

# THE FACT OF FICTION

“The Fact of Fiction” is a series of articles designed to take a deeper look at the information presented in a *Fighting Fantasy* gamebook, whether it be in-jokes, goofs, continuity with other gamebooks, the background to the creation of the book, or anything else which caught our attention and we thought was worth commenting on! In many ways it is to act like a DVD commentary for the book, telling you things that you might not have already known.

Titan City is in peril! **Alexander Ballingall** puts on a spandex super-suit and ventures forth to fight injustice and super-villains...

### Title Page

- The working title for the adventure was *Superheroes*, as detailed in the news section of *Warlock* #5 (June 1985). The gamebook shares its published title with a relatively famous UK radio anthology series of the 1940s and 50s of which a young Steve Jackson may well have been aware.
- The use of the acronym F.E.A.R. for an organisation name is a common feature of superhero comics with examples such as S.H.I.E.L.D. from the comic *Strange Tales* (created 1965), which most recently appeared in the *Iron Man* film (2008).

### How to Battle the Super-Villains of Titan City

- The superhero rules allow the player to choose

from four different super powers. These are ‘Super Strength’ in a reference to *Superman* (created 1938), ‘Psi-Powers’ which is most likely a combination of Jean Grey and Professor Xavier of *X-Men* (created 1963), ‘Energy Blast’ as another likely *X-Men* reference, this time to Scott Summers, and ‘ETS’ (Enhanced Technological Skill), which probably reflects Batman (created 1939) and his accessory belt – an item which a player with ETS has as equipment for the adventure.

### Background

- We learn that F.E.A.R. stands for the Federation of Euro-American Rebels, suggesting that the location of the book – Titan City – is set on Earth. Titan City itself was most likely named after the fantasy world Titan within which most of the *Fighting Fantasy* gamebook range is set. This appears to intimate that Titan City may be set in a future version of the Titan world, but the definition of F.E.A.R. and a mention of London in 410 seal the deal as to an alternative Earth setting (see 7, 88, 197, and 355 for further discussion).
- A *Superman* influence apparent in the “Background” is the hero having a double identity of superhero and office worker, in the same way that Clark Kent does as superhero and reporter for *The Daily Planet* newspaper. *Batman* comes into play with the Crimewatch that alerts the hero to crimes in progress, being akin to the Bat Phone (of the 1966 television series) or the Bat Signal (introduced to the comic in 1942), which allow the police to alert Batman when the city is in

**But when duty calls, you become the Silver Crusader, upholder of justice; and you have taken an oath to serve in the fight against crime in Titan City.**

Author Steve Jackson was perhaps the more adventurous of the dynamic duo who gave us *Fighting Fantasy* in the first place. While Ian Livingstone generally stuck to a similar format throughout his output (*Freeway Fighter* excepted), Jackson immediately pushed to include a magic system (*The Citadel of Chaos*), ventured into the genres of science fiction (*Starship Traveler*) and horror (*House of Hell*), and attempted the only true multi-book series of the range (*Sorcery!*) before bowing out with what is usually considered to be the hardest gamebook of the series: *Creature of Havoc*.

In the midst of all this in 1985, at probably the peak of the ranges popularity, he incorporated the superhero genre into the world of *Fighting Fantasy*. In *Appointment with F.E.A.R.* Jackson presents a deft blend of superhero staples along with a healthy dose of knowing winks to the readership, who are essentially asked to play

along with a sub-game within the standard gamebook adventure of guessing what he is parodying in any particular given paragraph.

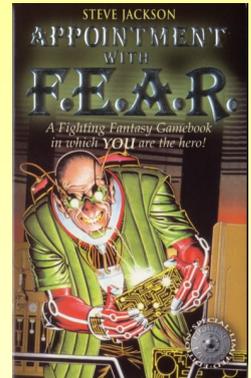
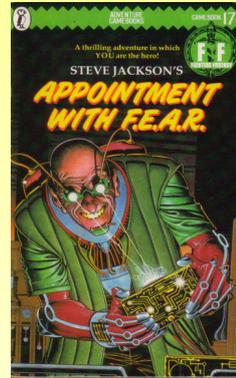
The unique and expansive nature of the game, a result of the four super powers allowing for several different routes through the gamebook, lead to it being the first gamebook to exceed the standard 400 paragraphs – something Jackson would repeat a year later to a larger extent with his swan song *Creature of Havoc*.

