

The Watergate Spies, narrated by a Cuban-exile double agent during the final days of the Nixon presidency, is an allegory of healthcare in D.C., a review of CIA assassination attempts, and a turbulent history of Cuban/American affairs.

THE WATERGATE SPIES

By Delta Tango

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The Watergate Spies

- A Novel



Delta Tango

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Chapter 1:

Cuba

Tuesday, June 13, 1972, noon—the Presidential Palace

“We may have an opportunity, Fidel, to do to the Americans what they tried to do to you. And this opportunity will come very soon.”

Miguel Pintaro, a.k.a. “Blackbeard,” dressed in military fatigues, looks the Líder Máximo in the eye, simultaneously ascertaining that the room is empty.

“Yes, and what is this opportunity?”

“Comandante, our agents have learned from Tango that the Code to the American defense system is accessible. He is working hard inside the capital, with FBI and CIA contacts. And he may be close to obtaining it. If he does, we have a way to block the Code or even change it, to prevent a preemptive strike. Nixon is the only one with access to this Code that releases a first strike. Without that capacity, the Americans will never attack us again, let alone assassinate you! You must know this.”

“What do I know?” Castro responds, touching his own dark beard while looking out a bulletproof window. “And what does Delta Tango know?”

“That they have never discovered him or our other agents. And we have discovered most of theirs. Tango has befriended ‘Deep Throat,’ who loves to gossip. The FBI knows that the code to the ‘Football’ can be unlocked and deciphered. Also, there’s a retired CIA agent named Hunt, the same Howard Hunt who helped plan and manage the Bay of Pigs attack on

us. He's actively searching to find out if the Code has already been leaked and if the Democratic party has acquired our dossier on the CIA assassination attempts on you. But he knows nothing of Tango, or our penetration. The FBI and CIA—well, you know, Fidel, how they love to out-spy each other. These Americans are very gullible....”

“And where is this Code?”

“You already know, Fidel. It's kept inside a briefcase, the so called 'Football,' kept close to the president to release the nuclear arsenal whenever he wants to. That's what we are to discover.”

Castro turns back to Blackbeard, eyeing him fiercely, then pointing a long finger at the informant.

“Nixon's Code? The son of a bitch, why would he activate it? He wants me gone, but all of Cuba? Do you really think they'll try again, after their failures?”

“Fidel, they and others have tried to assassinate you how many hundreds of times! Howard Hunt connects to Howard Hughes, along with Nixon. They all work together. Have you forgotten Operation Mongoose? Hughes has a manager named Maheu, the one who worked with Johnny Roselli and the Mafia. The ones who used to run this country. Think of the ways they tried to eliminate you!”

The two men look across the city, past the Monument of Jose Marti, beyond the Plaza of the Revolution where Fidel gives his orations, and study the streets of Havana. The aging Vedado and Cayo Hueso neighborhoods span outward, toward the Avenida Malecon. Traffic is sparse as Castro takes hold of a cigar and waits for Blackbeard to continue.

“Nixon is so paranoid, in my opinion, that his people will try again. Comandante, he may be more successful than Kennedy! Can you forget the invasion, which killed thousands of our militia and soldiers? Nixon planned for the

Bay of Pigs even before Kennedy, so we have to be ready with a defense before they try to eliminate us yet another time. I want to tell you, in the next seven days we will discover their Code. I am sure of this!”

Billowing clouds drift slowly over the Gulf of Mexico as waves roll in and collapse, over and over, on the thin shore before the seawall, becalming the residents with an ancient rhythm and cascading noise. Castro notes the humidity-softened outlines of Royal Palms defining avenues to the sea, no more than a short missile flight from the coast of Florida.

“All right, Blackbeard, have Delta Tango get this Code.”

Chapter 2:

The Lovejoys Visit the Capital

Tuesday, June 13, 1972, 1:25 p.m.

My story begins with a family of five on their first vacation to sightsee and attend a meeting in the American capital. I first encounter them in a Howard Johnson's Motor Lodge, and their experience with the city's ambulance system, called Medical, is unusual, but it could easily be yours or mine! My activities in the safehouse next to their motel room are also different since Castro expects a lot in one week's time!

