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The story of a brief career in scientific research.

## I Was a Hooker for the CIA

by Maggie Scarf

His name was Arp. I'd questioned him about the ethnicity of that name but he would say nothing, even though I'd assured him that I had no prejudices of any kind and to me sex was strictly a business proposition. But he only smiled mysteriously, saying: "I'm not here for sex exactly." He'd stripped the sheets from my vast kingsized bed, however, and remade the whole thing carefully, using Boy Scout corners. There wasn't a wrinkle upon the entire surface when he bid me into his arms. He was a future-oriented person, as I realized a moment later when the sexual act was completed. "And now," he said brusquely, leaping from the bed, "I must set myself to rights again."

I looked at him. Nothing had happened, I wanted to remark, that could have disarranged him in the slightest. But I said nothing, fearing that his male pride might be at stake. He went into the bathroom and soon I heard the sound of water running in the shower. After a brief interval he called to me asking if I had any extra Comet cleanser.

When he came out he looked healthy and spotless. He was fully dressed in his dark suit, diagonally striped tie and white buttoned-down shirt. I was glad, for he had a large and ugly scar that ran down the middle of his entire torso. When I'd asked him about this Arp would only say that it had to do with an unsuccessful attempt to open him up. As far as I could see the attempt had been successful—but he wasn't the kind of person one dared to prod too far.

I'd donned a negligee during his absence and was lying upon the bed reading Erik Erikson's *Childhood and Society*. This book fascinated me at the time because I'd reached an impasse in my own Adult Development. I was 25, one of the highest priced in the business, but was feeling increasingly alienated, empty and alone. I was in the stage Erikson defines as "Intimacy versus Isolation"—and yet who, I debated, would ever want to maintain an intimate involvement with someone in my own line of business? I had painted myself into one of life's corners. There seemed to be no clear way back into the society at large. I had an Identity, or perhaps a pseudo-Identity. And whichever it was it paid awfully well.

But I was in mental pain, and Arp's sudden question came to me as particularly apt. "Have you ever," he demanded, "considered going into scientific research?"

I admitted that I once had, but then shrugged helplessly. I'd had to drop out of college to support a

younger sister suffering from dyslexia. I'd had to start my present career at the bottom, in a massage parlor. "Are you an orphan?" asked Arp, his strangely pale eyes narrowing with interest. I explained that I wasn't, and that my parents were quite wealthy. "They never liked me or my younger sister, though . . . and my mother took the position that if she could choose her own friends she should also be able to choose her family."

Arp made no comment. He'd opened a luxurious leather briefcase while I'd been speaking, and now he took out a military-style hairbrush with an amber handle. He ran it over his short-clipped blond head, but there wasn't a hair there long enough to be affected. He put the brush away and took out a matching amber comb. He combed quickly through his eyebrows, which were bushy and flecked with grey.

I'd formed the suspicion that he might be a spy.

A few days later Arp asked me to meet him at the Grand Central end of the Times Square Shuttle at 11 pm. "Never," I replied. I was suffering from existential grief and angst and did consider life meaningless but hadn't, as I told him on the telephone, completely lost my marbles. "Don't worry, you'll be perfectly safe," he replied shortly. I could almost see the joyless smile on his face. "I am armed," he added, and then hung up. I'd have called him back if he'd given me any number—but he hadn't. I never would have gone if I weren't still tantalized by the possibility he'd mentioned at our last meeting—a career in scientific research.

I knew that I'd come to a place in my life in which all Adult Developmental Growth had ceased. I had to stop and remake some of the foolish decisions I'd made in the last phase ("Identity versus Role Confusion"). It was there that I'd screwed up, and thus rendered myself unable to move on and into the "Intimacy versus Isolation" stage and to traverse this one successfully. And so, against my own better judgment, I went down into the subway station at 11 pm.

He was there. On the trip to Times Square he revealed that he was an agent of the Central Intelligence Agency, and that he wanted to enlist my services in a special research project which had been given the name MK-ultra. "What does the MK stand for?" I asked. He would answer only that it was a code-name, and that I must not pursue this question further. "I only wondered," I explained, "because as it happens those were the initials of someone I knew, before she got married, that is." He looked around the half-empty subway car nervously. No one was sitting within earshot except for an old wino muttering TV commercials to himself. But of course, that could have been a cover for an operative on the Other Side.