*Appointment with F.E.A.R.* was a brave experiment at pushing the boundaries of what could be achieved with the *Fighting Fantasy* range, which makes it a shame that shortly afterwards Jackson stopped writing for the series and that other such experiments into other genres were not attempted.





# FURTHER INFORMATION



danger.

- *Appointment with F.E.A.R.* is the first *Fighting Fantasy* gamebook in which the hero is given a proper name, Jean Lafayette, rather than just being referred to as "YOU" or by some titled applied by other characters, such as "The Analander" in the *Sorcery!* adventures. But who is Lafayette named after? No comic characters have the name Lafayette till Franky Lafayette (aka "Greyshirt") in the 1999 comic *Tomorrow Stories*. Instead, is Lafayette named after the physical address of All-American Publications formed in 1938? The company was located at 225 Lafayette Street in Manhattan, New York, and was a sister-publication to DC Comics, with which it merged in 1944.

- Given that the player can choose their super power, identifying Lafayette with a specific comic-book superhero is not possible, but the way in which the main villain, Vladimir Utoshski, transforms himself into the "Titanium Cyborg" using electronic enhancements calls to mind Dr. Octopus from *Spider-Man* (created 1962).

## 1 The hero walks to work in the morning, while an escalating argument draws a crowd.

- Two locations are mentioned, with Clark Street being a nod to Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster's Clark Kent of *Superman* and Audubon Park being named after American naturalist John James Audubon (1785-1851), who already has five parks in the US named for him so what is one more! Perhaps in this case Jackson was thinking of the one in New Jersey.

- The Cougar GS mentioned as apparently being on the run from the police was a relatively new model of car at the time as the GS range had only been introduced in 1982 (the model pictured above is the 1984 GS V6).

## 2 The villain Kareem is sealed within a crate for collection by the police.

- Mustapha Kareem's super-villain "The Mummy" is perhaps based on Marvel Comics superhero N'Kantu, the Living Mummy (created 1973). The choice of villain here may have been based on the fact that mummies have been a staple monster of the *Fighting Fantasy* series since the first one cropped up in Ian Livingstone's *City of Thieves* (1983). Jackson used his first one in *Fighting Fantasy – The Role-Playing Game* (1984).

## 3 The hero engages in the fight with Bronski who wields a battery-powered electric knife.

**AUTHOR:** STEVE JACKSON  
**COVER ARTIST:** BRIAN BOLLAND  
**INTERIOR ARTIST:** DECLAN CONSIDINE  
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- "Chainsaw" Bronski is perhaps a reflection of a 1980s obsessions with characters wielding chainsaws: see Ash from the *Evil Dead* films (first film 1981); *Abslom Daak – Dalek Killer*, back up comic strip from *Doctor Who Weekly* (introduced in 1980); *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* (film from 1986); the character of Buzzsaw from the 1987 film *The Running Man*; *Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers* (a 1988 film); and Games Workshop's own effort with the board game *Chainsaw Warrior*, released in 1987 and created by later *Fighting Fantasy* gamebook writer Stephen Hand (1989's *Dead of Night*).

- Bronski himself is probably named after the pop act Bronski Beat who scored a #1 hit in the UK with *Why?* in the September of 1984 when *Appointment with F.E.A.R.* would have been in the planning stages.

- The standard modern electric knife, as opposed to other versions, was patented in 1964 by Arthur H. Freeman of the General Electric Company.

## 7 The crowds are out to see the President and the hero has to fight through them to get a decent view.

- The use of "President" seems to confirm a US location for the gamebook (see "Background").

## 8 Trapping a thief stealing chocolate bars proves deadly for the hero.

- Munchie bars are most likely a nod to Crunchie bars, a bar launched by J.S. Fry & Sons in 1929. Now produced by Cadbury, they are available in the UK, Ireland, Australia, New

Zealand, India, South Africa and Canada.

10

**The hero heads home for the day and watches a little television.**

- The hero's boss, Jonah Whyte, is a combination of two comic book newspaper editors: Perry White, introduced to the *Superman* comic in 1940, and J. Jonah Jameson, who was first featured in *Spider-Man* in 1963.
- Meanwhile, Radd Square is named after Norrin Radd, the "Silver Surfer" (created 1966).

15

**The hero is faced with the dilemma of deciding which fun fair attraction to try first.**

- The Wisneyland fair grounds are an obvious nod to Disneyland, which first opened in California in 1955.