Entering Washington, D.C., the Lovejoys drive off the Beltway and notice a sudden deceleration as surrounding traffic envelops them.

"To be seized by forces from without, that's how old civilizations used to describe epilepsy," David Lovejoy comments, looking over at his wife, expanding to fullness in her last month of pregnancy. Slightly overweight, with shallow creases lining the edges of his smiling face, he turns his gaze to watch traffic as their station wagon moves slowly toward the city center. In the midday haze it's possible to distinguish distant monuments and the circular outlines of the Watergate buildings, aloft over the edge of the Potomac. "But now, dear, we know it starts from within...probably from just a single neuron..."

"David, please. Can't our neurons have a vacation? This is to be our time away from work, and a chance for the

children to see the capital. Rebecca can do her school report, and you can relax a little. You know I have the dinner coming up at the Watergate Hotel, but let's try and relax."

Margaret Lovejoy sweeps her auburn hair out of the way as she looks back at her youngest, Michael, age four, and Angel, age nine, sleeping obliviously in the rear. Wearing a swimsuit in readiness for the motel pool, Rebecca, who is twelve, stares at the river. Her long, lithe legs are bent up against the back of the parents' front seat, and her toes point down, as she waits to escape the car.

"I know, I know. We're looking forward to this, and we're going to have a great time. I just want to help you remember your medication."

"And yours?" she asks David.

Margaret fingers an alert bracelet on her wrist, which is resting on her full abdomen.

These discussions always focus on my pregnancy and how my risk of seizures could be bad for the fetus. Typical. He never wears a bracelet, still smokes—you can smell it on his clothes—and his asthma condition puts him at greater risk for attacks he won't acknowledge. But not so judgmental, she tells herself. He's under a lot of pressure and the competition in the insurance business keeps getting worse. Spending time with the family in the capital should be fun.

"My breathing's okay, honey. What we have to make sure of is that your seizures are under control.... Margaret, are you all right?"

There's a slight tremor on the left side of her face. Simultaneously a bright red ambulance speeds past, lights flashing overhead, leaving bursts of a siren echoing.

"I'm okay," she answers. "Just fine. Why?"

"Because you looked like you were about to get sick. You've been taking the pills?"

“Why do you keep asking?”

She looks into the visor mirror just as the twitching stops and she’s reassured. In the excitement of preparing for their trip and the upcoming convention, she skipped her morning dose of Dilantin. The mirror reflects an attractive woman with bright eyes, but who seems a touch anxious.

“Well, you seemed a little funny. I think...maybe...look, we’re on the bridge. Look at the buildings. Magnificent!”

As they move into the right-hand lane, they pass over the Potomac River and some verdant banks sheltering remnant wildlife. Ahead of them are white marble and granite monuments, expressions of American history and splendor. Within minutes they turn onto Virginia Avenue, rolling past the Watergate buildings, and head into the underground parking lot of the Howard Johnson’s, just as Margaret’s left eyelid begins to twitch. Once they check into Room 623, however, she feels fine. Across from them, in room 622, I ply my trade. An odd activity is transmitted on my 110.13 MHz microphone transmitter as Nixon’s Plumbers are just getting started.

Tuesday, 1:30 p.m.—Dr. Fielding’s office

Bob Haldeman, White House chief of staff for the president, hunches over a Medical Ambulance dispatch board watching a video of a break-in. He can hear static from a CIA channel, as well as the covert activities of his fact-finding committee, the “Plumbers,” led by Gordon Liddy and Howard Hunt. Working for the president, Haldeman follows the Plumbers’ efforts to get dirt on a National Security adviser named Daniel Ellsberg, who has given classified

information to the press. When you mess with the military industrial complex and the national defense system, no holds are barred, and my Cuban colleagues and I are all over this. I follow the dialogue through my own transmitters.

“Damn, they’re taking too long!” Haldeman says to himself. “I never should have let these guys organize this. They’d better get their butts out of there!”

Adjusting his headset to comprehend signals obfuscated by static, he hears the Plumbers communicate through five-watt, six-channel transceivers. They’re miles away, attempting an entry into the Los Angeles office of Ellsberg’s psychiatrist.

