

Thou Spy hath Embrangled Me



BY JENNIFER DIANE REITZ,
THE SOMEWHAT KNOWN DESIGNER OF VARIOUS LUDIBRIOUS DIVERTISSEMENTS
WHO THUS PRESENTS THIS LATEST PASSETEMPS

**BEING THUS AN ROLE-PLAYE DIVERSION WHICH BE
SETTETH IN THE YEAR OF THE CHRISTIAN MYTHOLOGICAL GOD OF 1567,
AND WHICH DOTHS CIRCUMSCRIBE THOSE MOST MYSTERIOUS AND
UNTOWARD EVENTS WHICH HATH SURROUNDED THE UNTIMELY DEATH
AND INTRIGUES OF LORD HENRY STEWART DARNLEY
AMIDSTE THE MOST GRIEVOUS AND FEARSOMELY COLD TYMES OF
DESPERATION AND AGUE KNOWNE TO MANY AND ALL AS THE LITTLE
ICE AGE OF EUROPE.**

Thou Spy Hath Embrangled Me

Time: 1567

Location: England and Scotland

CHARACTERS:

HEROINE: PETULLA MARY CASTON, *AGENT INSIDIATOR OF ENGLAND* Age 19

Stats: Mind: 10 Body: 10 Luck: 13

Courtly 3, Rich 1, Weapons 6, Agile 6, Spy 6, Aware 5, Tricky 6, Dance 6

History:

1548–1589, bastard daughter of an unnamed Noble, Petulla was supported anonymously from her birth. Raised in Caston House, located near St Gregory by St Paul's, she was attended mostly by her faithful, aging (38 year old) spinster servant **CATHRINE**, who both raised her, and managed her money. In 1563, at the age of 15, Petulla was inducted into the ***Clanculum Regnum, a secret order whose purpose was to preserve and expedite the dignity and integrity of England and the stability of the Throne.*** Petulla was chosen for reasons she herself was unaware, though without doubt, her choice to remain unmarried, and her penchant for rigorous and adventuresome activity, as well as accusations that she was an outright *virago*, were factors. Petulla was very acrobatic, clever, smart, and adventuresome.

PATRON: SIR FRANCIS KNOLLYS, *LEADER OF PARLIAMENT* Age 53

Stats: Mind: 11 Body: 8 Luck: 4

Courtly 6, Rich 4, Politics 5, Secretive 6

History:

1514-1596 His strong Protestant convictions helped him to rise at court under Edward VI, but he moved to Frankfurt and then to Strasburg while Mary ruled. He returned on Elizabeth's accession and she appointed him to her Privy Council in December 1558. Knollys married Catherine Carey, (Mary Boleyn's daughter by Sir William Carey) and therefore first cousin to Queen Elizabeth. For much of Elizabeth's reign he sat in Parliament and acted as government spokesman there. In 1568-1569 he was jailor to Mary, Queen of Scots, and tried to teach her English and convert her to his own Genevan brand of Protestantism. He is also the secret head of the ***Clanculum Regnum***, referred to as the **Princeps Invisus** of the order. He runs the Clanculum to protect not only the Queen, but also England itself from enemies both within and without.

VILLAIN: LORD HENRY STUART DARNLEY Age 22

Stats: Mind: 12 Body: 11 Luck: 2

Courtly 6, Rich 6, Sword 4, Handsome 5, Persuasive 3, Aware 2

History:

1545–1567, second husband of Mary Queen Of Scots and father of James I of England (James VI of Scotland). His mother was Margaret Douglas, the daughter of Archibald Douglas, earl of Angus, and Margaret Tudor, daughter of Henry VII of England; this made Darnley a candidate for succession to the English throne after Elizabeth I. His father was Matthew Stuart, 4th Earl of Lennox. Darnley was born and brought up in England, where his father was in exile. In 1565, at the age of 19, he was allowed by Queen Elizabeth to follow his father to Scotland, and within a short time he married Queen Mary. The motives of the Scottish queen were predominantly political; Darnley was a Catholic and his right of succession to the English throne reinforced Mary's own. However, his handsome appearance and courtly manners must also have impressed Mary because at first she was infatuated with him. The Protestant lords, dismayed at what appeared a Catholic triumph, revolted, but Mary defeated them easily. Within a short time Darnley had shown himself to be a vicious and dissipated man, and Mary denied him the **crowm matrimonial**. **On the**

night of Feb. 9, after a visit from Mary Queen Of Scots, the house was blown up by gunpowder. Details of the murder remain a historical mystery. Mary's subsequent failure to punish Bothwell and her hasty marriage to him led to the revolt that soon dethroned her.

