she's O.K.

Bevan rings Sayana, tells him of what he's done with a tad of Sayana's cash and arranges to hand him the brief case on the steps of St Patrick's next Sunday.

He checks again on the invalid, who tells him Sayana's accountant has been and has given her a substantial sum to tide her over until back at work.

"Fine" he says, "may the blessings of Saint Cecilia continue to wash over you."

"MMMn" she says, "you're Irish of course."

Some of the Provo's Bevan has shot in Belfast wouldn't agree.

FOUR

Sayana turns up in a long black town car, the driver jumps out, he's tall, be-spectacled and looks intelligent. Probably a good driver. This is Andrew, who he later gets to know very well.

Bevan declines to enter the car but hands over the doings. Andrew is a tad nervous. "We're a bit obvious here" he says.

"Bevan" Sayana says "why not come to work with me for a few months, good money, interesting work?"

"Doing what?" Bevan asks.

"Oh just to watch my back" he says, "there seems to be a job vacancy."

"I don't know much about you" Bevan says, "how can I assess the risks?"

"Oh" he says, "I'm not dead straight but all good businessmen are smiling thieves anyway. You're obviously a calculated risk taker. I can

promise you travel and a good life for say six months while I pull a few things together. It's not good to have an unprotected back."

Bevan is curious and thus finishes up checking over Sayana's existing security at his Yonkers house. Yonkers is an interesting place, Somerset



Maugham once described it as a faintly English village gone hep. The house is very well protected but his transport can do with a little work. He installs, or rather has an auto sparky install, a beam on the car so that if it ever gets hijacked, perhaps the easiest way to liquidate

someone, the beam can be activated without notice by the driver and thus indicate to his Patrone that something is amiss.

Having seen so many cars blown to a million pieces in the Middle East, any device that can send out a warning pre pick up point is, in Bevan's view, worth the expense.

The house itself is quite a show, rich, restrained rich, more Spanish than Latino. But he has, just the same, close Argentinean connections. Some of them call, arrogant looking chaps, hawk faced, very chauvinistic. They roll in by private jet to Tetborough, spend a few days at Yonkers, go shopping and to private meetings. Bevan rides close to Sayana in all this and keeps extra alert but he judges them no threat really. They are more likely to be legitimate business connections than anything else.

There are a few one day visits too, Colombians, they come triangulated by bodyguards carrying arsenals. They are strictly business, high, high security and to see them entering and leaving the airport is like seeing a really good Ranger patrol in operation. They have point and flank guards and sweep men out to the sides, very impressive. They all carry Uzi's at least and one chap, a cardboard tube, almost certainly a Laws rocket launcher. God it's impressive.

At this time the Colombians are wiping out High Court Judges, Army Officers and so on. Bevan looks askance at Sayana when he sees them lob in.

"It's purely business Bevan" Sayana says, he hesitates and then says, "but a waiting game is being played out. If one sups with the Devil one needs a long spoon. Stay sharp Bevan" he says "it's dicey just at the moment."

FIVE

Eventually things blow. They're in 5th Avenue, outside Bergdoff Goodman watching out for Andrew to arrive. As he cruises up we step off the kerb, God the beams on.

Bevan pushes Sayana back. "Run" he says. He steps out to the kerb and blasts a big hole in the passenger seat windscreen with a heavy Mannlicher pistol, someone is sitting in this seat. The rear door flies open and they try hard for Sayana with automatic weapons, probably Uzi's, but they are so focussed on Sayana and their look out man is now out of the picture that it

gives Bevan relatively easy shooting and although the Mannlicher is a heavy calibre short range weapon, he is a fine shot and nails both the shooters in seconds flat.

They get Andrew out of the car, wave a gun and stop a cab.

“Can’t move” the Cabby says.

Bevan sticks the pistol in his ear. “Along the sidewalk” he says. “Quick now” he pauses only to toss a heavy grenade into the town car and it’s burning nicely as they leave the scene. “It’ll save a lot of explaining” Bevan says, “it’s leased I hope?”

Sayana grins, “well it’s all over now” he says and doesn’t even look back at the ascending pyre which is now causing alarm and panic on this very New York street.

SIX

Janie is at this time back in Gloucestershire and London to spend a bit of time with her parents. Dad’s just turned 65, also for consultations on the state of play at the United Nations with the Foreign Office. Thus I camp in the Sayana staff quarters for a while. These, like the rest of his Yonkers set up, are very impressive. He goes about his business around New York and Bevan is always close and vigilant at hand. Sayana is a calm character and more so as he seems to think current threats have gone away.

