

# Dick Scalps the Injuns

Richard Avery

A Dick Avery Adventure Story

## Foreword

Is anyone looking over your shoulder? I hope not because what I have to tell in this story may shock you—the reader.

This story takes place in India and involves the kidnapping of the American Ambassador's daughter in Delhi. Of course, there's much more to the plot. It writhes and wriggles like a hyperactive anaconda riding an out-of-control rollercoaster at Disney World. I think that means it twists and turns a lot in the telling, but without constricting or ingesting the reader.

I also must warn you that there are instances of sex, drugs, and rock-and-roll strewn throughout the book so it's not something to be read lightly by the prudishly fainthearted. That's because sometimes those who protect and serve must strip-off life's pretentious veneer to discover the whole truth and nothing but the truth. However, finding truth in the federal government is often an iffy thing because there's always some fibbing going on with the bureaucrats. Truthfully, it's simply a matter of sorting out their lies from the prevarications. Ironically, they often use the most politically incorrect agents (that's where I come in) to help them maintain their own political correctness.

This is my second recall from retirement by my former employer, the Diplomatic Security Service, U.S. Department of State. I'm starting to detect an uncomfortable pattern here. It seems that no one else will take the assignments I'm offered and for good reason. They are all fraught with consequence and danger and I mean to Foreign Service careers.

I don't have one of those things anymore so I'm considered an expendable and disposable commodity by the organization. By the way, those are great attributes when you're playing the scapegoat for the big suits in the department. I've even started calling myself Avery the Goat Boy so no one misunderstands my role in these things.

I'm also needy--not emotionally, just financially. I need to make a quick buck off Uncle Sam while I still can. You see, I'm getting a little long-in-the-tooth as some might suggest for this kind of work. However, you should also be aware that I still have some bite left. That's another reason why the higher-ups keep hiring me back.

They know I'm a stubborn Rottweiler with an attitude when it comes to solving the tough cases. But I also take these risky assignments in order to defend truth, justice, and the American way. I must be a bit masochistic since I simply can't turn them down for patriotic or pecuniary reasons. Sometimes those who protect and serve are true red, white and blue public servants down to the cores of their overdrawn checkbooks.

So, please join me as I travel the world on behalf of the Diplomatic Security Service and uphold truth, justice and the American way!

Sincerely yours,

Richard M. Avery, III

Special Agent (ret.)  
Diplomatic Security Service  
U.S. Department of State



# Chapter 1

## Swallowing Pickled Herring

“Any ransom demands so far?” I inquired.

“No, not yet,” he replied. “We have not had any contact from the kidnapers. We’re obviously expecting something in the way of demands, but no communication at this point. The proof of life factor comes into play too as you well know.”

I must be a hungry glutton for punishment because I was seated before the Director of Investigations and Counterintelligence, Diplomatic Security Service, U.S. Department of State (and yes he likes that plenipotentiary and the extraordinary accolades that entails), and ever-so-politely holding my begging bowl in front of me.

I was flat broke and needed money to support my precarious standard of living. The cost of staples such as booze, cigarettes, and classy women had all become too expensive on my meager government pension. While I fully embraced consumerism as a true American value, I wasn’t a cheap date.

Unfortunately, Jersey Briggs accommodated my pathetic plea for more porridge by dropping red herrings into my bowl and I didn’t like their taste one bit. Fishy would have been a good descriptor.

I certainly wasn’t going to bite the hand that was offering to feed me once again, but I wasn’t going to swallow my chum whole either. Even in my desperate straits, I resented an obvious slight-of-hand job from a former colleague and sometime friend.

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The question was why? I thought. Why would Jersey spin a story he damn well knew I wouldn't buy? The answer was all too obvious: he had to hew to the bureaucratic script, no matter how lame it sounded to both of us. It wasn't so much what he was telling me since I had accepted much of it at face value. It was the stuff he was leaving out that bothered me most.

