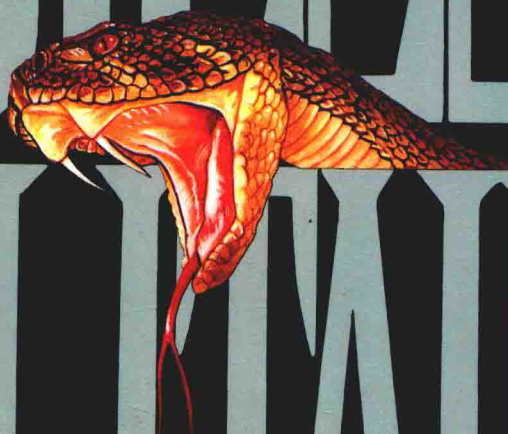


# QUILLER SOLITAIRE



By the author of **QUILLER BAMBOO**

# ADAM HALL



# *Quiller Solitaire*

*Adam Hall*

William Morrow and Company, Inc.  
New York

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The title 'Quiller Solitaire' is written in a bold, italicized serif font. The text is positioned between four parallel diagonal lines that slant upwards from left to right. The lines are black and have a consistent thickness. The text is centered horizontally between the lines.

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The Striker Portfolio  
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Bury Him Among Kings  
Night Stop  
Blue Jay Summer  
The Theta Syndrome  
The Sibling  
The Damocles Sword  
The Penthouse  
Deathwatch

**For  
Dale and Sally**

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# *Hit,*

## *Chapter 1*

**I** dropped the bundle onto the desk and pulled the string and opened up the crumpled newspaper and Tilney stood looking down at the stuff I'd brought in, the two blackened number plates, wristwatch, bunch of keys, ring, metal cigarette lighter, the upper jawbone, the lower one, while the reek of burned flesh began filling the little room, sickening me, sickening him too, I would imagine, Tilney, looking down at the stuff and then bringing his head up.

"That's all?"

"That's all."

"What does he look like?"

"Cinder."

It was cold in here, or it felt like it. I shrugged a bit deeper into my coat.

"Nothing recognizable?" Tilney asked.

I gave him a dead stare. "The object of the exercise," I said, "was to remove all traces of his identity. I did that."

I suppose I would have put it differently if the rage hadn't been in me, burning in me like that bloody car, burning half the night out there among the trees.

In a moment: "Have you had any sleep?"

He'd caught my tone, the far faint echo of the rage. Others wouldn't have noticed.

"No. I had to watch over things." A vigil over the dead, you could call it, but let's not be too dramatic.

"You could have phoned for someone."

"I didn't want anyone out there." It would have meant headlights arriving and everything, attracting attention. Things had been bad enough with the fire, though nobody had come running: last night was the Fifth of November, with bonfires all over the countryside. Trust McCane to get himself blown into Christendom on Guy Fawkes Night.

Tilney wrapped the things up in the newspaper again and jotted a note on a pad and said, "Let's go along to my room, shall we? We need to debrief, then you'd better get some sleep."

The clock on the wall said 6:21. There was still dark in the windows.

In the corridor I asked Tilney, "Who was running him?"

"Shatner. But there's no actual mission on the board."

"Is he in yet?"

"Yes." Tilney was giving me quick sidelong glances, still catching things in my tone. I couldn't do anything about that. "They got him on the phone when your signal came in, and he—"

"I want to see him."

Tilney broke his step and looked at me directly and said, "You can, eventually, but first I'm going to debrief you on McCane's death." He opened his door and waited for me to go through. Tilney has been known to put you in your place less gently than that, but he wanted to humor me, I think. He didn't know what was on my mind, why my control was so thin; I'd seen people killed before, and he knew that. "Take a pew," he said, and got behind his desk, pushing some stuff to one side. "Spot of tea?"

"No."

He got a tape recorder from a drawer and set it going. "So what happened?"

I still felt cold, though the radiators were on: you could hear the water gurgling in the pipes. "He phoned me in my car. He said he was going to Reigate, and asked me if I wanted to follow him up."

Tilney watched me, not looking away much, a thin man