We’re coming back from a restaurant that we’ve been dining at. Eating out is a dangerous business in some ways, a plethora of things can take your mind off what is going on just around you.

Bevan shares a table with Andrew and always eats something that can be eaten one handed with just a fork or similar, leaving his gun hand free and as it’s simple food it doesn’t need much concentration to eat, thus tonight he has been having a dish of fried rice. Andrew, under no such restraint, has been pigging out on Chateau Briand with béarnaise sauce.

As we are heading back to Yonkers, Sayana says “Bevan, we would like to buy you some casual, non Brit clothes. That is if you have no objections and similarly no objections to crossing the Pond (the Atlantic) in a small jet.”

“Fine, yes and no” Bevan replies.

Thus we go shopping next day, not anywhere cheap. Bevan never asks casual questions, but this time he says “temperature range?”

“Oh 15 to 28 degrees” Andrew says “Celsius.”

Among what they buy is Israeli cargo pants, ideal for carrying a thigh strap pistol in but quite smart too, a beautiful woollen blazer and a very upmarket sweater.

“Good to blend in” Andrew suggests. “It’s very fine wool, darkish green, also Italian deck loafers and some smart button up tops like the Colombians are wearing this year.”

We get back to Yonkers and Sayana takes Bevan down to the basement. “Ordnance” he says and opens a strong door to an Aladdin’s cave of what every assassin may need.

Bevan looks. “Custom checks” he asks?

“None” Sayana says.

Bevan shops around circumspectly and looks closely at an off length tube device.

Sayana chuckles, "the smallest Sam in this wide world" he says, "won't bring down a Huey but it will a smaller one."

Bevan selects one and they pick through the rack for the missiles to go with it.

They relax next day and don't leave the house. Evening sees them loading their gear into a discreet grey Lear jet at Tetborough and eight hours later they are wheels down at Milan Airport. A long black car swings out to the Lear. They transfer their things and within minutes are on their way to Bellagio on Lake Como.

Bellagio, it seems, has about 22 satellite villages, all with Church bells and they compete with one another at bell time. Sayana's villa there is a bit along from that of film identity George Clooney, it has wisteria covered walks to lake's edge.

Their drinking spot is a lakeside trattoria, wrought iron furniture, cobble stoned terrace, it's run by Pacio and Teresa and it sure pulls the crowd at this time of year. They spend a deal of time there, enjoying the Northern Italian cuisine and delightfully frosted Carlsberg beer, which is arguably the best beer in the wide world.

They just relax and holiday for a few days. Small excursions are made, a ferry ride across the lake to Varenna, a walk around the boardwalk there with it's fabulous views up the lake, a climb up to the castle and a leisurely lunch at the Hotel Du Lac. Then it's up to Erba markets.

Sayana buys some very good wood carvings there and they watch the mad Italian's play something like horse soccer, reputedly played only in Italy and England.

SEVEN

Bevan's never really off duty. They are at their favourite trattoria, Pacio's and Teresa's, drinking Carlsberg and watching on T.V. Italy beating the Aussies at soccer. Bevan is quietly looking at the crowd in the room, all relaxed and enjoying the balmy evening, it's the best time of the year for Lake Como. He lams Frank Mayhew, one of the best field spooks in M15.

Frank ambles over quite openly and says "perhaps a walk by the lake tomorrow, say 7 a.m."

Bevan grins and nods.

Bevan knows Frank's here but is curious to know why. It seems a quiet and harmless part of the world, at least on the surface.

"Who's that?" Sayana asks as they walk home.

"British Intelligence" Bevan says. "I'm walking by the lake with him in the morning, no idea why."

"Well it'll do no harm" Sayana says, "how do you know them?"

"Well I work for them once in a while."

"MMMn" Sayana observes, "for a low paid lift operator you have some surprising friends. Were you on a stake out at the Woolworth's building?"

"Not at all" Bevan says, "I was quite enjoying the job when your friends turned up."

Bevan walks with Mayhew. "Sayana" Frank tells him "is the least known and least intrusive of the world's arms dealers. Not to worry" Frank says, "we know you work for him, he sells almost the entire output of the Land

Mine Company who work out of the old car works at Coventry. We'd be more likely to give him protection than shoot him. Such is the Brits interests in trade balances."

"Why are you here Frank?" Bevan asks.

"Something is going on" Frank says, "we haven't the faintest idea of what is attracting big hitters to Lake Como this summer, but we're digging."

