

Bitch-Slapping Stalin

Jason Shannon



Olive Yang¹



Kawashima Yoshiko²

Yang and Yoshiko are my dynamic duo of crossdressing, possibly genderqueer, possibly trans, definitely gritty antiheroes, based upon the real historical queer pioneers Olive Yang (1927-2017), and Kawashima Yoshiko (1907-1948). Olive Yang (born Yang Kyin Hsiu, also known by the aliases Miss Hairy Legs, Two-Gun Mulan), a nobleman's daughter from Burma's Kokang region, founded a drug empire in the Golden Triangle, spied for the CIA, ran afoul of various cartel networks and the Burmese state, served multiple stints in prison, and dated the hottest actresses in Burma. Kawashima Yoshiko (born Aisin-Gioro Xianyu, also known by the male name Ryōsuke, and the alias Eastern Jewel), a Manchurian princess, was caught up in Japanese ultranationalist schemes, spied and honeypotted for Japanese military intelligence, commanded troops in battle while dressed in men's fatigues, and may have been tied in with the Black Dragon Society. Officially, Yoshiko was executed in 1948, aged forty, though rumours of their death being faked persisted. In my world, the Dragons were responsible for the faked execution, Yoshiko befriended Olive shortly thereafter, and went on to become Olive's closest confidante, and *consigliere*.

All the books in this series are designed as standalones, but to illuminate for the reader the road thus far:

1914: *Stalin's a Whore* (short story)

Pre-revolutionary Joseph Stalin escapes Siberian exile wearing lacy lingerie. Neither Olive nor Yoshiko appear.

1935: *Bitch-Slapping Stalin* (short story)

Yoshiko (28), spying for Japanese intelligence, obtains incriminating pictures on Joseph Stalin. Olive does not appear.

1945: *The Pattaya Gambit* (Short Story)

In the party district of Pattaya, Thailand, Olive (18) tries to run a smuggling scheme during a vacation weekend with their girlfriend. Yoshiko does not appear.

1947: *Taming the Laser Leopard* (novelette)

Arranged marriage of Olive (20). Yoshiko referenced, but does not appear.

1948: *Tiger Blues*

Olive (21) and Yoshiko (40) meet, undertake a dangerous mission in Tibet to keep a doomsday weapon from the Maoists.

¹ Yang family private collection, dated 1956. Paluch, pp 121. Photo enhanced.

² Kamisaka, cover image. Photo enhanced.



The so-called Man of Steel is handcuffed, wrists and ankles, to a rack, dressed head to toe in skin-tight black leather. There are cutouts in the leather for the nipples, genitals, and posterior, and, thankfully for me, the face. His bushy moustache twitches. His undergarments have been stuffed into his mouth. His nipples, pierced, have chains clipped to the rings, pulling the tender flesh. A metal rod is inserted into the urethra, and his lover, a three-hundred-pound, six-foot-eight Siberian elk herder named Vlad, is lubricating his meaty hand with petroleum jelly.

It's not the most elaborate scene I've witnessed, but it's possibly in the top five.

I furiously snap pictures with my miniature, cigarette case-sized camera. This thing is the newest tech from the Ministry, its existence fiercely guarded from the prying eyes of the Russkies, Brits, and Americans. All I need do is slide it along its spring, and it silently snaps up to one hundred photographs.

I'm standing atop a dresser, shoeless, in a boudoir next to Uncle Joe's private room, observing the kinky scene through eye holes, cut out of a painting of Catherine the Great in that room. According to our intel, this spying device was installed by Trotsky some fifteen years before, to keep tabs on his rival, and the NKVD has yet to learn of its existence.

"Oh, yes, Koba, smile for the camera, baby," I mutter in the faintest of whispers.

Some part of me feels a twinge of guilt. Tōkyō will be most pleased with this, and they will readily use it at the most opportune moment, blackmailing the Soviet dictator perhaps for the liberation of the Evenki, or Buryats, or Japanese protectorship for Tuva. Or perhaps one of his many rivals might be induced with these pictures to usher Uncle Joe out of office.

But are there not incriminating pictures of me out there in the same fashion? Well, perhaps not the *same* fashion – but embarrassing stuff Cousin Puyi's court in Xinjing might not look too kindly upon. Certainly I've never been presented with such pictures, but I shan't say they for certainty don't exist.

I, however, shall never sit the throne, whereas Uncle Joe despotically controls a fifth of the world (never mind that I'd probably laugh in the face of anyone who came to me with pictures of my so-called misdeeds).

