

*Pendulum pits the secretive United States Military Liaison Mission (USMLM) against the Soviet forces of East Germany and places this rivalry in the context of a Soviet military conspiracy against its own political apparatus.*

## **PENDULUM**

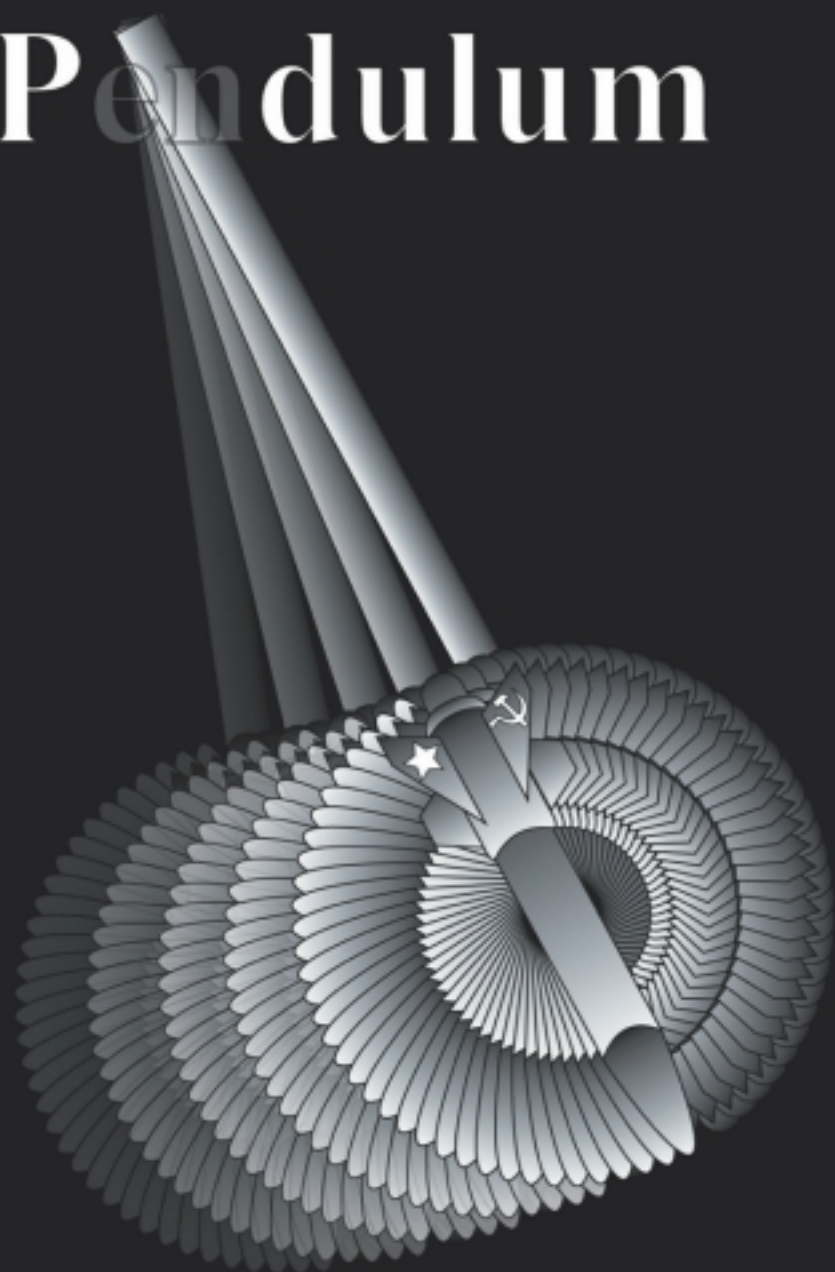
By Randal R. Jones

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# Pendulum



Randal R. Jones

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Pendulum is historical fiction based on non-fictional events leading up to and just after the signing of the 1987 Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. The Forward, Background, Prologue, and Epilogue of Pendulum are non-fiction. The non-fictional events are reflected in the Chronology and Sources on Non-Fictional Events section of this book. The events and characters in Pendulum are purely fictitious and not intended to represent specific persons, individual attitudes, traits, or characteristics. The character relationships are fictional. The U.S. Army, Air Force, and Marines provided their top intelligence officers to USMLM; they were dedicated and consummate professionals whose conduct and performance was of the highest order.

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# **PART I**

**Afghanistan – 1984**

## Chapter 1

### Operation Talon, Night Insertion

The C-130 Hercules flew northeast to southwest at 27,000 feet, hugging Pakistan's mountainous and barren border with Afghanistan. Its four prop engines hummed rhythmically just as they had done once a week for the past five years since the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The pilots remained glued to their instruments and the navigator tracked its flight path carefully to ensure sufficient standoff from the border and unquestioned Pakistani territorial integrity. The crew would not make it easy for any lurking Soviet fighters to make a successful strike and argue a violation of Afghan airspace, or worse, actually get their hands on this particular aircraft or its crew. Despite the aircraft's Pakistani markings, the curiously attired American crew, and its unique mission, tonight's flight and purpose was different from all the previous. Tonight, there was a passenger, and he was on a one-way trip.

