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How to Spot a Honey Trap

The “honey trap” has been a go-to method of espionage since the Old Testament. Here’s what it looks like.



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That extremely attractive woman you just met, the one who just cannot get enough of you—the one who hangs on your every word and loves—*loves!*—to hear about the fascinating things you do at your job? There is no way she’s an agent with foreign [intelligence](#).

Sure, she’s a little out of your league. I mean, just look at you. You’re a balding, middle-aged man who sweats and has the sort of rolling belly otherwise seen on tire mascots and slug gangsters on planet Tattooine. She picked you up at a sports bar—you, a middle manager at a defense contractor. You forgot to remove your access badge before arriving for drinks, but who hasn’t made that mistake at least once? She skipped the toned, Brad Pitt doppelganger who works at Google and has BMW keys next to his martini. He’s not her type. No, she wanted *you*. She chose you, this smoking hot 10 (her, not you) and she saw you out of the corner of her eye and she just had to know: Where do you work? Oh, have you worked there long? Wow you must be very important—

I mean, when she said that, you had to tell her *something*. It’s not every day that a perfect ten shows interest in you as you mop up chili and cheese with that last French fry. Well yes, you say. Yes! I am very important. I shouldn’t tell you this—it’s not really publicly known—but I am in charge of the launch system for a very important project. *Very* important.

She just couldn't get enough of that, this foxy number with the tight dress that came right up to here. Oh that magical height that reveals so much and so little. You're eyeing her and eyeing that plate of chili and cheese just sitting there, no fries left, and ordinarily you'd just finish it off with a spoon but with this goddess showing interest in you, is that uncouth? You finish your beer.

Well you see, you say, nobody usually asks much about my work. My wife at home—

Dammit! You mentioned your wife. She doesn't flinch, though. Doesn't say anything. She just sits there, shifts in her seat a little, but not in a bad way. In a *Go on...* sort of way. In a *You're making me shift in my seat in a good way* sort of way. You need to recover, and fast.

—well my wife, you continue, my wife stopped asking about my job a long time ago so I'm not used to talking about it. But it's interesting stuff! See—(and you speak softly so she knows how impressive this is and how important you are. Your faces are close now)—See, one of the weaknesses in strategic missile defense—do you... know what strategic missile defense is? No? Well let's just say what I do keeps us safe from North Korea. And I'm part of a team—more of a leader, really—that has found a way to exploit a certain weakness in their long range missiles. The ones that could wipe out Los Angeles...

sex, security briefings and setting the honey trap

Oh, there were those mandatory briefings in the office about foreign intelligence. The briefings where everyone signs the clipboard and then zones out for an hour while some security officer explains what a sensitive item is, and what to look out for when you're in public and what to do when somebody asks about your work. They explained that sometimes, some women—and sometimes men! But usually women—are members of foreign intelligence. And they will seduce you and get you to talk, or seduce you and blackmail you and get you to talk. The key words here are “seduce” and “get you to talk.”

Why it's even in the Bible, this spy trick, which is known as a “honey trap.” In the Book of Judges, the Philistine leadership approaches a woman named Delilah and tells her that there's a guy named Samson in town with godlike strength. He can slay lions with his bare hands. He can lay waste to entire battalions if he so chooses. Delilah, the Philistines say, “Entice him, and see wherein his great strength lieth, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him: and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred pieces of silver.”

The first honeytrap!

Samson wasn't that gullible, of course. He gave her bad information about various ropes and vines that might subdue him, and she dutifully tied him up all right! But they didn't work, and he snapped the ropes like they were nothing and he just figured she was into that sort of thing. Delilah stayed at it though, investing quite a bit of time, just him and her and extended interludes in her bed chamber, and finally she got to the heart of the matter. “How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me? Thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength lieth. And

it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death.”

Oh he talked after that! And the story ended badly for everyone involved, Samson most of all, his eyes soon gouged from his head.

But he was Samson, you think. You know better than some Iron Age brute! This fine woman at the sports bar thinks you are James Bond incarnate. She’s looking at you—an actual member of the intelligence community—well, a defense contractor, anyway, and not a spy, exactly, though you defend America, and she doesn’t know the difference—and you have a chance to take this woman home! Well not home *per se*, your wife being there. But a hotel! A nice one!

You go ahead and scoop up the chili and cheese with a spoon. You’re going to need your strength.

of MICE and Men

What else did that mandatory security briefing explain? Something about rodents. Rats? Mice? Mice—MICE! The motives for espionage: money, ideology, compromise and ego. Agents are recruited by foreign intelligence for a big payday, or because they believe in the political system of the foreign government, or because they’re being blackmailed or manipulated, or because dammit they’re important and nobody appreciates it and they’ll show the world how important they really are!

Honey traps fall under the C in MICE, it was explained. Either you unwittingly begin an affair with a foreign spy and you reveal secrets through pillow talk, or you sleep with a foreign spy and an envelope of photographs, just you and she *in flagrante delicto*, and a note included explaining that if you don’t deliver the goods, these goods will be delivered to your spouse and maybe posted on Facebook for good measure. Who *wouldn’t* reveal a few numbers or diagrams to spare your spouse the pain of such photographs? A few pages of notes to protect 50% of your belongings. It’s not like the country is at stake. It’s a little [secret](#), an insignificant piece of a colossal puzzle.

What else did the briefing say? It was so boring, the briefing. Why are you even thinking about this, with this woman who is clearly interested in you, and with her dress—it’s wrapped so tightly around her, and is at least an inch higher *and* lower than it was a moment ago. Something about small favors. If honey traps are in it for the long haul, they start actual relationships with their marks. Long term relationships built on sex and secrets. They probe gingerly at first—asking for something small. Some tiny secret that can help her somehow. For work or whatever. And then it builds and builds until you’re hers, Samson in Delilah’s clutches, and if you figure out what’s going on, the tender caresses end and the blackmail threats begin.

Anyway, you’re not a target! Sure, you’re only middle management and they keep passing you over for promotion, the bastards, but so what? And yes, you’ve put on a few pounds, but a nice belly gives a man a big of respectability. Your wife has lost interest but that’s her loss! Why would a spy—a “sparrow,” as the Soviets called their seductresses—waste time on you? You don’t fit the

profile. Actual honey traps [target](#) “those who lack confidence, feel insecure, harbour grievances and need affection.”

But this saucy minx at the sports bar—she’s not a spy. She doesn’t look anything like one! She doesn’t even have an accent! And nobody will ever know. Right? It’s just ships passing in the night. You’d never reveal secrets even if you were talking to a spy. What’s a secret, anyway?

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