A red tab on my camera pops up. The film roll is full. Very carefully, I slide the small device down from the wall, slip it into my pocket, and slide back into place the hidden door. Hopefully neither the Man of Steel, nor Vlad the Impaler noticed my eyes disappear from Catherine's face, before the painting's own clicked back into place.

I climb down from the dresser, grope for my shoes. It's pitch black in here, the lights intentionally left off to avoid a backlight.

Clicking open the bedroom door, I poke my head out. I'm not meant to be in this section of the Kremlin. It's all bedrooms, and garishly ornate hallways here. No sign of guards. I tip-toe out, silently shutting the door behind me. A plush carpet masks my footfalls as I scurry away, in the opposite direction of this secret bed chamber of Uncle Joe.

I sneak around a corner, and immediately see two Soviet guards on patrol. Before they spot

me, I duck back, look to and fro, then, hearing their footsteps, quickly disappear through the nearest door.

It's a ladies lavatory. Shit, I think, looking down at my attire. Hearing a soft voice from a powder station down the way, I scramble for one of the private rooms, collapsing onto the commode in a huff. I can hear women's voices outside the door.

By Amaterasu, Tada-*sama* is going to get me killed. My heart is hammering. Carefully, silently, I activate the release switch on the camera, and remove the roll of microfilm. If I'm caught with either the camera or the film on me, it will not bode well for Japan or Manchukuo – especially with what's on this film.

The roll is self-sealed. While voices chatter outside the door, I unbuckle my trousers, and pop the microfilm into my mouth to moisten it. Then, squatting, I insert the thing. I'm unlikely to be searched if caught – I have diplomatic credentials – but better safe than sorry.

I hear the lavatory door open, and the chatting Russian women leave. Quickly, I twist the mechanism on the camera, and watch a puff of smoke sizzle out. It self-destructs in my hands, and I crumple what's left before dropping it in the commode and flushing.

I buckle my belt, slink out, and return to the corridor. By now, the Soviet guards have passed.

Okay, enough with this sleuthing around. Oh, what's that officer? I had too much vodka and got lost looking for the pisser. Walk with confidence. They're not going to rubber glove me because I wandered into the wrong hallway.

Despite these words I tell myself, when I reach the next corner, I peer covertly past the Soviet flag to ensure the coast is clear.

Five minutes later, I'm back in the main banquet hall. Dazzling chandeliers twinkle overhead. White pillars and brilliant crown moulding envelop the space. Exquisite oil paintings of Peter the Great, Ivan the Terrible, and Saint Lenin. No paintings of the late Romanov children.

More than two hundred men and women are scattered throughout, plus a retinue of waiters and bartenders and other staff. The guests are dressed in their most exquisite finery – Italian suits, French gowns, some generals and admirals in ceremonial uniforms. Hair has been curled, faces powdered, moustaches sculpted with wax.

I arrive at the bar, sit on the stool. I immediately feel the roll of microfilm, but ignore it. The bartender scurries my way, bows respectfully. I notice a fine Taketseru scotch on the shelf, but I shouldn't go for it. That would be a tell.

"Stolichnaya, Comrade."

"Coming right up, Comrade."

The man chisels off some ice and clinks it into a crystal glass, before filling it copiously with vodka.

Munkhbaatar, seeing me at the bar, hurries my way.

He has with him a glass of fermented mare's milk, which the Russians have prepared in the traditional style for their honoured guests. Bringing the glass to his lips, he whispers, "Did you find the lavatory, Comrade?"

He's speaking behind the glass to stop any NKVD plants from lip-reading.

I bring my own vodka to my lips and say, "That's need to know, Comrade."

Munkhbaatar may style himself a patriot, and has demonstrated his *bona fides* more than once, but Tōkyō does not yet trust him completely. Assistant commissar for Dornod province in Mongolia's far east, he hates the communists with a passion, and thinks Japan is a far better protector of Mongolian independence than Russia. It's because of him that this mission is happening; he's the one to have had my name added to the roster. As far as our hosts are concerned, I'm his junior secretary.

Across the way I see the prime minister, P. Genden, chatting with Council Chairman Molotov. Genden is dressed in a ceremonial Mongolian robe, what they call a *deel*. Two of his advisors, and his wife, are dressed similarly. Our intelligence suggests he was advised to go with something less nationalistic – indeed, Munkhbaatar himself, and most of the other commissars and apparatchiks, are wearing military-style tunics favoured by Russian elites – yet Genden is drawing a line in the sand. He does not want Mongolia to become just another Russian oblast. He is not like his rival, Premier Choibalsan.

Molotov checks his pocket watch for the third time in as many minutes. Clearly looking for his commander-in-chief, who's a little tied up at the moment.