The devil is in the detail as some inane State Department pundit might say. I didn't want to get fired before I got back on the department's gravy train and headed for the lounge car. That wasn't my metaphor, but Jersey's. According to him, the choo-choo train with my name on it was pulling out of the station and I'd better get aboard if I ever wanted to work for DS again. Okay Jersey, I think I can, I think I can, I laughed to myself. And that was why I was here. He badly needed someone to pull the outfit's train. I was desperate for money and Jersey sensed my pecuniary neediness. Ok, all aboard folks!

"Avery, I know we've had our little differences in the past, but we need to put all the baggage behind us and work together. You're not much of a team player, but you've got to cooperate and coordinate your investigation with headquarters; that means me, specifically, like it or not. Otherwise, you'll be fired at once."

I viscerally responded to his hollow threat by opening my eyes. He had gotten my attention with that line and I sat a bit more erect in my chair.

Jersey continued telling his tall tale: "She was being driven to class at the International School of Delhi. The ISD caters to foreign kids whose parents comprise the top echelons of the international business community and diplomatic enclave in the Indian capital. Reportedly, the embassy chauffeur followed a predictable travel routine. He should have known to vary the routes and times to keep the opposition off balance. As you know

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very well, it's still one of the best and easiest countermeasures against being jacked or, in this instance, napped.”

I didn't correct him, but he should have added “hi kid” to the beginnings of those last words. They might have better befitted the circumstances. Maybe that was what the bad guys first said to the ambassador's daughter as she was being forced out of her vehicle at gunpoint.

“Maybe the driver thought it was a sobriety checkpoint,” I interjected. “The cops are really cracking down these days in India. I read that thirty-two percent of the traffic fatalities are due to drunk driving and the remainder to ordinary stupidity.” Of course, I made that stuff up out of whole cloth to bolster my credibility. Not surprisingly, my whole cloth was much too transparent, even for Jersey.

He shot me a dirty look and rolled his eyes at the same time. He could simultaneously chew gum too since Jersey was a multitalented DS agent. That was how he ascended so quickly in the department hierarchy. That and the fact he was good at kissing ass at the right time and in the right place. The place was easy to locate, but the timing was more difficult. He had to find targets of opportunity that could enhance his career and he had an uncanny knack for such things. Regardless, Jersey was a natural butt-boy, a successful agent, and a rising star in the organization. And I was envious.

“It's just basic Security 101 stuff, even absent any specific security concerns. Obviously, we still don't get the message through to some,” Jersey mentioned to no one in particular. He completely ignored my earlier interruption and clever theory of the crime.

He was certainly right about the message though. Following department security procedures and protocols was a huge pain in

the ass. They conflicted head-on with our innate sense of independence, individuality, and invincibility.

One of the biggest misconceptions about terrorists was the notion that they were all created equal, but they were most definitely not. For every trained, skilled, dedicated and savvy bad guy out there, there were two or three others who were bumblers of the first order. They sometimes made the most stupid mistakes imaginable and didn't succeed in bagging their intended quarry.

Unless the target was a well-known official or personality, these little failures and fiascos usually got no more than a few lines under the fold of an inside section of the international papers. Sometimes, with smaller fish, the incidents didn't even catch the attention of the media. Moreover, in a number of ransom cases, the victim's family and friends often kept the matter intentionally secret and away from the authorities and press. They would rather take their chances dealing directly with the bad guys than the government authorities. That was because those players were sometimes one and the same.

Sometimes we Americans didn't need to look abroad or under our bed for the scary bogeymen.

Jersey got up from his desk and started pacing his office. This was a standard routine when he was trying to spin something or to outright lie. He probably thought that the walking and talking bit was a more persuasive communication method with his audience of one. However, I'd seen him do this little ritual on more than one occasion for other, more gullible people. It was one more indication that he was trying to scam me.

Jersey paused to sip his coffee and then continued his story. Fortunately, he didn't spill any brew on his heavily-starched shirt. It probably would have gone unnoticed since starched and stuffed shirts were a common sight in the building. But Beth, his second

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wife, would have surely blamed me for her husband's clumsiness. We didn't get along since I occasionally pulled childish pranks on her husband.

