

Deep in the Heart of Texas

written by Pamela McCaughey(2001), from an idea by Stephen Greaney
based on the series "UFO" (1969-71)
created by Gerry & Sylvia Anderson & Reg Hill and "Dallas", created by David Jacobs

Warning: mild adult situations, some naughty words

Chapter One

July 1st, 1981, SHADO Headquarters, Great Britain

"I've got the research you asked for on those oil lease properties in Texas, Ed," Alec Freeman threw himself into the seat across from Straker's desk, "Owned by one J.R. Ewing, residing in Dallas. Some big-name oil-baron."

"Hmmp. Hope he's co-operative. If the reconnaissance photos are correct, we've got trouble brewing over there. Alien trouble," Straker paused to light one of his favourite cigarillos, "I want to send the Omega people in as quickly as possible."

"What kind of alien activity is going on?"

"We're not sure if it has anything to do with underground oil on those properties, or if there's some other mineral the aliens are after. You know how they love to get their hands on our natural resources."

"Are the aliens actually trying to mine the area?"

"If they are, it's all being done underground. Out of sight. Hush-hush. I doubt if Mr. Ewing is even aware he's got trespassers."

"So how are you going to approach this?"

"I guess the next step is to contact Mr. Ewing and buy those oil-leases - we don't want to tip him off to anything unusual, and if we can come to some sort of agreement, Omega can buy the properties and just carry on."

.....a few hours later.....

"How did it go with Ewing?" Alec asked, helping himself to a hefty glass of rye whisky. The pinched look around Straker's mouth told Alec the whole story, "Not so good, huh?"

"That arrogant red neck bastard!" Straker spat out, stubbing out his cigarillo with unnecessary force, "He says he won't even 'talk turkey' unless I come to Dallas to meet with him! I don't have time for that!"

Alec decided to act as the voice of reason for his PO'ed boss, "Time's a-wasting, Ed. Every day we let those aliens carry on, unmolested, they get closer to their goal - whatever it is. How bad can it be to take a little business trip to Texas?"

July 2, 1981...on board an Omega aircraft en route to Dallas.....

"Thanks for coming along on such short notice, Paul. I needed to leave Alec in the 'old responsibility' seat while I was away. God *damn* it! I didn't need to make this trip.....," Straker accepted the soft drink proffered to him by the lone flight attendant.

"Sounds like this Ewing is something of a hard-ass, from the briefing I got. You and he should get along famously," Paul grinned and took his own drink.

"Look, all I want is to get this sale taken care of, get the hell home to SHADO. I even offered to let you handle it, and that southern yahoo insisted I come all the way to Dallas myself!"

"Ed, this man sounds like an utter monster in the oil business. He's been the target of assassination attempts by members of his own family, other oil people - in short - he's not going to give up those leases easily. From what I read on him, he just loves to screw people for the sheer pleasure of it. You'll have your work cut out wrestling those leases from him. If he thinks you're too eager, he'll drag the sale out, or perhaps even refuse to sell - figuring you know something special about those leases he doesn't."

Straker smiled sardonically, "I do know something, Paul. I do. But, we can't let Mr. Ewing know that. We've got to make him think we want the leases for reasons other than minerals. That's why I've got a bogus business plan worked up for him to look at. If we can make him think Omega just wants the land to build a big computer complex on, he won't suspect there's anything special about the land except its location."

Paul nodded slowly, the Omega Corporation was SHADO's shadowy MIB organization, started back in the early 1970's when SHADO itself was getting under way. The Corporation had a global reach, and was able to cover up just about any alien interaction that occurred, not to mention handling those folks who thought they'd seen aliens or had 'close encounters'. Their main mission was to conceal SHADO's work and keep the general public worldwide from learning about the alien menace. They were considered the security arm of SHADO, and much of SHADO's finances were earmarked for Omega. Omega's front was as a computer component company. A portion of the company's annual budget really was given over to computer development, so that they could function legally and make actual components for sale. Foster was interested in someday pursuing a career in Omega, but for the time being, he was learning the SHADO ropes. It was only last year he'd been recruited into SHADO, and he had a lot to digest.

"How much money are you planning to offer him?" Foster asked.

"One half million per acre - and those leases comprise seven acres. I had our research department determine their current market value and I'm permitted to offer him slightly over that value. Apparently Ewing managed to get the properties from another oil man - Cliff Barnes - a number of years ago. They weren't considered all that valuable at the time, so I'm hoping he'll just roll over and sell them to us - no questions asked. You'd think he'd be glad to get rid of them."

.....a few hours later, Dallas airport.....

"Excuse me, are you Mister Straker?" the young blonde woman was buxom and obviously sexy, and spoke with a sultry Southern drawl.

Foster tried to conceal his natural male interest by looking down and fiddling with his luggage; Straker leaned forward and offered his hand to her, "Yes, I'm Straker. And you are?"

"Lucy Ewing - my uncle is J.R. Ewing. He asked me to pick you gentlemen up and bring you back to Southfork for the July 4th weekend."

Straker smiled blankly, "Southfork? What's a Southfork? We have reservations at the Dallas Hilton....."

"Yes, I know, Uncle J.R. canceled them for you. Wasn't that nice of him?"

Foster shot Straker an 'I told you' look, "Very nice, indeed."

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The drive out to the Ewing family ranch, Southfork, was an enlightening experience. Ms. Lucy Ewing was a very cavalier driver, gunning her small, but very expensive sports car, around traffic on the highways and chatting up a storm. By the time the SHADO men landed in the Southfork parking lot, they already knew about Miss Ellie, her dead oil-man husband Jock Ewing, Uncle Bobbie, J.R.'s wife, Miss Sue-Ellen, and J.R.'s small son, John Ross. Not for the first time, Straker and Foster wondered why all southern adult women preceded their first names with "Miss."

They were directed through the backyard, into the pool area, before being escorted into the house, and shown their rooms. There, they would be able to rest, refresh themselves, and dress for dinner - which would be at 6:00 pm promptly.

Straker went into his room to reread his Omega business proposal. Foster was eager to lie down and snooze for a bit to get rid of the jet-lag. Flying from London to New York, Omegas headquarters, and from there to Dallas had tuckered him out. He was just drifting off when he felt the bed move. His eyes snapped open - and there was Miss Lucy Ewing, in nothing but a black teddy, smiling down at him!

"Uh, Miss Ewing, we hardly know each other," Foster stammered - God, she was sexy!

"That's ok, we'll know each other a lot better by the time dinner is served!"

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The clocks in each bedroom were set to chime at 6:00 pm precisely, so nobody would ever be late for dinner. Straker dressed carefully. He had set aside the Nehru jacket which was part of his film producer apparel, and was wearing a very severely tailored navy blue suit, with a baby blue tie. He viewed himself in the mirror several times, making certain he looked American again.

Foster was still standing in the shower. He had just had the most extensive workout he could remember. Lucy was.....extraordinary. Were all American girls like this? He felt like going to sleep, but he knew he was expected at the Ewing dinner table.....

Straker walked down the curving stairwell to the main floor of the Ewing mansion. He was met at the bottom of the stairs by a tall, handsome man who held out his hand, "Hi there, I'm Bobby Ewing! You must be Ed Straker!" SHADO's CO permitted himself to have his hand gripped tightly in Bobby's big fist.

"Hello, Bobby! I believe it was your niece who brought us out here to Southfork."

"Hey, we've got the whole holiday weekend - you wanna have the grand tour of the ranch?"

"That would be great!" Straker extracted his much smaller hand from Bobby's ample fist.

"Well, I'll see if I can get you some riding clothes for tomorrow - you prefer a gelding or a mare for riding?"

"I'm.....not sure - why does color make a difference?"

Bobby threw back his handsome head and laughed, then he punched Straker in the shoulder, "Jesus, Ed! You're a card! Come on into the drawing room and meet Mamma!"