Munkhbaatar munches on a cracker with some eggplant ikra, then goes to dab at his mouth with a napkin. He motions with his eyes. "Nine o'clock. Blondie. I believe you know her."

He's using the royal you here, referring to my government. I swivel my head nonchalantly to check it out.

Shit. I do know her. Personally.

Stationed for three years at the Soviet consulate in Kyōtō, the blonde Polina had a diplomatic passport, and, on the records submitted to Tōkyō, was a secretary for a Party functionary, though, thanks to my work, was revealed to be a hardliner NKVD agent, siphoning off classified documents in her expansive blouse, and wiring them back to Moscow outside the consulate. Tōkyō now has a file on Polina V. V. as thick as a phone book, and she was expelled from the Empire in '31, whereupon she, given her uniform tonight, appears to have been knocked down a few pegs to the rank of common security guard. She probably has a burning hatred for me, not just because I exposed and shamed her, but because I'd kind of implied we'd run off to Brazil together.

I sometimes look back and wonder if not going was the right decision.

Instead I had Polina shipped back to the icy wastes of Mother Russia, alone. If she recognizes me...

She probably won't. I'd worn a dress back then, and a wig, and I played the coquette. Still, I should avoid those green eyes.

It's a den of thieves in here. Polina isn't the only threat, but she is the most unpredictable. Over there, posing as a what appears to be a Finnish radical, is my old nemesis, Willy Stephenson.

My old nemesis.

He's British-Canadian, MI6, assassin for His Majesty, holds the rank of commander in the Royal Navy. Our paths have crossed multiple times. I'm sure he's pegged me at this point. Might even have his own microfilm roll of the Man of Steel.

I could destroy him now, but it would be a murder-suicide pact. No, for as much as it still grinds my gears, we are both professionals. This is the job.

I finish the vodka, set the glass down. The bartender is already rushing with the Stolichnaya, but I put my hand over the rim of the glass. "*Kumiss*, if you please, Comrade."

"Of course, Comrade." He ducks below the bar. From a small refrigerator, he removes the canister full of fermented mare's milk, and pours me some in a fresh glass.

"I didn't know you had a preference for *kumiss*, Comrade First Secretary," beams Munkhbaatar, speaking openly now as though we're Party colleagues.

"My husband's Mongolian," I say behind the glass. "It kind of grew on me."

Across the room, Molotov checks his pocket watch yet again, then puts his hand on Prime Minister Genden's shoulder to usher him to a nearby waiter with a platter of *hors d'oeuvres*.

"If you'll excuse me, Comrade Commissar," I say with a bow.

Taking my mare's milk, I stride across the room, squeezing between groups of people. I have personally read the dossiers on almost everyone here. There are secretaries and commissars from Ukraine and the Kazakh SSR, the municipal Party secretary from Ashkhabad, with a flowing moustache and a silken Turkmen robe in brilliant colours. There are admirals and generals. There's Commander Zhukov, up-and-comer in the Red Army, chatting with NKVD chief Lavrentiy Beria, the latter of which is requisitioning large amounts of uranium to a secret facility in the Urals.

Oh, shit, I think again. There, in a group chatting with Kaganovich, is Wolfgang Vollmann, an undercover infiltrator for the Germans. We're also familiar with each other. He's dressed in a Soviet military tunic, with a USSR pin on the collar, so, like Mr. Stephenson, he's undercover.

Like Stephenson, *Herr* Vollmann is a professional, and a much more friendly one than the Brit. Ignoring him, I grab from a platter of *hors d'oeuvres*, snaking my way for the other end of the hall, towards Molotov and Genden.

I appear next to a young Mongol woman on Genden's staff, third assistant liaison to this or that ministry, chatting amiably with her opposite Soviet number. I make a show of being drunk, bump into her, and start aggressively flirting. In doing so, I swing in, Genden and Molotov just behind me.

The young woman doesn't know this is a ruse. Indeed, she doesn't know I'm part of an op. Probably knows only my face from the airship in here, and knows I'm connected to the delegation from Dornod. She reddens in the cheeks at my flirting, but merely as a show of modesty for her Soviet counterpart.

Meanwhile, behind me, Genden sounds quite irritated, his voice slightly raised. "The lamas are devout. They are holy. They are an integral part of the fabric of Mongolian society."

Molotov is placating, his voice low. "Comrade Prime Minister, the old society, yes. But the new communist man – he does not have need for outdated superstitions."

Genden grunts in annoyance. "But to subject such faithful men to the accusations of class treachery?"

