

# **Good Guys and Bad Guys**

**By**

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***Freeditorial*** 

Don't ask me why, but I have to confess that it has always been a secret dream of mine to get to be the bad guy in a movie. I know it sounds weird, but what can I tell you? The truth is, however, that this would not be an easy thing to do. Not at all!

This business of good guys and bad guys is more complicated than it looks on the surface; if you doubt me, think about this.

Have you ever seen one of the movies featuring Bond... James Bond? I'm sure you have. I am referring of course to the super-agent known to his friends as 007, working on Her Majesty's Secret Service, and with a license to kill.

Anyway, don't you think that rather than this guy saving the world (which is supposed to be his mission), it's the world that needs to be saved from him, since he generally causes more death and destruction than he ever manages to prevent?

And he causes it in every way possible. Deaths, I mean. By shooting them (which is probably the most vulgar method), or having them devoured by gigantic crocodiles and sharks, or poisoned by spiders and snakes. But he has no qualms about using subtler techniques: skin suffocation from painting a beautiful girl all over in gold paint; laser rays; electrocuting people with fans in their bathtubs, or throwing them off a train, plane or ship. He has even done it by tossing people off satellites into space... In short, a long list of ways to get rid of people. And there's more: burning buildings, exploding cars and boats, whole neighborhoods leveled... This guy must be the terror of the insurance companies!

With all due respect, I would suggest to Her Majesty that she should consider hiring another super-spy to spy on 007, with the mission to prevent the destruction he leaves in his wake. He's like Attila; wherever he has passed, the grass will never grow again.

So I ask you: Is 007 one of the good guys? If your answer is yes, which is what we all tend to answer automatically, I'd love to know what I have to do in this life to be considered one the bad guys. He sets the bar pretty high.

There is no denying that this good and evil thing is a complex matter, because apart from disgraceful exceptions like Hitler, Stalin, Mao, or, more recently, the repugnant president of North Korea whose name I don't even know or care to learn, it's generally not very clear exactly who is good and who is bad.

Another example of this can be seen with Kennedy and Khrushchev.

These two gentlemen (here I refer to the extensive knowledge of my friend

Zoilo; the information on 007 above are my own) were the protagonists of the Cuban missile crisis back in the sixties, when they came to the brink of annihilating all life on this planet.

Allow me to refresh your memory of what happened. The Russian leader set up a slew of nuclear missiles in Cuba (about 100 miles away from Florida), just like the ones the Americans had in Turkey, right on the Soviet border.

In response to the Russian move, Kennedy organized a blockade of the island, placing warships in international waters to prevent more Russian vessels with armaments from getting through, while demanding that the Soviets withdraw the missiles they already had on Cuba. In reality, this blockade was completely illegal – and could even be defined as an act of war – because they were stopping another country’s ships in international waters by force of arms.

Tensions escalated until the Soviet leader gave in (luckily for us, because if he hadn’t we wouldn’t be around today to tell the story) and ordered the withdrawal of their missiles, thereby avoiding the total holocaust that would have resulted from a nuclear showdown between the two superpowers.

In the secret negotiations held to resolve the conflict, Kennedy was forced to agree to two things: to withdraw the US missiles in Turkey, and to promise not to invade Cuba. But the crafty devil made sure this agreement didn’t get reported to the masses so that it wouldn’t ruin his image. With elections just around the corner, he thought it better not to explain the concessions he’d made to his Russian counterpart. In doing so, he managed to make himself look to the public like the great hero of history.

If you don’t believe it, you need only see the Hollywood movie on the topic, starring Kevin Costner, who in the end declares with an expression of spellbound admiration: “*Once again, Kennedy has saved the world.*”

In the film, the story presents Kennedy as the good guy and the Soviet leader as the bad guy, even though it was Khrushchev who gave way by withdrawing the missiles, and who even had the gallantry to keep the conditions of their agreement a secret, for which he had to pay a high price by being presented publicly as the loser in the crisis. As a result, shortly afterwards he was kicked out of office by his own comrades. He sacrificed himself, but prevented a nuclear war.

Zoilo, who is always well informed, says that Kennedy was just a rich dandy, a handsome, irresponsible, deceitful phony, a darling of the gossip columns, who even made agreements with the mafia to win the elections, and because he broke the agreements he’d made with them, they ended up killing him. Zoilo argues that the truth behind his assassination was hushed up so as

not to tarnish his image as a brilliant president, ideal father and loving husband. Incidentally, this last quality was the only one listed above that he had in reality, but with an important twist: he was loving toward any woman other than his own.