PLOT:

Lord Henry desperately desires the **Crown Matrimonial**, the given title of which would grant him kingly powers equal to and potentially surpassing that of his wife, Queen Mary. Mary is quickly coming to the conclusion that Henry is an evil, vile, power-hungry man, and has refused him this elevation. Henry knows that Mary believes herself to be the proper and rightful queen of England, with the blessing of the Pope, yet the bastard queen Elizabeth, a protestant, sits on the throne, while she must rot in frozen 'little ice age' Edinburgh Castle, in Scotland. Henry hatches an incredible scheme.

Henry has discovered, by the researches performed in his house in **Kirk o' Field**, just outside the city, the true source of the Ague, the terrible, and ultimately deadly incurable disease that plagued the land: mosquitoes. This secret knowledge has allowed him to create a **vast waxpaper hothouse compound**, in which he has been growing billions of infected mosquito larvae, which hatch from the soggy fens he has covered. In this tropically warm artificial environment, warmed at night by the burning of wood to make steam, and warmed by day by sunlight, he has produced enough **Ague** bearing mosquitoes to bring down the whole of London, and possibly, much of England into the bargain. Mad with power, as well as **syphilis**, he fails to see the full danger of this act. He also has had developed for him a bellows device with which to package the mosquitoes in special drums, which can be transported and used as a biological weapon. His plan is nearly complete, and he is sure that if he can but **destroy London**, Scotland can easily take it, and in this way he will win the respect of queen Mary, and finally earn the **Crown Matrimonial**, and become truly **King**.

SUPPORT CHARACTERS:

JAMES HEPBURN, 4TH EARL OF BOTHWELL, LORD HIGH ADMIRAL OF SCOTLAND

Wants Mary to marry him, jealous of Henry, willing to destroy him, will help so long as he is not exposed. He is rich and powerful. Location, **Castle Dunbar**.

WILLIAM SWANWICK GEDDES, SCOTTISH HIGHWAYMAN Age 17

Stats: Mind: 5 Body: 4 Luck: 2

Thief 8, Weapons 6, Handsome 12

Attacks before reaching Hepburn, but falls in love with Petulla. Becomes love interest. He will help her, to an extent, and is the reason for her being discovered as an agent. He cannot help poking around, and gets in trouble easily. He may be rescued, or he may be killed in the story.

THE CLANCULUM REGNUM:

A SECRET ORDER

The Clanculum Regnum is a secret order whose purpose is to preserve and expedite the dignity and integrity of England and the stability of the Throne. Based in hidden underground catacombs beneath Windsor Castle, and currently (1567) headed by **Princeps Invisus** of the order, Sir Francis Knollys, the order has agents and spies located everywhere across England, Scotland, and France.

“A”

Known only as “A”, he is believed to be **the last of the Alchemists** that flourished before the Renaissance. He is the keeper, and the dispenser of the tools that selected **Agent Insidiators** use on missions. Old and wise, he is also stern and humorless. He is also apparently from Scandinavia, for he speaks with such an accent, and is well acquainted with the ice and snow of the times.

THE TOYS:

The Simpkinpox Fan

This fan, typical for a Lady of the time, is constructed with a brass compartment that contains a special compound of sulphur, which, when a small catch is released, vaporizes violently, releasing a toxic and terrible cloud of gas. This gas will blind and induce uncontrollable wretching, when the vapors are fanned briskly in a given direction. One shot.

The Pomander Excindo

Appearing as an ornate, silver studded pomander, it is in actuality filled with an especially explosive **liquid black powder**. It is so designed, that when a small bauble attached to its chain is clicked, a slow fuse is lit, resulting in a horrendous explosion roughly 20 seconds later. The studs act as bullets as in a fragmentation grenade, and it has the power to destroy an entire building.

The BrigandIron Dagger

Made from an incredibly rare perfected iron, which has been purified using terrible heat and then seeded with 2% fine soot (Steel), the dagger is, for the times, unnaturally indestructible. It easily bites chunks out of other weapons, stealing from them, and thus this ‘stealing blade’ is considered made of ‘BrigandIron’. It breaks any blade weapon used against it on any roll that contains dice that equal each other, otherwise it will destroy any blade weapon within six attacks.