Under dim red interior lights, Major Matt Bollard sat alone on the nylon web laced paratrooper bench. He had been flying for three hours, and slept uncomfortably for most of the flight. He checked his watch and shifted in the seat. He felt awkward wearing civilian clothing and boots and the nylon bench seat provided little in the way of comfort. Tall and lean, he slouched in the seat, and pushed his legs forward. To his right and toward the front of the aircraft he noted a long gray curtain covered the width of the cargo bay blocking visibility of over half of the aircraft. He remembered the array of antennas located on the aircraft's exterior skin he had seen when he boarded. It was not hard for him to imagine what was on the other side of the curtain.

“A U.S. manufactured aircraft with Pakistani markings. Not so unusual given our military arms trading and activities since the Soviet invasion,” he thought.

“But a U.S. crew, wearing indistinct civilian clothes, this was obviously an Agency operation.”

“It adds up,” he thought. “The aircraft antennas and shrouded cargo bay - this was most likely a radio intercept flight targeting the Afghan side of the border.” He frowned slightly, “Some things are best not deduced or thought about. One thing is for certain - this is definitely not an aircraft that handles cargo and certainly not passengers. Fortunately, all they know or care about me is that they’re making a delivery.”

The curtain jerked to the right as a short stocky civilian stepped through. He pulled the curtain shut and looked immediately for his passenger. Walking quickly the length of the cargo bay and slowing only to tap Bollard on the knee, he pointed to the oxygen mask that hung from his helmet.

Major Bollard quickly opened a plastic bottle of water and drank all of it. It could be a long time before he had another drink of clean water. He pulled the oxygen mask up to his face and fastened the loose end to his helmet, then attached its hose to a receptor on the long black box just forward of the bench. He watched as a green indicator light came on and validated his oxygen line was fully connected and operational.

At the rear of the aircraft, the civilian fastened a long nylon tether cable to the floor anchoring him to the aircraft. He attached his oxygen mask and readjusted his goggles. He then inserted a black cable to the communication matching unit and flipped a switch on the intercom connection at his side, signaling the pilot that his passenger was standing by. The civilian pointed to Major Bollard and signaled “thirty minutes”.

Bollard acknowledged the signal and leaned back on the bench. He stared at the green indicator on the long box and recalled that on previous missions eleven other indicators flashed green, one for each member of his Special Forces A-Team. Tonight, the single green light served as a nagging reminder that only one port provided oxygen and he was on his own for this mission.

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“Things have gone like clockwork so far considering that less than 72 hours ago I was in Garmisch,” he thought.

He recalled he had been on his way to one of the specialized language courses at the U.S. Army Russian Institute in Germany when the school commandant, Colonel Smith, bellowed from his office, “Get Bollard in here right now!”

Bollard heard him and turned around. He liked Colonel Smith; something he could not say of most colonels. Smith was older than most colonels and had earned a silver star in Korea as an enlisted soldier. A tall man, with thick white hair, bushy eyebrows, and with gosh-awful Army-issued black glasses, Smith looked like a weather-beaten snow owl as he peered up when Bollard knocked on his door.

“Get in here and shut the damn door.”

Bollard smiled at the colonel’s gruffness, and pulled the door shut, “Yes sir.”

“This has to be fast. Just got a call on the STU from USAREUR G2,” he said referring to his direct Secure Telephone link to U.S. Army Intelligence. “10th Special Forces Group has a priority mission. Your 10th Group buddies at Bad Toltz want you up there immediately.”

“My buddies, huh? This should be interesting. What’s going on?”

“Apparently, a couple of Afghans got their hands on a large amount of liquor from one of the western embassies that had been abandoned. Over a period of several months they worked themselves into a level of trust with some senior Soviet officers and routinely hosted them somewhere in Kabul.”

“Let me guess; the Afghans were Mujahideen?”

“Roger. And when the time was optimum, they captured three of these drunken senior officers. Currently they’re being secreted to a location near

the Pakistani border. The problem is the Soviets will not survive. Intelligence believes the Mujahideen, according to their past actions, will torture and kill them before any intelligence is ever gleaned. The hook is that these officers are senior operations officers working at the theater level in Afghanistan.”

“Pretty valuable targets,” Bollard interrupted.

“G2 believes they have operational information that we need. Specifically, we need to find out why, after so many failures, the recent Soviet offensives have been so successful in the Panjir Valley. We have an Agency operative on the ground who is supposed to link up with the Mujahideen, but he speaks Pashtu, and not a word of Russian.”

“Why doesn’t he use the Muj to interrogate them?”

