

ADVANCE READER EXCERPT

This is a preview of the next installment of Mackenzie Gordon
historical spy thriller series.

This novel is based on the true events of the Shotweld fabrication
process developed by Budd manufacturing in 1930. While many
events and characters are dramatized, the historical backbone remains
intact.

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James Burwash Author

Also available: Book one in the series Double Agent Within.

Available now at Indigo, Amazon and your local library.

The Story so far

In *Double Agent Within*, Scottish naval engineer Mackenzie Gordon uncovered a smuggling and espionage network reaching from her Glasgow shipyard to Berlin.

Her father, Aberdeen private investigator Stewart Gordon, had secretly worked for British intelligence. His death left Mackenzie his agency, and his enemies.

Sworn in as an SIS agent herself, she travelled to Canada aboard the R-100 airship, her mission to find William Stephenson.

Racing against time and a brewing Atlantic storm, she must navigate a web of espionage and power brokers.

Aboard the airship, Mackenzie discovered that Adam, the man she once loved, was Neptune, the operative behind it all. In the storm that nearly destroyed the R-100, he shot Clare, her father's loyal associate, then leapt from the airship into the storm; everyone believed he had perished.

The R-100 survived, and her father's final mission became hers.

Prologue

Chief Engineer of the Flying Boat *BB-1 Pioneer* program, Enea Bossi inspected the stainless-steel joint at Philadelphia's Budd Manufacturing Plant. The weld held. No burnt edges. No brittle metal. "We have a path forward."

President Edward Budd smiled and locked the successful sample in his safe along with the formula. "We'll keep refining. Not a word leaves this room."

While they celebrated, across the Atlantic, a Berlin workshop lay strewn with failed welds. There, German engineers faced a bitter truth. If they couldn't master the process, they must steal it.

Scottish naval engineer Mackenzie Gordon steadied herself on the gangway at Saint-Hubert Aerodrome. Behind her the R-100 airship lay battered from the Atlantic crossing. To the cheering crowds, the voyage was a triumph; to Mackenzie, it was a reminder of the white squall that had nearly cost her everything.

*Still bound by the oath she'd sworn, the mission was tucked inside her coat:
Find William Stephenson.*

For Mackenzie, the deception had already begun

Chapter 1

August 1, 1930—Morning—Montréal—Saint-Hubert Aerodrome

A crack of thunder made Mackenzie jump. The memory of yesterday's storm still haunted her: rain lashing at the windows, the squall that had driven everyone to the floor. Above the crowd, the R-100 airship hung from its mooring mast like a tethered beast. Silver skin slick with rain, it ghosted in and out of the low clouds, a silent witness to a voyage that nearly cost Mackenzie everything.

Water dripped from the brim of her cloche hat, her red hair peeking around the edges. The sky cracked again.

"Inside! Everyone inside!" a Mountie shouted, waving a gloved hand toward the main hangar. Men moved planes out to make way for wooden chairs.

The crowd surged forward—a crushing wave of wet dignitaries and desperate journalists seeking shelter. The tide carried Mackenzie along as she fought to keep her footing. A familiar hand caught her elbow: Clare, rain-soaked and breathless. Miriam was not far behind, hat askew but eyes alert.

Mackenzie pressed one hand against the leather satchel beneath her coat. The letter inside was dry. That's all that mattered.

She recalled the meetings in Aberdeen. She had made a promise to James Redpath to go to Canada.

“I will send your travel arrangements to your contact, Mr. Lafontaine,” Redpath had said. “You are to find William Stephenson and deliver this letter. It’s vital to national security.”

The words echoed in her head; her father’s last mission was now hers.

I need to find Mr. Lafontaine, she thought, scanning the crowds. But how will I know him?

A microphone screeched. The ceremony was starting. The crowd’s noise faded. A sudden cold prickle danced across the back of Mackenzie’s neck—the air had shifted. Mackenzie saw two men cutting a jagged path, their eyes fixed on her.

“Ladies and gentlemen, your attention, please.”

“Let’s hope it’s Mr. Lafontaine,” Mackenzie whispered.