"The ambassador's daughter would have been sitting in the backseat of the car, if she had followed normal practice. From sketchy eyewitness reports, we have been able to piece together that her vehicle was intercepted at a narrow cross-section of road about a mile from the school. It was the perfect chokepoint for a grab. Her car was cut-off by a tanker truck that pulled in front of it. The chauffeur probably didn't have enough room to perform a bootleg or J-turn maneuver to escape; even if he knew how to execute one in the first place."

"Three bad guys popped open the front passenger door with a jaws-of-life rig. The GPS device secreted in the vehicle activated and alerted the embassy security office, but by the time the cops arrived at the scene, it was much too late; the embassy driver and the ambassador's daughter had been kidnapped. The entire operation took about four minutes which indicated that these guys were damned good. As best we can tell, there were no amateurs involved in this grab-and-run operation, other than the chauffeur."

I let Jersey ramble on since I was interested in seeing how far he could push my envelope before I could no longer remain stationary. I didn't doubt the fact that the ambassador's daughter had been kidnapped—CNN had already carried the story during its early morning news shows. What had me wondering was the fine print of the story that Jersey wasn't disclosing.

As DS's Director of Investigations, he was the man on the spot to make things better. Ideally, making them better meant recovering the ambassador's daughter, alive and in good health. Making things second better meant finding a credible scapegoat to lay things off on if the investigation didn't go well. I had been in

his spot for several years before retiring and knew how hot the seat he was occupying could get. I also clearly understood my new role in this drama.

“Jersey, why do I sense I’m not getting the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth from you?” I pointedly asked.

“It’s the old need-to-know principle at play, Avery,” he responded. “You know the rules: you don’t get any more information than necessary to do your job. You’ll be further briefed on the case and what’s expected of you when you get to post. Until then, that’s all the information you’re getting from HQ. You either go with the flow or you don’t go at all.”

“But why choose me?” I plaintively whined. “There are several experienced agents at post who can certainly do the job. In fact, they’d probably do a better job since they’re already familiar with the local scene and circumstances.”

“Avery, that’s precisely the problem. They’re too damn close to the situation. They are likely to be called before the department’s Accountability Review Board, if one is convened. We need someone who’s not connected with the case in any way, shape, or form. We have to use the ‘odd man out’ strategy on this one.”

“We need to send someone we can depend on, someone who won’t spin the facts and circumstances of the incident and someone who already has a valid multiple-entry visa for India. You’re definitely the oddest person I could think of so that’s why you’re here.”

I told him to go screw himself, if he could find his ass with either hand. I mentioned that if he needed any help, he could call in his stud bitch admin assistant to give a firm shove. I noticed that it was the first time Jersey had laughed during our meeting. He

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must have had some anal retentive hope that things would turn out okay for him in the end.

“So what’s my role in all of this?” I asked. “Playing the teat on the bull or perhaps something more practical that I can actually milk for a change?” I uttered, thinking I might have cowed him with my clever bons mots. I couldn’t help the puns and wordplay because real actions and decisions might have unintended consequences. Those could be career limiting or deadly if you weren’t careful, I remembered from my early career. Regardless, Jersey deftly sidestepped my childish nonsense.

“You will serve as the principal liaison officer between the local authorities and the embassy. As such, your role will be to coordinate the flow of investigative information back and forth between our government and the Indian authorities. The bottom line, you will be the point man for the U.S. government in the investigation of this incident. However, you will not, under any circumstances, put on your gumshoes and beat the bushes or the pavement for the bad guys. You will not play the hero in this drama; no Lone Ranger stuff this time. Do you hear me Avery?”

Jersey was getting red in the face. It was obvious that his blood pressure was peaking. Maybe I could push him over the edge and stroke-him out. Sometimes collegiality was a fickle and feckless thing among those who served and protected.

