

To Trap A Tiger Lily
By
Jonathan Brothers

In the near future, the world seemed quiet peaceful. There had not been a war for over thirty years. However despite the lack of open aggression, politicians coupled with various private groups pushed for it. Soon two global covert networks emerged that worked against each other. They were arrayed along similar lines of the east-west bloc countries of the old cold war.

Yet something within the conflict changed. Within a few years the eastern allied countries were usurped by a new insidious global entity. This group came about when an armistice was signed which relaxed the hidden aggressions. That caused a few politicians to quietly rebel. These highly placed people had connections to the underworld and used the covert war to line their pockets and gain more power. Yet a cooling of the conflict had hurt them financially.

These powerful people turned to the crime syndicates who had been eagerly egging on the fight from the sidelines. When they realized that the world was becoming more peaceful, they banded together and formed their own global organization. One that they could use to reignite the fight.

The three main criminal organizations behind the group were the Chinese triads, Japanese Yakuza, and the Russian mob. This new faction, known as Vanguard, worked to increase its power and profits. In response, many countries formed clandestine task forces to combat Vanguard. Though, in some ways these government groups were just as ruthless as the criminals they combated.

Rome, Italy, April 8 2130

On a sunny Saturday afternoon, Rome was bustling and full of tourists. They were gawking at the scenery, taking lots of pictures, and hanging around eateries that were quietly taking advantage of them. The locals, on the other hand, were trying to avoid the major tourist traps while going about their lives.

Along one narrow street lined with four story apartment buildings, a church, and a small piazza, strode one man. He was a tall sort of person with a long lean frame. His clean cut face showed his middling age while his short cut black hair gave off a no-nonsense air. The man's clothes were not flashy while his movements showed he had martial training.

As the man strode through the crowds he eyed everyone he past. He saw various merchants and their small hole-in-the-wall establishments. Plus he passed people casually window shopping, gossiping, and generally enjoying the weekend. He even spotted a girl of maybe nine years old gawking at a toy store. In the end he discounted them all.

Unseen by the man, the little girl broke off from gazing at the toys. She wore simple shoes, knee socks, off red knee length skirt, and a white t-shirt with a cartoon bear emblazoned on its front. Her long light brown hair loosely blew about with the breeze. The girl's face, with its large brown eyes and cute nose, showed the carefree nature of a child. Yet once she glanced the man walking away, her face became serious.

Regaining her playful demeanor, the child began to skip behind the man. She mischievously darted around various people and even took a moment to gawk at something. Yet all the while she covertly kept him in sight.

Unknowingly, the man led the little girl towards a narrow alley between two tall buildings. There he intently studied the stained walls until he found what he was looking for. Reaching into his pocket for his phone, he brought it up to the spot, and got it to shine a black light. This illuminated a bar code which had been printed on the wall with UV ink. The man scanned the code with his phone and watched the device decode the message.

While the man intently peered at his phone, the little girl quietly entered the slender space. She ducked behind some garbage cans and softly slipped a hand into a skirt pocket. Withdrawing the hand, she held a small tube that looked like an old cigarette. Briefly eyeing the thing, the girl put it in her mouth. Staring at the man, she took a deep breath around the device, then exhaled through it.

With a soft rapid hiss, the device shot out a small pellet. It slammed into the man's back. To him, it felt as if he had been stung by a bee or wasp. Plus the pellet rapidly dissolved

leaving no hard object in the wound. Furiously he tried to reach back and rub the spot. While the girl ducked behind the garbage cans and waited.

Ignoring the pain, the man studied his phone waiting for the instructions left for him. Then he began to notice his hands started to shake causing him to drop his phone. Rapidly he fell to the ground violently shuddering. White foam poured out of his mouth and five minutes later he was dead.

Making sure no one had seen the man's death, the girl got up and headed towards the body. She kneeled down, picked up the phone, and searched his pockets. Afterword she stood up and left the alley. There she handed everything from the corpse to a waiting man. Then she continued on to another street. Behind her the person who received the things disappeared into the crowds.

Once the young girl melded back into the multitudes, her demeanor shifted back to that of a regular child. The only difference was that she now seemed to be purposely striding along the street. Before long she arrived at the intersection between two narrow streets.

Briefly she gazed in both directions looking for something. Then after a moment the girl spied a candy seller across the intersection. She crossed the road and began peering intently at the candy. With a coveting gaze, the girl peered at each bin trying to figure out what she wanted.

While she did that, the girl lightly reached a hand up to the back of her head. It at first appeared as if she was satisfying an itch. Yet carefully the girl pulled aside her hair revealing two things. One was that her hair was a very realistic wig. The other was that when she moved aside some of her hair, the girl uncovered a pair of human eyes. They looked exactly like the eyes on her face. Once the hair was slightly out of the way, both eye lids opened up and she peered about behind her.

