

# LEN DEIGHTON LONDON MATCH

The  
third spy  
story in Deighton's  
great trilogy  
GAME, SET and MATCH



LEN DEIGHTON

# London Match

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Len Deighton was born in London in 1929. He worked as a railway clerk before doing his National Service in the RAF as a photographer attached to the Special Investigation Branch.

After his discharge in 1949, he went to art school – first to the St Martin's School of Art, and then to the Royal College of Art on a scholarship. It was while working as a waiter in the evenings that he developed an interest in cookery – a subject he was later to make his own in an animated strip for the *Observer* and in two cookery books. He worked for a while as an illustrator in New York and as art director of an advertising agency in London.

Deciding it was time to settle down, Deighton moved to the Dordogne where he started work on his first book, *The Ipcress File*. Published in 1962, the book was an immediate and spectacular success. Since then he has written twenty-two books of fiction and non-fiction – including spy stories, and highly-researched war novels and histories – all of which have appeared to international acclaim.

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*Basic French Cooking* (revised and enlarged  
from *Où est le Garlic?*)

# I

'Cheer up, Werner. It will soon be Christmas,' I said.

I shook the bottle, dividing the last drips of whisky between the two white plastic cups that were balanced on the car radio. I pushed the empty bottle under the seat. The smell of the whisky was strong. I must have spilled some on the heater or on the warm leather that encased the radio. I thought Werner would decline it. He wasn't a drinker and he'd had far too much already, but Berlin winter nights are cold and Werner swallowed his whisky in one gulp and coughed. Then he crushed the cup in his big muscular hands and sorted through the bent and broken pieces so that he could fit them all into the ashtray. Werner's wife Zena was obsessively tidy and this was her car.

'People are still arriving,' said Werner as a black Mercedes limousine drew up. Its headlights made dazzling reflections in the glass and paintwork of the parked cars and glinted on the frosty surface of the road. The chauffeur hurried to open the door and eight or nine people got out. The men wore dark cashmere coats over their evening suits, and the women a menagerie of furs. Here in Berlin Wannsee, where furs and cashmere are everyday clothes, they are called the Hautevolee and there are plenty of them.

'What are you waiting for? Let's barge right in and arrest him now.' Werner's words were just slightly slurred and he grinned to acknowledge his condition. Although I'd known Werner since we were kids at school, I'd seldom seen him drunk, or even tipsy as he was now. Tomorrow he'd have a hangover, tomorrow he'd blame me, and so would his wife,

Zena. For that and other reasons, tomorrow, early, would be a good time to leave Berlin.

The house in Wannsee was big; an ugly clutter of enlargements and extensions, balconies, sun deck and penthouse almost hid the original building. It was built on a ridge that provided its rear terrace with a view across the forest to the black waters of the lake. Now the terrace was empty, the garden furniture stacked, and the awnings rolled up tight, but the house was blazing with lights and along the front garden the bare trees had been garlanded with hundreds of tiny white bulbs like electronic blossom.

'The BfV man knows his job,' I said. 'He'll come and tell us when the contact has been made.'

'The contact won't come here. Do you think Moscow doesn't know we have a defector in London spilling his guts to us? They'll have warned their network by now.'

'Not necessarily,' I said. I denied his contention for the hundredth time and didn't doubt we'd soon be having the same exchange again. Werner was forty years old, just a few weeks older than I was, but he worried like an old woman and that put me on edge too. 'Even his failure to come could provide a chance to identify him,' I said. 'We have two plainclothes cops checking everyone who arrives tonight, and the office has a copy of the invitation list.'

'That's if the contact is a guest,' said Werner.

'The staff are checked too.'

'The contact will be an outsider,' said Werner. 'He wouldn't be *dumm* enough to give us his contact on a plate.'

'I know.'

'Shall we go inside the house again?' suggested Werner. 'I get a cramp these days sitting in little cars.'

I opened the door and got out.

Werner closed his car door gently; it's a habit that comes with years of surveillance work. This exclusive suburb was mostly villas amid woodland and water, and quiet enough for me to hear the sound of heavy trucks pulling into the Border Controlpoint at Drewitz to begin the long haul down the

autobahn that went through the Democratic Republic to West Germany. 'It will snow tonight,' I predicted.

