

An aerial night photograph of a city, likely London, featuring a river (the River Thames) flowing through the center. A prominent domed building, possibly the Houses of Parliament, is visible in the background. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The foreground shows a street with a crosswalk and a circular structure, possibly a fountain or a well, illuminated with warm lights. The overall scene is a mix of urban architecture and natural elements, captured in a cinematic style.

GEOFF
LOFTUS

DANGEROUS
PURPOSE

A JACK TYRRELL NOVEL

D a n g e r o u s P u r p o s e

By

Geoff Loftus


Saugatuck
Books

Dangerous Purpose

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Dangerous Purpose is a work of fiction. Any resemblance to actual people is unintentional and coincidental. A serious attempt has been made to portray the details and geography of Massachusetts, Paris, San Francisco, Washington, DC, and the New York metropolitan area accurately, but the needs of the story may have driven me to exercise poetic license, including with some actual places and buildings. I hope the reader will excuse this.

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The purpose you undertake is dangerous; the friends
you have named uncertain; the time itself unsorted; and
your whole plot too light for the counterpoise of so
great an opposition.

Hotspur in *The First Part of King Henry the Fourth*,
Act II, Scene III

William Shakespeare



Prologue

Two men, without a good intention between them, were following me in Paris.

It was a late July evening, ten days after Bastille Day, and I was strolling down the Champs-Élysées, enjoying the night air and the glamour of the City of Light. I was wishing that I were the title character of Joni Mitchell's song "Free Man in Paris." That guy felt "unfettered and alive" with "nobody calling [him] up for favors and no one's future to decide." I was far from unfettered, and there were people's futures to save. I'm not saying that saving is the same as deciding, but saving feels like one hell of a heavy responsibility to me.

Anyway, as I was savoring the beauty of the tree-lined Champs-Élysées, I found myself twisting around to look at the Arc de Triomphe directly behind me, with the Eiffel Tower a little to my left. I was being a complete tourist, soaking up all the sights.

Several blocks later, I turned to look at the Arc de Triomphe one more time, and my internal radar pinged. Two guys with a killer vibe were tailing me. If these guys weren't ex-CIA and/or former SEALs or Delta—the type of henchmen that a nefarious spies-for-hire organization would employ—I was sadly mistaken. I would have gladly admitted to such a mistake. But my damn radar wouldn't go silent. These guys were bad news. Lethally bad news.

Picking up my pace, I continued walking, not

pausing to twist this way and that to take in the sights. A few blocks ahead of me was the traffic roundabout where the Champs-Élysées met Avenue Franklin Delano Roosevelt. On the far side of the roundabout on the north of the Champs-Élysées, there was a public garden, the Jardin des Champs-Élysées. More parks to the south included the Theatre du Rond-Point, the huge glass-vaulted-and-domed Grand Palais, and the Petit Palais. If I was going to lose these guys, I would have my best chance in the *jardin*, although I knew there was a lot of open space between the rows of trees.

When I reached the rotary, I saw a tiny break in the swirl of traffic and dashed for it. Parisian roundabouts can be terrifying—all the drivers are playing traffic-circle chicken—and I *was* terrified, but my adrenaline rush gave me speed. I plunged across the four lanes of traffic, dodged a couple of scooters, jumped back to avoid being crushed by a small panel van, immediately resumed my rush forward, and felt the sideview mirror of a Citroen pluck at my sleeve. Brakes screeched, car and scooter horns honked, and the air was filled with Gallic cursing.

I made it to the small center of the rotary, a veritable island of safety in the midst of vehicular mayhem. I took a deep breath and plunged into the 4 lanes of traffic on the far side of the traffic circle. More honking, more cursing, and a helmeted scooter driver whacked my shoulder with his hand and shouted something that sounded like “*Piqûre stupide!*” I didn't ask him to translate.

As I reached the sidewalk, I heard a fresh burst of screeching, honking and cursing that I guessed was due to my pursuers, but I wasn't going to waste a second checking on their progress. I ran under the trees into the *jardin*, continued running across the walkways into a thick clump of shrubs, and ducked into them, hiding in the nighttime darkness. My pursuers had reached the sidewalk, stopped about fifty feet away from me, and turned toward the north side of the *jardin*.

