

# SM 11: Sheep's Clothing

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G.I. JOE: Special Missions #11

Sheep's Clothing

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Summary (by Robert Perry): Just outside the entrance to the main American Post Exchange in Frankfurt, West Germany... A female clerk is being held at gunpoint by a hooded assailant. Through Lady-Jaye's gun-sight across the street, it is apparent that a firefight has taken place, with both an M.P. and a would-be hostage taker shot dead. With the help of retrieved surveillance camera footage, Dial-tone and mission honcho Chuckles lay out the situation to the assembled Joe strike team — Lady-Jaye, Scarlett, Jinx, and Low-light: Four unidentified revolutionaries — three males and one female, "let's call them Rudi, Jane, Carlos, and Faoud" — enter the P.X. building wearing hooded sweatshirts. They take out a number of customers and enter the general manager's office, where they blow a safe and take the weekend receipts in American dollars. Their objective appears to be a quick smash-and-grab with enough money to fund their organization. But as they exit the building, they are surprised by a pair of off-duty M.P. officers who force them back inside. In the exchange, both Faoud and one of the M.P.'s are killed. Now, the three remaining terrorists have been hold up in the building for twelve hours with three hostages. They have made no demands and will not respond when contacted. With no further surveillance footage available, little else is known.

Meanwhile, at the Rhein-main Flughafen, just outside Frankfurt, a hijacked airliner has just hit the flight apron. As Dial-tone confirms the landing, Chuckles suspects the obvious and deploys his team to intercept. On route to the Rein-main, however, Dial-tone picks up a new signal: the Joes' every move is being monitored by a third party "spotter" who is apparently watching them from a "high roost" with an auto-switch frequency transmitter. As a result of this new development, the Joes learn that the terrorists have decided to move the hostages with them to the airport. Not to be outsmarted by the well-laid terrorist scheme, Chuckles devises a way to use this new angle to the Joes' advantage.

With only minutes to spare, they return to their perch across from the P.X. building, where the terrorists make their demands: an armored car full of gas ready in one hour. Now the Joes must make their move. Chuckles agrees to the demands. But in exchange for the car, three "volunteer nurses" must be substituted for the hostages. The terrorists suspect a trick, but eagerly comply, confident that they can "handle nurses."

As Low-light carefully covers the hostage exchange from above, the three strangely familiar female volunteers are unexpectedly bound and blindfolded before being forced into the awaiting armored truck. "This throws a monkey-wrench into our plan," admonished Chuckles, "but we have to hope that the 'ladies' will improvise and cope." In minutes, the terrorists and their covert cargo move through the busy Frankfurt streets. In no time, Rudi, Jane and Carlos begin to brutalize and threaten their captives, having little idea of the true identities of the women they are keeping.

With phase one of the plan set, Chuckles, Dial-tone, and Low-light quickly follow the armored car in the Awe-striker, but after several streets make an abrupt turn in another direction. All this is dutifully transmitted by the mysterious spotter from high above. Moving under the cover of a nearby tunnel, they set phase two of their plan into action: commandeer a local streetcar; use a handy vogelshaukerten \* to estimate roughly where the spotter must be in order to maintain visual contact; and pinpoint a spot near the main route to the airport where the spotter's vision will be obstructed. A narrow street leading to an Autobahn ramp proves the best strategy.

While the pair of hijackers wait impatiently on the flight apron, the terrorists and the Joes in their commandeered streetcar, move toward the intercept point. Gambling that Scarlett, Lady-Jaye, and Jinx may not expect their "improvisation", Chuckles makes quick use of the streetcar's bell to ring a Morse code message to the blindfolded Joes. No sooner is the signal sent than the women break into action. Scarlett uses the rearview mirror to return the threatening advances of Carlos, while the still-blindfolded Jinx and Lady-Jaye easily subdue Rudi and Jane with equal brutality. Jinx smashes the rear door open, and as the streetcar pulls up close beside the armored vehicle, Low-light springs aboard. Chuckles straddles to the side toward Scarlett in the cab, but comes face-to-face and muzzle-to-muzzle with a barely conscious, gun-toting Carlos. There is little time to react; both men fire. "That was cutting it kinda close," Chuckles grimaces as he slumps Carlos lifeless body to the side, and Scarlett takes the wheel. With precious seconds to spare before coming back into view of the spotter, Chuckles retrieves Carlos signature hooded-

sweatshirt and prepares for the final phase of the operation.

Back at Rhein-main, the hijackers breathe a sigh of relief upon seeing the armored car pull up. Everything is as the spotter transmitted: "nothing seems to be wrong." Three hooded figures slowly walk the blindfolded hostage volunteers up the plane's ladder to the welcome hijackers, realizing only too late that figures under those hoods are not the "brothers and sisters of the revolution" they had expected. Jinx takes the lead, grabbing Low-light's .45 and taking out both hijackers with ferocious speed. With the final phase of the mission complete, they have only one piece of unfinished business.

Not too long after the plane is secured, a bulging military helicopter pulls in low over an inconspicuous Frankfurt high-rise to find an unsuspecting man holding a pair of binoculars, a rifle and a transmitter. The spotter thinks briefly of retaliating, but quickly realizes he can do nothing but throw up his hands in defeat. \* illustrated map showing actual buildings (according to Marvel ed.)

Review: Larry Hama and company prove once again the appeal of the Special Mission series. Without the high-concept antics of Cobra or the Iron Grenadiers, he is able to tell the kinds of stories that best suit his skills — this time a low-key espionage thriller with some very specialized Joes at the helm. Plus, he finds a use for Chuckles . . . that in itself is cause for praise! With a tight, urban-drawn story to focus on, Hama keeps the pace up, maintains the varying plot threads, and pulls it all in to a satisfying conclusion. It's nice to see him juggle the scenarios a bit, bringing the Joes into a busy city as opposed to a jungle or desert. And the added element of the "spotter" is a great touch to create tension.

Trimpe also proves here why he was really one of the best G.I. Joe pencillers in either series. While the veteran's work (he was the first guy to draw Wolverine!) can be sketchy and static at times, "Sheep's Clothing" shows what he can do with a heavy panel count and a lot of detail. His efficient, no-frills narrative style blends well with Hama's heads-on approach, particularly in this issue.

If anything, though, the plot might be too tight — there's little room for any individual character moments or juicy villainous asides. With some exceptions, everything feels fairly perfunctory. As well, the faintly patronizing references to "the ladies" seems a little out of place, considering the characters' obvious skill and expertise (though, this is nothing compared to the embarrassingly sexist Herb Trimpe scripted Issue #24... sign of the times, I suppose.)

All in all, not the most dynamic SM in the series, but certainly worth the \$1.00 cover price (wow, were comics ever this cheap?!?) Note: As a letter column several issues later would attest, this issue contained one of the most glaring "no-prize non-mistakes" in the whole series: the case of Scarlett's appearing-disappearing blindfold on pg. 19. Can you explain it?

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