16

**After the rescue of Drew Swain, the hero takes the time to look through the "Mantrapper's" gadgets.**

- The first of two direct references to Bruce Wayne (of *Batman*) is sound-a-like Drew Swain who is a billionaire kidnapped by the "Mantrapper" (see 195 for the second).
- The Murdock Nuclear Laboratories is no doubt a link to *Daredevil* hero Matt Murdock (created 1964) who was, like many a superhero or villain, affected by a radioactive substance which grants him his powers.

17

**The hero tries to follow up a clue, involving a monogrammed medallion, with little luck.**

- Medallions, as part of gaudy necklaces, were all the rage fashion-wise for both men and women in the Eighties, and were especially prominent in the growing Hip Hop music genre.

18

**Off to work, the hero tries to come up with an excuse for missing work the previous day.**

- Cowfield Dairy is probably a simple play on meanings.

19

**The hero flies back to Parker Airport with the captured villains.**

- Parker Airport is a reference to Peter Parker, hero of *Spider-Man*. The other half of his name is referenced in a later paragraph (see 181).

22

**The "Creature if Carnage" returns to his human form and the battle then commences.**

- The "Creature of Carnage" and his transformation brings to mind the Hulk (created 1962). His human identity, Illya Karpov, is probably based on a combination of Anatoly Karpov, who became World Chess Champion in 1975, and Illya Nickovetch Kuryakin, the fictional spy played by David McCallum in *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* (created 1964).

32

**The "Macro Brain" defeats the hero, firing a wall of flame from the front of his helicopter.**

- Perhaps here the "Macro Brain" is a reference to *Incredible Hulk* character, "The Leader" (created 1964), or a reference to the big-brained Mekon of the English *Dan Dare* comics (created 1950).

34

**The hero visits the home of Dr. Crayfish and is met at the door by the doctor's maid.**

- Here we have Dr. Charles Crayfish working on the "Star Wars" satellite system, the nickname for the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) which US President Ronald Reagan announced in March 1983. In 1991 the US turned away from the space-based SDI plan to ground-based alternatives.
- The name for the project is taken from the successful film franchise that, at the time *Appointment with F.E.A.R.* was published, had only recently completed the first trilogy (along with the made-for-television movie *The Ewok Adventure* which was released in the UK as the theatrical film *Caravan of Courage: An Ewok Adventure*).

37

**The hero leaves the fun house and hands a key over to a boy crying by his bicycle.**

- Here Lafayette meets *Titan Times* newspaper reporter Grant Morley. Is he named after Morley Safer, the long-time host of *60 Minutes* (created 1968), or sometimes controversial *New Musical Express* (NME) journalist Paul Morley, who had only just left the magazine in 1983, and was instrumental in the promotion and marketing of Eighties pop success Frankie Goes to Hollywood (who had three number one hits across 1983-84)?

39

**The hero heads downtown towards the waterfront as part of a search for clues.**

- Like Cowfield Dairy (see 18), Oceanaria Marina is a simple play on words, but is Clancey Bay a nod to Chief Clancey O'Hara, a character created for the 1966 *Batman* television series?

42

**What kind of book to buy the boss? The hero browses the selection available and selects a gamebook.**

- The very first *Fighting Fantasy* gamebook, *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain*, makes an unexpected appearance on a book store shelf, in what can be described as a very post-modern moment (post-modern being something embodying either extreme complexity, contradiction, ambiguity, diversity, interconnectedness or interreferentiality). The sequel, *Deadline to Destruction*, will attempt something similar (see "Sequel").

43

**The hero goes to take in a musical, only to witness the star being kidnapped during the final scene!**

# SEQUEL

*Appointment with F.E.A.R.* is notable for having a sequel, and one not by the original author. *Deadline to Destruction* was a 200 paragraph mini adventure by Gavin Shute and illustrated by David Stevens that was published in *Warlock* #12 (October 1986). This time around the hero is on a mission to stop the "Dynamo" from holding the city ransom. The mini adventure replicated much of the original gamebook, such as the same four superpowers and the use of clues at the beginning.

*Deadline to Destruction* makes mention of the Marvel Comics character Spider-Man in 154, the hero referring to him as their "comic book rival". This either indicates either Spider-Man is fictional and the hero feels inadequate when compared to the comic book hero, or that Spider-Man is real and the hero feels he isn't a serious enough superhero!

Finally, the adventure copies the post-modern moment of buying a *Fighting Fantasy* gamebook (see 42) with one in which the hero examines a copy of *Appointment with F.E.A.R.* itself in 180, even thought the mini adventure is a sequel to that book! The adventure goes one further and has Gerry the Grass, presumably speaking for the writer Shute, describe the book as being "a good 'un!"

