

The Black Archive #3

THE AMBASSADORS OF DEATH SAMPLER



By LM Myles

Turning to Reegan first, we find an immensely satisfying villain. He's amoral, very practical, and he has an excellent work ethic. If you're looking to hire yourself a thug, this is the kind of man you want. Reegan is the villain motivated by money. He does the job he's paid for, so long as he gets his money, and he's happy. In his fear, this is the man Carrington has turned to. He'll trust Reegan, who is only interested in money, but not the Brigadier, because he works for an international organisation.

Reegan's most coolly villainous moment happens when he hands over a suitcase bomb to Taltalian. '15 minutes,' he says to Taltalian, setting the timer. 'That's how long you have to get away once you activate it.' Then as Taltalian turns away to put on his coat, Reegan, smooth as you like, opens the suitcase, flicks the timer back, and closes it again, all before Taltalian turns round to be handed the suitcase. It's all done so casually, and so neatly timed, as to demonstrate better than anything else in the story Reegan's character. Though he

can't resist the parting shot, with a double meaning that anyone who realises they're in a spy movie should beware of: 'Do as you're told and your troubles will be over.'¹

The man may enjoy his Bond-esque double-entendres, but when it comes to killing people, or even just plain old violence, it's clear Reegan's no sadist. He just does whatever's practical, or what he's being paid for. What causes him to be positively gleeful are the imagined possibilities once he's used the Ambassadors in a successful raid; he's thrilled at how quickly and easily they can kill, how useless conventional weapons are against them, and boasts of what he's made them do to Liz and Lennox. The first thing he thinks of when he believes he can use them to do anything is 'Walk into Fort Knox'². Liz is suitably unimpressed that his wildest dream is to steal a lot of gold.

Reegan is also a very hands-on sort of villain. No leaving the work to minions for him – he's happy to impersonate soldiers or scientists, set bombs, dump bodies, and kill with bullets, radiation, or sabotage to the fuel injection system. It's all just a job to him, and if he's getting paid, he's got no problem getting on with it. It's nice to see a villain with such a solid work ethic. One imagines that if he only applied this diligence to a more legitimate activity, he'd actually do rather well for himself.

When he captures the Doctor, Reegan is much less interested in killing him than he is in using him and his scientific expertise for his own material gain. He's happy to steal or buy whatever equipment the Doctor needs in order to make a more effective communications advice, one that goes beyond giving the Ambassadors simple orders. Presumably he wants it mostly so he can carry out more complicated robberies.

By the end, Reegan's in a smart suit, handkerchief in breast pocket and all, and in ever such a civilised way he's going through his plans for his next robbery with the Doctor. He seems to be of the view that if he's just persistent enough, he can surely convince the Doctor to join him. And, in a move worthy of the sheer practicality Reegan's shown throughout the story, he's the one who, after being captured and shot, suggests the plan to get back into the Space Centre: use the Ambassadors. 'You won't forget I thought of it?' he says, his final line. This is a man who knows when to quit. The desire for money motivates him, it gives him a reason to commit numerous criminal acts, but it never overcomes him. Carrington tells him he's 'not paid to think,' but Reegan never stops³. He's an incredibly sensible sort of villain, always looking for an angle to advance his own interests, but never pushing anything to extremes, never so greedy as to destroy himself. In a canon of power-mad villains where planetary, if not universal, Armageddon is a regular possibility, it's refreshing to have an antagonist who's both competent and small-scale. He's realistic in a way few **Who** villains tend to be, one who could easily walk off this set, and into **The Sweeney** (1975-78) without changing a thing about his character.

¹ Episode four.

² Episode five.

³ Episode seven.