Werner gave no sign of having heard me. 'Look at all that wealth,' he said, waving an arm and almost losing his balance on the ice that had formed in the gutter. As far as we could see along it, the whole street was like a parking lot, or rather like a car showroom, for the cars were almost without exception glossy, new, and expensive. Five-litre V-8 Mercedes with car-phone antennas and turbo Porsches and big Ferraris and three or four Rolls-Royces. The registration plates showed how far people will travel to such a lavish party. Businessmen from Hamburg, bankers from Frankfurt, film people from Munich, and well-paid officials from Bonn. Some cars were perched high on the pavement to make room for others to be double-parked alongside them. We passed a couple of cops who were wandering between the long lines of cars, checking the registration plates and admiring the paintwork. In the driveway - stamping their feet against the cold - were two *Parkwächter* who would park the cars of guests unfortunate enough to be without a chauffeur. Werner went up the icy slope of the driveway with arms extended to help him balance. He wobbled like an overfed penguin.

Despite all the double-glazed windows, closed tight against the cold of a Berlin night, there came from the house the faint syrupy whirl of Johann Strauss played by a twenty-piece orchestra. It was like drowning in a thick strawberry milk shake.

A servant opened the door for us and another took our coats. One of our people was immediately inside, standing next to the butler. He gave no sign of recognition as we entered the flower-bedecked entrance hall. Werner smoothed his silk evening jacket self-consciously and tugged the ends of his bow tie as he caught a glimpse of himself in the gold-framed mirror that covered the wall. Werner's suit was a hand-stitched custom-made silk one from Berlin's most exclusive tailors, but on Werner's thickset figure all suits looked rented.

Standing at the foot of the elaborate staircase there were



two elderly men in stiff high collars and well-tailored evening suits that made no concessions to modern styling. They were smoking large cigars and talking with their heads close together because of the loudness of the orchestra in the ball-room beyond. One of the men stared at us but went on talking as if we weren't visible to him. We didn't seem right for such a gathering, but he looked away, no doubt thinking we were two heavies hired to protect the silver.

Until 1945 the house – or *Villa*, as such local mansions are known – had belonged to a man who began his career as a minor official with the Nazi farmers organization – and it was by chance that his department was given the task of deciding which farmers and agricultural workers were so indispensable to the economy that they would be exempt from service with the military forces. But from that time onwards – like other bureaucrats before and since – he was showered with gifts and opportunities and lived in high style, as his house bore witness.

For some years after the war the house was used as transit accommodation for US Army truck drivers. Only recently had it become a family house once more. The panelling, which so obviously dated back to the original nineteenth-century building, had been carefully repaired and reinstated, but now the oak was painted light grey. A huge painting of a soldier on a horse dominated the wall facing the stairs and on all sides there were carefully arranged displays of fresh flowers. But despite all the careful refurbishing, it was the floor of the entrance hall that attracted the eye. The floor was a complex pattern of black, white and red marble, a plain white central disc of newer marble having replaced a large gold swastika.

Werner pushed open a plain door secreted into the panelling and I followed him along a bleak corridor designed for the inconspicuous movement of servants. At the end of the passage there was a pantry. Clean linen cloths were arranged on a shelf, a dozen empty champagne bottles were inverted to drain in the sink and the waste bin was filled with the remains of sandwiches, discarded parsley, and some broken

glass. A white-coated waiter arrived carrying a large silver tray of dirty glasses. He emptied them, put them into the service elevator together with the empty bottles, wiped the tray with a cloth from under the sink, and then departed without even glancing at either of us.

'There he is, near the bar,' said Werner, holding open the door so we could look across the crowded dance floor. There was a crush around the tables where two men in chef's whites dispensed a dozen different sorts of sausages and foaming tankards of strong beer. Emerging from the scrum with food and drink was the man who was to be detained.

'I hope like hell we've got this right,' I said. The man was not just a run-of-the-mill bureaucrat; he was the private secretary to a senior member of the Bonn parliament.

I said, 'If he digs his heels in and denies everything, I'm not sure we'll be able to make it stick.'