“Quiet! If you see Dr. Fielding’s Volvo, you say something. Otherwise, let’s get this over with!” Liddy tells Hunt. From his dispatch office, the crew-cut Haldeman winces as he listens to the two men prepare a Cuban-exile team to force their way into the doctor’s office, expecting police sirens at any minute. Ellsberg has divulged classified information about national security, the Pentagon Papers, and violent acts are taking place around the country. The Plumbers are hoping for evidence that Ellsberg is connected to the Russians and the Weatherpeople, an underground group of saboteurs who have been increasing in numbers. Failing that connection, they’ll be happy with any personal details the CIA hasn’t already uncovered about Ellsberg. His sexual escapades, his insecurities—anything that makes him look bad will make Nixon happy.

“Don’t worry, I’m looking out,” Hunt, allegedly retired from the CIA, responds. He watches his Cuban men climb through a broken window, carrying black muslin to cover their window reflections and a nylon rope for quick escape. “There they go! They’re inside!”

Haldeman can't discern whether it's Hunt or Liddy speaking, but by monitoring their exchanges he knows medical records are being pulled from the psychiatrist's files and photographed. The last sound he hears in the video is a car racing from the scene.

1:45 p.m.— Hinton meets Chuck Colson

Seen from above, Washington, D.C., is geometrically divided by two rivers, the Potomac and the Anacostia. The two rivers join in the center to make a Y, like the shape of a chromosome or a code, and in order to understand the city one must decipher the message within the form. Steel bridges cross over these ocean-destined waters, carrying long, uninterrupted columns of automobiles to and from diverse communities. One can see a sprawl of buildings and monuments interspersed with urban housing extending eight miles north to south, and eight miles east to west. To ambulance drivers it represents sixty-four square miles of inchoate catastrophe, more than a half-million potential passengers, in what's known as "the race."

Inside the Beltway of D.C., on a street lined with convenience stores, Hinton parks his green Mustang and begins his first day as an EMT, as well as embarking on a special mission. He walks to a building where the red letters MEDICAL AMBULANCE are emblazoned on a plate glass window and then, adjusting the zipper on his jumpsuit, he knocks loudly on the door. No answer. Pushing the door open he sees a lone couch furnishing a room along with a television set. Newscasters discuss the current election

contest for the president's office. The sound has made his earlier knocking inaudible and he hears snoring.

"Hey there!"

A somnolent body lies motionless on the couch.

"Hello. You okay?" He shakes the man, trying out the alert sequence from his CPR training.

"Whaaaaa..." The bespectacled face of Chuck Colson emerges, crowned by a shock of black hair. "Well, who the hell the...hey...oh, you're the new driver!" he sputters, as he sits up. "Can't hear you...TV..."

He moves slowly to the television, turns it off, and faces the visitor.

"Sorry, worked all night. And I had a lot of phone calls from the pres.... Hey, what'd you say your name was?"

"Hinton, James Hinton. You must be Mr. Colson."

A slight southern drawl defines Hinton's voice. Colson notes it as they shake hands, eyeing each other cautiously. Colson evaluates Hinton silently.

Something familiar about this face. Too enthusiastic, a little boyish. And he shakes hands soooo long...

"Mr. Nixon said someone would be training me on the job."

Seconds pass as Colson waits for Hinton to let go of his hand, and he smiles at the new driver. "That's right. Call me Colson. Ya'll worked in an ambulance before, James?" he asks, feigning a southern accent.

"No, I'm new to this."

"That's pretty obvious." Colson eyes the new uniform, dark blue without a stain.

"Pardon?" Hinton's expression is undaunted, though his shiny boots and clean jumpsuit confirm experience he doesn't have. His curly light brown hair contrasts with Colson's,

straight and dark, brushed back behind the horn-rimmed glasses. Both of them carry trauma scissors on their belts.

“Just kidding,” Colson says, focusing on the face.

Maybe twenty-five years old. A college kid and I've seen my share: long hair, long ideas—hopes for a quick rise in the ranks.

“So, your name’s Hinton? What kind of work you do before coming here?”

Colson turns back momentarily toward the TV.

“Law school.”

“Law school!” Colson booms, swinging back and crossing his arms and smiling. “Well, whatta you know! A lawyer! Whatta you wanta drive for, Hinton? Gonna be an ambulance chaser? Ha ha!”