- The musical, featuring a group of performers dressed as rats and singing to each other in a rubbish tip, is definitely a reference to the Andrew Lloyd Webber musical *Cats*. This musical, based on the book *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* by T.S. Eliot, opened in the London West End in 1981 and by 1983 had won several awards. Jackson later gives the musical the title 'Rats' in 103 and makes another play on names, this time involving the composer himself, at 218.

**51**  
**The hero makes a phone call to Susan in order for her to help convince the "Tormentor" to land the plane safely.**

- While the relationship between Susan Blythe and Richard Storm (the "Tormentor") isn't spelt out, 260 suggests they are husband and wife or at the very least dating. This is interesting, as their names conjure up three members of the *Fantastic Four* (created 1961). In Richard Storm we have Reed Richards ("Mr Fantastic") and Johnny Storm (the "Human Torch") and with Susan we have Susan Storm (the blue tight-suited "Invisible Woman") who was Johnny's sister and Reed's wife in the comics! The fourth and final member of the team is name-checked in 86.

- The surname Blythe may come from another female comic book character kitted out in tight-fitting blue gear, Blythe Bonner, who first appeared in *Firestorm* in 1984.

**60**

**One of the police officers relates to the hero reports of a shark off the shore at Starkers Beach.**

- Starkers Beach is a possible reference to Tony Stark of *Iron Man* (created 1963).

- Meanwhile, the shark sighting is no doubt a reference to the shark of the *Jaws* franchise of films, the third title of which (*Jaws 3-D*) had been released in cinemas in 1983.

**69**

**The hero takes on the "Devastator" with a vial of phenolic acid.**

- There isn't a specific acid by this name, "phenolic" here probably referring to the class of chemical compounds under that name. The compounds of this group are highly acidic, which matches the reaction of the "Devastator" to being splashed by some!

- Meanwhile, the rock-like nature of the "Devastator" most likely seems to be a reference to the "Thing" from the *Fantastic Four* (more at 86).

**75**

**The hero is faced with a choice of activities. What to do today, watch the President or the Football?**

- Further confirmation of a US-based setting, with the appearance of two American Football teams in the Titan Tigers and the Metro Mohawks. The Metro Mohawks at the game are representing Metroville, perhaps a reference to the city of Metropolis from *Superman*, just as Titan City is likely to be a reference to Gotham City from *Batman*.

- American Football is a derivation of Rugby that developed in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the first intercollegiate game being played between Rutgers and Princeton universities in 1869. However, it would not be till the late 1950s that the game would become a national sport in the USA.

**76**

**The hero spends time with their Aunt Florence being fussed over and eventually staying the night.**

- Two references in this paragraph. The first is Aunt Florence, who is a nod to Peter Parker's Aunt May in *Spider-Man*, and the second is the location of Whirls' Court Exhibition Centre, a play on the Earl's

Court Exhibition Centre in London (opened 1937).

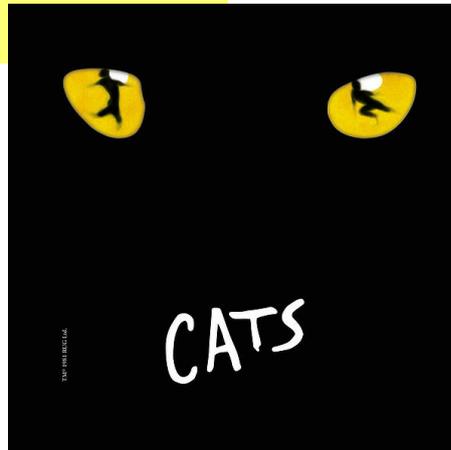
**83**

**The hero checks the book records and turns up a deed for Titan abbatoir, now owned by Sylvia Frost.**

- Sylvia Frost could potentially be based on the *Uncanny X-Men* character Emma Frost, who was introduced to the comic in 1980. Notably, both have a nickname using the title "Queen". Sylvia is the "Ice Queen" and Emma the "White Queen".

**86**

**Getting off the train, the hero goes to work once more, only**



**to told off by the boss!**

- Grimm Street probably refers to Ben Grimm, the “Thing”, one of the Fantastic Four. The other three of the team were name-checked back in 51.