“Loud and clear, boss man. Yes sir, ten-four and five by five,” I replied by the numbers.

Jersey sat down and was quiet. He looked emotionally drained and probably felt like shit on a shoe.

I thought about what Jersey had mentioned earlier. The old need-to-know principle for Christ’s sake! I knew the principle by heart. I had been repeatedly kneed trying to know things during

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my DS career. My groin was so swollen that my cup had runneth over, I silently groaned.

Ok, I would go with what he gave me, but I didn't like it. I knew there was more to the story than what Jersey was telling me. I'd have to uncover the facts the old-fashioned way by doing solid detective work.

Yeah, right. Instead, I would work the old boy and girl network for more information and some answers. The department grapevine was a good source of juicy gossip and I would tap into it. I just needed to squeeze the rest out of Mother State since she had always quenched my thirst for scuttlebutt in the past.

The meeting was over. Jersey knew what he wanted me to do, and I knew what I was going to do. We both knew they weren't the same thing.

## Chapter 2

### High Noon for the Long Knives

Jimbo Rainwater was a full-blooded Sioux and a senior intelligence analyst assigned to DS's Threat Intelligence Division. Despite being from the most litigious Indian tribe in American history, he was also a first-rate research analyst who invariably got things right.

Listening to the department drums was a favorite pastime for him and he could pick up on their rhythms and cadences like no one else. He had the ear to discern the most subtle nuances of the drum beats and decipher their meanings. We had worked together off-and-on for years and had become friends; at least as much as possible in the department. "What do you mean 'we' white man?"

Sometimes friendship was only skin-deep for those who served and protected.

I joked a bit with Jimbo and then got down to business.

"Jimbo, what are the drums saying about the Delhi kidnapping?"

He smirked and immediately shot back that it wasn't kosher. I thanked him for his slice of Hebrew baloney. He had a wry sense of humor for a Gentile Indian and I tried asking again.

"Okay, what do you hear, wiseass?"

Jimbo immediately fell into his standard routine for such occasions by doing his Soaring Eagle shtick, as he liked to call it. He dropped to his knees and then put his ear to the floor, listening intently for the linoleum to reveal its wisdom.

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“I hear buffalo, kemosabe, many angry buffalo. It sounds like a large herd thundering through the hallways of Main State. Do not stand in its path or you will surely perish,” he spoke in flawless, Native American English. “I hear more, my pale-faced friend. I hear the Big Chiefs are extremely upset; on the warpath as my red brethren might have said without reservations. However, no one can figure out why. They’ve gotten past last week’s diplomatic snafu over the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, so go figure. The ambassador’s daughter is not a big deal in the overall scheme of things, but the seventh floor is really uptight and nervous over the incident. The reaction’s way out of proportion to the incident in my humble, Injun opinion.”

He then stood up, raised his right arm, and loudly said “How.”

As a Washingtonian, I enjoyed the Redskin’s home games so I asked, “How what, you frigging moron?”

“How do you think I learned that bit of gossip?” he responded.

“I have no clue so tell me O Wise One of the Endless Prairie,” I plainly asked.

“It was easy, my friend. I spoke with Andy Grafton, the shift-leader of the Secretary’s Detail earlier this morning. He filled me in on what was happening under the big-top teepee. The take away message is that the clowns and natives are restless.”

Jimbo’s opinions and sources were always good enough for me. What had the building so damn riled up? I wondered. I had no clue and neither did Jimbo. He said that a number of senior DS powers came into the building in the wee hours to powwow about the problem. I played his game of cowboys and Indians and asked how he knew that bit of trivia.

“Ugh, I checked the keycard access records when I arrived to see who else was in the building. I was curious and, as an anal

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retentive intelligence officer, I ran a report of the entry logs. That's how. It's an old Injun trick like hobbling our horses so they don't run off at night. Keep that bit of folklore under your war bonnet, white man. May the spirits of the soaring eagles peck-out both of my eyes if I'm lying to you, my friend."