While most of the girl's actions suggested a child looking for the right candy, she used her rear eyes to covertly peer at the crowd. Before long the girl spotted a no-nonsense woman striding through the crowd. She wore simple trousers and a tough work shirt. Her long dark brown hair was pulled back revealing a stern face.

Satisfied she had found her next target, the young girl closed her rear eyes and settled her wig. Then she reached into a pocket for a Euro and selected a cherry lollipop. After paying, she slipped the candy into her mouth. Then she turned around and began playfully skipping down the street.

The little girl tailed the woman along three blocks. On the one hand, she tried to act as innocent as she could. Yet she also attempted to be discreet. So far it worked as few people paid attention to her.

After ten minutes, the woman came to a piazza with a small fountain and local parish church. Off to one side was a small café, many of its tables were full of locals relaxing. While other people hung around the fountain. Interspersed between it all were flocks of pigeons cooing and looking for whatever scraps they could find.

Briefly the girl played with the pigeons causing them to quickly fly up into the air away from the child. That caused some adults to laugh and enjoy the sight of the girl playing. Yet underneath her play, the girl had kept an eye on the woman.

After a couple moments, her target strode towards the side of the church. Before long the woman had stepped down into a two step depression beside the church. Within that lower portion was a small thick wooden door. Instead of going inside, the woman chose to lean against the wall beside the door waiting for someone.

Taking a chance, the girl playfully ran through the space past the woman as if she was chasing after something. For a moment the woman casually watched the child, but quickly discounted her. Meanwhile the girl came back and squatted down against the building wall opposite the church. There she happily sucked on her lollipop innocently. Peering at the girl, the woman tried to act more nondescript than before.

While the girl happily sucked on her candy, she softly reached into a pocket and pulled out a second small tube. Unlike the last time, the child could not bring it up to her mouth without being noticed by her target. While she played with the candy in her mouth with one hand, she cautiously spread her legs a bit. Unnoticed by the woman, the girl lightly lifted up her skirt revealing another strange facet. Instead of childish underwear, the girl had a second face tucked down by her groin.

As her regular face peered about enjoying her candy, her lower face stared intently at the woman as best as it could from between her legs. The girl took the small pellet gun and brought it down to her second mouth. Briefly she took aim, then with a sharp puff of breath, the girl fired a pellet into the waiting woman. After that she quickly closed her legs hiding her second face. All the while her regular face seemed totally innocent.

The impact of the BB caused the woman to hurriedly peer about. When she saw the girl had not changed positions, the woman then began searching the roofs. However, like the man, the pellet caused her to begin shuddering violently. Within five minutes the woman was dead.

Abruptly the child got up and strode over to the corpse. Briefly she leaned down to rifle through the body's pockets. All she found was a cell phone and billfold.

The girl paused to take the lollipop out of her mouth. Then, while angled away from any onlookers, the child raised her skirt exposing her lower face. It had an expectant look as she brought the lollipop down and stuck it into her lower mouth. With some quick crunching sounds, she removed the now empty stick. Discarding it, she lowered her skirt and retreated out of the spot. Her normal face focused on her task while her lower one happily sucked on the remains of the hard candy.

Dropping any pretenses, the girl hurried through another street. Before long she emerged into a wide boulevard. On either side were tall stone pillars topped with wrought iron lanterns. The buildings lining the long wide street had four story white marble exteriors with soft pastel tan painted sections. Yet the most stunning feature was the huge Saint Paul's cathedral at the very end of the boulevard. It's tall domed spire dominated the local scenery.

However the girl was not paying attention to the stunning sight. Instead she searched and located the same man she handed her previous target's things too. The girl strode over and he indicated for her to follow him. The two made their way through the bustling area and found a nice discreet place.

"Is it done A125," the man asked with a serious tone. His age lined face and salt and pepper beard brooked no nonsense.

The girl nodded and used sign language to say yes.

"Did she have anything on her?"

A125 signed, *she had these*. After finishing up the last hand sign, the girl reached into her pockets and fished out the woman's phone and billfold. Without hesitation, A125 handed them to the man.

"Thank you. Did anyone see you take care of her?"

A125 shook her head no.

"Good job. Return to the safe house and wait."

Yes sir, the young girl rapidly signed to the man. With that the pair broke apart. The man strode away from the spot towards the cathedral while the girl exited the other way. Seeing a small general store off to the side, A125 strode into the establishment. She silently asked for a chocolate bar and paid. Back in the safe house, if the girl liked the lollipop, the chocolate bar was truly her favorite by the way she reverently ate it slowly.

"Papa what'cha doing," innocently inquired a young Japanese toddler to her father.

"I'm working right now."

"On what?"

