

# SHREDDERMAN



## Sneaky-Peeky Spy Tools

Illustrations  
Copyright © 2004  
by Brian Biggs

Humans have spied on each other since the beginning of time. The way spying is done and the tools that are used have changed over the ages, especially since the invention of satellites and computers. Probably the peak of “cloak-and-dagger” spying was during the time in history called the Cold War.

**The Cold War:** The Cold War was not a traditional war where armies march and shots are fired. It was a tense and competitive rivalry that used to exist between the United States and the Soviet Union (which is now Russia). It was a very long war, lasting from 1945 to 1989.

**The CIA:** The United States agency that was in charge of information-gathering was the CIA, which stands for the Central Intelligence Agency.

**The KGB:** The Soviet Union’s agency was called the KGB. That stands for Komitet Gosudarstvenoy Bezopasnosti, and translates to the Committee for State Security.

During the Cold War, the CIA had spies in Russia, and the KGB had spies over here. Both sides were trying to find out the other side’s secrets. To complicate matters, there were people called **double-agents**. These were spies who were pretending to be on one side, but were really on another. Both sides used **dead drops**—secret containers that could hold information or payment for information (like the fake rock in [Enemy Spy!](#))

**The Equipment:** During this time, spies from both sides used ingenious gadgets to get information about their enemies and pass it along without blowing their cover. Here are a few of them: (Some of these may sound unsophisticated, but remember, this was before the age of the microprocessor!)

**Guns and Knives:** These came in all sorts of shapes and sizes. Here are a few especially clandestine ones:

**1) Cigarette Case Weapon:** This was a small case that held a pack of fake cigarettes. The spy could shoot bullets filled with poison through the cigarettes!

**2) Keychain Guns:** These were only 1 inch wide and 3 inches long, and fired poison gas cylinders or bullets!

**3) Thumb Knives:** Imagine you’re captured by the enemy. Tied up! About to be taken away and killed for being an enemy spy! But in your pocket you have a coin that’s really a knife. You struggle, you fumble, but at last you reach the coin. You thumb open the hinged blade, cut through your ropes, and escape!

**4) Lipstick Guns:** The lipstick gun could be fired by clicking a ridged ring a quarter of a turn. It was a very small weapon so it was only useful at very close range.

**Poison Pellet Weapons:** These were weapons that shot pellets of a deadly poison. It only took a few hundred micrograms of certain poisons to kill someone! (Real espionage (spying) is not a game. It could get you killed!) Here are a few types of Poison Pellet Weapons:

**1) The Assassination Pen:** This was the size and shape of a fountain pen, but could deliver poison pellets or liquid poison

**2) The Poison-Pellet Umbrella:** There's a famous story about a Bulgarian man named Georgi Markov who was jabbed with an umbrella at a bus stop in London. "Pardon me. Sorry. Accident," the man with the umbrella said. But he'd just injected Georgi Markov with poison which killed him soon after!

**3) The Blind Man's Cane:** This was one of those heavy black canes with the curved handle and rubber cap on the end, and white tape wrapped up it in a spiral to indicate that the person carrying it was blind. What the white tape really did was hide the trigger which would activate poison gas coming out of an opening in the handle!

**Hidden Cameras:** Nolan's got this one down pat! But during the Cold War, there were no digital cameras, so secret agents had to use film cameras. Sometimes they hid them under their clothes, or in their briefcases or purses. Here are some examples:

**1) The Necktie Camera:** This camera was strapped around the chest under clothing and could take pictures through a "tie pin". It was activated by a remote control hidden in the secret agent's pocket.

**2) The Book Camera:** This one could take pictures through a finger tab like you see in some dictionaries or bibles. It was activated by putting pressure on the book's cover.

**3) The Wristwatch Camera:** This looked like a wristwatch and used a circular piece of film that could take up to six shots. Pictures were taken while the secret agent was pretending to check the time.

**4) The Cigarette Lighter Camera:** All the spy had to do to take a picture was aim the small metal cased "lighter" in the right direction and flip up the top, pretending to light a cigarette.

**Listening Devices:** Remember, the microprocessor has changed things a lot in the past fifty years. During the Cold war, they used microphones that linked to a transmitter or a tape recorder.

**1) The Belt Buckle Microphone:** A little microphone was hidden in the back of a belt buckle, and picked up sounds through a small hole in the buckle.

**2) Book Spine Devices:** If you open a hardcover book and look at the spine, you'll see that a little tunnel is created as the spine flexes open. Secret agents used to hide a long, narrow microphone/transmitter device into this opening, and when the book was closed it was invisible. Then the spy could put the book on a shelf in a room and listen in on secret conversations!

**3) "The Thing":** This was a listening device invented by the Soviets. It worked using radio beams and had no batteries or electrical circuits. One of these devices was discovered in the American embassy in Moscow, Russia. It had been hidden behind the Great Seal of the United States, which hung on the wall over the American ambassador's desk!