We continue to lead our harmless life at the Lake. Friday dawns and a new sense of purpose is evident. We breakfast on the old terrace, where Mussolini once was a regular. Fruit juice, cereals, hot croissants with honey and marvellous coffee, follow one another.

Sayana eyeballs Bevan, "How's the knee Bevan, will it stand a climb?"

"Surely" Bevan says, "what are we climbing?"

"Mont San Primo today is the answer, it's 2,000 metres, about ten hours up and back. Perhaps you might like to bring a stainless steel tube to lean on."

Thus warned Bevan arms up well and tucks the small Sam under his arm.

They turn up to the refuge, have a blow, note they are out of cell phone range and get onto the sheep tracks. They keep walking along the steep sheep pad, kicking aside sheep dung as they go and crest the mountain. The views of the lake and mountain are breathtaking, but of course Bevan's looking to see what's over the slope. The track dips down a bit to a hollow that will be snow filled in winter but is now dry.

Two men, one about 40 and another about 60, dressed quite ordinary, are drinking wine from plastic glasses in the hollow. They have a picnic basket with them, over a bit on the edge of the ridge are two swarthy or slightly swarthy types, perhaps followers of the prophet, are sitting talking calmly. They're about a hundred yards from the lunch party.

Sayana raises a hand in greeting, gestures Bevan back and goes down the slope. He eases against a rock and checks in his bag, screened by a rock. He fits an extra long magazine in his machine pistol and cocks it, ready to roll.

Nothing at all happens for near an hour as Sayana and Co lunch from what looks like Italian type fare and converse. One of the brownish ones springs to his feet and loops around the hollow towards Bevan. He doesn't move a muscle until he's as close as he wants him and lifts his gun.

In old Aramaic he says "another step and your Il Morte."

He stops and in the broadest of Australian accents says, "bang on Cobber. You're with the new comer."

"Yes" Bevan says, "why don't you quietly go back and sit with your hands in view."

"MMMN" he says, "I've just come over to say that company is coming up your path soon."

He turns on his heel. Bevan eases back on the rock and listens hard. Sure enough he hears noises. Slap me the driver comes along with two more men. One of whom is carrying a flat folder. They nod to Bevan as they pass.

They greet each other and sit on the ground with the other three. After an exchange of civilities, drinks in plastic mugs are passed around from another tallish bottle and they talk. Eventually the new comers open up the folder and spread it on the ground. Bevan looks forward, down, back and

gets out a single strong monocular glass from his bag. They're looking at a painting, it seem to be the only one.

They have a good look and then Bevan hears a whucker, whucker noise, a chopper is coming around the mountain. They hastily throw the rug they are sitting on over the doings and calmly go on with their discussion. The chopper flies around the peak as tourists would and Bevan eases into a split in the rock in case it erupts in bullet fire.

Nothing happens. It's bound to be British Intelligence joining forces with the C.I.A. The latter have the resources to put their inquisitive noses into anything. No doubt they are photographing events too.

Eventually the conference wraps up. Cigars are handed around, hands shaken and tiny glasses of dark port circulate.

They've now finished whatever they are doing. All of those now get on the precipitous downwards sheep track while Bevan cautiously brings up the rear.

While it's been a very pleasant outing he doesn't have a bad feeling about it at all but he balances the Sam and goes ready for instant use should another chopper turn up.

EIGHT

Next morning as they walk back from breakfast at Pacio's, Sayana says "a change of scenery late afternoon Bevan, casual dress".

They emplane at Milan Airport (about 40 miles down). Andrew runs them down, sees them on board but doesn't join them. Bevan has been warned that custom checks may apply and is armed well under his blazer with a big plastic non-detectible pistol with plastic eagle's claw shells.

They're wheels up at 4 p.m. It's light until around 10 p.m. this time of year. Bevan doesn't know where they're headed but feels it's probably North Africa, it's not a long range plane. They put down at Palermo, where attendants load up fresh fruit and vegies, cheeses and Parma ham.

A little later they pitch in at Malta. Bevan doesn't know a lot about Malta, except that the Princess Anne lives there with Tiger Tim after several very determined assassinations goes at her in England. Looking at its great geographical location, Bevan can never understand why the Krauts didn't invade it with commando canoes in the dark, instead of trying to bomb the place out.

In the pleasant dusk they are driven to the Villa Guernica, maintained on a year round basis by Sayana. It's very beautiful and very Malta. The buildings have a wonderful honey colour and are washed by light.