"Just some paperwork Oni," the man sighed looking away from his paper strewn desk. Briefly he peered out his office window at the Zen garden he and his wife maintained. Though at the moment it did not look as tranquil with all of Oni's toys strewn about.

"Wana' come out and play," insisted the child.

"I wish I could hun, but daddy needs to work. I'll come out later." The father spoke as he leaned down to kiss his daughter on her forehead.

The young girl pouted before dashing out of the room. He could hear her heavy footsteps thudding through the house and back out into the garden. There she began to play with her dolls.

Back up in his office, the man contemplated the child from afar. Her innocence brought a smile to his tired face. However the trade agreement he was writing needed his attention.

"Pardon me minster Ito, but would you like some more tea," softly asked one of his aids. The aid stood respectfully in the doorway with a downcast head waiting.

"Yes please," gratefully responded Ito.

"Right away."

Minister Ito knew despite his promise, it was going to be a long night. The trade agreement between Japan and the European Union was far too important to be put off. He had to get the first draft written as soon as possible for the other ministers to review.

Ito knew there had been rumors that certain groups wanted it scuttled and were willing to kill to stop it. The main reason was that the deal was slightly favorable to Europe. Yet it would have long term positive affects for his country. However certain private groups were worried they would lose money and were willing to do anything to stop it. Even if that meant killing the creator of the agreement.

At first the government suggested Ito stay in one of their fortified compounds. Yet to him, those places felt more like fortresses than homes. Minister Ito instead chose to be in the one place where he felt the most comfortable. So in the end, he had numerous police and military guards trying to secure his home.

Hours later on the far side of the house, a small shadowy person lightly leaped over the retaining wall. Silently they rushed along a stretch of darkness beside the outer barricade. Up ahead was a military guard making his rounds. The person ducked down and waited for the guard to pass. Then with a silent dash, the black clad figure quickly cut the guards throat from behind. Carefully they dropped the body, then grabbed for his radio and turned it off. Finally they dragged the body into the bushes.

Next the intruder moved back into the darkness and made their way along the exterior retaining walls. What little light there was showed that the person was clad head to toe in black reminiscent of the old ninjas. On top of that, the figure did not have a traditionally human form. It seemed as if they had more limbs than normal.

Before long the intruder crossed over to a sturdy rain gutter beside the house. Dexterously the person ascended the pipe to the tiled roof above. Once at the top, the intruder crouched and made sure they had not been seen.

Satisfied, they softly crossed the roof towards an open window. Coming closer, the person ducked and checked the other

side. Viewing an empty hallway they made their way through the window and peered about.

Satisfied no one had seen them, the intruder stood up and silently padded along the hallway. Within moments they arrived at a set of wooden stairs. Briefly they checked to see how squeaky the wood was. However the stairs did not make enough noise for them to be concerned. Afterward the person softly descended down to the ground floor.

Peering about, the black garbed intruder saw a family space to their left and a hallway to their right. Down that passageway was one room that had light coming from under the closed door. Carefully the person made their way to the door. There the intruder slightly cracked it open to peer inside. They saw Minister Ito standing with his back to the door stretching. After a moment he sat back down and continued to write.

Softly the intruder opened the door enough to enter. While they had been relatively obscured by the darkness, the single light on the man's desk dispelled the shadows that shrouded the person. Along with the ninja outfit, the intruder had four arms. Poking out the back of their rear was a long flexible tail covered by black, orange, and white striped fur reminiscent of tigers. The intruder's uncovered face revealed that they were an Asian girl in her early teens. The most striking thing about her face was it had one golden cat's eye in the center of her forehead.

Silently the girl made her way across the room towards the man. Within moments she loomed behind him and softly pulled a sharp knife out of its sheath. Then with one quick violent stroke, she lashed out one arm to restrain his head, the other two stopped his other arms from whipping about, while her fourth took the blade and dragged it across his throat. Her cut went so deep that she nearly severed his head. Minister Ito had no chance to call out.

Briefly she let the blood pour out of his neck. Then satisfied he was dead, she lowered the body to the ground. After that she reached into a pocket and pulled out an orange origami folded tiger lily. After placing the paper flower on Ito's chest, the killer left the room. Yet instead of leaving, as instructed she went about slashing the throats of each member

of his family. In the end she exited the charnel house the same way she came in.

"Damn, damn, damn..." angrily swore an older gentlemen who wore a formal military uniform full of medals. The general stood in an underground meeting room semi full of politicians and military personnel.

"Calm down general Kelly, what's the problem," questioned a female politician.

"Tiger Lily just got Minster Ito," Kelly morosely answered.

"What," quickly replied numerous people within the room.

"Ok folks, let's settle down and discuss this. Vanguard has assassinated three of the four people involved with the classified Japanese-European alliance talks." Spoke the president as she tried to calm everyone in the briefing room with her. That caused them to sit down along a long rectangular conference table. The lights in the room dimmed to focus on the participants.