I looked at the suspect carefully, trying to guess how he'd take it. He was a small man with crew-cut hair and a neat Vandyke beard. There was something uniquely German about that combination. Even amongst the over-dressed Berlin social set his appearance was flashy. His jacket had wide silk-faced lapels, and silk also edged his jacket, cuffs and trouser seams. The ends of his bow tie were tucked under his collar and he wore a black silk handkerchief in his top pocket.

'He looks much younger than thirty-two, doesn't he?' said Werner.

'You can't rely on those computer printouts, especially with listed civil servants or even members of the Bundestag. They were all put onto the computer when it was installed, by copy typists working long hours of overtime to make a bit of spare cash.'

'What do you think?' said Werner.

'I don't like the look of him,' I said.

'He's guilty,' said Werner. He had no more information than I did, but he was trying to reassure me.

'But the uncorroborated word of a defector such as Stinnes won't cut much ice in an open court, even if London will let Stinnes go into a court. If this fellow's boss stands by him

and they both scream blue murder, he might get away with it.'

'When do we take him, Bernie?'

'Maybe his contact will come here,' I said. It was an excuse for delay.

'He'd have to be a real beginner, Bernie. Just one look at this place – lit up like a Christmas tree, cops outside, and no room to move – no one with any experience would risk coming into a place like this.'

'Perhaps they won't be expecting problems,' I said optimistically.

'Moscow know Stinnes is missing and they've had plenty of time to alert their networks. And anyone with experience will smell this stakeout when they park outside.'

'He didn't smell it,' I said, nodding to our crew-cut man as he swigged at his beer and engaged a fellow guest in conversation.

'Moscow can't send a source like him away to their training school,' said Werner. 'But that's why you can be quite certain that his contact will be Moscow-trained: and that means wary. You might as well arrest him now.'

'We say nothing; we arrest no one,' I told him once again. 'German security are doing this one; he's simply being detained for questioning. We stand by and see how it goes.'

'Let me do it, Bernie.' Werner Volkmann was a Berliner by birth. I'd come to school here as a young child, my German was just as authentic as his, but because I was English, Werner was determined to hang on to the conceit that his German was in some magic way more authentic than mine. I suppose I would feel the same way about any German who spoke perfect London-accented English, so I didn't argue about it.

'I don't want him to know any non-German service is involved. If he tumbles to who we are, he'll know Stinnes is in London.'

'They know already, Bernie. They must know where he is by now.'

'Stinnes has got enough troubles without a KGB hit squad searching for him.'

Werner was looking at the dancers and smiling to himself as if at some secret joke, the way people sometimes do when they've had too much to drink. His face was still tanned from his time in Mexico and his teeth were white and perfect. He looked almost handsome despite the lumpy fit of his suit. 'It's like a Hollywood movie,' he said.

'Yes,' I said. 'The budget's too big for television.' The ballroom was crowded with elegant couples, all wearing the sort of clothes that would have looked all right for a ball at the turn of the century. And the guests weren't the desiccated old fogies I was expecting to see at this fiftieth birthday party for a manufacturer of dishwashers. There were plenty of richly clad young people whirling to the music of another time in another town. *Kaiserstadt* - isn't that what Vienna was called at a time when there was only one Emperor in Europe and only one capital for him?

It was the makeup and the hair-dos that sounded the jarring note of modernity, that and the gun I could see bulging under Werner's beautiful silk jacket. I suppose that's what was making it so tight across the chest.

The white-coated waiter returned with another big tray of glasses. Some of the glasses were not empty. There was the sudden smell of alcohol as he tipped cherries, olives, and abandoned drinks into the warm water of the sink before putting the glasses into the service lift. Then he turned to Werner and said respectfully, 'They've arrested the contact, sir. Went to the car just as you said.' He wiped the empty tray with a cloth.

'What's all this, Werner?' I said.

The waiter looked at me and then at Werner and, when Werner nodded assent, said, 'The contact went to the suspect's parked car . . . a woman at least forty years old, maybe older. She had a key that fitted the car door. She unlocked the glove compartment and took an envelope. We've taken her into custody but the envelope has not yet been opened. The captain wants to know if he should take the woman back to the office or hold her here in the panel truck for you to talk to.'

The music stopped and the dancers applauded. Somewhere on the far side of the ballroom a man was heard singing an old country song. He stopped, embarrassed, and there was laughter.