**88**

**One of the clues has the super-villain the “Alchemist” planning to raid a bank.**

- Further evidence of an Earth-based setting for Titan City as a fictional part of the United States. Cleveland is a city in the US state of Ohio, being founded in 1796.

**90**

**Within the Fun House the hero confronts the super-villain the “Scarlet Prankster”.**

- The “Scarlet Prankster” is most likely based on *Daredevil* villain the “Jester” who first appeared in that comic in 1968.

**92**

**The hero sees off the “Ringmaster’s” pets through the use of catnip.**

- The password “Quicksilver” is a possible *X-Men* reference to the character Pietro Django Maximoff. “Quicksilver”, as he is better know, was first featured in the comic *The X-Men* in 1964.

**97**

**The hero arrives at the pool to find that it is frozen over and two girls are stuck in the ice!**

- Stanley Pool is easily a nod to Marvel comic book legend Stan Lee (born 1922), famous for creating or co-creating many memorable comic book characters including Spider-Man, the Fantastic Four, the X-Men, Iron Man, the Hulk, Thor, and Daredevil.

**107**

**The hero wonders about the F.E.A.R. meeting and if the Colonel can help.**

- Is Colonel Saunders a thinly veiled reference to Kentucky Fried Chicken founder Harlan ‘Colonel’ Sanders (1890-1980)? His grip on the chickens of the world began in 1929, although KFC didn’t become a franchise till 1952.

**111**

**The hero stops at a shop. What better way to butter up the boss than by buying a gift?**

- Harrold’s Department Store is none other than Harrod’s Department Store in Knightsbridge, London (founded 1834).

**114**

**The “Creature of Carnage” interrupts a Football game that the hero has gone to watch.**

- Here Jackson pays homage to Dino De Laurentiis’ re-imagined Flash Gordon (created 1934, De Laurentiis’ film 1980) in the character of American Football player “Streak” Gordon, who plays for the Titan Tigers. Prior to the 1980 film Gordon had not been portrayed as a Football player, Gordon’s preferred sport being polo instead.

**122**

**The evening concert that the hero was planning to attend has been cancelled.**

- Addison Square Gardens is equivalent to Madison Square Gardens of Manhattan, New York (originally built 1879).

- Georgie Boy (and his Vulture Club mentioned in 226) is a parody of Boy George, who was riding high in popularity with the group Culture Club, having had a number 1 album in 1983 and a number 2 in 1984. That Jackson has Georgie struck down by “facial dermatitis” tells us a lot about his thoughts on Culture Club at the time of writing the book!

**125**

**Walking along the hero spots a news broadcast on a TV in the window of an home appliance shop.**

- Does Danvers Street here refer to Carol Danvers, also know as Ms. Marvel? Introduced as a regular human in *Marvel Super-Heroes* in 1968, she gained her super powers in the first issue of *Ms. Marvel* in 1977.

**157**

**The hero is running late to see the Presidential cavalcade when the President is assassinated!**

- The events depicted here are a definite reference to the assassination of John F. Kennedy in Dallas, Texas on November 22nd 1963. Declan Considine’s illustration to accompany the paragraph also goes some way to echoing that event. The assassin is a man with a gun on a roof, mimicking Lee Harvey Oswald shooting from the sixth floor of the Texas Book Depository. But playing up to the conspiracy rumours that surround the event, Jackson also has a decoy in the crowd in a modified version of the “man on the grassy knoll” scenario.

**179**

**The hero must investigate either a biomechanical engineering company or a Chinese laundry.**

- Is the biomechanical company Chomsky and Sons named after famous American linguist Avram Noam Chomsky (born 1928), whose political views gained him further notoriety from the 1960s onwards?

**181**

**The Crimewatch flashes up two issues to deal with.**

- In the second half of the Peter Parker reference (see 19) we are presented with Peter Labs.

**189**

**The hero buys a music album and heads straight home to listen to it.**

- Mention is made of the hero buying Michael Blackson’s new album ‘Willer’, a pun on *Thriller* by the late pop artist Michael Jackson (1958-2009). The album had been released in November 1982 and the single of the same name in early 1984, which probably meant the single had had some fairly heavy airplay by the time Jackson began writing the gamebook in late 1984/early 1985.

- If we were to take this as a means of dating the alternative universe of the gamebook, *Appointment with F.E.A.R.* is set in late 1982/early 1983!

• In contrast to 122, the hero buys the music album, which suggests that Jackson was far more keen on the music of his namesake than he was of Culture Club.