"I'm not surprised that Minister Ito was killed," stated one Asian female.

"Why's that," questioned another general.

"Well he chose not to be relocated with his family to a safe house."

"He was at his home?"

"Yes. We tried to secure it as best as we could.."

"No wonder Tiger Lily was able to get at him," commented Kelly. "Essentially the pact is all but dead now. Japan and Europe would not want to risk more people."

"So Vanguard has won?"

"In this battle it seems so. There were various factions adamantly against the pact. Each stood to lose billions if it were to go through."

"So what are we going to do about the pact then," questioned a female officer.

"As of right now, nothing. Neither party is willing to discuss it while Vanguard keeps assassinating everyone involved," spoke up one politician.

For a couple minutes everyone was silent while they pondered the implications of what they discussed.

"We've got to do something about Vanguard's Tiger Lily assassin," muttered general Kelly.

"Who?"

"You know how Vanguard has an assassination program similar to our MX program right?"

"Yes?"

"Well Tiger Lily is their best assassin from their program," answered general Green.

"But why is this person called Tiger Lily? I ask because we don't allow our assassins nicknames."

The director of the assassin program spoke up. "While their program is similar to ours, it's not the same. They use a similar modification process to enhance their assassins, yet what they're using we're unsure. The only other noticeable difference is that they show a bit more creativity on their part," espoused the woman.

"So then how do we know about Tiger Lily?"

"From the origami tiger lily flower they always leave behind."

Everyone was silent as they pondered that.

"You know, I'm getting a bit tired of this cat and mouse game we've got going on with Vanguard," complained Kelly. "We need to find a way to get a leg up on them."

"Agreed," chimed in a few.

"One question, how prolific has this Tiger Lily been," asked another military officer.

The director who explained the assassination program spoke up. "Our intelligence suggest that Tiger Lily is their premier assassin. They're capable of getting inside even the most hardened safe house to take out their target. Do you remember that Bulgarian minister who was assassinated last year? The one who had lived in an underground fallout shelter?"

"That was Tiger Lily?"

"Yep. The assassin worked their way through a few ducts, hacked the secure door, then slashed the minister's throat," explained the director.

"Wow, can any of our assassins do that?"

"They have the capability."

"Here's an idea, what if we kill Tiger Lily then recover the corpse for our scientists to study," posed general Kelly.

"If we could do that, then yes we might be able to reverse engineer it," answered the director.

"An interesting idea, but how would we go about accomplishing that," asked the president.

For a moment each seemed to be pondering the problem. Then general Kelly spoke up. "How about we set up some sort of trap that causes Vanguard to send Tiger Lily. When they get there, then our best assassin takes them out. We'd kill two birds with one stone."

"How about this," added the defense secretary. "What if we leak that the Japanese is secretly trying to restart the talks. Except this time the person writing the pact is in some hardened bunker. Maybe away from Japan. We know that Vanguard has a deep interest in keeping that pact from happening and would do anything to stop it. Plus with this supposed 'negotiator' hiding in a bunker, Vanguard would have no choice but to send their best to make a point."

"That might work," agreed the president. "But the other question is, do we have an assassin at the same caliber as tiger Lily?"

The director did not answer right away. She seemed to be pondering the question. "Hmm... well we have numerous error free assassins who are quite capable madam. Yet I would not rank any of them as being absolutely on the same level as the Tiger Lily or at least they've never had the chance."

"Yet could any of them do it," asked Kelly.

"Theoretically. However we rarely have the chance to truly pit our assassins against a person of Tiger Lily's caliber."

"Hold on a second," asked another woman, the intelligence director. She had been silent throughout most of the conversation. "We just used one of your assassins to stop a Vanguard hit team from going active?"

"Oh yea, the Rising Dawn pair who wanted to bomb the Vatican," chimed in a man.

"Yep. We were having a hard time trying to track them down and stop them before they could execute their plan. Your assassin was instrumental in that operation."

"Oh you mean A125," asked the assassination director.

"Yes her," responded the intelligence director.

"I'm not too sure she's up to the task of hunting down Tiger Lily?"

"Why not?"

"A125 had numerous errors occur to her during her modification process."

"You mean all those strange things about her body?"

"Yes those. The vast majority of our active assassins either have no errors or only very minor things. The few that sustained major errors like A125 are either terminated or used for low level jobs where their problems won't be a hindrance."

"Well all I can say is that the job she pulled was no cakewalk. She executed her mission flawlessly and showed a lot of creativity when it came to finding the pair. I'd like to suggest we use A125 to hunt down and kill the Tiger Lily."

The president quietly listened to the two discussing A125. She turned to ask the assassination director, "what are A125's errors?"