'Has she given a Berlin address?'

'Kreuzberg. An apartment house near the Landwehr Canal.'

'Tell your captain to take the woman to the apartment. Search it and hold her there. Phone here to confirm that she's given the correct address and we'll come along later to talk to her,' I said. 'Don't let her make any phone calls. Make sure the envelope remains unopened; we know what's in it. I'll want it as evidence, so don't let everybody maul it about.'

'Yes, sir,' said the waiter and departed, picking his way across the dance floor as the dancers walked off it.

'Why didn't you tell me he was one of our people?' I asked Werner.

Werner giggled. 'You should have seen your face.'

'You're drunk, Werner,' I said.

'You didn't even recognize a plainclothes cop. What's happening to you, Bernie?'

'I should have guessed. They always have them clearing away the dirty dishes; a cop doesn't know enough about food and wine to serve anything.'

'You didn't think it was worth watching his car, did you?'

He was beginning to irritate me. I said, 'If I had your kind of money, I wouldn't be dragging around with a lot of cops and security men.'

'What would you be doing?'

'With money? If I didn't have the kids, I'd find some little pension in Tuscany, somewhere not too far from the beach.'

'Admit it; you didn't think it was worth watching his car, did you?'

'You're a genius.'

'No need for sarcasm,' said Werner. 'You've got him now. Without me you would have ended up with egg on your face.' He burped very softly, holding a hand over his mouth.

'Yes, Werner,' I said.

'Let's go and arrest the bastard . . . I had a feeling about that car – the way he locked the doors and then looked round like someone might be waiting there.' There had always been a didactic side to Werner; he should have been a school-teacher, as his mother wanted.

'You're a drunken fool, Werner,' I said.

'Shall I go and arrest him?'

'Go and breathe all over him,' I said.

Werner smiled. Werner had proved what a brilliant field agent he could be. Werner was very very happy.

He made a fuss of course. He wanted his lawyer and wanted to talk to his boss and to some friend of his in the government. I knew the type only too well; he was treating us as if *we'd* been caught stealing secrets for the Russians. He was still protesting when he departed with the arrest team. They were not impressed; they'd seen it all before. They were experienced men, brought in from the BfV's 'political office' in Bonn.

They took him to the BfV office in Spandau, but I decided they'd get nothing but indignation out of him that night. Tomorrow perhaps he'd simmer down a little and get nervous enough to say something worth hearing before the time came when they'd have to charge him or release him. Luckily it was a decision I wouldn't have to make. Meanwhile, I decided to go and see if there was anything to be got out of the woman.

Werner drove. He didn't speak much on the journey back to Kreuzberg. I stared out of the window. Berlin is a sort of history book of twentieth-century violence, and every street corner brought a recollection of something I'd heard, seen, or read. We followed the road alongside the Landwehr Canal, which twists and turns through the heart of the city. Its oily water holds many dark secrets. Back in 1919, when the Spartakists attempted to seize the city by an armed uprising, two officers of the Horse Guards took the badly beaten Rosa Luxemburg – a Communist leader – from their headquarters at the Eden Hotel, next to the Zoo, shot her dead and threw

her into the canal. The officers pretended that she'd been carried off by angry rioters, but four months later her bloated corpse floated up and got jammed into a lock gate. Now, in East Berlin, they name streets after her.

But not all the ghosts go *into* this canal. In February 1920 a police sergeant pulled a young woman out of the canal at the Bendler Bridge. Taken to the Elisabeth Hospital in Lützowstrasse, she was later identified as the Grand Duchess Anastasia, the youngest daughter of the last Czar of All the Russias and only survivor of the massacre.

'This is it,' said Werner, pulling in to the kerb. 'Good job there's a cop on the door, or we'd come back to find the car stripped to the chassis.'

The address the contact had given was a shabby nineteenth-century tenement in a neighbourhood virtually taken over by Turkish immigrants. The once imposing grey stone entrance, still pitted with splinter damage from the war, was defaced by brightly coloured graffiti sprays. Inside the gloomy hallway there was a smell of spicy food and dirt and disinfectant.