“No, I’m...uh...looking for medical experience.”

“Oh yeah? Well, you’ll get that here all right. This company is special. In fact, as you already know, the owner happens to be the president of the United States. He likes to keep his hand in the medical world. But, you know something else? Drivers come and go. I’ve been here a few years and seen quite a few leave. We don’t always get excitement. Gets pretty tired, sometimes. A lot of what we do is cabbage factories.”

“Pardon me?”

“I said cabbage factories,” Colson repeats, pulling a cigarette from his shirt pocket. “What you call convalescent hospitals. You’ll see ’em when we get there. Know any first aid, Hinton?”

“Sure, advanced CPR,” Hinton answers, slapping the trauma scissors hanging from his thick leather belt.

“Ya’ll must be a rocket scientist! Well, come on, rookie. I’m gonna show you my car. You work with me today and another driver tomorrow. There’s four of us and we’re all

different. You're gonna learn each one of our styles. Fortunately, you start with me, 'cause I plan to teach you the most."

Outside, a red ambulance shimmers in the sunlight, the number "22" painted on its side. Colson opens the back and points to a cabinet above the locked gurney. As they climb inside there's a stillness, the smell of medical alcohol, and tightly spaced cabinets line the interior.

"Bandages and stuff in here. Gotta know where they all are for whenever we get the Big Three."

"Big what?"

"Code Three. Ever heard of life and death, Hinton? Lights and siren, man. Code Two means no siren. You can't drive as fast. And Code One's a normal transfer. You'll find out soon enough."

He shows Hinton sequential maneuvers for deploying the gurney, then takes first aid equipment from the cabinet as they study the assortment of dressings and paraphernalia.

"Company has a lot of stuff," Colson points out, "but we need more."

"How's that?"

"Technical advances. That and a demanding public. Our competition is a company called Therapy. They think everyone should get free health care, so they pick up all the bums on the street and expect you and me to pay for it. Health care's not a right, Hinton. It's a privilege and a responsibility you have to pay for. Know what I mean? You and I are supposed to pay for our own health care."

"You and I?" Hinton asks, holding up a pair of forceps.

"That's what I said. Put the tweezers back, Hinton. We use those things to pull out foreign bodies...from wounds."

"So how does this company keep from going bankrupt?"

“Good question. Look, this city pays for everything. Supports every bum on the street, along with the welfare mothers. Every unemployed dropout gets a new car every year, and our taxes pay for it. With a free expense account, who the hell would want to work anymore? Can you answer that?”

“That’s right,” Hinton agrees quickly. “You know something else, Colson? Ambulance drivers make a third of what the city garbage men average. On a wage basis, that is.”

“Is that right? Well, wait till you see what we pick up! Haah-ha!”

Hinton smiles as he hands back the forceps. “Listen, Colson. Everything’s about to change,” he says. “You and me, we’re the future. If we work together, health care will never be the same...”

“Buddy, you will never be the same! Ha-ha...”

Chapter 3: Howard Hughes' Biographer

Tuesday, 2:20 p.m.—Waiting room of the Pyramid

Who could ever question the Man
Who altered the original D.C. plan?
Who's the one that shaped this city?
A billionaire pilot receives my ditty.

Clifton Urning reflects on the words, wondering how his poem “The Freeway” will be received. A sizeable income awaits if his poems are published, but he still needs permission from Howard Hughes. Nearing his goal as he waits on the ground floor of the Pyramid, Hughes' Business Center, he has the sensation he's experienced it all before. And he has—countless times. Each day he arrives at the reception desk at the base of the city's tallest building, requesting an interview with Howard Hughes. Dressed in a dark suit, white shirt, and black tie, Urning has the countenance of an Anglo poet. His eyebrows arch up, his sensitive gaze peers outward, and his lips intimate a wish to rhyme. And each day he's told Mr. Hughes is unavailable.

As the world's richest man, Hughes avoids any meetings. Awkward and shy from his youth, he was catered to and protected by his mother, and allowed a \$5,000-a-week allowance by his itinerant father. Both parents died suddenly, and when Howard took over the family fortune at age eighteen, he never stopped the quest to make more money. As a mechanical genius in his childhood, he left behind his

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father's oil drilling ventures to make movies in Hollywood, pursued aviation, and began building an empire.