They barrelled through the crowd. One shoved Clare, sending her stumbling. The other lunged. Mackenzie jerked back, but the leather strap of her hidden satchel snapped, sending it to the ground. The man’s eyes lit up—ignoring the purse, he dove for the satchel.

Miriam reacted instantly, hooking her foot and sending him sprawling face-first onto the ground. Mackenzie scooped it up. Her hand was already inside her purse closing over the gun. She didn’t draw it—there wasn’t time, and there were too many people. Through the leather, she shoved the barrel hard into the second man’s ribs, and he felt exactly what it was. He froze. Miriam finished it with a kick hard to the ribs. Gasping for air, both men scrambled up and bolted into the crowd before anyone could stop them.

That wasn’t a random theft—they’d come straight for the letter.

Mackenzie clutched the satchel to her chest, catching her breath. Her handbag had fallen open; she quickly snapped it shut, but not before Miriam glimpsed the weapon inside: a cut-down American Colt “Fitz Special.”

“Who were those men?” Miriam asked.

“I...I don’t know,” Mackenzie replied. “I heard the short man speaking German.”

Something pulled at Mackenzie's coat.

She spun, hands raised.

"*Pardon, M'dame,*" a voice squeaked.

Mackenzie expected to see the attackers. Lowering her gaze, she saw a young girl, no more than twelve. She looked ragged, with torn hand-me-down clothes, uncombed hair, and a face smudged with dirt.

"*Bonjour,* and who do we have here?" Mackenzie asked in French, bending to get eye level with the girl. "What's your name?"

The girl's bright eyes opened wide, not with fear but with purpose. She pressed an envelope into Mackenzie's hand and ran.

"Wait!" Mackenzie exclaimed.

Clare made a grab for her, but she was too quick and disappeared into the crowd.

"Who was that?" Miriam asked, craning her neck to see where the girl had gone.

"I have no idea," Mackenzie replied, turning the envelope over in her hand.

"What does it say?" Miriam asked, stepping closer.

Mackenzie tore open the envelope and read quickly. She folded the note and slipped it into her coat pocket.

"A pamphlet for a local orphanage. Poor thing was probably hoping for a coin."

Miriam's eyes lingered on Mackenzie's pocket, but she said nothing.

"Shall we find a taxi?" Mackenzie asked. "I'm exhausted and need a hot bath."

"Would you mind if I caught a ride to the city with you?" Miriam asked. "I'll need to sort out some accommodation. It was all rather last-minute."

"You work for Sinclair?" Mackenzie asked casually.

"Yes, he sent me on the R-100 to replace the nurse who took ill. On the airship, you knew me as Miriam. That was my cover name. Please call me Vera. Vera Atkins."

Mackenzie studied her for a moment. British SIS agent or not, Vera was alone in a foreign city.

“Of course. We can share the taxi.”

“Thank you.” Vera adjusted her hat. “I’m sure I can find something nearby.”

Clare and Mackenzie exchanged a glance as they walked toward the waiting taxis. On the airship, Vera had been kidnapped and left for dead—which was either the best possible proof of her loyalty, or the most elaborate cover story that Mackenzie had ever encountered.

Trust no one.

A secret forged in steel

August 1930. Deep within the Philadelphia plant of Budd Manufacturing, a revolutionary engineering breakthrough is achieved:
The “Shotweld” process.

Fresh off the battered British airship R-100, Scottish naval architect and newly recruited SIS operative Mackenzie Gordon is entrusted with her murdered father’s final mission: deliver a top-secret dossier to a man named William Stephenson.

But a simple misunderstanding sends her chasing the wrong man.

Following a trail from Montréal to New York, Mackenzie finds herself pursued by the ruthless Yorkville gang and is entangled in a dangerous web of secrets stretching across two continents.

Meanwhile, the real William Stephenson is fighting for survival in Germany, unaware that others are searching for him.

As their paths converge on Philadelphia, hidden secrets and deadly ambitions threaten to change the course of history.

“A pulse-pounding historical thriller that will leave readers wondering how much of it actually happened.”