I checked their position and saw two more men with the dangerous, *je ne sais quoi* quality typical of spies for hire, entering the *jardin* from the north side.

I still had a clear line of retreat down the Champs-Élysées. But I would only succeed in getting away if I were faster than all four of the guys chasing me. And only if none of them was armed. The chance that I could escape them if they were armed was *très petit*. I'm not without some serious skills of my own, but I was unarmed and at the wrong end of a 4-to-1 ratio.

The guys on the sidewalk began walking moving closer to me; their hands empty. Their team mates in the *jardin* were also moving slowly in my direction, but unless the dark was playing havoc with my eyes, their hands both held automatic pistols.

I double-checked the position of the sidewalk pair. They had stopped and were scanning the *jardin*. If they had a pair of night-vision goggles they would have spotted me in two seconds, but night-vision goggles are not

particularly sleek and fashionable. In fact, wearing a pair of these goggles gives a person the look of an insect's head: the Goggle Mantis, which does not meet the fashion standards of Paris. Nor are they inconspicuous.

After a long moment, I noticed the sound of laughter, voices, and hurdy-gurdy music. I turned to the east and spotted a small carousel, the kind that gets towed into place by a truck and set up for street fairs. This carousel sat in an open space about two hundred feet away from me to the east. It was directly in front of the Théâtre Marigny, whose original architect Charles Garnier designed the magnificent Paris Opera House. The Marigny was nowhere near the size of the opera house, but it provided a nice backdrop for the carousel. Maybe I could ride to safety on a carousel horse. If only. It would have been so cool to escape the bad guys to the notes of the hurdy-gurdy machine.

Returning my attention to my pursuers, I noticed that the two spies for hire in the *jardin* had spread farther apart; no doubt to cut down on my escape path and to avoid shooting each other or catching the boys on the sidewalk in a crossfire. And unless I was imagining things, they were screwing suppressors onto their pistols. Good move, I thought. When you're going to kill someone in a public place, you don't want to make too much noise—it might disturb the carousel riders.

One of the men, with a pathetically wispy mustache and goatee, was getting very close to my hiding

place. The other man, with a prominent hooked nose, remained in place to cover Mr. Goatee. Staying within the cover of the shrubs, I dropped to the ground and slithered silently toward Mr. Goatee. Yes, *toward*. This seemed like one of those moments when the best defense was a good offense. He obligingly came closer and closer, peering this way and that, doing his absolute best to find *moi*. Being the thorough type, he crouched down to check the ground. His stance wasn't balanced and his feet were tight together under him. Highly unstable. I swept my right leg in a hard kick, as hard as I could manage lying on my left side, catching him directly on the backs of his ankles.

Mr. Goatee flipped onto his back. I jerked myself upright and lunged on top of him, grabbing his gun hand, his right, with my left. I tore the gun away from him and fired at the other spy for hire in the *jardin*. It was a tough shot because Goatee's finger was still on the trigger—I missed. But the other guy scrambled for cover and aimed in my direction.

I slammed my right fist into Goatee's chin, and the back of his head bounced off the ground. He was out. I rolled again, yanking Goatee on top of me at the instant the other guy's bullets thudded into Goatee's back. I tugged Goatee's gun free from his now lifeless hand, pushed his body off me toward the shrubs, while I rolled in the other direction and fired. I fired six times, and I hit the other guy twice. He went down.

There was no sign of the sidewalk team. I wished

they had disappeared into the night, running in fear from Tyrrell the Terrible. But they were pros. They weren't running away. They were staying hidden, guns in hand, moving closer to me for a kill shot. Damn.

I crawled on my belly to Goatee, checked again to see if I spotted the sidewalk team and when I didn't, and patted down Goatee's pockets, finding a phone and two extra magazines with ten rounds each for his Beretta M9. I hadn't fired this model Beretta since my time in the Army, but after the events of the last couple of minutes, I was still inclined to give it my personal endorsement.

Remaining behind Goatee for the cover his body provided, I tucked the phone and clips into one of my cargo pants pockets. It was a tight fit and not very comfortable. Running out of ammo would be much more uncomfortable, so I told myself to shut up and deal with it. I scanned the *jardin* very slowly, looking for the remaining two men. Still no sign of them. That was a problem.