Seated on a wing back chair was Ellie Ewing Farlow, the family matriarch. Her second husband Clayton Farlow, was out of town on business. Lucy Ewing was seated on the tapestried couch, nursing a drink, grinning like the proverbial cat that ate the canary.

"Where's Mr. Foster?" asked another woman, a sleek, elegant lady, with a small space between her two front teeth.

"I'm sure he'll be right down," Lucy purred, "He told me his trip took a lot out of him!"

"Ed, this is my mother, Ellie Ewing Farlow, this is Sue Ellen, J.R.'s wife, and of course, you've already met Lucy," Bobby did the introductions, "Would you care for a drink?"

"Uh...just tonic water, please." Straker waited for Bobby to hand him a glass.

"Tonic water! Ah never heard the like!" said a big voice from the door, "Mah Daddy used to say he never trusted a man who didn't drink!"

Straker turned and watched as a big man, now throwing down his Stetson hat, came toward him, hand extended. Bobby smiled, "Ed, this is my brother, J.R. Ewing!" For the second time that night, Straker's hand was mangled in a much larger fist. He tried not to react as his fingers smarted.

"Pleased to meet you Mr. Ewing," Straker replied, "I look forward to our business discussions later."

J.R. walked over and planted a kiss on his mothers cheek. He had not as yet acknowledged his wife's presence in the room. He made his way to the bar table and poured a large glass of bourbon, "Wee-lll, dinner first, Mr. Straker - can I call ya Ed? - and then down to business! Can't negotiate on an empty stomach, Ah always say!" The smile was smarmy, oily.

Just at that moment, Foster came into the room. Lucy smiled, and went to him, taking him by the hand, "Uncle Bobby, Uncle J.R., Grandma, Sue Ellen - this is Paul Foster!"

Feeling for all the world like a prize stud, Foster allowed Lucy to bring him into the drawing room, so he could shake hands with the men and nod to the ladies.

"You'll have a drink with us, Paul?" Bobby asked, a glass with ice at the ready.

"Yes, by all means," Foster accepted the bourbon with alacrity and more than a little relief.

"Doesn't he just have the cutest British accent?" Lucy said to Sue Ellen. Mrs. J. R. Ewing smiled demurely. Her eyes had been discreetly following Ed Straker since he came into the room.

"Ah understand you flew all the way over from England to be here with us today, Paul," J.R. smiled at Foster, "Yer arms tired?"

Foster nodded, "I must have.....uh.....dozed off as soon as I laid down on the bed."

"Jet-lag does take a lot out of a person," Miss Ellie commented, as one of the Southfork maids came in a whispered to her, "Dinner is ready to be served."

Lucy attached herself to Paul and led him from the drawing room, while J.R. took his mamma by the arm. Unused to Texas etiquette, Straker didn't know what to do, until Miss Sue Ellen took his arm, "Are you from Boston, Mr. Straker?" she asked, her beautiful eyes gazing up at him.

"Why yes, how did you know?"

"You still have a touch of the Yankee accent...."

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Dinner was a several course affair, with prime Texas steak served for the entree, and a rich dessert to finish off the meal. Coffee and brandy were brought round, as were cigars for the gentlemen.

"Cuban cee-gar, Ed?" J. R. offered one to Straker.

"Don't mind if I do," Straker puffed experimentally, while J.R. lit the other end for him. Foster also took a cigar from Bobby. The ladies had absented themselves when the cigars and brandy appeared on the table. What an oddly backward society these Texans lived in, Straker mused to himself. He felt like he was in a scene from *Gone With The Wind*.

"Ah wuz thinkin' we could take a little trip intah Ewing Oil tomorrow, Ed, just show yah around the place a bit," J.R. suggested.

"It'll have to be after I give him the ranch tour," Bobby interjected, "I promised him a great ride around Southfork," he nodded at Foster, "I can get some gear for you too Paul, you're about my size, I bet."

"Bob, Ed didn't come half way around the world just see a buncha cows, for Christ's sake!" J.R. sucked on his cigar and poured himself more brandy. He topped Foster's up too.

The last thing Straker wanted, at this point, was to cause offense, but in reality, the idea of sitting his SHADO ass on a horse for several hours did not much appeal to him, "Maybe Paul could get the tour tomorrow and I could accompany J.R. into Dallas."

Bobby looked crestfallen, but he smiled at Foster, "My niece seems to have taken quite a shine to you, Paul."

"She's very lovely, Bobby."

"Just gettin' out of a bad marriage - that girl never did have any luck with love - just like her daddy!" J.R. commented. From the grim expression Bobby shot J.R., it was obvious that the subject of Lucy's marriage and her father were sore spots between J.R. and Bobby Ewing.

"Wee-lll," J.R. downed his brandy and got up from the long table, "Ah do b'lieve Ah'll turn in for the night. Gotta big day tomorrow!"

Bobby excused himself with some sort of check he wanted to do on some pregnant cows on the ranch, and Straker and Foster found themselves going back upstairs to their guest rooms. They said good night and separated, each going into his own room.

Foster was pulling off his tie when he turned on the upper light. There, lying in his bed, was Lucy Ewing. He shut the door quickly, lest anyone should see Miss Ewing in his bed, "Lucy, we have to stop meeting this way," Paul smiled, sheepishly.

Lucy reached her hand out to him, "I heard Uncle Bobby say he was gonna take you riding tomorrow, but you've got some riding to do yet tonight!"

Chapter Two

July 3rd, 1981.....riding the range....

Paul Foster had been a top test pilot. Once he joined SHADO, he got plenty of experience piloting space shuttles, moon hoppers, and other SHADO hardware. However, none of them had ever pained his backside more than the horse he was currently riding. He realized he would never be interested in acreage, pregnant cows, Brahma bulls, or the other assorted ranch animals Bobby Ewing had taken the trouble to point out to him, but he feigned attention nonetheless, and tried to wriggle discreetly in his saddle often enough to distract himself from the bruises on his derriere. At least, thank God, Lucy has remained back by the Ewing pool, and Foster didn't have to put on a macho facade for her, at the moment.

Bobby was right - Foster and he were roughly the same size. Foster had grinned down at himself as he whirled in the mirror - watching himself in the thick blue jeans, heavy shirt, cowboy boots and Stetson. For a man who normally wore Moon Base silver, or Skydiver knits, this was a real sartorial departure.

The clothing had arrived at his door with the 5:00 am 'wake up call'. Lucy had discreetly removed herself a few moments earlier (how did she know what time to leave?) and Bobby had taken Foster for a hearty breakfast in the Ewing dining room before they went out to the barns to saddle up.

By 6:00 am, Bobby and Foster were out on the Southfork 'back 40', watching the ranch's real cowboys at work, and enjoying a cool, but sunny morning.

"I hear Omega is a computer company," Bobby said as they rode along, "J.R. says you're interested in those old oil leases, not for oil, but as property to build a new facility on."

Foster reined his horse around a steaming puddle of cow shit, "Omega wants to expand. We'd like to put another factory on the map."

"Why Texas?"

"We're starting to make big sales in South America and the Caribbean - a site in Texas would provide quicker delivery and ensure new sales because of its proximity to these markets."

"How big a facility you boys plannin' to put up?"

"It would house several hundred people, certainly, plus we'd need an infrastructure - you know - parking lots, coffee outlets, warehousing, trucking space."

"You gonna to give jobs to people around here?"

Truth to tell, Foster was bluffing. Getting the oil lease properties was important to SHADO and Omega so they could flush out an alien mining base. Putting an Omega computer plant there might never even happen, "It depends on the labour market available to us here. There just might jobs for the locals in it, but our managers will have to come from our other plants to get things going."

"You know anything about those properties?" Bobby asked.