Urning explains to the receptionist that he's been assigned to write poems, has been paid a substantial salary to do so, and that a meeting with Hughes is imperative. He is always offered the opportunity to wait, and this Tuesday, like others, he sits down in the spacious lobby and recites his verses.

Yes, he's the one that circled the Earth
To show us all what flight is worth.
It was he that flew the planes
To set the records and win the dames.

He offered Terry and Gina the fame,
He was with Ella and Billie and Jane.
He courted Ava and the beautiful Jeans,
And married and made them all movie star queens.

Mona and June and Linda and Gail
And Mitzi and Ida and Ginger won't tell.
Olivia, Katherine, Elizabeth, Faith,
Yvonne and Bette won't give a trace.
Why do you take the reds out of the movies?
And fill them instead with gigantic boobies?
Why build the steamer to chop into pieces,
And shake hands wearing gloves to avoid diseases?

Spend fifty million to fatten the Goose,
Do all your business in white tennis shoes.
Deal in the billions without paying fees,
And eat by yourself and measure your peas?

Oh, where do you hide, what do you do,
Who reads your will when everything's through?
The whole world wonders, so please don't refuse,
Tell us you're living, and where, Mr. Hughes?

It's not easy being poetaster for a man who hasn't been seen in a decade. Urning wishes he could have been Hughes' doctor, or barber, though it would mean a lesser monthly stipend. Hughes hires thousands of employees and wants none of them in his presence. They're kept at work for years on the offhand chance he'll need their services, perhaps to have a haircut or administer an enema. On a rare occasion he may let a physician examine his body. But Hughes knows Urning wants to publish a biography about him, so he's hired the writer for life to be sure the book never gets published. Rumor has filtered down to Clifton, however, that an allegedly dying Hughes is bedridden and may be willing to listen to poems and tell his unpublished history.

2:35 p.m.—Howard Johnson's

Colson and Hinton leave the ambulance quarters and walk to a small restaurant at Howard Johnson's Motor Lodge. As they slide into a booth, Hinton's eyes focus on the waitress's legs, bare to the mid-thigh where her skirt stops. Sitting at the counter two men, one bald with a prominent forehead and the other hirsute and spooning into a large chocolate sundae, are deep in a discussion.

"So whatta you think?" Colson asks.

"About?" Hinton turns and watches as a toothpick splinters between Colson's teeth.

“The president, Hinton. The man who owns this company. The same man who’s in charge of the nation.”

“Well, he’s remarkable, Chuck! He rose all the way to become the leader of the United States. You know, to start off as an ambulance driver, then become an attorney and a politician, to build up this company and get where he is now, that’s extraordinary! He’s probably going to be re-elected and then he’ll be in a position to shape health care for the future.”

“Yeah, that’s exactly right. So, tell me something, Hinton. How’s a law student like you come to work for Medical, anyway?”

Hinton pauses, taking his eyes off the waitress, and checks again the holster of his trauma scissors. His answer comes soft and raspy.

“Well...I’m here for experience. To learn about the real world, just like you and Mr. Nixon have.”

Colson spits out the toothpick.

This guy is after something. For sure not the average Medical newcomer. Maybe he’ll end up switching over to Therapy and the blue team.

The struggle for domination between Medical and Therapy, the two major ambulance companies in D.C., has a long history. Presidents have always associated with one company or the other, the Republicans supporting the individualistic, market-based ideology of Medical, or the Democrats supporting the more collective, government-inclined actions of Therapy. Colson knows Therapy will do anything to regain prominence, and the competition between red and blue has intensified.

“When are we supposed to start working?” Hinton continues, ordering a cheeseburger and refocusing on the waitress’s thighs.

“We’re working right now.”

“We are?”

“That’s right. Dispatcher knows our location. Anything happens, they contact me.” Colson indicates a pager on his belt. Then looks hard at Hinton. “How come you never worked for the military?”

“How do you mean, Chuck?”

“I said, how is it you never worked for the military? I hear from our manager that you never signed up.”