“G2 is not sure what the Soviets might reveal. It could be something we don’t want revealed to the Muj. It’s also likely the Muj won’t understand the technical and operational nuances.”

“I wouldn’t underestimate them.”

“Anyway, G2 and your Special Forces buddies need a man who speaks Russian, has been tracking the activities in the Panjir Valley, and can conduct a HAHO insertion,” the colonel continued, referring to a high altitude high opening parachute insertion.

“Sounds like you just painted a picture of me. I’m qualified in HAHO, but a HAHO is a pretty complex insertion, especially given the tricky winds on the Afghan border.”

“There’s not enough time to get to the captured Soviets by any other means.”

“This operation have a code name?”



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“‘Talon.’ Don’t know who comes up with these names. Look, everyone understands that no one will order you to take this mission. It’s high risk, has low probability of success, and you can’t be sure the Muj won’t try to hold you for ransom. For that matter, we can’t even be sure the Pakistani operatives won’t try to do the same on your way out. So, G2 wants you to volunteer to take on the task.”

Major Bollard sat silent for a few seconds, “Well, I never ‘volunteer’, but I agree to take on the mission. And you’re right, I’m not liking the odds on this operation one bit.”

“G2 and Bad Toltz have agreed I may assign a second person to go with you. So, I’m bringing Major Sweeny in to assist. He has free fall parachute experience, speaks excellent Russian, and knows the Panjir Valley almost as well as you.”

Major Bollard’s jaw locked and his demeanor changed immediately. “I don’t think so. Not going to happen.”

Colonel Smith was taken aback. “What the hell do you mean ‘it’s not going to happen’? It’ll increase the odds. Besides, the two of you have traveled together before, he’ll be an asset.”

“Colonel, this is a one man mission and I’m not taking Sweeny anywhere. If you want Sweeny, you send him and I’ll bow out. Otherwise, let’s get on with it. Daylight’s burning.”

“There’s something you’re not telling me, but we don’t have time to play games; you win. By the way, I want you to know I leave in two weeks to serve as the Chief of the U.S. Military Liaison Mission. When you get back, I will have departed, but I want you to consider coming to Berlin as soon as possible to serve as a Liaison Officer to the Soviets in East Germany.”

“I appreciate it colonel, but one mission at a time.”

“How much time do you need to say goodbye to your family?”

“I’ll have my wife and kids bring me back here in an hour. She’s familiar with short notice departures. Colonel, for these types of operations, I keep a sealed letter for them in case something goes wrong. I want you to pass it to your replacement for safe keeping until I get back.”

“OK, we’ll put it in the safe. Let’s pray we won’t need to open it.”

“I presume you have someone standing by to transport me?”

“We have a chopper coming in to the German facility on the other side of the Loisach River. I’ll drive you there.”

Major Bollard recalled the long walk up the stairs to his apartment thinking, “She won’t be expecting this one and it might not go down as easily as I told the colonel.”

He walked inside the apartment as his wife, Molly, was feeding their baby daughter. “Here, let me interrupt you and Amelia,” he said as he lifted the baby from the highchair, held her up high, and gave her a big ‘smooch’ on her stomach as she giggled. “Where’s John Paul?” he asked, looking around the room as he put his daughter back in her seat.

“He’s playing next door. Why are you home so early?” she said as she searched his face and then frowned.

“I have to go on a mission,” he replied matter-of-factly, though he anticipated her next response.

She laid the baby’s spoon on the table and stepped in front of him as he was about to walk to the bedroom.

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“I thought ‘we’ were going to be ‘mission-free’ for a couple of years. This was supposed to be a two year training assignment!”

“Me too,” he responded. “But it has to be done.”

“And you have to do it, right?”

“Yep.”

“How much time do we have?”

“None. I have to go now.”

She was a solid Army wife through and through, but this news came as a surprise. “You have to be kidding me! Just a little bit of warning would be helpful.” She folded her arms and nodded toward the baby, “We have two children here and both are more than a full time job. This assignment here in Germany was supposed to give us more time as a family.”

Bollard gave his wife time to vent and placing his hand alongside her face said softly, “I have no choice. Send your mother an airline ticket to come over from the states. She’ll be a big help with the children.”

“You bet I will buster,” she replied as the tears welled up in her eyes. She put her arms around him, “I know you wouldn’t volunteer to deploy unless it was something very important. How can I help you? What do you need?”

“I’m just changing clothes, and I’ll take a toothbrush.”

“No other clothes? No razor?”

“Nope. I’m good to go.”

“Well, that’s pretty telling as to what you might be doing.”

“You’d make a good agent. I’m glad you’re on my side,” he said smiling.

They embraced closely and kissed slowly. He ran his fingers through her hair, “I have to get ready to go. You know I love you... Are we good?”

“We’re good and you know I love you too. So, not even time for a quickie?” she asked as she squeezed him closer.

“How about make-up sex when I get back?”

She searched his face, “You be careful.”