Anyway, as I was saying, in the explanation that Kennedy offered the world after the resolution of the Cuban missile crisis, he lied shamelessly by concealing the concessions he'd been forced to make so that he could look like a vanquishing superhero, an image that always guarantees more votes.

But in reality, who was the good guy and who was the bad guy in this story?

It is true that sometimes it is easy to tell the good guys from the bad guys, like in the case of the two Koreas today. While the North creates missiles and hunger, the South gives us Hyundai and Gangnam Style. In this case, the two sides are clear.

The same is true of the infamous Berlin Wall. In that case, it was just as easy to tell the good guys from the bad, just by observing the direction taken by the people fleeing. Everyone fled from west to east, not the other way around. That settles the question, I guess. But not every case is that obvious; a lot of the time it's hard to tell.

As I was still confused about it, in spite of putting my neurons to so much work, I took the most logical approach: ask Zoilo. I remember his answers exactly, and I transcribe them here for you so you can make up your own mind.

“On the one hand,” he told me when I explained my trouble, “it could be argued that if it weren't for the existence of bad guys the good guys wouldn't exist either, because we wouldn't have anyone to compare them to. So the bad guys are the ones that basically define the good guys. On the other hand, you need to understand that these are relative terms that depend on the point of view of the observer.”

Very interesting, I remember thinking, but taking this line we weren't going to get anywhere. So I persevered.

“But it isn't all totally relative,” I argued decisively. “For example, look at what happened in World War Two. The winners in that war were indisputably the good guys.”

“Sure,” he replied, “but they didn't win because they were good guys. They won because they had the USA, the industrial powerhouse of the world. In fact, a lot more of the Allies died than Nazis in that war, and they also lost a lot more tanks, airplanes and ships. What happened was that American

industrial might enabled them to manufacture weapons faster than they could lose them on the front, as huge as those losses were. No, they didn't win because they were good guys or heroes, but because they produced more bombs. Furthermore, allow me to remind you that among the Allies there were bad guys too, because Stalin, who was one of them, would be hard to classify as a kindhearted soul..."

I have to admit that I was troubled by this, but I quickly got over my cares when he continued:

"Look, I'm going to tell you a true story, and after you've heard it, you tell me who the good guys and the bad guys are in it. You'll see that it isn't easy."

I got into my attentive listening pose, because I love stories, and Zoilo is the best storyteller of all.

"Cast your mind back to the 19th century, in Hawaii," he began. "Ka'ahumanu was the queen ruling the archipelago after the death of her husband, the former king. Until then, the Hawaiian Islands, like others in the Pacific, were places of easy living and free sex, as their inhabitants had no notion of our moral scruples about such matters. For the natives it was a source of pride to show a long list of lovers, and men sought to marry the most beautiful ladies, so that they could be praised for their prowess by their friends. There was nothing sinful about sex, which they accompanied with songs, dances and flowers. Public parties generally ended with what Christian culture would define as orgies."

I listened attentively.

"But this queen was very old when she came to power, and she had lost her passion," Zoilo went on, "and she decided to surround herself with Anglican missionaries, who got her to enact laws banning free love. These laws were so harsh that they condemned anyone who broke them three times to death." He paused for a moment, and then went on. "This moralization drew a gray shroud of sadness over the natives of Hawaii, and the population of the archipelago began to shrink, as its inhabitants lost their sense of enjoyment of life."

"What's the deal with that queen?!" I couldn't help but exclaim. But Zoilo didn't even seem to hear me.

"At the same time that this severe Christian morality was spreading through the islands," he went on, "so were venereal diseases, love of money and alcohol. The archipelago began to depopulate. So they decided to import manual labor from Asia, which is why there are so few actual descendants of the Hawaiian natives left today, and so many Asians. All that has been preserved from those idyllic days are the flowers and the music. So, tell me

now, who were the good guys and who were the bad guys?”

What a great story! But this whole good guy/bad guy thing still had my mind in a knot, and Zoilo didn't seem very interested in untying it. So I had to start looking for my own answers. And suddenly it hit me: the only reason why this question interests me, as I said in the beginning, is because since I was a child I've always had a burning ambition to get to be the bad guy in a movie. I don't know why, but it appeals to me more than being the good guy. Perhaps it's genetic... or something I ate that didn't go down well, or who knows? But after the whole 007 thing, and the other cases mentioned above, I don't know how I'd ever be able to do it. The bar has been set too high, because most of the time the good guys do things that make them impossible to tell apart from the bad guys.

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