“Well...uh...that’s uh...true. That is, I signed up, but I was still at the University, so I couldn’t really serve. I was...uh...what you call a Rhodes Scholar.”

“Is that right? Tell me about it, . I bet you know all about the world.”

“Sure, I know a little. But not like you, Chuck. That’s why I joined Medical, so I could learn more here on the ground floor. You think it’ll take long to train me?”

The two men sitting at the counter get up to leave, just as the three Lovejoy children enter the restaurant and take their seats. Michael sits on Rebecca’s lap as they ask for a menu to take to their parents. Angel reaches over and dips her finger in the remaining chocolate sundae left behind on the counter. Colson smiles at Angel and then answers Hinton’s question.

“Maybe not, if you keep your eyes open on something besides that waitress’s legs. It’s a slow day, Hinton. Not much to get worried about.”

“You mean we’re picking up patients today? My first day?”

“Sure. I just showed you the ambulance, didn’t I?”

“Well, Chuck, you showed me equipment. But you haven’t finished showing me how to hook up the oxygen.”

“Well, ya’ll just watch,” Colson assures him, using his southern accent again. “Ya’ll pick it up. College boy like you

ain't going to have any trouble, . You just said you were a scholar. Ain't that right?"

The bald man with a prominent forehead stands at the door, stopping to look closely at Colson before exiting. Colson recognizes him but says nothing and just then Colson's beeper emits high-pitched beeping signals. He curses as he squeezes himself out from the booth.

"Probably another emergency," he tells the waitress as she brings their food.

Hinton starts on a cheeseburger while Colson calls on the payphone and jots down an address.

"Code Two, !" he calls out as he hangs up. "Baby in trouble at City Hospital. We gotta hurry!"

Together they run back to the living quarters, dodging cars as they cross Virginia Avenue to the corner. Hinton climbs into the passenger seat of Car 22, feeling the thrill of his first ride as they accelerate forward. Colson swerves dangerously around an old woman with a shopping cart. No sooner have they headed down the Parkway, however, than he stops and makes a U-turn.

"We gotta pick up the incubator at the station. I almost forgot. Look out, Grandma, we're in a hurry!"

As they race back toward the station, the hapless woman rushes her shopping cart back to the sidewalk, away from the oncoming vehicle. Aluminum cans spill out of the cart and her mongrel dog barks at the passing ambulance.

"What's the incubator do, Chuck? It's for taking care of the babies?"

"Right. Thing we carry babies in. You've never seen one?"

"What are you talking about, man? I just started."

They swerve back into the right lane, narrowly missing a patrol car.

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“What’d they teach you in college, anyway? You don’t know what an incubator is? Listen, boy, we need it and you’re gonna handle it. While I drive. Thing is, don’t let on like you never used it before. When we get to City Hospital, they’ll be watching us.”

Chapter 4:

The Hepatitis Baby

Tuesday, 3:40 p.m.—City Hospital

Inside the hospital ER, the ambulance drivers arrive unannounced. A resuscitation is taking place in two different cubicles, and physicians and nurses hover over trauma tables shouting commands and acknowledgments. Heroin has found its way into the poorest sections of the city, having come from Mexico or by way of Cuba, and the results of alcohol and overdosage are never good. A nineteen-year-old woman in her third term of pregnancy, brought in comatose with her boyfriend, undergoes urgent procedures, as remnants of her clothing remain scattered aside on the floor, where they were removed using trauma scissors.

“Lactated Ringers! Give me another amp of calcium!”

“Right here. Ten milliliters calcium gluconate, Doctor. Forty-four milliequivalents bicarb. This is your second amp!”

A harried physician reaches for a long-needled syringe, then injects the contents into tubing connected to the vein of the naked woman.

“Move away, everybody! Stand back!” he shouts from the side.

“Clear, please! Paddles on. Okay, fire!”

POOMMT!

A blunt noise is followed by silence. Everyone watches the cardiac monitor, ignoring the odor of singed flesh.

“Okay, resume CPR. Get ready to defibrillate again. I saw a rhythm.”

Hinton stands in the first cubicle, uncertain what to do. He knows CPR, has performed flawlessly on a practice dummy, but he's still nervous he'll be asked to help in a real situation. Colson wipes dust from his glasses and leans against the incubator, waiting for someone to come forward with transfer papers.