The Villa Guernica, confidentially facaded and with long courtyard gardens at the rear, is quite venerable but has had a deal of post war money spent on it.

The main entrance door opens into a grand hallway or vestibule/foyer and on a screen limestone wall a copy of Picasso's seminal masterpiece 'Guernica' has been reproduced beautifully in ceramic tile. Talk about a conversation stopper.

NINE

Sayana and Bevan walk along the old British dockyard wharf area in the early evening light. No one is much around. Up the harbour comes a fast moving mid size tug, very workman like and functional. Bevan makes out the name of the tug and shipping company (Liberian). It's the famous Snow Goose, once much used in North Atlantic rescues and later used to run ordnance into the vicinity of Cork by Sayana and Co.

The Brits at one time were so suspicious of this fast tug that they buzzed it in the Irish Sea and were a bit taken aback when the crew smartly pulled the covers off a German .88mm mounted on the rear deck and started cranking it this way and that. The fly boys got out quick.

The guns are still there, sheeted over and there is a strong swing derrick also on that deck. It's a marvellous boat and the nearest thing to a pocket battleship in the Med.

Andrew steers the tug expertly into a covered dock, the door closes smoothly behind it. We enter the dock.

"A very easy run from the Bosphorus", Andrew grins.

Andrew pays off some of the crew and three members take post, well armed, as an anchor watch.

We adjourn back to the Villa Guernica for a pleasant on the terrace dinner. Sayana over dinner is more forthcoming than Bevan has ever seen him.

"This is a one off Bevan" Sayana says, "anti tank and armoured car stuff. We've got it out of the Southern Russians. The customer is not one of our usuals but they've made me an offer I can't refuse. We wouldn't mind your inputs on a delivery point. The Maltese are easily induced to turn a blind eye as to what we run into the dock, but we have to transfer the stuff well away from here."

Bevan asks the individual weights of the stuff, whether the money changes hands at transfer point and so on. Searching questions.

"The money is changing hands in France this week, only the ordnance is swapped."

"MMMn" Bevan says, "put the gear on a lighter and transfer it at the Vincent Varennes' bell buoy between satellite sweep times."

And this is what they do. The bell buoy, the deepest chain anchored bell buoy in the world, is attached to the sunken aircraft carrier Vincent Varennes. The buoy simply is an Italian Navy maintained tribute to the full crew lost in deep water between Malta and North Africa when the Brit Navy put a torpedo through, midway through W.W.II.

They hook up the lighter to the chain in the dark of evening and reverse off a bit. A quick boat comes out, flashes the agreed signal. They pull alongside. It's the two darkish chaps from Mont Primo. They were also on hand at Chaminox, a day or two back, taking point on the terrace there when the money changed hands, along with a flat flax pack.

We point out that we have the .88 mm manned. Also a searchlight and having made our point pull off half a mile from the buoy.

Shortly there's a whump, whump from a huge Sea King chopper, running dark that comes in skimming the sea. They load the doings by winch,

fore and aft and in no time have cleared the lighter. The brown ones go up on the last pallets, opening the seacocks on their quick boat as they go.

The scene is cleared in no time, no traces of the transfer remain. The Med is a busy place at night. They've been in and out between satellite sweeps and are soon back in Grand Harbour at the old British dockyard.

TEN

After a few days break we fly up to Paris.

"Doubtful stuff a bit" Sayana tells us both. "I've had an approach, but perhaps not an approach from Hamas. Dicey, but I plan to have a quiet look at the deal."

It has a bad feel right from the jump and develops badly an evening or two later. We are in the mouth of a dark alley. Sayana is street side as arranged. We are leading with our chin a bit but he's near a street bin, a big one that we have had placed there by devious means by a hire bin mob half an hour earlier. He's ready to duck to that perhaps. The unexpected happens, a police car idles up to the kerb. Two Gendarmes jump out.

"Place your hands on your head" they say.

Both have automatic weapons, they're about as real as a three pound note. Bevan blasts the one on the left and Andrew knocks over the other. It's not quite so fatal as it looks. They are using short pump action shotguns, shells filled with rock salt, to disable and stop, but not kill. They flop around. Don't fire a shot. Bevan hops out of the alley and nerve gases the two men. They run through their pockets, no I.D.'s, just an ambush that didn't work out. A real police car screeches up onto the kerb, the shots have drawn attention.

Bevan now steps out from behind the bin where he has been standing undetected, opens the rear door of the cop car and throws in a mild flash bank stun grenade.