"I understand your brother purchased them from a fellow by the name of Cliff Barnes some time ago. Since then, Ewing Oil has made no effort to drill on them."

Bobby tipped his Stetson back and reined in his horse next to Foster's, "Paul, my brother J.R. is not the nicest oil man in Texas to deal with. I hate to speak this way about family, but the truth is, J. R. weaseled those oil leases from Cliff illegally."

"How do you know?"

"Cliff's my brother in law - and I know my own brother only too well. There's been a feud between J.R. and Cliff Barnes for years. They hate each other, and both will do just about anything to screw the other, professionally or personally."

"Why are you telling me this, Bobby?"

"Because this sale isn't gonna be as easy as your Mr. Straker thinks. Not only will J.R. play hard-ball on this, because he figures he can get more money out of Omega, but once Cliff gets wind of this deal, he'll probably sue J.R. for some of the profit - like I said, J.R. doesn't really have the true ownership of those properties. If Cliff gets involved - and I bet he will - the sale could be stalled indefinitely."

.....into the oil world.....

Ed Straker had donned another severe American-style suit for his visit to Ewing Oil. Black, with a red power tie. The black suit contrasted considerably with his silver hair and big blue eyes. He noticed Mrs. J. R. Ewing was eying him closely again over the breakfast table.

"Why, Sue Ellen, you nevah come to the breakfast table at this hour," J.R. smiled his oily smile, "Whut on earth has you up so early?"

Sue Ellen smiled gently, "I'm taking John Ross out shopping today."

The young lad looked up from his cereal, eyes bright, the resemblance to his father unmistakable, "Mum said we could go to FAO Schwarz today and look at all the toys!"

"We-ell, John Ross, you just make sure Momma don't spoil ya too much - yer gonna be an oil man someday, just like yer Daddy - and the only toys we oil men like are oil drills!" Sue Ellen rolled her eyes in derision, but J.R. ignored her expression, "Say, Ed, how would you like to meet some other oil men here in Dallas - I could take you out to the Cattleman's Restaurant for lunch. Most of 'em tie on the feed bag there!"

Straker smiled, "That would be just fine, J.R. I've closed lots of deals over the dinner table."

J.R. got up from the table and put on his Stetson, "Time to hit the road," he leaned over and kissed his mother on the cheek, "Don't wait up for us, Momma!"

On the way into Dallas, Straker listened while J.R. spewed forth all his oil-man wisdom. They were a garrulous lot, these Ewings. J.R. had quite a few things to say about his competitors in the oil business, especially someone named Cliff Barnes, and none of it good. Straker felt as though he was dealing with a nine headed Hydra. J. R. had the kind of oily charm that might work on women, but it left Straker cold. If he felt this business deal was going to be easy, he knew now he was wrong. And, time was of the essence. What the hell were the aliens up to out there?

The Ewing Oil offices were located in one of Dallas' many steel and glass towers. From what Straker could see, the only employees were two very comely female assistants. Somehow that didn't surprise him. J. R. seemed to be the type who liked women for all the wrong reasons. Straker had also noticed that J.R. virtually ignored his own wife, which was odd. She was attractive, obviously well-bred.

"Mah Daddy started Ewing Oil way back, and Ah've been tryin' to run it just like he did, Ed. He nevah trifled over details and he knew a put up job when he saw it. So why do you computer people want some next-to-worthless oil lease properties?" J. R. sat down behind his desk. Straker was used to people sitting across from his desk at SHADO - this was not a position he liked at all.

"You've seen our business plan. We want to put up a new factory here in Texas. We're

now serving a whole new market area in the Caribbean and South America - we want to expand on it by having a factory located close to these buyers. Makes for closing deals quicker and shipping the product that much faster."

"But, why those properties? Ah've got others here in downtown Dallas that'd cost you less."

"J. R. we want to build a large facility - housing several hundred workers. The computer business is not like others. We require a certain degree of.....privacy, shall we say? Industrial espionage is especially rife in the computer business. By placing our facility in an out-of-the-way location, it will make it harder for strangers to get to us, and of course, we have stringent security conditions at each of our plants."

"We-ell, I don't know much about the computer industry, but I know oil. And, I know those properties are worth only so much. So why're ya offerin' a better than market value for 'em?"

"It's the location. The properties are not far from the Gulf of Mexico, which gives us access to several port cities through which we can ship our components and other items. For our needs, it's prime real estate."

J. R. toyed with a pencil on his desk. Straker was feeling frustrated, but from long years of concealing his emotions, he sat with an impassive poker face. J. R. Ewing was not going to stop SHADO and Omega from getting those properties. And, the sooner the deal was clinched, the better.

"Soooo, yer not gonna be drillin' for oil, then."

Straker leaned forward, and in a conspiratorial voice said, "Our company is poised to move ahead with some special development, and we want a nice, quiet remote spot to do it in. Right now, people think about computers in the business sense. But, Omega wants to be in the vanguard of the personal computer industry. PCs, that is. Before too long, everyone will have their own home computer - and they'll be using them for everything from private accounting to entertainment. It's a rich, untapped market as yet. And, we have items in the works which will give us a good competitive edge. Plus, we're still going to be manufacturing current technology."

J. R.'s eyes widened when Straker mentioned the word "rich", as was expected. Then he gave Straker one of his oily smiles, "I do believe we might be able to do some business after all, Ed. Let's sidle over to the Cattleman's and discuss this further over lunch."

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Straker and J. R. were seated at a discreet table, enjoying a quiet meal. They'd continued their business discussion, and branched off into several other topics. The post-prandial liqueurs had arrived via their waitress when a short stocky man, with thinning sandy hair approached them.

"There you are! Those harpies you have for secretaries told me they didn't know where you went. I mighta known I'd find you in here!"

J.R. looked up at the man with utter contempt, "Now, just whut d'you want, Barnes? Lak Ah should care."

"Those oil leases! I hear you're gonna sell them - they aren't yours ta sell! You know they're mine!"

Ewing shook his head, "Ah don't know whut you mean! Ah took them away from you, fair and square - just like Ah take eve'ythin' else from you!"

"There was no fair and square about it, J.R.! You got NO right to sell those leases or the

properties - unless you plan to share the profits with me!"

"Now, look here, Barnes, Ah don't plan on arguin' this business with you here in public. You got some legal rights I don't know about? Fahne. You git intah court and we'll discuss 'em. In the meantime, Ah got better things tah do than listen tah you blitherin' away!"

Barnes wasn't backing down one inch, "You're damn right I'll take you to court! Either I get my share, or you don't make the sale! You can just tell THAT to your buyer!" and he stomped off in a huff.

J. R. shook his head, "We-ell, we don't hafta worry 'bout him. He's all noise and no action!"

Straker was silent for a moment. The very idea of something else stalling SHADO and Omega from getting onto those properties to clean out a possible alien base pissed him off. And, he was shrewd enough to know that a J. R. Ewing was certainly capable of letting the information about the sale get to Cliff Barnes, just to drive the price up on the leases, or threaten to stall the entire sale process. Finally, in a move calculated to scare J. R., Straker said, "Omega would like to close this deal, but if it's going to be too much trouble, perhaps my company should be looking elsewhere. Shame, too. We really had our eyes on that spot."

If he was rattled at all by the prospect of losing the sale, he didn't show it. Instead, J. R. smiled broadly, "Ah, don't let that fool Barnes worry ya none. Ah'm sure we can come to an understandin' about this."

Chapter Three

"J. R., that helicopter you ordered is available now," Sly told him, as he and Straker came back into the Ewing Oil office.

"Good - we'll just take a run out to th'airport and hop us a ride," J. R. smiled at his guest, "Ah got us a rental so Ah kin show you the oil lease properties you bin so interested in."