"Hold CPR! Okay, everybody back! Clear, please! Fire!" the physician continues.

POOMMT!

Another silence, shorter than the first, is followed by a resumption of frenzied activity. Pharmaceutical interventions proceed futilely.

"EMD! I don't see a rhythm!" a nurse by the monitor calls out.

"Pump harder! I'm not getting any pulses!"

"Someone get OB down here! We called 'em five minutes ago!"

Sweat builds up on the ER doctor's brow, and Hinton's anxiety also increases as he watches the heart tracing go flat. The physician starts changing places with a nurse, who has lost stamina doing compressions. As he moves farther up the bedside, he spots Hinton.

"You!" the physician says, spotting him. "I need you to switch with me so I can run this code!"

Hinton passes around the machines nervously and then stands next to the woman. She's spread-eagled on the metal emergency bed, secured with gauze restraints over her wrists and ankles. Four IV bottles frame an image of last rites as he puts the palms of his hands on the sternum and begins pressing down.

"One thousand one, one thousand two..."

Her stomach is tight with air, the fetus pressing up on it, almost even with her ribcage.

“There they are!” the code doctor calls out as obstetricians finally approach from the side door. “Get some instruments!”

Colson keeps by the side of the incubator, still cleaning his glasses. Two orderlies next to him make their own assessment, having watched the woman come into the ER with her boyfriend. Both patients had arrived unconscious.

“Don’t think I wanna try anything they used,” the first says. “That woman’s gonna go a lot lower than she ever got high—can tell that just by lookin’ at ’er now. An’ that baby. That’s a crime.”

“Yeah, I heard that. Look at ’em. He’s colder than she is.”

In the next cubicle, the boyfriend’s resuscitation is not going well. A large tube sticks out his mouth and a nurse pumps saline solution to rinse out the stomach. Besides an occasional retching noise there are few signs of life from the drug-laden body.

“Man, a’least he might live,” the first orderly continues. “She ain’t gotta a snowflake’s chance...”

“Wait a minute. Watch, man. Just watch now, here comes OB. They’re gonna, oh Jesus, can you dig this? Watch it, Colson, you watching?”

Codes rarely run longer than twenty-five minutes in City Hospital. This one has been going for twenty and the end is approaching.

“Damn, man,” one of the orderlies whispers. “Chief resident’s doing it! Can you believe it, Colson? I’m telling you, the lady’s gotta be infected.”

Colson wipes the back of his neck with a handkerchief and looks over the crowd, watching the obstetrics residents rush into the room. They speak with the Emergency Room doctor and go to the side of the agonal woman.

“Knife and pick-ups! Prep her belly fast!”

Hinton presses on the woman's sternum, giving short, deep compressions.

"Deeper!"

At the foot of the table a female surgeon directs her partner, who slides a scalpel vertically across the taut, distended surface of the woman's abdomen. Blood rushes out as successive layers of skin and muscle give way to the underlying womb.

"Now, you up there, doing CPR. I want you to press down on the abdomen when I tell you to. Do you hear me? We'll need a little pressure to get his child out. Do you hear me?"

She looks up at Hinton, who's never seen a C-section, let alone assisted on one. Across from him another nurse has prepared to take over his chest compressions.

"Okay, now! Start pressing!" the chief resident urges. With a pair of scissors, she cuts through the top of the uterus, then with the help of pressure above she scoops out a helpless, barely squirming form. Amniotic fluid drips onto the mother's blood-soaked abdomen, and the baby looks dusky.

"Give it oxygen!"

Hinton, at first shocked, then is elated as he watches the baby turn pink, squirm, and emit a high-pitched cry. Immediately the chief resident clips and divides the umbilical cord and walks toward the incubator where Colson is waiting. Blood and amniotic fluid have soaked the bottom of her scrubs, and Colson backs up a few inches. She reaches into the incubator, pulls out a blanket, and wraps the newborn girl before handing her to him.

"Keep her warm. Bag her if you have to," she tells him. "And get her to Children's Hospital in five minutes. And please don't you crash, okay?"