"Quick now Andrew" he says, "drive us out of the area."

They use the first cop car, which is still idling at the kerb. They get away smartly and drop the car near a metro entrance. They metro out to the end of the line at Galliani where they have a pub room organised and some spare stuff already there.

Sayana whistles up a bottle of cognac and some toasted ham sandwiches.

"Don't think Paris is healthy this time of year" he drolly remarks.

It seems he's found out what he wanted to know and nobody's been killed as a result, so there you are.

ELEVEN

Sayana tells us that some of his biggest customers are running into retaliatory troubles and that the new ones that are trying to get on his books, i.e. Hamas in France, are nothing but trouble.

"Anyway" he says, "Hamas are not going anywhere. The sniffer detection tunnels, which work like a German band, added to the huge fly trap wall the Israeli's are building will contain them more than somewhat and nobody with any brains will sell them rockets. That's why they have to use their firecrackers (the Katusha's)."

“Light gear Gentlemen” Sayana tells us next morning at breakfast. “We’ll shop our way out to Charles De Gaulle.”

Thus we start a series of pilgrimages to India. Bevan watches proceedings. Andrew comes and goes on errands and a string of well dressed and very articulate Indian’s come and go.

Bevan loves the legacies the Pom’s have left in India. English spoken perhaps better there than anywhere in the world, cricket, high tea, it’s all part of an England that has just about disappeared everywhere else.

Sayana appears to be conducting business discussions in quite a tranquil setting. As things go, we later tow a damaged freighter to Hong Kong behind the Snow Goose to the breaking yards in Hong Kong. Discharging night after night big quantities of mixed ordnance into boats at night via the freighters derricks.

Bevan is quite astonished. It appears the transport belongs to Tamil Tigers. How they are able to operate in Indian waters when the Indian Navy is as strong as is a complete mystery. Whatever brought this about Sayana is not saying a word. He’s obviously running the gravy train of all time arms wise and is keeping his secrets.

We finally get the now empty freighter to Hong Kong and Chinese bound tugs take it on from there.

From there, after shopping and sightseeing, we fuel up big and head back to Malta at good pace. It must have been a helluva deal to travel this much of the globe and to run home empty, or perhaps not empty. We rendezvous and load crates, late evening en route and after a very cautious and then smart speed in we unload these at dead of night off Dondra Head in Sri Lanka, again to Tamil Tiger’s craft.

“Cream on the cake, or perhaps cream on the icing of the cake” Sayana says and adds nothing to this.

Nevertheless, we are brought up sharp by an Indian Navy destroyer as we make our way up to Bombay. They run a fine tooth comb over us and let us go without comment.

Bevan now goes off on a mission concerning arms to Tel Aviv. He plans to pick up a El Al flight in Athens and while there Bevan takes a day tour out to Delphi, walks around the lair of the oracle in olden days, walks up to the Roman amphi theatre and around the slopes of Mt Parnassus a bit. He meets a charming American girl and gets to spend a few days with her doing Athens and out to Mykonos. She flies off. He sees her off, then is ready for business.

Bevan is enjoying a late breakfast at a street side corner, semi outside Café in Tel Aviv. He has an appointment later with a contact in the old Arab town of Jaffa, now a suburb of Tel Aviv.

He is tucking into a frothy cappuccino and some pleasant pastries and also scanning a broadsheet copy of the Paris Match, a big paper, complete with the stylised journalism common to French papers. But he is also using this as a screen. He has been shadowed since arriving in Israel but is not unduly perturbed by this. This is an antsy sort of world and logically someone will be watching his movements.

However about four tables over three Arabs are exuding a lot of Bonhomie in taking coffee and croissants with a better dressed, probably American rellie. But it’s a bit over the top and the vibes Bevan is getting from

all this are bad vibes, especially as the Arabs have been shooting him some sharp looks. He eases out his big plastic pistol from his undercoat holster to his lap. It's hidden by the Paris paper. He thinks something is going to happen and is ready to rock and roll if necessary.

While he's watching things quietly and evenly, two people beeline into the street café and sit down at his otherwise empty table. One is Hanna his old girlfriend, later Haganah of the Cyprus camp. The other is Ari Ben Yez, a mediator often seen around the camps too. Hannah gives him a peck on the cheek.

"How nice to see you Bevan" she gushes, although she is not in any way a gusher. Still good looking, very good looking, the lines of authority are graven into her face.

"You remember Ari of course" she says.