"They are leaches on the means of production, Comrade Prime Minister. What do they contribute? How is their so-called way of life any less bourgeois than monopolists and landlords? Think of that White old guard fascist who swindled these holy men into backing his

feudalistic barony with a whole lot of religious mumbo-jumbo."

To the girl, I say, "I hear there's an opera in town – the Bolshoi. Why don't you tell the minister you're taking tomorrow evening off. I will escort you. Wouldn't you like to see the Bolshoi while we're on vacation?"

The girl is intrigued, but ultimately very modest. She's worried about her job, about being seen as being a floozy. She's meant to be professional, modern, educated, prim and proper. "Comrade," she whispers, "why don't you get some coffee? Perhaps we could chat another time?"

But her blonde counterpart is goading her on. "Come now, Khaliun, the Bolshoi is an excellent date. You should most certainly go."

My intention is merely placement near Molotov. Yet, now that I'm closer, and can see this woman's awkward smile, and the way she fills out that tunic, I can see she's a cutie, and, I think to myself, were she to respond to my overtures... well, there are rooms here, set aside for those who indulge a little too heavily with vodka and need to lie down. I don't exactly want Willy Stephenson to push aside the eyes of a portrait of Peter the Great and pad out his debrief for London with embarrassing pictures, but it would be hard to say no to a romp if Secretary Khaliun favoured me with a smile. She couldn't use her fingers, though.

But despite my suave coolness, this dame isn't going to bite. Not the type to spread her legs to some random apparatchik in a foreign land.

Behind me, Genden and Molotov are still bickering about Buddhist lamas, and Genden is incensed he can't talk to Comrade Stalin personally about this. I have enough for my report; Tada-sama will be much pleased when I get back. There's a potential rift between the Russkies and the Mongolians on the issue of religion. Hayao will be so over the moon he'll let me take him to the back of the dance hall, dress him up as a Japanese maid, and show him where I hid the roll of microfilm.

To the girl, I say, "Forgive me, forgive me, Comrade. This vodka is... well, it's good. Oh, I should sit down. You are most pretty, forgive my clumsiness. If you'll excuse me, ladies..."

I slink away effortlessly.

Suddenly a hand is on my elbow, I'm tugged back. Nothing too violent, but it gets my attention. I whirl, and come face to face with Wolfgang Vollmann, that ridiculous Soviet tunic, and a wispy blonde moustache.

"My apologies, Comrade," he says, as though he'd merely bumped into me in the crowd.

"Not a problem, Comrade," I say. Then I add just the slightest edge to my voice and say, "We should both take care to not be clumsy."

I knew Herr Vollmann in Xinjing. He was stationed out there with the German consulate. They had bugged every room of Lord Lytton's delegation, though it didn't stop the man from condemning Manchukuo's sovereignty.

"I didn't catch your name."

"Zul," I reply, plying him with my cover name.

"Viktor Kozorov," he says with a handshake. He leans in with the handshake and whispers, "You look good."

I'm wearing a white tux, black bow tie, Mongolian-themed cufflinks stolen from my

husband. My hair is freshly cut and oiled, slicked back and parted to the side. I look damned good.

"I'm not sure about the moustache," I say with a little indifference.

He would love nothing more than to tear me out of this tux, bite at my lower lip, and twist my nipple until I slap him and bend him over the bed and punish him. Back in Xinjing, I could do anything I wanted to him. Anything.

Or maybe here he wants my legs spread. Wants to find the roll of microfilm. Maybe he suspects I have one. Maybe he has his own and is looking to eliminate the competition.

Just then I see my NKVD ex-girlfriend circling around. Grabbing Vollmann by the elbow, I frantically whisper to walk with me, and lead him away from the encroaching busty blonde.

Arm interlocked with mine, his neck swivels. I see now hints of a smirk. "Is there a reason you're avoiding the company of Comrade Polina Vasilyeva?"

"I may have promised her a ring in São Paulo," I mutter.

"You didn't?"

"All empty words, baby. No one loved me like you did."

He indulges, and steers us down towards a Party secretary for Vladivostok.

"That chap over there," he says, motioning to an NKVD officer with bars on his shoulders, "chief asset recruiter for western Europe. Have you ever heard of a trio of drunkards named Burgess, Maclean, or Philby?"

Of course, he does not ask me why exactly I'm here, nor I him. And neither of us would enquire with Willy Stephenson. This is the game, and we're all gentlemen. There is an honour among thieves, even if rapiers might be unsheathed behind backs.

"I assume you've marked His Majesty's secret agent?"

"From the moment I walked in here," I lie.