On the drive out to the airport, J. R. chattered along seemingly good-naturedly, as though he was eager to sell Straker on the properties in question. Straker was now firmly of the opinion that Mr. Ewing was playing an elaborate cat-and-mouse game with him, and he wasn't one bit amused. He had bigger matters on his mind. Used to being the one in complete control, Straker was getting frustrated with J.R.'s "hail fellow well met" charade. However, a fly-by of the properties might be useful.

* * *

Straker, J. R. and the pilot were all wearing headsets so they could communicate more easily.

"Now, this here is the start of the first property," J. R. pointed down, "Raht now, it's just scrub trees, but it could be clear-cut for construction. The access roads all connect onto the state highway."

"So at least we'd have that much infrastructure in place," Straker commented. Infrastructure was the least of his worries. SHADO mobiles could go just about anywhere!

The helicopter moves quickly over the landscape, it's shadow running over the grass and trees like a wraith in the bright Texas sunlight. As they moved forward, Straker saw J. R.'s facial expression change.

"Something wrong?" Straker asked.

J. R. pointed down again, "Ah think I got trespasser trouble - look down there - somebody bin clear-cuttin' on mah property!"

Straker followed J. R. line of vision. There was indeed a small clear-cut space amongst all the trees. He'd seen it before. On SHADO reconnaissance photos. Aliens!

* * *

J. R. and Straker had just gotten back into the terminal building at the airport when J. R. was paged for a phone call. He excused himself and walked to one of the 'house phones' to take it. Straker was preoccupied with his own thoughts. He'd now seen for himself the very spot where the aliens were active - but what were they up to?

"J. R.? That you?"

"Yeah - whatcha got fer me, Fenton?"

"Did some more checkin' on that Straker fella. He's a little more than he seems."

"Like whut?"

"Grad-iated MIT in Boston, was with the American Air Force, and then give it all up to become some movie tycoon in England. I don't know whut all that has to do with computers."

"Whut about this Omega Corporation? Is it real or just a dummy?"

"Oh, it's real enough."

"And Foster?"

"Until last year he was a test pilot workin' in England. Then he just kinda drapped outta sight for awhile. When he resurfaced, he was workin' for this Straker fella as a film exec-u-tive too."

"We-ell, Ah'll be damned," J. R. smiled nastily, "If'n they think they're gonna pull the

wool over ol' J. R.'s eyes, they gotta another think comin'. Keep on it Bubba, I wanna know whutever you find out. I gotta use every trick on this one. He's gonna learn he don't get nuthin' cheap from the Ewings. Could ya drop it to Barnes that I had Straker out for a fly-over the properties today? I wanna keep Barnes stirred up some. It just might make me more money! 'Spec'lly if this Omega Corporation got some ties with the Pentagon or somethin'! And, Bubba, would you take a coupla men and git out there and check things out for me? I want rid o' them squatters right away."

* * *

Straker stood up expectantly as J. R. approached him, fresh from his phone call.

"Ah gotta git some muscle out there to that prop'ty ASAP, Ed. Ah don't take too kindly to trespassers. Ah better alert the Braddock County sheriff."

Without changing expression, Straker replied, "Is that necessary?"

"Hey, Ah got th'chance tah sell them leases to Omega - Ah don't want no squatters out there makin' no trouble for me. Ah bet that damn Barnes sent 'em out there!"

"I'm sure Mr. Barnes couldn't have marshaled anyone that quickly to go out to work that property. Why don't you let me look into it? I can pull some strings you can't."

J. R. inclined his head at Straker - just whut was this Yankee up to? - he wondered, "Like whut?"

"I have some friends at a nearby air force base who owe me a couple favours. Let me make one call."

"Be mah guest!" J. R. gestured expansively to the row of "house phones".

Unbeknownst to J. R., Straker punched a secret SHADO code, and was put through immediately to Alec Freeman. Turning his back to J. R., and speaking softly, Straker said, "Alec, it's me. I need another reconnaissance fly-over on that site we talked about. Yes. I just did a helicopter trip out there myself. Definitely activity on the surface now of some sort - trees have been clear cut on-site. You can call me at Southfork with any new information. Thanks."

"I don't think we'll have any further problems with your trespassers, now, J. R. I'm buddy-buddy with the CO, and he's going to send out a detachment of men to check on the site right away. They'll read those 'squatters' the riot act."

* * *

By the time J. R. and Straker drove back out to Southfork, the sun was setting as a big red ball in the West. J. R. had taken Straker out to one of their closer oil drilling set-ups and showed him around some of Dallas. Neither man trusted the other, and both were eager to keep each other under close scrutiny. They had their supper in a small, but select, steak-house on the way out to the Ewing Ranch.

The evening meal was over at the Ewing residence by the time they returned. Foster, having nothing better to do, had succumbed to Lucy's entreaties to join her in an after-supper swim, and they were joined by Sue Ellen's son John Ross, who enjoyed frolicking in the water with his cousin and Foster. Sue-Ellen was sitting pool-side while the others played when J. R. and Straker came into the area.

"Dah-dee" John Ross shrieked, jumping soaking wet into J. R.'s arms.

"Now, boy, yer gonna get Daddy all wet here!" J. R. put him back down. He studiously ignored Sue Ellen and started talking to the child about his shopping expedition earlier in the day.

Sue Ellen smiled demurely at Straker, "Did you have a good day?"

"An interesting day would be a better assessment," he replied, "I met quite a few of your husband's business associates, including a Cliff Barnes."

Her smile slid off her face, "Did those two make a scene in public again?"

"I take it their 'feud' is public knowledge?"

"To the point of boredom, Mr. Straker," Sue Ellen commented, and uncoiled her long legs out from under herself. She stood up and leaned into Straker's ear, "Those two just love to hate each other!"

"So I gathered."

The Ewing's maid came to the back patio doors, "Mr. Straker, there's a call for you - a Colonel Freeman?"

Straker nodded and went inside to take the call. When he returned, he said, "I think the problem we discussed earlier has been taken care of. I just spoke with Col. Freeman."

J.R. nodded and excused himself to make his own phone call.

"Where's Bubba?" he asked when an unfamiliar voice answered the phone.

"He ain't come back yit. Took Jasper and Hartley out with him earlier today on some bizness fer you, he said, and I ain't seen hide ner hair of 'im since!"

"We-ell, you tell him when he gits in I wanna call from him - I don't care how late it is."

"Ah'll do just that, J. R."

July 4th, Independence Day, Southfork.....

Straker hadn't seen an American July 4th celebration in quite a few years. The Ewings were obviously party people, and their Independence Day BBQ was complete with big steaks, lots of free-flowing booze and a plethora of Stetson-hatted Texans, drawling all over the place. Foster felt somewhat like a fish out of water, as the lone Brit, during a festival celebrating the overthrow of his country's colonial government by the Americans. However, he had no cause to be lonely. Lucy kept him company every night in his bed, and she clung to him tenaciously all throughout the party.

J. R. took Straker around introducing him to his various guests, and when Straker turned down a beer and asked for soda pop instead, he found Sue Ellen nursing her own beverage right beside him.

"You don't drink liquor. How odd," she mused aloud.

"I don't drink - dulls the mind," Straker nodded to her.

"Is that a personal choice, or a choice your addiction made for you?" she asked.

"I haven't had a drink of booze since I was married, Mrs. Ewing."

"I see - then, you're married?"

"Divorced."

A small smile crossed Sue Ellen's lips, "Children?"

"I lost my son earlier this year."

"Your ex got sole custody?"

"No, Johnnie was killed in a car accident."

"My God! I'm sorry to have reminded you....."

"We all have our crosses to bear, don't we?"

"Yes, that's true enough. Mine's J. R."

"He's not a very attentive husband, is he?"

"You noticed."

"Impossible not to."

"J. R. and I have an.....understanding. He doesn't get in my way, and I don't get in his." Sue Ellen took another sip of her soda through her straw, looking up at Straker with those beautiful eyes.