"Salud Ari" Bevan says. "You call at an inopportune time, something is about to blow in this pleasant café, sit tight."

The Arabs get up to go, the visiting member bids them farewell and resumes his seat. It's just camouflage. As the departing three head uphill from the corner there is the totally unmistakable rattle of a hand grenade on the cobbles in Bevan's direction. He feels rather than sees what is causing the vibration and in a split second fields the grenade and lobs it in the middle of the three moving up the side street.

It detonates instantly and the three go down, down on the pavement. Without looking to see the effect of the lob, Bevan sticks out his left arm, drops his pistol hand over and calls to the odd man out in broadest American (he is a linguist) "Goddam, lie on the pavement or you're dyud."

In the broadest of Brooklinese the Arab does, "don't shoot Squire, I'm down."

In two shakes Bevan, totally ignoring the traumatic effects of the grenade on the other three, has his Gucci loafers on the neck of the third man, runs his hands over him, finds only a flick knife in his sock and divests him of his wallet and papers.

"MMMn" he says, "you have a return ticket to Kennedy and a current passport. Level with me and I may get you on the midday El Al flight to Athens."

"No problems Squire" he says and does.

It proves an interesting story, it's all a Hamas set up due to them missing us in Paris. The Israeli's let him go and Bevan spends a few days with Hannah and Ari looking at this and that in the land of Zion.

He rendezvous with Sayana and Andrew back in Paris. Sayana is spreading the huge dividend of the Indian adventure.

Sayana thinks it's about time he spends a bit of time at his ranching operation in the Argentine, although Bevan wonders how Sayana will cope if he gets more than a stones throw from a good coffee shop.

Anyway, they are in a private room in a very discreet bank in a Basle side street. The money matters attended to, Sayana pushes a flax folder along the table to Bevan.

"Open it" he says. It's the Pablo Ruiz Picasso artwork he glimpsed while back on Mount Primo sometime back.

It's part of a very selective art bust carried out at the Picasso Collection in Paris a while back and it's a very good piece indeed. It's Picasso's famous portrait of Andrew Vuillard.

Sayana says, "you have done some good work for the Firm Bevan. Here is a copy of the original authorisation I have given to the men who run this bank."

It sets out shipshape and Bristol fashion and condensed, it says that on the production of a death certificate of him the painting can be collected and taken away by Bevan.

"It's a sort of superannuation fund" he says. But he also says "be very careful if you attempt to sell it back to the Museum. The French S.C.D.E. are pretty keen to retrieve it and they are not pretty to play with."

"However in this sealed envelope is the name of a Japanese industrialist who will pay telephone numbers in gold for this painting. My authorisation for him to deal and pay you for it is also attached. But bear in mind I'm authorising you, in the event of the events specified happening, to deal on it. It doesn't officially belong to me."

"How in the world" Bevan starts to ask, Sayana holds up his palm "for those with a dire need, anything at all is possible."

The three now go their separate ways. Sayana to Buenos Aires, Andrew to his home in Cape Province and Bevan returns to the U.K. and his in-law's estate in Gloucestershire.

Time ticks around. They resume their conversation in Gloucestershire in a most English pub.

Andrew says "the Brit arms makers have been bending over backward to keep him supplied, but it may be only a question of time before the high proportion of English made arms gets commented on and hard questions asked."

"By and large" he says, "business is totally booming, supply is no problem and he's making a mint."

He's living with a very nice Algerian French girl, he tells me, in a splendiferous apartment on the Avenue Foch. I shudder a bit, the Algerian connection is a big worry. They are resolute people with a foot in many camps.

"Well Andrew" I say, "I hope you don't love her, the last thing an arms dealer needs is a hostage to fortune."

"Well" he says, "we are meeting up with Sayana at the Newport Regatta this summer. We are taking the Snow Goose over. Why don't you and Janie come?"

And we do.

We take a good chef along, the Atlantic is like a millpond and we have a bit of fun with the U.S. Coastguard off Cape Hatteras. They flag us down and Andrew fires a huge flare straight up into the air from the .88 mm. Boy do they jump. We pull over and run up our colours.

The Coastguard men all arrive and board the Snow Goose. We serve them up Canapés and Gin Slings. The girls, wearing string bikinis, help serve out the food and drinks.

The Captain says, "we know a lot about you blokes."

Andrew laughs, "oh we're retired now" he says.

The Exec Officer, who up til now hasn't said a word, looks at our girls in their string bikinis, serving up good food and drinks under the awning, says "what a way to do it."