My eyes comb the room, where I find Mr. Stephenson over towards the bar, looking dapper in his black tux, bow tie, cufflinks, his dark hair slick with pomade, smoking a Camel. He's departed the company of the exiled Finnish Communist Party.

My eyes flick back to Molotov and Genden, the Mongolian PM arguing stridently, the olive from his martini glass bouncing out and dropping to the floor. I make a mental note to circle back to that in a few.

"It was a pleasure making your acquaintance, Comrade," I say courteously, and turn to walk away.

He steps in close, blocking my path. Throwing caution to the wind, not minding any potential NKVD plants, he whispers, "I miss you. I can't forget those months in Xinjing. I—"

"Will shut up this instant or I'll perform the death-point," I seethe, "and blow your cover. I'm sure your file with the NKVD won't stand up to scrutiny when Beria is standing over your corpse in the morgue."

The death-point, or touch of death, is the most lethal move in the martial arts, using a pinpoint strike on a key meridian to render instant death. I needn't do a roundhouse kick or elbow thrust; a simple flick of my thumb and second finger will accomplish the desired effect. If done properly, even a coroner will rule it a stroke.

He steps back like a hurt puppy. My eyes are darting around, seeing if anyone overheard.

I seem to have no trouble attracting these effete men who would sell their own mother into bondage on Nazino Island for the chance to lick my feet and kiss my ass (or kiss my feet and lick my ass). Tada Hayao is no different. Why do they always become so enraptured?

(Admittedly, I don't always discourage their prostration, so there's that.)

I offer my hand. "Good evening, Comrade."

"Good evening," he replies sheepishly.

If he finds himself in Xinjing, maybe I'll offer my bed once more. He does make a good bitch.

I return to the bar.

Munkbaatar jumps up when he sees me, "Ah, Comrade-secretary, I would like you to meet a Finnish revolutionary in exile—"

"Stephenson," I cut him off, my voice low, an empty glass concealing my lips. "Willy Stephenson."

Commander Stephenson smiles at me confidently. Munkhbaatar – who I presume was wanting to introduce us because my government might have use for a disgruntled Finn living in exile – looks back and forth, confused. At last, the Mongolian says, "I see you two have met. Oh, I must go say hello to the governor over there. If you'll excuse me."

He bows out.

I set my empty glass on the bar. "Stoli," I tell the bartender.

"Nix that," says Stephenson. "My comrade here will have the Taketseru. Make sure you use the aged stuff."

The bartender looks to me. I nod and say, "And the Finnish gentleman will have three measures of gin, one measure vodka, a half-measure Lillet, shaken, in a martini glass, with a lemon peel."

"Coming right up," says the barman.

Willy Stephenson is unimpressed. He says, "You can be quite the bitch, you know that?"

"Oh, but me having a snifter of Taketseru isn't going to raise any red flags at all?"

"Fair," he says with a nod.

Two glasses are deposited in front of us. Stephenson picks up his martini, and, speaking behind it to hide from NKVD lip-readers, whispers, "What were you and *Herr Vollmann* discussing?"

I wonder if I should drop the names Burgess, Philby, or Maclean. Lifting my snifter of scotch to my lips, I say, "Dressing him up as a Japanese maid and having my wicked way with him."

Stephenson dabs his lips with a napkin. "Cute. You don't need to tell me." He sips his cocktail. "Prime Minister Genden appears quite agitated, doesn't he?"

I look across the room. By now, Genden's wife has pulled him aside, is chatting in his ear. His empty martini glass has been taken away. Molotov is still hovering nearby.

"Indeed. I wonder what that could be about," I say behind my own glass.

"You don't have half your report pre-written?" he asks in jest.

I do, but my report isn't concerning the Mongolian PM.

Testing the waters, I say, "Have you seen Mr. Dzhugashvili this evening?"

All this conversation is being conducted behind cocktail glasses, napkins or *hors d'oeuvres*.

The Taketseru is quite good, though less peat than I prefer.

"Fill it up, bartender," blurts a woman to my left. She's quite loud. I turn. A voluptuous woman, probably not yet thirty, sits there dressed in an opulent violet gown. Earrings, necklace, hair curled in ringlets spilling forth from a tight bun. A deep V neckline and cleavage for days.

Stephenson is noticing the woman. He and I both clock that it's an expensive gown, and that she has a tan-line on her third finger. She's also by herself, and her mood suggests she hadn't expected to be. Stephenson picks up his martini glass, making a move for the woman, wants to add the dame to his roster.

I put a hand on the Brit's shoulder, already on my feet. "I'll courier one of her earrings to the chief, old boy," and I glide down the bar.