"Hell of a way to run a marriage," Straker observed.

"It's mostly for John Ross."

"He's a beautiful little boy. One you can be proud of."

"I try to keep him from falling under his father's influence too much. That's part of why I'm here for him. So why are you divorced?"

"My work. My wife didn't understand. I'm a busy man."

"Too busy for your family?"

"It's the nature of my work.....I travel a great deal."

"Computers? Isn't that what J. R. said?"

"If your husband and I can reach an agreement, my computer company will be placing a new facility on those oil lease properties. It's my job to negotiate such deals wherever and whenever they come up."

"So, how long are you planning to stay in Dallas?"

"Just until J. R. and I can close the deal. Then, it's back to the Big Apple." Straker was lying, and he knew it. He'd be back to England on the first SHADAIR flight he could get, letting Omega clean out the aliens!

Sue Ellen's limpid eyes looked Straker over, "That's too bad. There's a lot more to Dallas than oil men and cattle ranches," her smile was suggestive.

Their conversation was interrupted by a noisy ka-fuffle over by the pool area. All eyes turned to the raised voices.

"Barnes, if you had half a brain, you'da nevah come out here today. Yer not welcome on this prop'ty anytime, but especially not on Ju-lie 4th!"

"I just wanted all these good people to know what you were up ta, trying to sell those oil leases, an' they don't even really belong ta you!"

Straker heard Sue Ellen's voice sotto voce, "Oh, here we go agin!"

"Now look! You sold them leases to me and that's that!"

"But, if I had known I was sellin' them ta you, I wouldna sold them at all!"

"It ain't mah fault if'n you don't check out yore business deals bettern' that!"

"You used a dummy company tah buy my oil leases!"

"That's raht - a dummy company to buy from a dummy!"

"That company doesn't even really exist - so I didn't sell those leases to anyone! They're still mine!"

"Not accordin' to the law, Barnes....." but it was too late. Barnes threw the first punch, and J. R. toppled over into the swimming pool, Stetson and all! Straker watched as Bobby Ewing came over to calm things down.

"Now look Cliff, you weren't invited, and you've said your piece, so you can just leave now!"

J. R. was splashing about in the pool, "Get that damn fool outta here! Ruin' my party! Just lookit mah hat!" J. R. was trying to salvage his new Stetson.

Barnes just looked at Bobby, "Well, now I don't have ta tell you of all people what a shit head your brother is!"

"Be that as it may, Cliff, it's time you left!" and Bobby turned Cliff around and steered him towards the parking lot. For such a small man, Barnes wriggled out of Bobby's grasp and

almost managed to get away. Until the two of them ended up joining J. R. in the pool!

"We-ell, God damn it - Ah ain't sharin' no pool with that idiot, Barnes!" J. R. tried to get up the stairs at the shallow end, but Barnes had eluded Bobby's grip in the water and pulled J. R. back down by his coat-tail.

Most people who had been to Ewing parties before knew enough to back away from the pool and keep their distance. Straker put down his drink and leaned over to give J. R. his hand, but as the oil tycoon reached out, Barnes dunked him again, pulling Straker in head first! The SHADO CO came to the surface, spitting like a Siamese cat. Foster decided it was time to come to his commander's rescue and likewise bent over the pool-side, just in time for Barnes to slither out and knock him over. Splash!

"See what you did, Cliff Barnes!" Lucy was screaming at the top of her lungs!

"Ah'm gonna call the po-lice!" J. R. sputtered, as he finally made it up the shallow end steps, dumping water out of his hat.

Bobby came out next, pulling Cliff with him, "There's no need of that J. R., Cliff was just leaving, weren't you?"

"This isn't the end of this, J. R.! I'm not gonna let you get away with this!" Cliff stood on the tiled pool-surround, rivulets of water draining off him.

"Git off'n mah prop'ty raht now or else Ah will call the sheriff!" J. R. advanced toward him, and this time Bobby grabbed his brother, "J. R., cool off and go upstairs and get changed," he looked over at Barnes, "And, Cliff, I expect to see you gone by the time I get back down here in dry clothes!"

Foster and Straker, soaking wet, made their way out of the pool via the ladder on the other side, "Shit, these people are worse than the aliens!" Straker hissed at Foster under his breath.

.....Somewhere on one of J. R.'s oil lease properties.....

Hours earlier, a trio of orange and silver clad figures were working their way around the scrubby trees, weapons at the ready. There was an intruder alert. Someone was snooping around and the aliens didn't want any company - especially human company. One of the aliens caught sight of three uniformed men, working their way towards them. Under cover of the foliage, the aliens shot down the sheriff and his two deputies. Then, they dragged the bodies down into their subterranean base.....

July 5th, 1981.....overseas phone call for Mr. Straker.....

"Ed, our last fly-over found a county sheriffs vehicle parked near the alien base. No sign of life. I guess we can assume the aliens got to them. They don't like witnesses," Alec Freeman's voice reported to Straker on the phone.

"That damn fool!" Straker swore quietly, "I told J.R. not to get the local authorities involved!"

"What do you want me to do at this end?"

Straker chewed his cigarillo, "I don't think we have any choice now, like it or not. Omega's gotta go in there."

"Are you any closer to making the purchase?"

"No. And, we can't wait any longer. This should have been finished days ago. I'm tired of playing games with this Dallas dipshit. Make the arrangements to send in the Omega people.

I'll keep the Ewings stalled on this end. But, make it fast! I don't know how much time we'll have before those state troopers go missing and J. R. gets suspicious!" Straker put down the phone and made his way back to the Ewing family breakfast table.

Upstairs, Sue Ellen softly cradled her own extension phone. What did Straker mean by aliens? The state of Texas had been having an on-going situation with Mexicans coming over the border to work illegally. They usually took the shit jobs nobody else wanted because they were so eager to gain entrance into the United States. Had J. R. hatched some diabolical plan to cash in on those poor people? And, then there was that comment about the county sheriff. Sue Ellen knew from personal experience that J.R. had any number of sheriffs and Texas Rangers in his employ, under the table. But, why would Straker insist on having the Omega people sent in right away, even before the deal was finalized? They were computer designers, or so she thought. What could a group of engineers do out there? Were they survey people? She wondered for a moment if she should let J. R. in on these tidbits of information she'd acquired. But, Straker was young, handsome, and also divorced. And, if it was possible for anyone to go J. R. one better, than she wanted to see someone do that! Sue Ellen finished putting on her earrings and smoothed out her day-dress. She looked at her reflection in the mirror. Yes, it just might be amusing to watch Mr. Ed Straker - a Yankee - beat out that miserable excuse of a husband of hers!

* * *

"Whaddya mean they nevah came back!" J. R. shouted into the receiver.

"Just whut Ah said - they ain't come back yit. But, Ah bin on it already, Ah sent out another cruiser to check on 'em. I figgered when they didn't show up after last naht, somethin' must be wrong." Bubba's deputy, Cletus, said.

"Yah hear back from him yit?"

"We-ell, not yit, but it's a fahr piece out yonder thar to that spot. I'll keep ya posted, J. R., don't yah worry none."

* * *

Much as hated to admit it, Foster had actually started to like horseback riding. His rump was getting used to the bump-bump of the animal's movements, and he managed to convince Straker to join him for a late morning canter. In the interests of self-preservation, Foster stifled a chuckle when he saw SHADO's CO come out of his guest room in jeans, boots, flannel shirt and cowboy hat. They ate a late brekkie with the Ewing family and promised to be back by lunch. Bobby wanted to go with them, but was mercifully called off to the barns to witness the birth of a much heralded champion bull calf.

Straker spent his breakfast, trying to avoid Sue Ellen's doe eyes. He chatted with the family, answered Miss Ellie's sociable questions, and lied about how much he was looking forward to that morning's horse ride.