"One second ma'am," responded the woman. She took out her tablet and typed in a few things. Before long she had a dossier on the assassin. "A125's errors are: she has a pair of eyes in the back of her head and also a second fully working face by her groin that replaced her sexual organs. Her feet were changed into another pair of hands. Plus she cannot speak out of either of her mouths."

"And you said she accomplished her task flawlessly?"

"Yes. She was able to hide her errors and terminated the two."

"If A125 was capable of stopping those two reclusive bombers, then I'm of a mind to let her try and take out Tiger Lily. It sounds as if her errors don't hinder her. Plus she makes good use of them," spoke the president.

"Yes ma'am," agreed the intelligence director.

"Then I say we go with the plan of setting up a trap and using A125 to take out Tiger Lily. Afterward we recover the body and figure out how Vanguard created the assassin," spoke the stately woman with some finality.

"Yes madam president," responded everyone around the room.

Over six hundred nautical miles south of Japan sat the tiny island of Iwo Jima. An island made famous by a massive World War Two battle that occurred there. Since then the island had

been returned to Japan and was being used for numerous defense purposes.

On one dark night, an Air Force cargo plane made its final approach towards the island's only airport. It slowed its engines and with a quick screech, each of its numerous wheels contacted the runway. The pilots slowed the craft and was escorted towards a wide open airfield that contained a few planes.

Once the plane came to a halt and shut down, the machine's rear cargo door slowly lowered. That exposed its wide open bay. In the middle of that space were numerous pallets of cargo. After that the plane crew began moving the pallets towards the open door. While that was happening, other personnel came over and helped unload the cargo.

One rectangular clamshell box that had been removed was a little over five feet long and a couple feet wide. It had been constructed out of hardened black plastic. It's most obvious feature was an electronic lock set in one side.

When the military personnel tried to lift the case, they found it heavier than expected. Quickly they called a few more people over and four workers lifted the case out of the plane. After that they carried it to a waiting truck.

Once the box was safely stowed, an officer and a civilian got into the truck and the pair drove off the field. For a couple moments the two navigated the island towards a building off to the side of the small facility. Once there, the civilian got out and went over to the non-descript building. There they lifted up its garage door while the officer backed the truck inside the windowless cinderblock structure.

"Is she safe," asked the military member after getting out of the truck.

"Hold on," the civilian spoke closing the door. Then the man climbed up into the truck and touched the box's lock. While it appeared to be a simple touch screen, after pressing a few things it displayed life sign readings. "She's stable."

"Good, it's time to wake her up."

"Understood," the civilian spoke as he began to type in some codes into the touch pad. Within a couple moments the screen indicated that the occupant inside was slowly coming out of their hibernation. Then at a certain point the computer opened the lock allowing both men to swing up the thing's top.

Opening the container revealed the same girl from Italy. Except she was not wearing a wig to hide her sheer bald head, similar to the other assassins. Her body was covered in a black tight suit, special boots that covered her strange hand like feet similar to gloves, and a small computer on her left wrist. Another oddity of her clothing was that the crotch and abdomen of her suit was open exposing her lower sleeping face.

Silently the officer reached into the side of the padding surrounding the girl and pulled out a small syringe. Making sure it was loaded right, the man exposed the thing's needle and injected its contents into the girl's neck. With that the girl became more flush as she continued to wake up.

"How long till A125 is fully awake," questioned the civilian.

"Five minutes."

"Good."

With that the two men watched A125 wake up. Soon the eyes on both of her faces fluttered open. Quickly each pair scanned her surroundings before eyeing the men watching her. Then she sat up and turned her head to regard the pair.

I am ready, the girl finally signed to the two.

"Very good," replied the officer with a pleased tone.

"Time to get out of there," responded the civilian.

A125 did as she was told and easily pushed herself out of the box. With cat-like agility, A125 jumped out of the truck and landed on her feet.

"Here consume this." Ordered the officer as he pulled out what looked like a power bar made out of some brownish pasty substance. A125 took the proffered food and rapidly ate it with her upper mouth. While she did that, briefly all six of her eyes peered about the space and saw that it was a small warehouse.

"Were you briefed on your mission before being packed," questioned the civilian.

Yes sir

"Very good. Minister Kato is currently in building twenty-six. She will be staying there while she works. Also Kato is under strict orders not to leave the building without an armed escort," explained the civilian.

Understood sir.

"While your overall orders is to hunt and kill the Tiger Lily assassin, I also want you to completely, but covertly, scout out the entire island. Next I want you to secretly observe not only the base's security, but also the people guarding her. Then I want you to find their weaknesses and how you would exploit them to kill Minister Kato. Understood?"

A125 nodded.