The bartender has a bottle of vodka and is chiselling ice for the woman. "Bartender, put that away," I command. "Use the good stuff, the Avarga Premium, I know you have it. The prime minister would have requested it."

The woman swings her gaze to me.

"Courtesy of my countrymen, Madam Comrade."

Out of a refrigerator comes an unadorned, corked bottle of vodka, one hundred and four proof, from central Mongolia. The bartender pours a tumbler and hands it to the woman.

The woman in violet hesitantly sips. "Strong," she say, stifling a cough, "but smooth."

"One of my favourites. I shall have my office send you a bottle. A gift to lift your spirits, in light of your gentleman standing you up."

She's mildly embarrassed that I've noticed she's been stood up. She sips again. "That is very kind, Comrade..."

"Zul, my lady. From Dornod Province."

The woman's name is Vera. She's an opera singer with the Bolshoi. She's in her late twenties, she's never met a Mongolian before, and she's drop-dead gorgeous.

And, with the tan-line on her third finger, she's either recently divorced, or, more likely, she's cuckolding her husband with some Party cadre who isn't currently here.

If I'm right, by sending her a free bottle of vodka, I now have her address, which means we can narrow down who her lover is.

"May I offer you tickets to the Bolshoi Theatre, Comrade Zul?"

"I would love to see you perform," I reply with a smile.

I continue flirting with her for a few minutes. Moscow is a dangerous place to be showing any amorous interest, but I'm intrigued. Perhaps her lover is someone high up, a Kaganovich, a Molotov. Doubtful this information will be more damning to the USSR than Marshall Dzhughashvili's amorous affairs in the other room, but I still want to know the inner goings-on. Could be that Tada-*sama* gleams something truly valuable from the information on who is and is not being cuckolded in the Kremlin.

I shift my hip and am reminded of the roll of microfilm. Perhaps this is a bit too dangerous.

After a few moments, Comrade Stalin, at long last, arrives. When he enters the hall, all eyes go to him. Charismatically, he strides straight for Genden and Molotov, the latter clearly

unable to placate the former any longer. Genden, though tactful, bores his gaze directly at Uncle Joe, lasering in and ready to confront the despot on his policies regarding lamas.

Many eyes throughout the room are following the Soviet First Secretary, though everyone becomes conscious that they shouldn't stare too long, shouldn't eavesdrop or insert themselves. Indeed, I see Comrade Beria observing the room coolly; his NKVD agents undoubtedly keen to know who's taking a little too much interest – including Polina, who's eyes are doubtless combing the room.

Feeling unseen NKVD eyes, I too ignore the Man of Steel, and focus more on Vera. She talks about friends of hers in the arts. I wonder if one of those 'friends' is her husband. She asks if I have someone special back in Mongolia. Chizuko, my faithful wife, awaits my return. Her hair would almost certainly go grey overnight if she knew I were here, in Moscow, rather than reporting to Tada-sama's command post in Rehe. But I don't mention Chizuko – I'm single, freshly divorced, looking to meet single ladies once more now that things are finalized. A shame my delegation could not allot any time to visit a Moscow dance hall.

"Divorced?" she enquires, and perhaps I can steer the conversation towards her own marriage.

But, alas, she pretends to be single, spurned by someone – she says not who, nor does she wish to discuss it – who was meant to accompany her to this banquet tonight.

Meanwhile, far behind me, I can tell Prime Minister Genden is quite irritated with Comrade Stalin. Molotov is still with them, trying to placate the foreign leader. At last, I see the trio head for a door. I assume Genden has demanded a private conversation. It would be so nice to eavesdrop on that.

Alas, Vera is all over me. I've turned to observe the departure of Stalin, Molotov, and Genden, and when I turn back to the voluptuous babe, she practically throws herself at me, her lips meeting mine. I return the wet kiss, my hand cupping the small of her back.

Munkhbaatar is nearby, coming my way, but seeing the display, halts in his tracks. The bartender is selectively blind to this, and the few others around us politely avert their gazes. Willy Stephenson is jealous.

Vera's lips part from mine. In a surprising moment of honesty, she says, "My husband is a limp-dicked fool, and my paramour waltzes in here and doesn't even look at me. Someone is going to leave me weak-legged, dumb, and makeup-sullied tonight."

Who am I to deny a beautiful woman such a request? She takes my hand, leads me. We pass by Munkhbaatar. I lean in and whisper, "Cover for me," and keep right on striding, leaving him befuddled and fidgety.

She leads me out of the banquet hall, down a corridor. We find a room. Evidently she knows her way around these corridors. She's probably done this before with her paramour, whoever that should be.

