

The Firebrand

by
Tom Menary

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Wingless Films
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tmenary2002@hotmail.com

1 INT. BRITISH INTELLIGENCE - RECEPTION - DAY

GEORGE CORNWELL walking, carrying a BRIEFCASE. Tracking shot, side on.

He approaches a desk, opens the case and places a DOCUMENT on the desk, reading: "A. BAINES".

CUT TO:

2 INT. BRITISH INTELLIGENCE - OUTSIDE CONTROL ROOM - DAY

An imposing door. Track in as Cornwell walks past, goes inside.

CONT:

3 INT. BRITISH INTELLIGENCE - CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Cornwell shuts the door, walks around a long conference table. ELLISON and KENT already seated. Cornwell takes his seat as ALISTER BAINES enters; everyone rises. All sit.

BAINES

Gentlemen. Richard Forrester is dead.

ELLISON

Tell us something new. Forrester went down with the Stonehouse a year back.

KENT

He was a whistleblower. He deserved six feet of sod.

Baines hands a DOCUMENT around.

BAINES

Yesterday, we intercepted a communiqué currently circulating the Eastern Bloc-as-was. It was delivered this morning by ah, Mr....?

CORNWELL

Uh, Cornwell, sir. George.

BAINES

Of course.

ELLISON

Have we decoded this?

(CONTINUED)

BAINES

Crypt is working on it. As far as we can tell, it contains telemetry projections on four moving targets in British naval space.

ELLISON

The Vanguards?

BAINES

Our best guess. With the correct codes in the wrong hands, our nuclear submarines would be -- well, sitting ducks. And as you can see, the document bears the signature of Richard Forrester.

ELLISON

A forgery.

KENT

Where would he get the tracking data anyway?

BAINES

We don't deal in speculation. The document stipulates a meeting, that much is clear. The old Asylum, three days' time. I need eyes and ears.

KENT

I know what you're thinking, Alister. Forrester won't show. I'll bet my pension.

ELLISON

For what good that's worth. Ringmaster, if a Party member jumped ship in the old days, we left him for the sharks. Forrester is dead, and a defector either way.

BAINES

Times have changed. Cornwell will attend.

ELLISON

(bitterly)
New blood.

Cornwell looks apprehensive. The others gather their papers.

CONT:

4 INT. BRITISH INTELLIGENCE - OUTSIDE CONTROL ROOM - DAY

The men leaving the room. CORNWELL stops BAINES.

CORNWELL

Uh, sir, can I ask why I've been chosen for this?

BAINES

Like I said, I need eyes and ears. And it will give you a chance to prove yourself.

CORNWELL

Yes, sir.

BAINES

Call me Alister. Do you trust me?

CORNWELL

Yes, sir.

BAINES

Very good.

He exits. Cornwell stares after him, still unsure.

CUT TO:

5 INT. CORNWELL'S HOUSE - DAY

CORNWELL getting ready, nervous. He pockets a RECORDING DEVICE apprehensively. Takes a deep breath, exits.

CUT TO:

6 INT. ASYLUM - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

CORNWELL sitting at one end of a conference table, a BRIEFCASE in front of him. Waiting. Nervous.

The door opens. FORRESTER enters with a BRIEFCASE, sits opposite. Stares.

FORRESTER

Let's take it as read that you're wired. They always do that; it means they don't have to believe your report.

(louder)

Hello, Alister. Long time no see.

Cornwell looks out of his depth.

(CONTINUED)

FORRESTER

You're new, right? You're shaking like a leaf. I suppose I ought to identify myself. I'm Richard Forrester. I'm what you might call part of the old vanguard. That'll have your Crypt boys sweating. But what about you? What's your name?

CORNWELL

Cornwell.

FORRESTER

And why are you here, Cornwell? Why did your ringleaders decide to send a green leaf to meet with a clapped-out old relic like me? Maybe they thought you were the best man for the job. Or maybe they realize you're expendable. I know; I am a relic, after all. I outlived my usefulness. They dressed me up, shined my shoes, waved me out of the door and left me out in the cold. How useful are you, Cornwell?

Cornwell frowns, unsure.

FORRESTER

They call it a game. Or a circus, which is closer to the truth. But it's business. The business of government, which is about as far from being a game as you can get. It's life, and it's out to kill you.

Forrester puts his briefcase on the table.

FORRESTER

Snap. Shall we trade notes? You can have my data, and I'll take whatever fake codes they've supplied you with. Unless you thought you were carrying around the real deal?

(louder)

You don't work like that, do you, Alister?

He stands, crosses to Cornwell. Swaps pages from the two briefcases (and puts a LIGHTER in Cornwell's, unseen).

(CONTINUED)

FORRESTER

Don't worry, I'll cooperate, and
you can have your golden
retriever back safe and sound.