I told him not to worry since he was already a bona fide pecker-head in my book.

"Okay, who done it, my brave chief? What are your counterparts in the intelligence community saying about the likely culprits?"

"They have already rounded up the usual suspects on paper; al-Qaida, the Tamil Tigers, Sikh separatists, common criminals, the Pope, who knows? They certainly don't. The list is endless, meaning they don't have a clue. It's a sad comment, but the community lost its edge years ago when they went for the high-tech, flash-bang, intelligence acquisition crap rather than employing the old-fashioned HUMINT techniques: the human spies."

"With the Soviets becoming good capitalists, the justification and interest for human intelligence sources dried up. Nobody cared about such outdated, antiquated methods of intelligence collection since it was much too low-brow for the TECHNO-MENSA crowd in the community."

Jimbo had gotten serious and I could tell he was on a personal vision quest because his eyes rolled up and he spoke in the disembodied voices of his ancestors. The sun-catcher hanging from his desk lamp looked like it was about to vibrate. This was going to be important stuff and I listened closely to what he had to say.

"It's now about plucking data from the ether, even though we have trouble digesting what we've collected. The trained linguists

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and analysts deciphering what we learn through these fancy methodologies either don't exist or are in short supply. However, accurate interpretation is the tough part."

"All the data collected is largely worthless if you can't determine the intentions of the bad guys. And you can't discern those things without having a real, live person inside a terrorist organization to give the stuff context and perspective—a reality check. We're now paying the price for ignoring tried-and-true intelligence collection methods and sources and shame on us! Thank God we retained our half-vast counterintelligence skills," he snickered while still entranced.

"Avery, spying has been called the world's second-oldest profession for good reason. We didn't have satellite imagery and communications intercepts for much of our history. We can thank the technocrats for leading us astray and leaving us vulnerable. Why? Because human spies don't make for high-dollar procurement awards to the private sector contractors; what President Dwight Eisenhower called the Military-Industrial Complex."

"The President was right as far as he went, but now the private intelligence and security service providers should be added to the mix to make the term more accurate. We should have renamed the thing as the Military-Industrial-Intelligence-Security Complex. Christ, the Pentagon wonks would love to come up with an acronym for that one."

"Avery, here's another point you need to know about these terrorists, especially the fundamentalists and extremists. They can't be easily bribed. You know that's how much of the human intelligence was gained in the past, especially during the Cold War. 'Money talked and bullshit walked' as we said then. By and

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large, that simply doesn't work today since we're dealing with religious idealists, zealots and not greedy apparatchiks".

Jimbo was now profusely sweating and breathing heavily. I worried that he might have a heart attack if he pushed his out-of-body experience too far, but I didn't interrupt him.

"We have a complex all right, but it's not a good one in my opinion. The government has outsourced many intelligence and security functions to the private sector. The jury's still out whether that's a good or bad thing for our nation."

I acknowledged that much of what Jimbo said rang true. We had been asleep at the switch for years when it came to accurately predicting, disrupting, and thwarting terrorist events around the world with 9/11 just one example. We sometimes picked the low-hanging fruit, but often missed the forest for the trees. I wasn't sure we were now much safer as a nation without matches aboard our aircraft and having a color chart of terrorist threat alerts to remind us we had a serious problem. Why did it seem that our leaders were colorblind and in the dark about such things? Were they afraid the American public might question our nation's foreign affairs policies around the world? What led us to this point in our country's history? How did we alienate much of the moderate Muslim population around the world?

Oh my God, I was on a vision quest too!

In my mind, secrecy cut both ways by hiding failures and screw-ups. I'd rather rely on a sleeping pill and a glass of Zinfandel for a good night's rest. That was just me and I tended to wax cynically and sarcastically. I readily acknowledged that my sage insights into the world's problems grew after each glass of wine.

Jimbo awakened from his dreamlike state and changed horses in the middle of the stream. That wasn't a safe thing to do unless

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