It's a grand bedroom, with a sofa and chairs and a four-post bed. She kisses me again, then marches for the bed, slipping off her heels and going to remove an earring.

I see a bottle of Japanese scotch on the chiffonier in the corner. I go to it, uncork the bottle, pour myself a drink.

Behind me, Vera is scoffing, "He takes me away from my devoted husband, and then he's

distant and noncommittal when I'm here."

I sip the scotch. It's a '33, good but not great. Then, suddenly, I hear muffled voices through the wall. I glance back at Vera, who's unclasped the back of her dress, and is fumbling with her hair pins. Her back is to me.

Covertly, I press my ear to the wall. The voices are still muffled. There's more than one speaker. One of them is calm, a second quite irate. I look down. Behind this chiffonier is a vent, which I presume passes to the room next door, concealed by the dresser. Perhaps if I could shift the chiffonier a touch...

I can tell Vera cares not for whatever could be happening in the other room, nor does she care for another nip of alcohol. She's randy, impatient, with needs to be fulfilled. Another grumble for her, and I can sense her growing displeasure with the attention I'm lavishing upon this scotch.

"I tire of drunkards and featherheads," she says behind me. "If you want to make love to that whiskey, go back to the bar. But I was expecting my face smashed into the pillow by now."

I turn. Vera is out of the dress, her skin porcelain, nipples the most heavenly pink. Her tits are tremendous. I nearly drop the scotch.

Never mind some business in the other room, thinks I; my attention is now solely focused on this vixen before me. Fumbling for the chiffonier, I set down the tumbler of scotch, reach for my bow tie and promptly slip it loose and pull it free.

Stepping forward, my lips find hers and my tongue accepts her invitation into her mouth. My arm goes around her and pulls her close.

"That's better," she coos, and I lean in to kiss the nape of her neck.

Stepping back, I fumble for my cufflinks, unclipping them rapidly and setting them on the chiffonier.

In the other room, there's a raised voice. One of the men over there is shouting. Saying something about the Tsar, possibly. Damn, this could be important, I think, briefly turning back as Vera reaches for the waistband of her underwear.

There's some commotion. It sounds like a bookshelf has fallen over.

I look back to the randy dame. By this point, she's removed her panties, and is striding for the bed. She is completely nude, blonde, voluptuous, eyes ravenous for me, and I can see that, for the entire evening, she's had her backside plugged with a device.

My jacket is flung onto an ottoman. I'm sure that whatever is happening in the other room is not important.

Historical Note

At a state visit in December, 1935, Mongolian Prime Minister Peljidiin Genden slapped Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin, reportedly breaking the latter's pipe. Genden is reported to have rebuked Stalin with the line, "You bloody Georgian, you have become a virtual Russian Tsar."³ Stalin had been pushing his Mongolian ally to purge Buddhist lamas from the Mongolian

countryside; their way of life being in opposition to the principles of socialism.⁴ Lamas typically didn't contribute to 'the means of production', making them a blight on socialist society.

Dorigjaviin Luvansharav, secretary of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party, reported this at the MPRP Second Congress, saying, "Genden got drunk at a reception in Leningrad. That happened again in Moscow when he got into a fight with Stalin and Molotov, snatched Stalin's pipe, and then crashed into broke tables and chairs. He even suggested that an alliance with Japan was possible".⁵

This incident occurred at the Mongolian embassy in Moscow. I have depicted it here as taking place in the Kremlin at a state gala. Kawashima Yoshiko was not present.

Genden was forced out of the MPRP and sent the USSR for medical treatment at a Black Sea resort, where he remained for a year. In 1937, he was arrested, 'confessed' to being a Japanese spy and counterrevolutionary, and executed in Moscow.⁶ He was forty-five years old.

Following his purge, Khorloogiin Choibalsan became commander-in-chief and minister of defence, eventually rising to prime minister, and amassed power, following the Soviet model, in one man, himself.⁷ Choibalsan was happy to go along with Stalin's directives.⁸

In the late 1930s, some 20,000⁹-100,000¹⁰ lamas and other 'reactionaries' and 'counterrevolutionaries' were rounded up and liquidated from Mongolia, approximately ten percent of the country's population.

From 1992 until its demolition in 2019, Genden's daughter, Gendengiin Tserendulam, and later grandson, ran The Memorial Museum of the Victims of Political Repression in Ulaanbaatar, out of the house Genden used to own. G. Tserendulam died in 2003, the house was demolished in 2019, and is being replaced with a twenty-two-storey apartment building. This sparked some controversy in Mongolia, and Genden's grandson, who owns the property, has assured the public the museum will reopen on the first four floors of the new building.¹¹ Alas, the project has stalled, and it remained closed during my visit to Ulaanbaatar in 2024.