“I will. How about getting the kids ready and driving me to the office?”

Major Bollard remembered what seemed to be the long drive to the office with few words exchanged; and then the final good-byes, the hugs of his young children, and the look in Molly’s eyes as he gave her a parting smile and slid into the car with the colonel. She didn’t notice as an unmarked envelope was quickly handed to the colonel.

Colonel Smith stepped on the accelerator and sped away as if he were on the mission himself. The short drive to the German facility was marked with idle chat as Bollard began the mental process of putting wife, children, bills, and all personal issues on the back shelf. After an exchange of salutes, he boarded the helicopter. As it lifted off, he recalled Colonel Smith looking up, grinning broadly, and signaling a ‘thumbs up’ – the old colonel was definitely a fighter.

Though only 72 hours ago, his departure from Garmisch seemed like an eternity away. Bollard was jolted back to the present when the pilot signaled the crew and his passenger with two loud blasts of a buzzer over the internal signal system. The thirty minutes needed to physiologically adjust to altitude passed quickly, affording sufficient time for Bollard’s blood system to be free

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of nitrogen and reduce the chances for arterial blockage. Suddenly, the loud roar of the rushing air and the sound of the churning prop engines blasted through the cabin as the hydraulics released the large tailgate and depressurized the aircraft. The tailgate dropped slowly forming a horizontal ramp, revealing nothing but darkness. Just as Bollard took a final look at his watch the civilian signaled for him to stand up. Bollard leaned forward and twisted the nozzle on the oxygen line as the indicator flashed red. He attached the nozzle to a receptor at his side which housed three small oxygen bottles. After adjusting his goggles, he walked to the rear of the aircraft and nodded to the civilian.

Keeping his eyes on a one inch red light to his left front, Bollard worked his way to the end of the ramp. As he came to its leading edge, he maintained a fixed stare on the red light, resisting the urge to look out the aircraft. The red light went off and a green light flashed on.

Bollard jumped from the aircraft.

The jump was unremarkable. He simply hopped into space, as he had done over one hundred times before, stabilizing himself after the initial blast, then turning to the northwest and perpendicular to the track of the departing aircraft. He yanked the ripcord and the black square opened above his head, propelling him approximately twenty knots per hour in the direction of Afghanistan. He was surprised at how dark the ground and horizon looked. No towns. No village lights. Not even a campfire. It made the stars seem all the brighter.

Looking down at a large compass positioned beside the altimeter, Bollard maneuvered to follow an exact 320 degree heading directly to the target. He checked his altimeter that read 26,500 feet.

“Opened the chute too early,” he said aloud. He pulled both toggles and dropped quickly to 26,000 feet. Now, if the Air Force meteorological specialists calculated the wind speeds and wind direction for the varying altitudes accurately, he would just have to stay on the compass reading and watch the altimeter to hit the target.

On track and several kilometers yet to go, he reached inside his jacket and pulled out a black, seven-inch cylinder with a nylon cord attached to a buttonhole. Flipping a switch on the side, it made a low humming noise as the night vision device came to life. He pulled the monocular up to his goggles and peered through, searching the horizon for a signal.

Just twelve kilometers northwest of Bollard, another team was on its way to the same ultimate target but with an entirely different purpose.

**PART III**

**German Democratic Republic**

**1987**

## Chapter 1

### Zossen-Wunsdorf, GDR

Sergeant First Class Dan Crockett leaned to the right and flipped two of the Mercedes 280G Geländewagen's specialized eight toggles shutting off the brake lights and the backup lights. He slowed the vehicle quickly as he approached a bend in the road and announced to the other team members, "Shutting off headlights."

Instinctively the other two of the three-man team closed an eye to assist in quickly gaining their night vision. The driver turned off the headlights simultaneously as he stopped the vehicle in the middle of the turn. Now in total darkness they looked for approaching vehicles and searched the multiple rearview and side mirrors for any indication of trailing or approaching surveillance vehicles. Nothing.

They flipped the 'on' switch of the AN/PVS-5 night vision goggles, pulled them over their heads and tightened the side straps. The greenish hue became brighter as the goggles came to life, magnifying the ambient light and providing a clear view of the road and nearby forest.

SFC Crockett quickly backed the vehicle into the left lane. He then spun around in the opposite direction executing a two-point turn without leaving the paved road or revealing tire tracks along the side. The team began moving slowly back in the same direction they had just come. They continued ahead for a quarter mile.



Major Matt Bollard, the team's leader pointed, "That dirt road just ahead on the left."

SFC Crockett moved the vehicle into the left lane and slowly turned left. They traveled in the grass adjacent to the dusty dirt road concealing the distinctive track marks of the Mercedes' oversized tires. In a hundred meters, he pulled onto the gravel road and drove forward.