"Good, because your target may use the same things you discover. Your goal is not to protect the minister, but to kill the Tiger Lily. Above all, and I cannot stress this enough, you must not be seen," spoke the officer with a serious tone. "The gear you'll need is over there and there's a door in the back. It exits out behind the building."

Yes sir.

"Very good, get yourself geared up and start the mission."

A125 strode over to the spot the officer indicated and started opening boxes. She pulled out a small black nylon backpack and loaded it up with what she needed. Then she strapped on a few knives to a belt which she buckled around her waist above her lower face. Briefly she pondered taking a gun, but decided against it due to her orders to be discreet. Finally she grabbed a handful of food rations and a canteen. Then she stuffed them into the backpack which she slung over her shoulders.

Promptly she left and hurried away from the building into the darkened Iwo Jima landscape.

"Think she's up to the task," questioned the officer watching A125 depart.

"An error like her? Nah. I suspect she'll be slaughtered by Tiger Lily and the minister killed."

"True. If the council were being serious then they would have sent an error free girl."

"Well they never told us their reasoning behind their decision."

"Good point," casually agreed the officer as the pair left the building.

A day later A125 had a clear picture of the island. She followed her orders and explored every facet. Then she began to plan different ways she could kill the minister.

A125 concluded that as remote and impenetrable as the island was, once on shore there were numerous ways she could kill Kato. The two biggest questions she needed to answer were how was her target getting on the island and which way they would attack the minister. While she contemplated that, she pondered the limited information she had been given on her true target.

Standing atop Mount Suribachi A125 pondered her opponent while keeping an eye on the base. She did not understand why Tiger Lily would leave such an identifiable piece of evidence behind? Was it some sort of bragging?

A125 remembered her intense training as if it was yesterday despite the five years that had past. How she had started out as a nine year old orphan. Gabby had been her name before being unwillingly entered into the training program. She remembered how her training involved lots of pain while they trained her. Then came her modification process where she stopped aging, lost all her hair, and became stronger, faster, and more agile. About halfway through she developed numerous errors that resulted in her odd body. Beyond that came even more intense assassin training over a wide spectrum of weapons and tactics.

However thinking about the Tiger Lily's penchant to leave a folded flower after a kill struck A125 as odd. The reason was that A125's instructors clearly taught her to leave few traces behind if possible. That dropping something went against her training.

A125 always thought her enemies were just as trained as she had been. While the vast majority of her assignments were against non-assassins, she had gone up against one Vanguard killer. Her impression was the girl she fought seemed similar to the other error free girls in her program.

So A125 asked herself why would an accomplished assassin leave a calling card? Before long A125's enhanced mind began to puzzle out a reason why. It came as part of an undisclosed act she and her fellow assassins quietly did from time to time.

A125's masters expected her to live a stark life and only focus on her tasks. Her meals consisted of bland food bars, water, and rations. When she was not on an assignment she was

either held in a locked facility with stark amenities or was put into hibernation. Yet unnoticed by her handlers, A125 liked to sneak a chocolate bar every so often. Those candy bars were her only pleasure and her way of remembering her old life.

A125 wondered if dropping the folded flower was Tiger Lily's way of expressing herself and remembering her old life? That seemed to be the most logical conclusion based on what little evidence A125 had on Lily. Though it was not like A125 was ever going to get her questions answered. Not while being mute and having to kill her.

Pulling herself out of her memories, A125 pondered how Tiger Lily was getting on the island undetected. She concluded there were only two feasible ways. The least likely was by boat or submarine. While the boat would be easier to spot, the submarine would be more complex. She knew simpler transportation methods that were more reliable.

The other way was by cargo plane. Tiger Lily could either hide herself in a crate or pose as a crew member. While there was not a constant daily stream of aircraft, a few planes did land on the island every so often. In the end, A125 concluded that was the most likely route for the assassin.

For the next couple of days A125 stayed on Mount Suribachi watching the island below. She used her binoculars to zoom in and peer at every plane landing. Plus on the safe side she kept an eye on the beaches.

Along with that she listened to her radio scanner and the air tower's communications both in English and Japanese. What she heard was pretty standard for a military airport. Then on the third night, while snacking on a ration bar, A125 heard the tower receive a transmission from a plane low on fuel. Listening in, it identified itself as a Japanese defense force cargo plane.

Hurriedly wolfing down her dinner, A125 stood up and began peering at the sky. Through the scanner, she heard the tower clear the plane for landing. Then within moments she saw it softly land. Upon touching down, the machine's engines went silent presumably because they were out of fuel.

Using her binoculars, A125 watched the base send a tow truck to the plane. Once it was parked, she watched as a side door opened up and a group of people disembarked. They all

looked like regular military personnel. Each was relaxed and happy to be off the plane.

Briefly A125 was about to dismiss the landing. Yet after the scene died down, a group of soldiers drove a fuel truck over and began to refuel the plane. While that was happening, four quietly broke off and entered the craft. Within moments those same military members came back out carrying a long black box similar to A125's. She watched them load the box onto the truck.