195

**The hero has to break some bad news to the estranged wife of Wayne Bruce.**

• The second of the two Bruce Wayne parodies (see 16) appears in the form of Wayne Bruce, a dead millionaire.

197

**After rescuing a boy from a shark the hero is given the phone number to a circus.**

• Taking the setting as being the US, the phone number prefix of 444 given here was an unused exchange number in 1985, and even today, under the North American Numbering Plan instituted in 1995, it remains unused. Curiously, Steve Jackson chose to ignore the 555 prefix, commonly used since the 1970s in American television and film when a phone number is given, as this prefix remains generally unused. In fact the numbers 555-0100 through 555-0199 have since been specifically reserved for fictional use only.

202

**The hero stops for a bite of pizza and witnesses the kidnapping of Drew Swain.**

• Banner Street here is a reference to Dr. Bruce Banner, the mild mannered human counterpart of the Hulk.

218

**It is the end of the day. Will the hero retire home for the evening or head out on the town to take in a musical?**

• Following on from the parody of *Cats* (see 43), Jackson presents us with Lloyd Webber-Andrews, a reference to composer of the musical Andrew Lloyd-Webber.

222

**One of the beginning clues for the hero notes the recent arrival of Metroville villainess Tiger Cat.**

• Tiger Cat is most likely a reference to long-time Batman anti-hero Catwoman, who was first introduced in *Batman* in 1940.

245

**At police headquarters the hero learns about what has been taking place recently.**

• Lieutenant Wojak is based on Lt. Theo Kojak, the hero of the television series *Kojak*. The series ran on CBS from 1973 to 1978 and featured Aristotelis "Telly" Savalas (1922-1994) as the eponymous investigator.

264

**Shopping leads to the hero, in civilian disguise, bumping into their informant Gerry the Grass.**

• The game mentioned here, 'Whack Man', is most likely a reference to パックマン (*Pac-Man*), which was released in Japan in 1980.

349

**Arriving at the airport, the hero has to decide which hanger to search for clues.**

• More *X-Men* references, with three airport hangers named Xavier (Professor X), Summer (Cyclops), and McCoy (Beast).

355

**Shopping for a gift is interrupted by the presence of the Fire Warriors in the women's underwear department.**

• Board games *Monopoly* (Parker Bros. version patented 1935), *Trivial Pursuit* (released 1982), and role-playing game *Dungeons & Dragons* (created 1974) are named checked as products in the store.

• Also featured, this time in the accompanying illustration, is a Nazi swastika (Hitler's flag designed in 1925) as jewellery for one of the Fire Warriors. This further cements the location of the gamebook as an alternative Earth. This is also a nod to the then recent, almost mainstream, fashion flirtation with Nazi imagery, such as S.S. uniforms and swastika armbands. In most cases they were utilised by some musical groups for shock value (Siouxsie Sioux of Siouxsie & the Banshees is one example.).

369

**Which problem to deal with first? Will the hero rescue the cat or apprehend "Chainsaw" Bronski?**

• The illustration for this paragraph shows "Chainsaw" Bronski up to some general 'meanness', including the decapitation of a statue in a moment reminiscent of the scene in the film *Goldfinger* (1964), where Oddjob uses his bowler hat to slice the head off a statue.

374

**Did the hero only catch the decoy involved in the assassination of the President?**

• This brings an addition to the assassination conspiracy (see 157) that mimics the JFK scenario, with doubt brought up about the bullets involved. This mirrors confusion over how many shots were fired and from where, as some recorded sound evidence supposedly points to a second gunman with a different gun.

410

**The hero arrives at the airport where the "Tormentor" has taken a plane full of people hostage.**

• The McDonnell Douglas DC-10 first entered service with American Airlines in 1971 and, whilst still in service today with some non-major airlines (Biman Bangladesh Airlines and Omni Air International are two examples), was no longer in production after 1989.

423

**The hero studies a packet of cigarettes that may or may not contain a coded message.**

• The Karlsborough cigarettes are a play on Marlboro brand cigarettes (first sold in 1847).

428

**The hero carries on shopping downtown with a choice of two stores to investigate.**

• Verging Records is of course a pun on Virgin Records (established in 1972).

• The jewellers, Epiphany's, is a reference to the famous jewellery and silverware store Tiffany & Co. (usually referred to as simply "Tiffany's"), which was opened in New York City in 1837 by Charles Tiffany and Teddy Young. It gained further fame through the work of fiction later adapted into the 1961 film *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (which featured Audrey Hepburn and George Peppard). **FF**