The sound of the vehicle and the impact of tires on the gravel always seemed much louder inside the vehicle with the lights out. Major Bollard lowered his window to ear level. He listened intently for sounds outside the immediate noise level; any sounds of generators, trucks, tanks, or other evidence that might reveal the presence of Soviet soldiers or a military deployment. In a half mile, he reached above his head and twisted the latch that secured the overhead hatch, "Stop here."

Crockett stopped the vehicle and turned off the engine. He rolled down his window to ear level and listened intently. From the back seat, Major Cobb continued to watch to the rear of the vehicle. Cobb was an extremely capable intelligence officer who, unlike many, preferred operational missions over sitting at a desk reading the reports of others. He knew this mission could get dicey, but the potential benefits would outweigh the risk and he signed on immediately when he saw the target assignment.

Bollard stood on his seat and lifted his 6'2" frame through the hatch. He slipped on a set of commercial headphones that could magnify sound by 50 times but were ineffective in determining the direction of the source of the sound. To compensate, he turned his body fully in the direction he desired to listen. After three minutes, he came back inside the vehicle and shut the overhead hatch.

"Nothing, except some dogs barking off to the left," he whispered. He pointed to a tree line on the left, "We'll park at the point of the tree line that protrudes out. Back in so we can watch the road from both directions."

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Crockett started the vehicle and moved 200 meters forward. He then pulled off the road and backtracked in the grass for 75 meters. An old ambush technique, the maneuver would allow quick detection of trailing surveillance teams. Any Soviet or East German surveillance teams following the vehicle's tracks would have to pass directly in front of him.

He drove toward the woods and followed along the tree line toward the designated point. Each of the men searched for activity or signs of an encampment.

"Five seconds of infrared lights," Crockett said as he slowed the vehicle. He flipped another toggle and the wood line lit up. Invisible to the naked eye, the infrared lights combined with the team's night vision goggles to pierce the darkness deep into the woods.

"No encampment here... looks clear."

Crockett toggled the infrared lights off. He pulled adjacent to the protrusion of trees that Major Bollard pointed out earlier, backed the vehicle into the tree line, and shut off the engine.

Bollard lifted himself through the hatch and pulled the headphone on again. He could hear dogs barking. They were at the far left of the facility and most likely too far away to be responding to their presence. He put the binoculars up tight to the lenses of the night vision goggles and focused. In the distance, across the gravel road and on the opposite side of a wide field of oats, he could see the lights of the team's target - a Soviet facility surrounded by a ten foot wall, located approximately 800 meters away.

Everything was just as the target folder had depicted. He traced the approximate route that he and Major Cobb would travel. They would move across the road, through the field to a small clump of trees located on a small hill 100 meters from the facility. From there they would be able to see over the facility walls and directly into the vehicle and equipment parking areas. Most importantly, they would be able to see the rail cars, if present, parked under sheds on the rail spur that paralleled the perimeter wall.

Tonight, they must confirm or refute other intelligence information that possibly four support vehicles for Soviet ballistic missiles were hidden under the sheds. The U.S. and NATO were keen to monitor Soviet deployment of these missiles in the GDR; not only did they represent a threat to the West, but they were also the subject of intense and ongoing negotiations to eliminate them under the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF). The Soviets were equally intent on concealing their deployment, garrisons, and training locations. As a result, extreme security measures surrounded the movement of these missiles.

If indeed missile support vehicles had made an intermediate stop at this location, the team would have to get close enough to photograph them using their Nikon F3 with NI-TEC night vision lens. If successful, their photographs would be distributed to the U.S. and Allied intelligence community upon their return to Berlin. As a result of the high importance of this target, the area could get hot with security activity very quickly and the American team knew they must proceed with extreme caution. They would have to avoid any and all contact with locals and especially Soviet security elements. Except for the bright American flag sewn on the left arm, the team's standard Army battle dress camouflage uniforms would be beneficial in concealing their movement. They must now rely on stealth.

Major Bollard tucked his head down inside the vehicle and whispered, "Let's give it five minutes." Each member continued to strain every sense to discern anything out of the ordinary.

After five minutes, he slid back inside the vehicle and shut the hatch, "Night vision off."

Both Bollard and Cobb turned their night vision goggles off, removed them, and placed them in their protected containers. They would not use them; they were additional weight and too cumbersome for this mission. The camera, night lens, and binoculars held a higher priority for this target and were a lot easier to conceal or hide should things go wrong.

The team sat quietly as their eyes became accustomed to the darkness. After several minutes Bollard began moving quietly in his seat.

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Cobb leaned forward and whispered, "What are you doing?"

"Changing boots."

"Changing boots?"

"The *Stasi* and Sovs know what our tire tracks look like. I'm sure they also know what our boot tracks look like. I picked up these East German boots in East Berlin for operations just like this. We'll have to watch where you're walking tonight and try not to leave any of your U.S. Army boot tracks on the trails or road."

Cobb shook his head; Bollard operated differently than most.

Bollard turned to SFC Crockett, "OK, you know the alternate pick-up points if we get blown out of this target."