Once the refueling truck was finished, it backed away from the plane. A125 watched the vehicle head back to the main hanger. However instead of parking in its usual spot, the soldiers drove the truck closer to the building. Though despite her vantage point, A125 could not see what they did after that.

A125 realized Tiger Lily was now on the island and in the hanger. She hurriedly packed what little she took out. Then she made her way off the mountain.

Forty minutes later, A125 began to creep through the base. Covertly under the darkness she worked her way outside the hanger. Being unsure of where the case might have gone, A125 formulated a plan to find out more. In the end she settled on the idea of climbing up to the roof.

Using her regular hands and hand-feet, A125 dexterously climbed up a stout pipe attached to the side of the building. Briefly she stopped halfway up and peered through a large set of windows. She used both of her faces to get a general sense of its layout. What she saw looked like a typical hanger.

After that A125 continued climbing. Occasionally she tipped her head backwards so she could peer behind her. Then she stepped onto the long roof and scanned the area for a way in. Quickly she found a lone roof door.

Lightly dashing across the roof, A125 came to a halt before the door. Finding it locked, she reached into a pouch and pulled out some lock picks. In under a couple minutes she had picked the lock and was softly descending a set of stairs into the hanger. The interior seemed relatively devoid of life. Though, she did pick up the echoes of the plane crew relaxing somewhere else inside the building.

After descending a level, A125 noticed there was a long roof atop the hanger offices and below the main ceiling. Carefully she went over the railing and onto the long dusty and

dirty space. Lightly tiptoeing across the roof, she tried to hear what was going on below her. A125 also saw numerous small ventilation grates. Those allowed her to covertly peer below and saw some kind of parts storage. Then at the far end A125 found what she had been looking for.

Below her appeared to be a cleared space with an unmanned counter. In the center of the open floor was the black hard case. The soldier she saw was standing guard over it.

Carefully A125 adjusted herself so she could get a better view below her. The soldiers silently waited forty minutes before a man walked in. This newcomer was Japanese and wore a pair of slacks and a tucked in buttoned short sleeved shirt. Upon seeing the box and soldiers, the man smiled.

"Did you have any problems getting this here," questioned the man.

"No sir," one of the military personnel responded.

"Good, good, here's your payment." With that the man pulled out envelopes and handed them to the soldiers. They opened them up to see a large amount of money inside.

"Thank you sir," responded one of the soldiers.

"You can go," the man instructed them.

A125 watched the man go about the room checking that he was truly alone. Satisfied, he then went back to the case, knelt, and typed a code into its side. After a moment the thing's locks snapped open revealing a sleeping young Asian teenager. Yet what struck A125 the most was that Tiger Lily was an error like her.

A125 knew that her agency felt that errors were inferior to non-error assassins. During the times she worked with an error free girl, A125 was always considered secondary. Each looked down at her. Yet A125 was confident with her abilities and knew she could get the job done. However seeing that Vanguard's top assassin, Tiger Lily, was an error caused a smile to cross A125's lower face. In a way that confirmed to A125 that she had as much potential as the girls.

Focusing on Tiger Lily's errors caused A125 to ponder how tough they might make killing her. By her estimates, A125 figured Lily's four arms would make hand to hand combat hard. When she saw Tiger Lily open her three eyes, she witnessed the third cat eye in the center of her forehead. She assumed that would grant Lily better night vision.

"Are you ready," the man asked Tiger Lily once she was fully awake.

"Yes sir," she responded with her young voice.

"Good, your target is in building twenty-five. You are to quietly enter the building without alerting security, take out the minister, then return here. You have exactly one hour to accomplish this, understood?"

"Yes sir."

"Good then gear up and go." The man stood up and watched the girl adroitly climb out of the box. Tiger Lily expertly reached into the sides of her container and pulled out two knives which she strapped to her belt. Then she took out an open faced hood and pulled it on over her bald head.

"You can exit through the window." A125 heard the squeak of the window being lifted open.

Softly she backed away from her vantage point and hurried back towards the stairwell. There she jumped over the metal railing and ascended back up to the roof. Dashing to the side of the building, she was just able to see Tiger Lily quietly dart away.

A125 descended down another pipe towards the ground below. Once down, she began stalking the other girl. She watched Tiger Lily silently move from one shadow to another as she got closer to the minister's building. In the back of her mind, A125 promised herself that she would practice that technique after the mission.

Hurriedly A125 had to figure out how she was going to attack the Vanguard assassin. Before long she realized the other assassin was planning on entering the building from the back. Pondering that, A125 realized it was the best way to get the minister.

