

Site 3: A Cold War Espionage Story Finally Ready for Telling

When I was in my teens and early 20s I was a member of the Army Security Agency, translating East German intel for the National Security Agency on the cutting edge of the Cold War in West Berlin. Interesting times in one of the most amazing cities in the world, and sometimes bizarre things going on in the land of COMINT and HUMINT spooks.

I knew at the time that all this was narrative-worthy. I was sometimes conscious of being a human recording device, clocking things with special attention because I knew that some day later, I would write about it all. Indeed, the instant I came home I typed some chapters and an draft outline of the book I wanted to write about that time, and what I experienced, and some things that were, or could have been, or should have been. And then I reluctantly put that book away, because I knew--as we sometimes know these things--that it was bigger than me. My skills or my craft weren't quite up to it yet. Yes, I could have written "a" book then, but it wouldn't be THE book it needed to be.

Hanging on to the Bright Idea

The earliest date on my draft files that I can find now is January 1980--a manuscript that went from a 1920s Olivera manual typewriter, to a Commodore 64 disk, to an IBM PC disk, and somehow through all these transitions eventually ended up (still intact!) on my present machine. By various time/date stamps from different save files, I see I gave this fledgling draft a once-over three different times in the ensuing decades. Each time I poked at it a bit and put it away again. Nope. Teramis the Writer was still ripening.

Now Splintegrate is wending its way through editorial at Tor, and that book that too-long congested my narrative pipeline has left, leaving space for...what? For the fantasy novel I am writing because I want to read it (Queen Victoria's Transmogrifier), and now.... This. Site 3.

The time is right. I just know it, and I just realized this tonight. The journey into the world of that story will take me to a different space and place than my fantasy or sf novels, but now-- AT LAST! I just know this is the right time to tackle it.

I was writing QVT when I was blocked with Splintegrate. It was helpful to my process to have two books in progress at once, so I could work on one while the other percolated. An especially useful thing when I'd written up to a wall and needed a mental change of pace. So I've decided to add this second book to my WIP pipeline, and will be working on Site 3 from here on out in addition to, and as an alternation from, Transmogrifier.

Espionage Novel in Novella Installments

This is also an experiment. I plan to do this in a series of novella-length installments. Ultimately they could all be combined into one omnibus edition that equals a single full-length novel. But if

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I structure it properly, the novellas should each stand alone and yet collectively tell the tale of the whole book. I think. I hope. Well, like I said, this is an experiment.

It will also let me experiment with some stricter plotting approaches than I normally follow. Part of my snarl with Splintegrate was because of not tight-enough plotting up front in the conceptual phases of the novel. Site 3 falls into the espionage/suspense genre, so of course the plotting and pacing are especially critical.

We'll see how that goes. If I get a wild hair I may sell this by subscription as I write it--a serialization of the book, as it were, that you can get on a subscriber basis. Does that sound like something you'd sign up for? Yeah, breaking a lot of new ground with this one, both in my writing (style, approach) and business model too.

Wish me good luck with this one. I think I'm finally able to do this story justice, and if things click here then I know I'll be ready to also write another book that is likewise on the back burner for similar reasons. (That one's an even bigger story than Site 3, and also based on bizarre true events). But one thing at a time.

I'll probably be quiet about this while I brood over plotting and structure before I start writing, but when I'm ready to roll, you'll hear a lot more about Site 3, especially if I open it up to subscribers. **Let me know what you think about the subscription idea, ok?**

To be continued! Huzzah. :)