(to Cornwell)

If they let you back inside after
dark, that is.

He smiles. Cornwell is thinking hard.

CUT TO:

7 INT. BRITISH INTELLIGENCE - CONTROL ROOM - DAY

BAINES sitting, CORNWELL hovering close by. ELLISON
standing by the door. Baines switches off the RECORDING
DEVICE, leans back.

BAINES

And that's the last of the
recording?

CORNWELL

Yes, sir.

BAINES

Well, Forrester's data is
incomplete; he obviously wants us
to follow a paper trail. But at
least we know it's him. Well
done.

CORNWELL

Thank you, sir.

BAINES

I'll need you to keep tabs on
him, of course.

CORNWELL

Yes, sir. You can trust me, sir.

BAINES

Mm. It's Forrester I'm worried
about. Alright, that'll be all.

He waves Cornwell out, continues poring over his
documents.

ELLISON

Should I follow the kid?

BAINES

Don't get too close. Just keep
watching. I expect you to do the
right thing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

6.

Ellison nods.

CUT TO:

8 INT. CORNWELL'S HOUSE - DAY

CORNWELL sitting, deep in thought, toying with the RECORDING DEVICE. Track in as dialogue from end of [Sc.6] fades in.

FORRESTER (VO)
--If they let you back inside
after dark, that is.

CONT:

9 FLASHBACK: INT. ASYLUM - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Continuing from end of [Sc.6], CORNWELL and FORRESTER sitting. Cornwell stands, makes to leave, pauses.

CORNWELL
They trust me, you know. It's not
false information. He trusts me.

FORRESTER
Check your facts. Then come and
find me.

Cornwell frowns, stares into the BRIEFCASE: The LIGHTER is inside. Forrester exits.

CONT:

10 INT. CORNWELL'S HOUSE - DAY

Continued from [Sc.8]. Cornwell puts the DEVICE down and glances across at the BRIEFCASE, wondering.

CUT TO:

11 INT. BRITISH INTELLIGENCE - CONTROL ROOM - DAY

BAINES sitting. ELLISON enters.

ELLISON
Alister. It's Cornwell. He's
gone.

CUT TO:

12 EXT. CORNWELL'S HOUSE - EVENING

Establishing shot. ELLISON standing outside.

CONT:

13 INT. CORNWELL'S HOUSE - EVENING

The room is dark. BAINES standing, looking around. Spots the BRIEFCASE, lying open, empty. Regards it sadly.

Goes to the window, sees Ellison outside, who waves. Baines flicks the LIGHT on and off in response.

CONT:

14 EXT. CORNWELL'S HOUSE - EVENING

The LIGHT flicking on and off through the top window, ELLISON watching.

CONT:

15 INT. CORNWELL'S HOUSE - EVENING

BAINES flicks the light again -- when it comes on again, FORRESTER is standing in the doorway behind him. Baines tenses.

FORRESTER

Welcome back.

Baines turns. Stand off.

FORRESTER

Isn't that what you're supposed to say? I've come in from the cold, Alister. Welcome back.

BAINES

Where is he?

FORRESTER

He's outgrown you, Ringmaster. You can't keep running after your boys, checking up on us.

Baines simply stares, waiting.

FORRESTER

No time for a trip down memory lane?

(shrugs)

He's where you left me, Alister. He's waiting out in the cold.

(CONTINUED)

Baines realizes, runs to the door. Forrester watches him go.

CUT TO:

16 EXT. ROADS - MONTAGE - NIGHT

Car driving, lights passing. Travel shots.

CUT TO:

17 EXT. INDUSTRIAL ESTATE - DAY

BAINES approaches.

CORNWELL stands in the middle of the expanse, holding DOCUMENTS, waiting.

BAINES
You don't have to run.
Everything's alright. You can
trust me.

Cornwell frowns at this.

BAINES
Forrester is old, and bitter, and
wretched. He's using you, trying
to turn the Party in on itself.
He doesn't trust you. He doesn't
even know your first name!

Cornwell regards him sadly.

CORNWELL
Funny. He said the same thing.
But about you.

Baines glances at the documents. Holds out a hand.
Cornwell raises them -- brings a LIGHTER out from his
pocket.

CUT TO: POV shot, from the trees. Crosshairs, trained on
CORNWELL.

BAINES
It isn't worth it.

CORNWELL
It's just business.

He flicks the lighter.

The CRACK of a GUNSHOT.

(CONTINUED)

Cornwell drops from frame. The documents scatter. Baines rushes to pick them up.

ELLISON approaches, wearing dark gear and gloves, carrying a VIOLIN CASE.

ELLISON

It was the right thing to do.
Good result?

Baines regards the body sadly, in thought.

BAINES

The show must go on.

They depart.

FADE TO CREDITS