



Source: Steven Erlanger, [‘West Bank boys dig a living from settler trash’](#), *New York Times online*, 02/09/07.

Tags: [violence](#), [streets](#)

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Bored with the regular routine walk to his girlfriend's house when he was at university—a twenty-five minute walk across the city—he would invent scenarios to keep himself occupied. For instance, he might be a secret agent whose mission is to traverse the city with a piece of vital information stored on a microchip in the heel of his shoe. Crossing certain roads would mark the leaving of one patrol zone and the entering of another. He might receive a coded message through a hidden earpiece, which would tell him to follow a subject, divert to a different route, increase his speed, or abort a mission.

Sometimes he would set himself the task of arriving at his girlfriend's house before 'take-off'. This was not a conventional spaceship take-off but the citywide curfew that the new order government had implemented before the wholesale transplant of the city to a new geo-sphere through a trans-galactic transportation. Remaining in the open air during the transplant could result in injury or even death. He would watch, as all his fellow citizens, as well as himself, rushed to get to their destination ahead of the curfew.

At other times he was chased by the Nazis and had to make it to his girlfriend's house before he was caught and shot, or deported to a camp. This might require several different strategies within one journey; for example, using the open roads and brazening it out, trying to 'look German', or alternatively taking the back routes down alleyways and side passages. He would notice someone ahead and think about the possibility that they might be a spy or an informer. He would determine that if they turned round before he got to the next corner, he would divert his route. He would be thinking: 'I must get to the safe house', or 'I must get to the border'. The city around him looked like a scene from a film set in 1940s Berlin. 'I must get out of the city and into the hills.' He could see the von Trapp family running over snow-capped Austrian

peaks as he hid behind a rubbish skip waiting for a Gestapo officer to pass by.

On some occasions he would really manage to scare himself with these invented narratives and would arrive at an informal dinner engagement frightened and emotionally drained.

On moving to the capital city, he would play these same games when walking home late at night or in the early hours of the morning after dancing and drinking. One dark winter night he was crossing a bridge, his path illuminated by the lamps spread at intervals across the bridge. He had determined that on this occasion he was a secret agent. As he moved across the bridge, the light from the lamps on their posts cast a shadow beside him on the pavement. There was someone walking about two post-widths behind him, whom he chose to cast as his would-be assassin. As he continued to walk he noticed the gap between their shadows reduce and he enjoyed the authenticity this growing proximity led to his fictive narrative.

As he walked on, the shadows moved closer and closer together until he had crossed the bridge and entered into an underpass. He felt a dull thud. Snapping his head down he noticed the silver gleam of a knife pointing upwards towards his neck. 'Don't move.' The assassin was pressed up tight behind him, arm with knife, curved round to his chest. They stayed in this strange embrace for just a fraction of a second. Without even thinking about it, his years of training about to pay off, he jerked his elbow back sharply into the assassin's stomach. The knife fell to the ground and he ran, ran, ran all the way home without looking back.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Joshua Sofaer.*