She wished she had either a sniper rifle, dart gun, or some other silent weapon she could use to kill from afar. However her only effective weapon she had were her knives. Hefting one, she realized it was balanced.

Quietly the one assassin stalked the other. Before long she saw Tiger Lily making her way towards a spot she could climb into the building. A125 rapidly threw a knife at the other assassin. Unexpectedly Tiger Lily ducked causing the knife to slam hard into the wall. Then she dropped to a crouch looking

for where it came. Somehow the other assassin had sensed A125's presence.

Cautiously Lily silently moved away from the building searching for the person trying to kill her. A125 on the other hand kept her distance while contemplating her last knife. While it felt balanced enough to throw, she was leery about throwing it. Especially as Tiger Lily ducked the last one.

Finally A125 decided to outflank the other assassin. Lily peered about still trying to find who threw the knife. Then before she knew it, A125 launched herself. However, Tiger Lily ducked and rolled away from A125's lunge.

Coming back up, Tiger Lily assumed a combat crouch. A125 dropped into a pose and peered intently into the other girl's three eyes. There the two silently looked for some kind of weakness.

With a sudden swift motion, Tiger Lily darted two arms down to her belt and withdrew knives. A125 used that as a chance to kick at Lily's leg. Except, instead of kicking the other girl, A125 lunged in and used her foot-hand to grab Lily's leg. She let her momentum destabilize the other. That caused both to fall down. While Lily was briefly prone, A125 struck out with her knife trying to stab Lily.

Yet Tiger Lily rolled out of the way and whipped a knife at the other girl. A125 abruptly rolled out of the knife's range. After that both hurried to their feet and faced each other again.

This time it was Tiger Lily's chance for offence. She darted in and tried to use two of her free hands to grab A125's knife while striking out with both of hers. A125 countered by grabbing one of Lily's knives and moving out of the way of the other. Then A125 saw a chance to grab Lily's free knife.

While A125 struggled with Lily's four arms, she decided to again strike out with one of her feet hands. Using her right foot-hand, A125 grasped Lily's left ankle and yanked hard. That was enough to unbalance the Vanguard assassin. Yet Lily did not let go of A125 and both tumbled to the ground.

A125 used the fall to roll Tiger Lily on her back. Briefly Lily broke one of her knives free of A125's grasp and tried a quick jab. While she was able to cut the girl's arm, the Vanguard assassin was unable to land a decisive blow.

The cut was more than enough to cause A125 to quickly get off the other girl and rethink her strategy. She leaped back and into a defensive crouch. There she waited for the other girl to make her move.

For a couple minutes the two silently circled as they tried to figure out how to defeat the other. While they moved around, A125 noticed the knife she threw with her rear eyes. Having that knife would help. She dove for the discarded weapon and angled her rear eyes back at Lily while using her lower face to focus on the weapon.

Tiger Lily darted in to stop the other assassin from gaining her knife. However A125 dove into a judo roll. She used one of her feet hands to grab the knife and roll out of the way of Lily's lunge. Awkwardly she transferred the knife to her free hand just in time to block another lunge from Lily while on her back.

While A125 was prone on the ground, Lily chose to land punches and knife blows against the vulnerable girl. A125 on the other hand ignored the punches but blocked the knives with her own. Then she kicked out a leg into Lily's gut slamming Lily away. A125 quickly got to her feet and rushed the other girl who was still unbalanced from the shove. She leaped up in the air and landed a kick to Lily's chest which slammed Lily hard against the ground.

A125 closed the distance and used one foot-hand to stand on one knife wielding arm. Then she did the same with the other. Lily tried to use her free hands to throw strikes. However A125 withstood the pummeling and quickly lanced out with a blade, slamming it into Lily's stomach. Then with another blow, A125 jabbed her knife into Lily's heart.

The Vanguard assassin struggled a moment before her fatal injuries overcame her. Once Tiger Lily stopped moving, A125 reached down and checked the girl's neck to make sure she was dead. Satisfied, A125 first went about collecting whatever things both assassins dropped. Then using her enhanced strength, she carried the body over her shoulders like a fireman.

Carefully A125 made her way through the base. Before long she arrived outside of the building she woke up in. After knocking on the door, she was let in and dropped the body before the two stunned men.

I have completed my mission, signed A125 while huffing a bit.

"Tiger Lily was an error," questioned the officer.

"And A125 beat their top assassin," the civilian spoke in awe.

While the two men pondered the body, A125 went over to her box and pulled out a first aid kit to repair her wounds. After that she explained what she had seen, including the traitors who helped Tiger Lily.

In the end, the people who assisted Vanguard were arrested and interrogated. Tiger Lily's body was shipped back and dissected. While A125 silently enjoyed a chocolate bar before going back in her case. The after action reports showed how the council and assassin corps were reevaluating assassins with errors. Especially seeing how Tiger Lily was one herself.