The Ropa Schuss

This Ropa, or Spanish Surcoat, popular in these times of cold, has hidden within its stiff fabrics wooden slats with curved tips that can be slid out of the surcoat, and bound to the feet with clamps made especially for use with **special boots** also given to the agent. From other pockets can be pulled several parts that when combined produce two wooden poles, and the result is full apparatus for skiing. This mode of travel provides and incredible escape and amazing speed on the frozen land of ice age Europe.

The Bracelet Abscido

Worn as wrist jewelry, with a twist of the hand it can extend a BrigandIron blade, which can cut through virtually anything, including ordinary iron.

The Adventure:

Petulla Mary Caston is summoned by black carriage to Windsor, and taken below the castle through a secret passage in a bookcase. Much fuss is made of the newness of this original idea of a secret bookcase passage, new advancements made possible by books acquired from the eastern world.

In the underground catacombs of **the Clanculum Regnum**, Petulla is welcomed by the Princeps Invisus, Sir Francis Knollys, who explains that a terrible threat exists to her majesty, Queen Elizabeth from Scotland. In an elaborate control center, featuring wooden peg-board map 'viewscreens' and hanging lamps, it is explained that the recent husband of Mary, Queen of Scots is up to an insidious plot.

In order to gain favor with his wife, the queen Mary, and so be granted **the Crown Matrimonial**, Lord Henry Darnley has devised a plan to destroy London, the queen Elizabeth, and perhaps even England itself, with the dreaded Ague, the mysterious illness that killed Chaucer and Oliver Cromwell, along with many others. **The Ague** is actually malaria, and has no cure in this time, and flourishes despite the mini ice age, but is waning during the cold years. Apparently, Darnley has found the cause of the Ague, and according to inside information, has a method to create and distribute it on a mass scale, despite the **frozen world**. It is up to Miss Caston, as an **Agent Insidiator**, to attempt to verify these rumors, and if true, put a stop to them. She is chosen because it is well known that Darnley cannot resist women, and she would be the perfect choice to infiltrate his compound at **Kirk'O Field**.

Petulla is taken to see "**A**", who gives her some **special devices and toys** for the mission. Then she is on her way, to **Scotland**.

At the border, Petulla is met at **Berwick-Upon-Tweed** by **James Hepburn, the fourth Earl Of Bothwell** under cover, who offers what assistance he can, so long as he is not discovered to be helping her. He wants Darnley dead, so that he can have Mary for himself, he has plans to abduct and rape her, forcing marriage. He can get her to see Darnley, by providing a letter of introduction supposedly signed by Darnley's last secret mistress, Prudence Blackpool. Petulla is to be a 'gift' to him, as payment for some unknown and unspoken boon. Hepburn explains that something odd is going on at Darnley's personal home, Kirk 'O Field, just outside the city of Edinburgh. By night vast plumes of smoke constantly rise, and by day, a stream of shipments of covered boxes are being brought to the house from places beyond. Additionally, the Lord has been assembling nearly a hundred carts, and horses to pull them, housed in a complex of ever growing buildings. But far stranger than this is the immense tan, waxpaper windowed mountains that have been constructed in his fields. They look like pyramids, and no one can imagine what they are for. Many consider Lord Darnley mad, and there are rumors he suffers from the clap.

At Kirk' O Field, it is clear that the rumors are true. Petulla is quickly desired by **Lord Darnley**, who takes great pleasure in indulging her in expectation of sexual favors. Petulla discovers that the great waxpaper pyramids are **greenhouses**, and that workers sworn to secrecy wear thick garments as they tend vast, tropically warm shallow pools in which mosquitoes are being bred. A bellows-like device, hand cranked, can suck the infected mosquitoes into special barrels, which can sustain them on a projected trip to

London, where they will all be released to **destroy England**. More than this, the Barrels are heated, by virtue of slow-burning warmers, providing a home for reproduction over many, many days, so that all of London will be infected. Darnley believes, in his madness, that this will make England easy for his queen's army to take, and thus he will win his status as a **full King**. He must be stopped.

The world:

Everything is deep snow and ice, and in summer only barely warms. This is the Europe of the mini ice age, and this is the deepest part of that climate change. People are starving, times are desperate, and *malaria*, called the Ague - despite the cold - is a constant threat.