"Roger," SFC Crockett replied, looking to the right, in the direction of the main highway.

"If it gets to be daylight, you know the location and actions for the alibi," Bollard continued.

"Roger. Got it."

"If all goes well, we'll see you in two hours. Check your watches," Bollard paused as each checked the time.

"When we return, we'll approach from the right front, the two o'clock position." He pointed to his red-filtered flashlight, "I'll signal with two 'Rs'; a dit and dah and dit, followed by another dit, dah, and dit. You'll be facing to the right of the facility, so countersign quickly with a single 'A'; a dit and dah. Got it?"

“Roger. Sign ‘R’; countersign quick ‘A.’

“Danger response is ‘S’; three quick dits.”

“Roger. Waive off and hold is three dits,” Crockett said acknowledging he would only flash this signal if it was necessary to alert them of the presence of Stasi or Soviets.

Bollard pulled his Nikon F3 with the NI-TEC night vision lens out of the specially built camera box. This and the binoculars would be the only equipment for this operation. He opened the hatch and climbed through the roof. He slid quietly off the top of the vehicle and onto the right front hood and fender, stepped onto the bumper and down to the ground. Cobb followed closely behind.

Crockett double checked the locks on the doors and then stood up through the hatch to provide observation security as Bollard and Cobb began their mission.

The team moved forward and crossed the dirt and gravel road, paying particular attention to remain on the gravel. They stooped forward reducing their silhouette as they walked cautiously through the large oat field that grew between the facility and the road. The oats were just above waist high and due for harvest. Bollard pointed ahead to two signs approximately 50 meters apart. “Mission Restricted Signs (MRS),” he whispered. The MRS, written in English, Russian, German, and French, were posted around key facilities and training areas warning foreign liaison teams that passage beyond the sign was prohibited. “The Sovs know we ignore the MRS. Not part of the agreement. We’ll snatch one for you on the way out. It’ll look nice hanging in your office.”

They continued cautiously. After 350 meters, the team was about halfway between their observation point adjacent to the Soviet facility and their vehicle. They stopped and listened. The barking dogs were clearer now, but still well to the left of the facility. Crouching even lower and bending to just above the tops of the oats, they moved forward another 100 meters. Sentries

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were barely visible in their guard towers to the extreme right and left of the facility.

Bollard and Cobb, now squatting in the oat field, reviewed their approach to the target and watched for perimeter patrols. They worked their way to the small clump of trees and moved to the forward edge of the hill crest that would serve as their observation point. The interior of the facility was well lit.

Both men strained through their binoculars. Bollard scanned to locate the missile security force. In addition to the sentries at their guard posts at each end of the facility, he could see at least two and possibly four guards on the inside of the facility and on the far side of the rail cars. Two of them appeared momentarily as they walked between the cars and then stopped to chat. Bollard flashed two fingers twice and pointed to the locations of the sentries and the interior guards. Cobb nodded and focused again on the vehicles.

The intelligence had been accurate. Four rail cars were parked under the sheds on the rail spur. A vehicle, covered with tarp to conceal its shape, was located on top of each of the rail cars. The tarps on the vehicles provided little concealment for the trained eye.

Cobb soaked it all in and whispered, “That’s a SCALEBOARD set! SS-12M Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile! It’s the enhanced version of the SS-12 and has a range of about 900 km! There’s no missile but everything else is there. The command and control vehicle is on the right, followed by the generator vehicle, and the transporter-erector-launcher. The SS-12 crane is on the far left. They’re probably on their way to the *Jüterbog* deployment area. Try to get an individual shot of each.”

Bollard pulled the camera to his eye, focused the night vision lens, and took four pictures in rapid succession. He changed the f-stop to overexpose the picture and took four more photos. He was about to change f-stops again when Cobb grabbed his arm, “Listen! What’s that?”

The sound was growing louder. It was unmistakable – it was a truck!

Bollard turned toward the noise. The truck was not visible, but the beam of a white spotlight searched the hill to their left rear.

“Damn! Let’s go!”

Both men crawled to the back side of the hill and the clump of trees and sprinted in the direction of the Geländewagen. They bent low and clung as close to the tops of the oats as possible without breaking stride.

The Soviet truck, a Ural-375 with a spotlight on top and loaded with a squad of Soviet soldiers, crested the hill. The soldiers pivoted the spotlight between the edge of the oat field and the tree line.

Bollard stopped and stuck out his arm stopping Cobb’s dash, “We can’t make it! Drop!”

They dropped to their knees and bent forward.

Bollard, a hunter, and experienced at spotting deer at night, knew it was difficult to see an animal in tall grass; virtually invisible unless it stands, exposes its eyes or the white portions of its hair, or bounds away. He turned to his partner, “Turn your hat backwards to cover your neck. Keep your face down. Put your hands behind you. Don’t move!”