In the stable, two horses had been saddled as requested by Bobby for Straker and Foster. While Foster, the younger of the two, bounded up onto his horse with great energy, Straker stood on the ground by his horse, reins in hand, looking up at the huge black animal.

"Are you sure we actually have to ride them? Couldn't we just roll in the hay and pretend we went riding?" Straker asked.

"It's not that bad once you get used to it, Ed," Foster replied, unable to wipe the grin off his face.

"How do I get on?"

"Well, first you have to put your left foot in the left stirrup, lift yourself up with the

pommel, and then swing your right leg over onto the right side of the horse. And, you have to do all this without....hurting your privates," there was a definite teasing note in Foster's voice.

"Shit! I knew there was a damn good reason I never played cowboys and Indians when I was a kid!" Straker shook his head. The horse whickered softly and redistributed its considerable weight from one foot to the other, "Whoa, boy!"

"I hate to tell you this, Ed, but the horse is a female!"

Straker raised an eyebrow, "It figures. Well, now or never, I suppose," and SHADO's CO slipped his left foot into the stirrup as instructed by Foster. He hung onto the pommel, but just couldn't quite get the movement right to lift himself up and over into the saddle. He hung there for an embarrassing moment until he was able to straighten up a bit and finally stepped down again, just before Foster was about to dismount and assist him.

"I can get you a mounting block," Foster offered.

"What's that?"

"It's just a small step-stool which elevates you a little higher so you can get on the horse."

"Yes, I think I'll try that."

Paul dismounted, walked down three stalls, and brought the aforementioned item back. He positioned it for Straker and then got back on his own horse, a roan gelding. Then, he watched, as Straker managed to get himself onto the mare and into the saddle.

"Now what?" Straker asked.

"Now, we take the horses out of the barn and out into the 'back 40' for a nice long ride," Foster told him.

"How do we do that?"

"Just pull those reins in your hands and make a sound like this," Foster clicked in his mouth to the gelding. The horse turned his head smoothly and headed out of the barn.

"Wait a minute, Paul - how'd you do that again?" Straker yelled after the departing Foster.

* * *

One weary hour later, Straker and Foster were overlooking a small stream on the Ewing property. Foster had gotten off his mount to stretch his legs, but Straker refused, saying when he got off that horse, it would be the last time ever!

"When are the Omega people going in?"

"They should be there as we speak. I told Alec to get it in gear - I was tired of waiting. I told you about the state trooper vehicle on the reconnaissance photos - I'll bet the aliens took care of them already."

"Think we'll have any trouble with the Ewings about trespassing?"

"If anything gets said, I'll say I sent in a survey team to check things out - to see if there was anything wrong out there that could cause J. R. to stall this sale. He's just playing games, hoping for a bigger score on the pay-off. If we get the aliens cleaned out of there within the next 24 hours, we won't need to buy the land at all - and we can say good-bye to Mr. J. R. Ewing for good! And, save ourselves several million dollars in the process. He doesn't know it yet, but he may have just screwed himself out of a deal. I can play hard-ball too."

"How soon can we expect Omega to have the situation in hand?"

"Alec promised to call me with the 'all clear' signal as soon as he gets a report. Then, we can hop a plane and get the hell home."

"I'm sorry I haven't been much use to you on this trip, Ed. But, I don't know anything about the oil business."

"That's ok, Paul, neither do I!" Straker grinned suddenly, shifting in his saddle to a more

comfortable position, "I take it Lucy Ewing has been keeping you busy!"

"I have to wonder if all American girls are so.....insatiable!"

"Don't look at me for answers!" Straker grinned again, "I married a Brit, and besides, I don't 'kiss and tell.'"

"From the looks of things, J. R.'s wife has her eye on you," Foster teased back.

"Well, she can look all she wants. The last thing I plan on doing is bedding J. R. Ewing's wife!"

"Seriously, Ed, what can Omega do about the alien base?"

"The Omega people are highly trained to handle hazardous materials, they're combat ready, and they're mean. They can clean out a nest of aliens like a pest control agent handles an infestation of termites, or some other such parasite. They're so thorough that nobody will ever find that state trooper's car, and if they find the state troopers, they'll never be seen again, either. You know what the word Omega means, don't you?"

"It's Greek for 'the last' isn't it?"

"Right! Because the Omega people are the last things the aliens see on this planet before they're finished off. Same goes for all those people who 'think' they see little green men, or have 'close encounters.' Omega handles them pretty well."

"What about all those people who claim they were abducted by ETs?"

"Paul, you know the aliens NEVER let any humans get away. People making those alien sighting claims are just looking for attention. They're the stuff of the tabloid press."

Foster looked down at his watch, "I suppose we should start back. They'll be looking for us. What's our game plan?"

Straker leaned forward in his saddle, and pushed his hat back, "We'll stay at the ranch house until we get the OK signal from Alec. Then, I'll say we've changed our mind about the deal, and we'll go home."

"J. R. isn't going to be too happy about losing such a lucrative sale," Foster observed.

"You just leave old J. R. to me. I can handle that bastard. Now, if I can just manage the rest of the way back to stable on this horse before my arse is permanently damaged....."

CHAPTER FOUR

July 5th, 1981.....enter the Omega Men.....

Omega utilized mobiles quite similar to SHADO's. Heavily armoured and well provisioned with weapons and test equipment, Omega's vehicles were top of the line in every way. As good as top secret military hardware could be, but they didn't have tank tracks (which could be easily disabled), and they looked more like Hummers, without any visible weaponry. However, special cannons or additional radar detection units could be mounted to the roof turret, and each Omega mobile carried a crew complement of six. Commanding the mission was Allan Leslie, a young Canadian geologist, who had proven himself Omega's top expert in alien technology.

The three Omega mobiles were put down on one of Ewing Oil's properties by a large transport aircraft, several miles from the alien base. It landed long enough just to off-load the mobiles and took off again.

"This is Omega One, report in," Allan Leslie's voice crackled over the intercom.

"Omega Two, here."

"Omega Three, roger."

"SHADO Control, you monitoring us? Target area is Mark 5-niner-2-7. We're gonna split up and come at the alien base in a pincer movement - from three different directions. We'll haul up about half a mile in and then continue on foot. Any questions?" he paused, waiting. When there were no comments, he continued, "We'll touch base when we get to our rendezvous spots."

The mobiles made their way slowly and quietly to their assigned positions. Five of the six crew members would be going into the site, while the driver would remain with the vehicles as communications points men. At the assigned locations, fifteen heavily armed Omega troopers got out, and advanced on foot to the alien base.

On their way in, the Omega operatives came across two Braddock County Sheriffs' vehicles. They'd known they'd find them, and they would have to deal with them later - after they'd flushed out the nest of aliens. They marked them with electronic beacons for the Omega aircraft to remove them. Then, they continued on.....

* * *

Returning to the Ewing ranch house, Straker and Foster found that luncheon was being served and there was a message waiting for Straker - he was to call Colonel Freeman when he got in.

"Alec - any news?"

"Things are in process. We're monitoring everything as it happens."

Straker paused to light a cigarillo. He hadn't had one yet today and as he sucked in the fumes, he felt better, but his rear end didn't, "Just let me know when you can give me a final status report."

He hung up and was planning to go back to the dining room for a bite when Sue Ellen gestured for him to follow her into the sitting room. Straker was not into any hanky-panky, and he certainly didn't want J.R. to think he was consorting with his wife. Avoiding any hassles was one of Straker's top priorities in this case. As soon as he got the "all clear" from Alec, he and Paul would be winging their way home to Great Britain.

"I'm sorry, Sue Ellen, I was just on my way in to get something to eat," Straker tried to put

her off with a bland smile.