These old houses have no numbered apartments, but we found the BfV men at the very top. There were two security locks on the door, but not much sign of anything inside to protect. Two men were still searching the hallway when we arrived. They were tapping the walls, prizing up floorboards, and poking screwdrivers deep into the plaster with that sort of inscrutable delight that comes to men blessed by governmental authority to be destructive.

It was typical of the overnight places the KGB provided for the faithful. Top floors: cold, cramped and cheap. Perhaps they chose these sleazy accommodations to remind all concerned about the plight of the poor in the capitalist economy. Or perhaps in this sort of district there were fewer questions asked about comings and goings by all kinds of people at all kinds of hours.

No TV, no radio, no soft seats. Iron bedstead with an old grey blanket, four wooden chairs, a small plastic-topped table and upon it black bread roughly sliced, electric ring, dented kettle, tinned milk, dried coffee, and some sugar cubes

wrapped to show they were from a Hilton hotel. There were three dog-eared German paperback books – Dickens, Schiller, and a collection of crossword puzzles, mostly completed. On one of the two single beds a small case was opened and its contents displayed. It was obviously the woman's baggage: a cheap black dress, nylon underwear, low-heeled leather shoes, an apple and orange, and an English newspaper – the *Socialist Worker*.

A young BfV officer was waiting for me there. We exchanged greetings and he told me the woman had been given no more than a brief preliminary questioning. She'd offered to make a statement at first and then said she wouldn't, the officer said. He'd sent a man to get a typewriter so it could be taken down if she changed her mind again. He handed me some Westmarks, a driving licence, and a passport; the contents of her handbag. The licence and passport were British.

'I've got a pocket recorder,' I told him without lowering my voice. 'We'll sort out what to type and have it signed after I've spoken with her. I'll want you to witness her signature.'

The woman was seated in the tiny kitchen. There were dirty cups on the table and some hairpins that I guessed had come from a search of the handbag she now held on her lap.

'The captain tells me that you want to make a statement,' I said in English.

'Are you English?' she said. She looked at me and then at Werner. She showed no great surprise that we were both in dinner suits complete with fancy cuff links and patent-leather shoes. She must have realized we'd been on duty inside the house.

'Yes,' I said. I signalled with my hand to tell Werner to leave the room.

'Are you in charge?' she asked. She had the exaggerated upper-class accent that shop girls use in Knightsbridge boutiques. 'I want to know what I'm charged with. I warn you I know my rights. Am I under arrest?'

From the side table I picked up the bread knife and waved it at her. 'Under Law 43 of the Allied Military Government legislation, still in force in this city, possession of this bread



knife is an offence for which the death sentence can be imposed.'

'You must be mad,' she said. 'The war was almost forty years ago.'

I put the knife into a drawer and slammed it shut. She was startled by the sound. I moved a kitchen chair and sat on it so that I was facing her at a distance of only a yard or so. 'You're not in Germany,' I told her. 'This is Berlin. And Decree 511, ratified in 1951, includes a clause that makes information gathering an offence for which you can get ten years in prison. Not spying, not intelligence work, just collecting information is an offence.'

I put her passport on the table and turned the pages as if reading her name and occupation for the first time. 'So don't talk to me about knowing your rights; you've got no rights.'

From the passport I read aloud: 'Carol Elvira Miller, born in London 1930, occupation: schoolteacher.' Then I looked up at her. She returned my gaze with the calm, flat stare that the camera had recorded for her passport. Her hair was straight and short in pageboy style. She had clear blue eyes and a pointed nose, and the pert expression came naturally to her. She'd been pretty once, but now she was thin and drawn and – in dark conservative clothes and with no trace of makeup – well on the way to looking like a frail old woman. 'Elvira. That's a German name, isn't it?'

She showed no sign of fear. She brightened as women so often do at personal talk. 'It's Spanish. Mozart used it in *Don Giovanni*.'

I nodded. 'And Miller?'

She smiled nervously. She was not frightened, but it was the smile of someone who wanted to seem cooperative. My hectoring little speech had done the trick. 'My father is German . . . was German. From Leipzig. He emigrated to England long before Hitler's time. My mother is English . . . from Newcastle,' she added after a long pause.

'Married?'

'My husband died nearly ten years ago. His name was Johnson, but I went back to using my family name.'