The spotlight coursed over their heads once, then again, then back toward the road. The light from the facility, the spotlight, and the stars provided limited visibility even down in and among the oats. Cobb glanced at Bollard as the light passed overhead. Bollard’s head was canted sideways, and he was looking directly at him with a mischievous smirk on his face; like a young boy who had just raided a watermelon patch. Cobb felt a perceptible relaxation in his muscles and the tension disappeared. He grinned and shook his head as both men turned their faces to the ground in front of them.

Suddenly the Soviet soldiers began shouting loudly, and the spotlight swung erratically over their heads and then in the direction of the wood line.

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Crockett, standing in the hatch of the Geländewagen, heard the Soviet truck well before it had crested the hill. Using the night vision goggles, he readily saw the spotlight and truck's headlights through the trees as the truck moved down the gravel road. He immediately dropped into the driver's seat and locked the hatch. The night vision goggles were off his head and in his lap; they were worthless in the face of the blinding spotlight. He started the engine immediately, placed it into gear and with one hand on the steering wheel and the other on the light switch, he was prepared to respond when the Ural-375 came into clear view.

His actions were well thought out for the protection of the dismounted team. Should the Soviets soldiers spot the officers, he was prepared to swoop in ahead of the truck for a fast pick-up of the two-man team. Otherwise, he was prepared to lure them away from the team by turning the headlights on and racing out in front of the Ural-375. The Soviet's forced his response.

The Soviet soldiers swung the spotlight along the tree line and its beam flashed by the Geländewagen. The beam flashed back quickly as the soldiers yelled for the driver to turn in the direction of the Geländewagen. As the Soviet truck veered off the road and entered the field, it bounced violently, sending the soldiers into the floor and the spotlight's beam wildly into the air.

Crockett turned the headlights on and accelerated; the Mercedes bounded from the hiding spot. He sped across the open field onto the gravel road. The Ural-375 was 75 meters behind and accelerated quickly back onto the road as the soldiers attempted to regain their footing and control the spotlight.

Crouched in the oat field, Bollard and Cobb listened as the unmistakable sound of the powerful gas engine of the Mercedes Geländewagen powered to life and screamed away with the Ural-375 in pursuit.

Bollard was not smirking anymore. He looked at Cobb and mouthed the word, "Shit."



They listened intently to determine if any soldiers got off the truck to search for them. It was completely quiet. After five minutes, they raised their heads just enough to slowly look 360 degrees for any movement.

“We have to go to the alternate pick-up point,” Bollard whispered. “It’s two kilometers; just over a mile away on this side of the main highway where we exited. On the way, if we’re detected or get nailed by their security, we have to ensure we expose this film and ditch the camera and lens.”

Cobb nodded. The two men crouched over and walked parallel to the facility in the general direction of the main road. They had to move carefully. The Soviet security element might have coordinated its actions with the facility and may have sent out ground patrols. At a minimum, the commotion at the wood line would have certainly alerted the facility sentries who would be much more attentive and focused.

After another 50 meters, the two officers finally stepped from the field onto the edge of a tree lined dusty road that ran directly to the facility and perpendicular to the main road they had accessed on their way to the target. They moved quickly to a small turn in the road where they could not be observed from the facility.

Bollard turned to Cobb, “The road is too dusty. We’ll leave tracks all over the place and they could be on our asses within minutes. Take your jacket off.”

Cobb looked puzzled.

“We have to use our jackets to cover our tracks in case the *Klingons* use this road to look for us,” Bollard explained with a commonly used and derisive reference to the Soviet military and its mirroring of Star Trek archrivals.

Both men removed their jackets. Bollard laid his jacket down in the road and the two stepped on it. Cobb then laid his jacket in the road and they stepped on it, while picking up Bollard’s coat. They repeated the process until they had crossed the road. Bollard looked through the camera back at the road – no tracks, their trail was clean.

## Pendulum

He whispered, "If things go to hell and we get separated, this will be our initial rally point. I'll point out additional rally points along the way as a precaution, but bottom line, don't get separated."

The two continued along the more concealed route, taking advantage of the trees, and depressions in the terrain. In twenty minutes, they could see a small hill in the distance. The road was directly below the hill and their alternate link up point.

Not far away, Crockett was moving at high speed and attempting to go around the town of Zossen, the headquarters and garrison town of the Group of Soviet Forces in East Germany. It was a town to avoid. But his pursuers had other ideas. They quickly channeled him into the town when a second truck blocked the main road directly in front of him. Narrowly missing the blocking vehicle, he swerved hard to the left onto a narrow cobblestone road leading directly into Zossen and away from his planned escape route. Two Soviet trucks were now chasing him directly through the town.

He was clearly in the Permanently Restricted Areas (PRA) where absolutely no mission teams were permitted. A detention here would bring a protest at the highest levels. No explanation would be acceptable to the Soviets, or even to the Frankfurt or Washington rear echelon 'wonks' who had never played in this environment. He had to break contact and get out of Zossen before the Soviet trucks rammed him, or worse, detained him inside the PRA.