"I think you might like to hear what I have to say, Mr. Straker," she smiled back, but there was something strange in that smile that sent alarm bells ringing in Straker's head. She took him by the arm coquettishly and led him into the sitting room.

Straker tilted his head sideways, "Yes?"

"I...uh....heard that phone call you had with Colonel Freeman last night. The one about the illegal aliens? Is my husband up to something?"

"What exactly did you hear?"

"Just something about some county officers who disappeared, and a base for Mexican illegals out on my husband's property."

Straker drew a breath of relief. It was obvious that although she'd definitely overheard his conversation with Alec, she had no idea of what they were really discussing. She equated the word 'aliens' with Mexicans who were crossing the international border illegally. He'd known it wasn't a great idea to hold converse with Alec over an un-secure phone line, but he'd not had much choice. They just tried to keep their comments as indecipherable as possible.

"It's my understanding your husband wished to have the illegals removed so he and I could proceed with our business arrangements."

"But, why were your engineers from Omega going into the site? Does my husband know about *that*?" Sue Ellen smiled up at him ingenuously.

"Just survey people. We'll need to provide our architects with the proper information so they can site the plant and it's surrounding environs," Straker commented cautiously. He hadn't done this much lying since high school!

"So, you and J.R. must be close to some sort of closure?"

"I hope so, Sue Ellen."

"Does Cliff Barnes know this?"

"I'm sure he must, if he's got his finger in the right pies."

"Is there any chance those illegal aliens were placed there by Cliff to slow down the deal-making process?"

Straker smiled in spite of himself, "I don't think so." It had taken brains far more nefarious than Cliff Barnes' to set up that alien base! But, then, Sue Ellen was J.R.'s wife - had he set her up to pump Straker for information?

"Well, I just wondered. J.R. has so many dirty deals going, that I was naturally suspicious."

"He isn't involved with anything underhanded this time," Straker lied again. If J.R. knew what was really squatting on his land, he'd be up to something pretty damn quick!

Sue Ellen patted Straker's arm, "Be careful of my husband. Don't trust anyone."

July 5th, 1983, later that afternoon....

"Alright, Sue Ellen, what d'ya want?" Cliff Barnes laid his feet up on his desk. He watched J.R. Ewing's wife, and his former mistress, seat herself demurely in front of him.

"I have some information you might be interested in."

"And, whose interests are you serving - yours or J.R.'s?"

"I think you should know by now that I don't serve any interests for J.R."

"Yeah, well, you're still married to 'im, and still livin' under his roof these days."

"But, not spending my nights in his bed," Sue Ellen commented.

"So you've said before," Barnes frowned at her, remembering the debacle in which he

once thought Sue Ellen's child was his own. That had been a major defeat for Cliff - DNA testing had proven the child was actually J.R.'s.

"And, you know that J.R. has never observed the letter of our marriage, just the law." Sue Ellen countered.

"So what's this all about?"

"I thought you might be interested to know that there's a band of illegal Mexicans camped out on those oil lease properties. They may hinder the sale of the land to the Omega Corporation. This could be a golden opportunity for you."

"How d'ya know about this?"

"I have my sources."

"Pillow talk with that Straker fella?"

"Not exactly, but he does seem to trust me."

"So what's in this for me?"

"If you manage to 'hinder' the process, you might just be able to deal with Straker yourself, and stall the deal long enough to get some money out of it. You said yourself that there's some legal question over whether J.R. actually owns those properties. Are you going to sit back and watch him earn millions of dollars that rightfully belong to you?" Sue Ellen hoped she could appeal jointly to Cliff's ego and avarice at the same time.

"What makes you think this Straker is all hot to trot to close this deal anyway?"

"He told me this morning that he had his survey engineers out there, sizing the place up for construction purposes. And, I know J.R. sent his Braddock County sheriff's office buddies out there to clean out those illegal aliens."

Cliff sat quietly, contemplating the situation. Finally he said, "What do you get out of this. I know you wouldn't rat J.R. out unless you stood to gain something."

"The longer this deal takes to materialize, the longer Ed Straker stays in Texas."

Realization struck Cliff. Just like a woman! She didn't care about business - not the dollars and cents kind of business. She just wanted to get involved in monkey business!

"Thanks for comin' in, Sue Ellen, don't let the door hit ya on the behind as you're goin' out," he waved her to the office exit, but he was thinking about finding a way to contact Straker privately himself....

* * *

J.R. help his voice low as he spoke on the phone, "Yer sure he's not just avoidin' me?"

"Ah'm tellin' ya, J.R., not only is them two cruisers gone, but the whole area looks like a dang wind-storm hit it! Ah wuz up thar mahself! No sign a' nuthin! Just a big ole hole in the ground, and even the scrub trees 's gone! Looked lak sumthin' ripped 'em raht out bah the roots! Only thing Ah saw was whut looked lak aircraft landin' marks. Mebbe the feds whent in thar and cleaned out all them ill-eeegal aliens ya mentioned?"

"If'n they did, it wasn't 'cause I tipped 'em off. I wonder if that Straker called in the Immigration and Naturalization Service people.....he mighta thought the deal wouldn't go through with a problem lak that attached to it...."

"All's Ah kin say is that thar ain't no sign 'a no Mexicans up thar now!"

"We-el, Ah guess that cleans the ole slate off, but Ah'd sure lak t'know whut happened to Bubba and his men."

"Ah hadda call th' EFF BEE AH, 'cause they bin missing now for two days, an' that's a big deal. They're sendin' someone out from the state capital ta interr-ogate me."

"Yew keep yore big mouth shut 'bout them goin' out thar f'me, y'hear? Ah don't want any

federal entanglements. Ah got 'nuff ta deal with here. Yew keep yore mouth shut, and there'll be sumthin' in it for ya." J.R. hung up. He drummed his fingers on the desk. What could have happened to Bubba and the others? And the Mexicans? He had a few congressmen on his payroll. Maybe they could get him some information. He punched out an Austin phone number and waited until it was picked up at the other end, "Harve? Yeah, ol' J.R. here. Got a job for ya. Ah wancha nose around and fahnd out whut the feds did 'bouta buncha illegal Mexicans that was squatting on one 'a mah oil lease prop'ties. Yeah. The ones Ah bin' tryin' ta sell off. Ah was out there th'other day and saw 'em. Now, that's whut's so funny, Harve! Ah sent out the Braddock County sheriff and some a his men and three o' 'em disappeared! You know Ah'll make it worth yore while, Harve. That's raht. Call me when ya hear anythin'."

Until he heard back from the congressman, there was nothing else he could do. If Straker wanted to deal, then maybe he'd consider it more seriously.

July 6th, 1981

"Well, I don't know what happened out there on those oil lease prop'ties, J.R., but my contacts tell me there was no action up there on their part. They were totally unaware of any illegal Mexicans."

"Damn! Ah thought those boys would spill it to *you* at least!"

"This time I hadda pay for nothing, so I'd 'preciate it if you'd send the customary sum along to my bank account."

"Sure, Harve! Ah'll git that money wired up t'ya t'day. But, keep yore ear tuh th'ground fer me just in case?"

"Will do, J. R.!"

J.R. put down the phone. This was the first time the congressman ever failed him. If the feds didn't know anything about that bunch of illegal aliens on his properties, who did, and who cleaned them out? If Straker was so hot to trot to make the buy, was it possible that his so-called Air Force "connections" had something to do with the disappearance of the Mexicans, the sheriff and the men he'd sent out there? Straker looked all innocent with that strange silver hair and big blue eyes, but was there something about him J. R. had missed? Bubba told him this Straker had once been in the Air Force - could the Air Force remove a group of people, cars and trees that quick? And, that thoroughly?

.....by the pool.....

Straker was sitting pool side, resting his aching behind, waiting for a call from Alec Freeman when the maid told him he should pick up, "Alec?" he answered.