William "Bill" Stephenson, erroneously¹² codenamed Intrepid, was born 23 January, 1897, in Winnipeg, Manitoba. In 1917, he enlisted with the Canadian Expeditionary Force and was sent to France, where he was gassed and transferred to the Royal Flying Corps, and, by war's end, had achieved fourteen aerial kills.¹³ He relocated to England after the war, and later joined MI6 on the eve of the Second World War.¹⁴ Posted to New York, his chief mission was to propagandize the Americans into joining the war, a campaign described by a CIA historian as "the largest clandestine foreign intelligence station ever established in the United States."¹⁵

4 Ibid., pp 363.

5 Ibid., pp 348.

6 Ibid., pp 348.

7 Ibid., pp 356.

8 Sandag, pps 83-84.

9 Baabar, pp 369; says the number is at least 20,000, but the total number cannot be calculated.

10 Sandag, pp xv.

11 NewsMN.

12 Hemming, pp 280.

13 Ibid., pp 23.

14 Ibid., pp 26.

15 Ibid., pp 13.

Acquainted with naval intelligence officer Ian Fleming, Stephenson's name is on a short-list of those believed to be the inspiration for James Bond. And, of course, Fleming noted Stephenson's drink of choice: Booth's gin, high and dry, easy on the vermouth, shaken not stirred.¹⁶ Stephenson's assignment behind enemy lines in the Soviet Union, as well as his association with Kawashima Yoshiko are entirely fictional.

Vera Alexandrovna Davydova was born September, 1906, in Nizhny-Novgorod, and became a renowned soloist with the Bolshoi Theatre. Fellow Bolshoi performer, orchestral musician Leonid Gendlin, wrote a book in the 1980s titled *Confessions of Stalin's Lover*, which alleged a nineteen-year-long affair between Davydova and the first secretary, a claim Gendlin allegedly heard from Davydova herself, though she denied it. She and Stalin were known to be acquainted with each other in the 1930s.¹⁷ Stalin's cuckolding at the hands of trans Japanese spy, alas, is the product of my imagination.

Dramatis Personae

KAWASHIMA YOSHIKO, alias ZUL— Spy.

IOSEF DZHUGASHVILI, called JOSEPH STALIN, called KOB— First Secretary of the Soviet Union.

MUNKHBAATAR— Assistant Commissioner for Dornod Province.

WILLY STEPHENSON— British-Canadian spy.

WOLFGANG VOLLMANN, alias VIKTOR KOZOROV— German spy.

TADA HAYAO— Lieutenant-General in the Kwantung Army. Yoshiko's lover.

PELJIDEN GENDEN— Prime Minister of the Mongolian People's Republic (1932-36).

VERA ALEXANDROVNA DAVYDOVA— Opera singer.

POLINA VASILYEVA V.— An NKVD agent. Yoshiko's lover.

LAVRENTIY BERIA— Head of the NKVD.

CHIZUKO— Yoshiko's wife (middle 1930s).

GANJUURJAB— Yoshiko's husband (1927-30).

KHORLOOGIIN CHOIBALSAN— Premier of the Mongolian People's Republic.

KHALIUN— A staffer.

LAZAR KAGANOVICH— Second Secretary of the Soviet Union.

VYACHESLAV MOLOTOV— Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR.

VLAD— Stalin's lover.

LEON TROTSKY— Head of the Red Army. Exiled in 1929.

GEORGY ZHUKOV— Commander in the Red Army. Future victor at Khalkhin Gol and Moscow during World War 2.

GUY BURGESS, DONALD MACLEAN, and KIM PHILBY— British traitors, defectors to the Soviet Union.

Glossary & Gazetteer

16 Hemming, pp 160.

17 RBTH.

Ashkhabad– Capital of the Turkmen SSR.

Avarga Premium– A Mongolian vodka.

Buryat– A Siberian people near the Mongolian border

Deel– (Mongolian) A traditional robe.

Evenki– A Siberian people near the Manchurian border.

Kumiss– A Mongolian alcohol made from fermented mares' milk.

Nazino Island– An island on the Ob River, and site of a gruesome 1933 Soviet resettlement, with little planning, resulting in starvation, camp anarchy, cannibalism, and mass shootings by guards. At least 4,000 people perished. A possible inspiration for *Battle Royale* and *The Hunger Games*.

Stolichnaya– A Russian vodka.

Taketsuru– A Japanese scotch.

Tuva– A *de jure* independent state allied to the Soviet Union, and which was later absorbed by the Soviet Union.

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