He sped through the city using side streets and alleys in an attempt to both shake off the trailing trucks and to find a major road leading back out of the town. By keeping his tail lights off, alternating between headlights and no lights, and using the narrow side streets, he broke away from the Soviet trucks and accessed a narrow road that led out of Zossen. At high speed he turned onto the main road. Crockett finally breathed a sigh of relief as he sped past the backside of the town's signpost, exiting the town and the PRA.

Crockett put on his night vision goggles, turned his infrared lights on, and switched his headlights off. His priority now was to move quickly to locate the alternate pick-up point where Bollard and Cobb should be waiting. It

would soon be daylight, and with daylight came the increased physical threat to a team on foot.

Bollard and Cobb stood on the hill listening for the Mercedes.

“Here comes a vehicle,” Cobb pointed to the left.

“Listen to that engine! It’s the G-Wagon and has to be Crockett!”

They both strained to see the vehicle.

Bollard moved part way down the hill within ten feet of the road. He lifted the camera to his eye. Too late. He didn’t see the vehicle as it screamed past him at 80 miles per hour. He ran back to the top of the hill and whispered, “Holy shit! It was him! He blew right past us!”

“For crying out loud! He was coming out of the PRA, right out of Zossen!”

Cobb started to move down the hill, but Bollard’s firm grip on his shoulder held him in place. “There may be someone on his ass. We’ll hang tight right here for a few minutes.”

Cobb looked at his watch, “It’ll be daylight in 30-45 minutes and the Klingons could still be looking for us.”

Bollard nodded, “We just need to get to the vehicle and get the hell out of here. When Crockett gets here, don’t try to use the doors. They’ll be locked. We can’t take a chance that a Sov security team is nearby, so get in quickly through the hatch.”

In ten minutes, they could hear the vehicle, now coming from their right. Both men slid down the hill. The vehicle’s lights were still out and it slowed as it came up to the hill. Bollard signaled with his flashlight, ‘dit dah dit’ followed by another ‘dit dah dit’.

## Pendulum

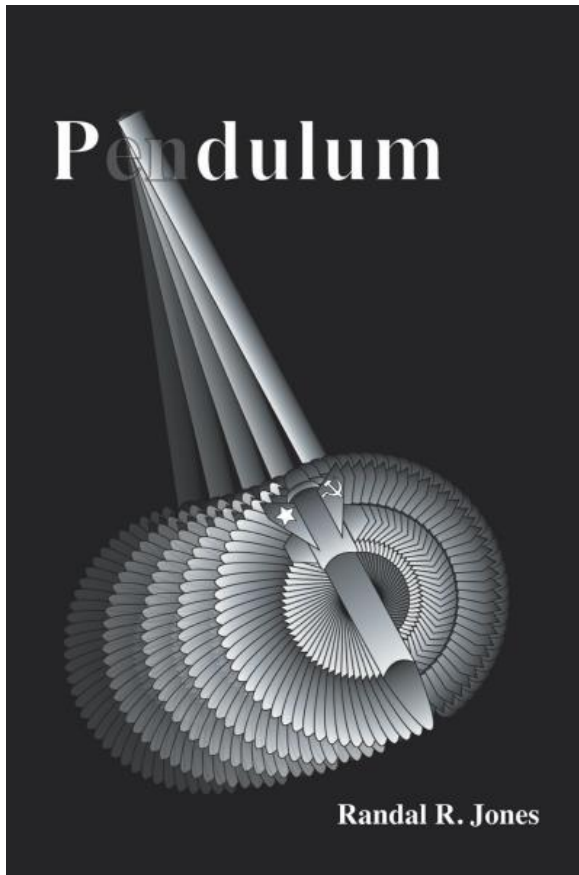
The signal flashed brightly in Crockett's night vision goggles and he slammed on the brakes, coming to a stop directly in front of the two officers. He reached up, twisted the release, and popped the hatch open. Cobb ran to the front of the vehicle and threw his foot on top of the massive winch at the center of the bumper. He propelled himself up onto the hood and jumped headfirst through the open hatch. Bollard was close behind and dropped inside feet first, sliding into his seat, and pulling the latch shut.

Crockett took off the night vision goggles, turned on the headlights, spun the vehicle around, and sped off.

He looked at the two officers and spoke as if Oliver Hardy was scolding Stan Laurel, "Well, here's another nice mess you've gotten me into."

"Yes, but we nailed the target, Ollie!" Bollard replied.

Cobb, looking to the rear of the vehicle, responded, "I think we got one of the largest watermelons in the patch!"



*Pendulum pits the secretive United States Military Liaison Mission (USMLM) against the Soviet forces of East Germany and places this rivalry in the context of a Soviet military conspiracy against its own political apparatus.*

## **PENDULUM**

By Randal R. Jones

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