The Goal:

The ultimate goal of the scenario is for Petulla to discover what is going on, be found out, fight her way free to a position to do something about it, and finally use the Pomander to blow up the compound at Kirk 'O Field. She must then escape from Lord Darnsley's guard using the skis in her surcoat.

Research:

Until the second half of the 20th century, malaria was endemic and widespread in many temperate regions, with major epidemics as far north as the Arctic Circle. From 1564 to the 1730s—the coldest period of the Little Ice Age—malaria was an important cause of illness and death in several parts of England. Transmission began to decline only in the 19th century, when the present warming trend was well under way. The history of the disease in England underscores the role of factors other than temperature in malaria transmission. The English word for malaria was ague, a term that remained in common usage until the 19th century. The Medieval Warm Period was already on the wane when Geoffrey Chaucer (1342-1400) wrote, in the Nun's Priest's Tale, "You are so very choleric of complexion./ Beware the mounting sun and all dejection,/ Nor get yourself with sudden humours hot;/ For if you do, I dare well lay a groat/ That you shall have the tertian fever's pain,/ Or some ague that may well be your bane." Such mention of agues did not disappear when the coldest years of the Little Ice Age began. In 16th century England, many marshlands were notorious for their ague-stricken populations and remained so well into the 19th century. William Shakespeare (1564–1616), who was born in the autumn of Bruegel's first fierce winter, mentioned ague in eight of his plays. The summer crops were a disaster, yet Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) died of a tertian ague in September 1658, just as another severe winter was setting in. No cure in this time period.

Petulla Mary Caston,

AGENT INSIDIATOR OF ENGLAND

Age 19

Mind: 10 Body: 10 Luck: 13 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Courtly 3, Rich 1, Weapons 6, Agile 6, Spy 6, Aware 5, Tricky 6, Dance 6

Petulla is beautiful and healthy, she is also muscular and toned. She is a great dancer, and is very active. She loves to ride horses, and often acts more than a little boyish. She lives for adventure, and is very practiced at fighting, having been trained by masters sent to her home over the years of her childhood by a mysterious benefactor. She lives in Caston House, located near St Gregory by St Paul's, in London.

Petulla has a fondness for brandy, but often drinks ale at roadside inns in the country, during her many little 'excursions'. She often dresses as a boy to gain acceptance in such places, and finds such antics amusing. She is a secret member of the *Clanculum Regnum*, the first secret service in England, so secret that it will forever remain unknown to history....



HISTORY:

1548–1589 Petulla was almost certainly the bastard daughter of an unknown Noble. Petulla was supported anonymously from her birth. Raised in Caston House, located near St Gregory by St Paul's, she was attended mostly by her faithful, aging (38 year old) spinster servant **CATHRINE**, who both raised her, and managed her money. In 1563, at the age of 15, Petulla was inducted into the ***Clanculum Regnum, a secret order whose purpose was to preserve and expedite the dignity and integrity of England and the stability of the Throne.*** Petulla was chosen for reasons she herself was unaware, though without doubt, her choice to remain unmarried, and her penchant for rigorous and adventuresome activity, as well as accusations that she was an outright *virago*, were factors. Petulla was very acrobatic, clever, smart, and adventuresome.

Game Mechanics

THE BASIC GAME MECHANICS FOR **THOU SPY HATH EMBRANGLED ME** ARE SIMPLE AND INVOLVE ONLY THE USE OF A **D20**, AND ANY NUMBER OF ADDITIONAL **D6** DICE. THE BASE STAT FOR ANY CHARACTER IS USED FOR A RELEVANT SUCCESS OR FAILURE CHECK BY ATTEMPTING TO ROLL UNDER THE VALUE OF THE GIVEN STAT, AFTER ADDING TO THAT STAT ANY APPROPRIATE SKILL VALUES. PENALTIES MAY BE SUBTRACTED FROM THE ROLL ALSO, ACCORDING TO THE DIFFICULTY OF THE ATTEMPTED ACTION.

SUCCESS OF AN ACTION:

ROLL UNDER ((base stat + skill) – penalty) ON ONE D20

A ROLL OF “1” IS CONSIDERED A **CRITICAL**, AND IS DOUBLY SUCCESSFUL, A ROLL OF “20” IS A **FUMBLE**, AND ALWAYS FAILS.