The one dead man was about twenty feet away, closer to the carousel, which continued to turn while the hurdy-gurdy music played. More snaking along the ground for me. I reached him without anyone shooting me as I wriggled along. It's not easy crawling around on the ground, even Parisian ground, when your pockets are full of ammo and a phone, but it gets much tougher if someone is shooting at you while you do it. Sometimes, you just have to be grateful for the little things. And I was grateful for not having been shot. Yet.

The hooked-nose dead man's pockets also produced a phone and a wallet, both of which I took and was about to shove into my pocket, when I realized he was wearing a lightweight rucksack. Perfect for carrying guns, ammo, and spare phones. It took me a minute to get the rucksack off him—in my experience dead men are not very cooperative about someone looting their corpses—and loaded all the ammo, phones, wallet, and Goatee's Beretta into it. I had to paw around on the ground to find the other man's gun, a Sig Sauer P226 9mm, which I also packed it inside the rucksack.

I crept into the nearest clump of bushes and checked the *jardin* in every direction. Still no sign of the two guys who had been on the sidewalk. Which meant, they could be near the carousel, enjoying the horses in their endless circling. Or, it meant they had departed the area to go enjoy some wine and cheese at a local bistro, which is what I would have done if I were them. Or, it meant . . . they were still lurking nearby, hiding, waiting for me to make a move.

If I had to bet, and it just so happened that I was betting my life, my spies-for-hire buddies were still lurking in the immediate vicinity. But since I had no idea where they were, I had no idea if I had a clear escape route. I scanned the area again, very slowly, and still couldn't find the twosome. I opened the rucksack, took everything out, and laid it all on the ground to take a quick inventory. I put the Beretta and its magazines back into the pack along with

the phones. The Sig, with its large-capacity magazine, I kept in my right hand, and a spare mag went into my pants pocket.

I wriggled over to the hooked-nose man, rolled onto my left side, unscrewed the Sig's suppressor, pointed it at his back, and whispered, "Sorry about this, but you won't feel a thing." His body and my body would screen most of the muzzle flash when I fired, which I hoped would keep the two guys from spotting me. If, however, they were hiding only a few feet away from me, they would see the flash, and I'd be dead before I could relax my trigger finger.

I inhaled deeply then slowly exhaled. Now or never, Tyrrell. Now. I pulled the trigger three times. Lots of noise. The area around the carousel erupted in screams and shouts of fear and confusion. Feet pounded in every direction.

Two men jumped out of the bushes about fifteen feet away from me, between my position and the carousel.

I leapt to my feet and hurtled across the walkways under the trees and ran directly across the Champs-Élysées, a panel van barely missing me. The bad guys' bullets popped through the van's metal panels but I kept moving onto the Place Clemenceau then down the Avenue Winston Churchill, running as fast as I could past the elaborate facades of the Grand Palais on my right and the Petit Palais across the street on my left.

Bullets whined by both of my ears. One shot

pinged off an ornate street lamp. Keep running, Tyrrell, the Seine's about three hundred feet in front of you.

My pursuers stopped firing and concentrated on chasing me. I raced across the walkways of the Cours la Reine and out onto the Pont Alexandre III, a Beaux Arts style bridge that—in my humble opinion—is the most extravagantly beautiful bridge in Paris.

A bullet ricocheted off the walkway near my feet. Another hit the railing to my right. I ignored them. I paused and peered down over the stone railing at the Seine. My prayers had been answered: A glass-enclosed riverboat was gliding east under the mid-span of the Pont Alexandre III. There was no time left to think or come up with another plan—there was no cover on the bridge, no place to hide.

I shoved the Sig into my pants pocket, planted both hands on the railing, and vaulted over the rail toward the glass dome of the boat—

Silly me. I had thought I would go to Paris, take in the beautiful city, enjoy the astounding food, make love to my beautiful girlfriend in a luxury hotel, and, in my spare time, stop a neo-Nazi terrorist attack. Instead, I was being pursued through the City of Light by a bunch of very nasty people with some seriously lethal skills. Put that down as the result of poor planning on my part.

All of which makes me realize you would probably like to understand how I came to find myself trapped in this peculiar set of circumstances. Well. . . .