"Cliff Barnes, here, Mr. Straker. I'm sorry, but we haven't been formally introduced."

Straker stared at the receiver for a moment, thinking *'Why the hell is Cliff Barnes calling me, at the Ewing clan's home, and how does he have the brass to call after that Independence Day debacle?'* He realized he hadn't replied and finally said, "Uh, Mr. Barnes. You'll pardon me, but you're the last person I expected to speak with today."

"Yeah, I suppose J. R.'s been bad-mouthin' me all over the place to ya. I just wanted ya ta know that if it's land yer lookin' fer, I've got lots better available than whut J.R.'s offerin'!"

"Mr. Barnes, my job is to obtain the best possible deal for the Omega Corporation. I am not here to get involved in your feud with J.R. Ewing."

"Yeah, well, doesn't your company expect you to get the most advantageous deal

possible?"

"Of course, but playing partisan politics is not likely to accomplish that."

"I hear J.R.'s got an illegal alien problem out there on those lands and that might just pose a problem in the sale. I thought you'd be open-minded enough to consider other.....options."

"Believe me, Mr. Barnes, I'll keep you in mind." and Straker hung up the receiver. *How the hell did Barnes know about the aliens?*

About an hour later, Straker took the much-anticipated phone call from Alec Freeman, "What's up?"

"Just calling to confirm Project Texas has been completed," Alec's slightly Australian accent crackled over the international phone line.

"That's great. Paul and I will finish up here and hop a flight to New York. Can you send a brief over with the next transport? I'd like to have the details as soon as possible."

"Sure, Ed. No problem. I think you'll be very pleased with the report."

"Don't tease me, Alec! It'll be hours before I can read all about it!"

Now, all Straker had to do was locate Foster, pack and get a ride out to the airport. The Omega Corporation had once again neutralized a difficult situation, and it was time to bid adieu to Mr. J.R. Ewing, his troublesome family and blow the dust of Texas off his shoes!

* * *

Straker had to wait for Foster to exit his guest room. He was reasonably certain Paul was with Lucy Ewing, and found the idea of interrupting their sexual Olympics distasteful. When Foster arrived downstairs to take a quick dip in the pool, Straker motioned him over for a quiet chat.

"Alec just called."

"And?" Foster raised an eyebrow.

"We can get ourselves the hell out of here now - Omega cleaned things up."

"That's certainly good news, but how are you going to explain our decision not to purchase the Ewing land?"

"I'm going to tell him that the company has opted to back out of the deal - I don't have to explain to him why. He thinks he had illegal aliens squatting out there - I can say Omega didn't want to get involved in such a situation."

Foster nodded, "I can take a quick shower, throw my suitcase together and be ready in twenty minutes."

"Good. I'll see about arranging transportation for us to the airport."

* * *

Sue Ellen greeted Straker as he strode inside, "Too hot out there for you by the pool?" she cooed, those doe eyes flashing.

"No, I just have a phone call to make. If you'll excuse me....." and he took the stairs two at a time to the upper level and the semi-privacy of his room.

Mrs. Ewing considered his hasty retreat for a moment, then she went into the kitchen to speak with the maid, "Maria, did Mr. Straker take any phone calls this afternoon?"

"Yes, Miss Sue Ellen, he took two calls."

"You.....don't happen to know who they were from?"

"The first was from Mr. Barnes, the second was long-distance from England."

Sue Ellen smiled - Cliff had taken her seriously after all! She thanked the maid and walked back out to the foyer and waited for the phone to light up. When the tell-tale light came on, she carefully lifted the receiver from its cradle, and pulled off an earring to listen.

".....I want a limousine sent out to the Southfork Ranch immediately. We'll be heading to the Dallas Airport.....," Sue Ellen listened intently to Straker's voice, frowning. This wasn't going according to her plans at all!

The conversation ended when the rental company clerk on the other end confirmed the limo would arrive in about half an hour. Sue Ellen held the button down until she heard Straker ring off, and then she quickly dialed another number. She ran her tongue over her lower lip to moisten it quickly, "J.R.? Just thought you might like to know that Mr. Straker called for a limousine to take him to the Dallas Airport. Yes, that's right, the Airport. No, I don't know why. But.....uh.....Cliff Barnes called here for him a bit ago. I think you better get on home."

.....thirty minutes later.....

Foster and Straker had just had their luggage placed in the limo trunk by the driver and were about to get in the passenger compartment when J.R.'s sports car came screaming into the driveway. He jumped out and grabbed Straker by the arm.

"Whut's goin' on here? I thought we had a deal?"

Straker looked down at J.R.'s hand still gripping his arm, and then looked back up at J.R., "A deal, Mr. Ewing?" SHADO's CO shook J.R.'s hand off, "I don't remember signing any deals."

"You Yankee bastard! Whut was this really all about? Why did you want those oil lease properties? Ah know ya bin talkin' to that damn Cliff Barnes!"

"Cliff Barnes has nothing to do with my leaving. Omega has decided they do not wish to deal after all with you. It's out of my hands."

"We had a verbal agreement, Straker, and a verbal agreement can be argued in court!"

Straker was shorter and slimmer than J.R. Ewing, but he had had enough of the double-dealing Texas oil baron. He fixed J.R. with a basilisk blue-eyed glare and said coldly, "I would advise against that, Mr. Ewing. The Omega Corporation has.....governmental connections.....which could put you and Ewing Oil out of business - permanently. Don't make me have to destroy you."

J.R. gawped - lost for words. Straker got into the limo and J.R. watched, stunned, as the limo pulled out of the drive and down the highway. Sue Ellen walked up beside him, her arms folded across her chest.

She smiled that familiar sardonic smile of hers, "Looks like your little deal didn't work out, J.R. And, here comes company....." Sue Ellen commented, watching the Sheriff's car pull into the driveway.

"Whut d'ya want, Cletus?" J.R. asked him as Bubba's deputy got out of the driver's seat.

"Just doin' mah duty as the new Sheriff of Braddock County, J.R.," and he handed J.R. an envelope.

"New Sheriff? Who made you Sheriff?"

"Since Bubba and his men disappeared without a trace, they promoted me to take over as Sheriff. Ya better read that, J.R."

Ewing stared down at the envelope, "Whut's this?"

"A subpoena. Cliff Barnes is takin' ya ta court over them oil lease prop'ties he says ya weaseled outta him. Better call yer lawyer," Cletus got back into his car and drove off.

Epilogue

July 10, 1981

Straker looked up from his paperwork as Alec Freeman and Paul Foster walked into his office.

"How does it feel to be back in the old 'responsibility seat'?" Alec asked, smiling, helping himself to a shot of booze from Straker's well-stocked bar.

"Great! I just finished reading the file on Omega's job in Texas. Kudos all around - we've got several alien bodies to dissect, and some of their technology to examine. Make sure their team leader - what's his name? - Allan Leslie - gets a commendation!"

"You're in a generous mood this evening," Foster observed, seating himself in front of Straker's desk.

"I can afford to be. The Omega boys saved us millions of dollars by cleaning up that situation quickly, and best of all - I didn't have to sign any deals with that J. R. Ewing!" Straker lit up a cigarillo and propped his feet on his desk, grinning uncharacteristically, "So what are you two up to this evening? Carousing?"

"How did you know?" Alec smiled again, "Paul, here, is on his way back to Moon Base. We have to pull off one last night of drinking and wenching before he returns to the sterile, hands-off atmosphere up there!"

Straker shook his head, "You two are incorrigible!" he waved them off, "Off you go, then - have your fun! But, Paul, I would have thought you'd be too exhausted from your "ordeal" in Texas to even think of chasing the ladies!"

Alec looked at Foster quizzically, "Ordeal?"

Foster grinned broadly, "Come on, Alec, I'll tell you all about Texan women over dinner and some drinks!"

THE END