“Wait a minute, Doc,” Colson protests. “We need some papers signed. We need a name...”

“Jane Doe. Now get going!”

4:05 p.m.—The first ambulance ride

“Don’t worry about a thing,” Colson tells Hinton as they slide the incubator into the back of the ambulance. “You’re gonna be steward on this run so you can get some experience. We’ll be there in no time.”

He closes the back doors and hops in front, behind the steering wheel. As he flicks on red lights and glances back, Hinton looks worried.

“Damn, Chuck, what exactly am I supposed to do?”

“Keep it pink,” Colson tells him, accelerating forward, “and don’t let it spread any bad stuff!”

Hinton puts on gloves and searches through the cabinets. When he looks back into the incubator the baby has stopped crying. The pink flush of its lips has become a mottled blue. A cold sensation runs through his stomach. Traffic and buildings appear and vanish through the rear window view of the ambulance, and fast lane changes throw him off balance.

“Chuck...”

“Yeah?”

“Baby’s blue. Where’s the Ambu bag?”

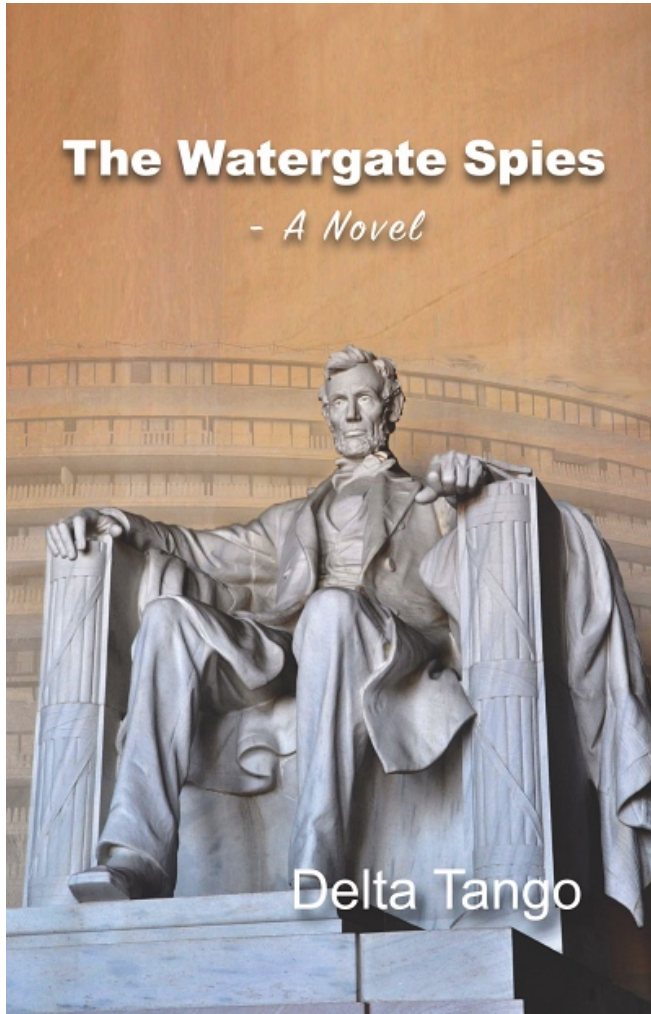
Colson gestures into the rear in several directions, hoping to pinpoint the Ambu bag for ventilating.

“Over...there.... Look on top of the whadda-ya-callit. Right there!”

“Come on, man!” Hinton says, reaching for and then tossing away an obviously oversized adult Ambu bag. “This can’t fit! Where’s the baby one?”

He has an urge to jump out of the vehicle and desert the whole rescue effort. Instead, he reaches for the infant, lifting him gently from the incubator so that he can seal his mouth around the nose and lips and blows short, quick breaths.

“Damn!” Colson proclaims, looking back at the blue-colored baby and then ahead at approaching traffic. “I seen a lotta resuscitations, but this takes the cake, buddy. Your eyes will probably turn yellow in a few weeks!”



The Watergate Spies, narrated by a Cuban-exile double agent during the final days of the Nixon presidency, is an allegory of healthcare in D.C., a review of CIA assassination attempts, and a turbulent history of Cuban/American affairs.

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