IF AN ACTION IS WELL DESCRIBED, VERY COMPLEX, OR SUCCESSFUL DESPITE ANY PENALTY, THE PLAYER IS AWARDED ONE OR MORE “**ODYLIC DICE**” (**D6**)

ODYLIC DICE CAN BE USED AT ANY TIME TO AFFECT ANY ROLL, EITHER OF THE PLAYER, OR OF ANY OTHER CHARACTER, BY RAISING, OR LOWERING THE END RESULT. **ODYLIC DICE** MAY BE STORED UP, BUT NOT CARRIED OVER TO MULTIPLE GAMES, THEY MUST BE USED IN A GIVEN GAME SESSION.

CHAIN-ACTION OCCURS WHENEVER ANY ODYLIC DIE ROLLS A “6” OR WHEN TWO OR MORE ODYLIC DICE ROLLED **SIMULTANEOUSLY** EQUAL EACH OTHER, MAKING A MATCHED PAIR OR GROUP. SHOULD THIS OCCUR, THEN THE PLAYER CHARACTER CAN EFFECTIVELY GAIN ANOTHER FREE TURN. THIS CAN GO ON AS LONG AS THE PLAYER HAS ODYLIC DICE TO SPEND, AND THEIR LUCK HOLDS OUT.

A CHARACTER IS DEFEATED WHEN IT RUNS ENTIRELY OUT OF ‘**LUCK**’. THE LUCK STAT IS NOT EQUIVALENT TO DAMAGE, RATHER IT REPRESENTS THE TOTAL CAPABILITY OF **AVOIDING HARM**. WHEN A CHARACTER’S LUCK RUNS OUT, THEY ARE AT THE MERCY OF WHATEVER HAS DEFEATED THEM. AT THIS POINT THEY MAY BE SLAIN, OR CAPTURED, OR ADMONISHED, OR WHATEVER IS DESIRED. LUCK CANNOT BE REGAINED EXCEPT BY EXCEPTIONAL MEANS WITHIN ANY GIVEN GAME SESSION.

A CHARACTER IS, IN GENERAL, CONSIDERED TO BE CARRYING ALL CLOTHING AND MATERIALS CONSIDERED NORMAL FOR THE TIME PERIOD, WEALTH, AND SOCIAL RANK APPROPRIATE.

The Nature Of Play

Thou Spy Hath Embrangled Me is a single-scenario role-playing game for 2-3 people. The suggested player roles are that of a GM, or game master to run the adventure, and a player to fill the role of Petulla Mary Caston, a literal 'Jane Bond' of her time, which is 1567. An additional player could represent the role of her love interest, her 'Bond Boy' as it were, William Swanwick Geddes, but this is optional.

The play of ***Thou Spy Hath Embrangled Me*** is highly focused, intending to represent a classic James Bond movie in 1500's terms, using actual historical research as its foundation. For this reason, the plot flow must remain highly structured, this is without question a plot 'on rails', from which only marginal deviation can be allowed. Far from being a handicap, this is deliberate, maintaining the focus on the subject matter and theme. The value of playing ***Thou Spy Hath Embrangled Me*** is not the freeform experience of an open-ended RPG, but is instead to slip into the skin of a specific person in a specific time and place, and to live the most important adventure of her life, and nothing less, and nothing more. In short it is to play a very specific role, as fully as possible. Like the holodeck of Star-Trek, or the body-snatching of Quantum Leap, the player is expected to become Petulla (and possibly William) and see a specific circumstance to a conclusion. However, this circumstance can have any number of outcomes.

If Petulla fails, then history will be disrupted, and Lord Henry will become king of England, England will become ruthlessly Catholic, a new Inquisition will begin, and Scotland will likely dominate the British Isles politically for centuries to come. More than this, hundreds of thousands of people will perish of the Ague, and London will almost certainly become a ghost town.

If Petulla wins, then history will be as we have known it, and will utterly fail to record the very first British Superspy.

Thou Spy Hath Embrangled Me is a specific one-shot, focused role-playing scenario, but with only a small bit of imagination, and adaptation of existing spy movies to time and place, the adventures of Petulla Mary Caston could conceivably continue.

The mechanics of the game are likewise focused to the genre and to immediate and simple action with a focus on narrative. This is to be understood, and nothing more expected of them.

Thou Spy Hath Embrangled Me

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April 24th, 2005, created in eight hours, 23 minutes.

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