

STM: LN60/NYK    JULY 19TH, 1978    HSG: FIL

TO: TIME PRESS

FROM: LONDON    BY: BONNIE ANGELO

SLUG: TEST TUBE TEMPEST

ECH:

THE COMPETITION FOR THE TINIEST SHREDS OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE STEPTOE WIVES HAS PUSHED JOURNALISTIC ETHICS TO THE OUTER LIMITS, REPORTAGE WITH THE FAT CHECKBOOK AND THE READY DISGUISE. THE EDITORS OF THE BRISTOL POST AND THE WESTERN DAILY PRESS, HOMETOWN PAPERS FOR THE BROWNS, TAKE A SOUR VIEW OF WHAT THEY SEE HAPPENING IN THEIR BAILIWICK. UNABLE TO COMPETE WITH THE NATIONAL NEWSPAPERS IN THE BIG PAYOFF AND UNWILLING TO ALLOW THEIR REPORTERS TO ADOPT FALSE IDENTITIES, THE BRISTOL EDITORS CAN ONLY SIT AND SEE THEIR OLD SOURCES CLAM UP. BRISTOL REPORTERS HAVE FOUND COMPETITORS FROM THE LONDON POP PRESS POSING TO GAIN ENTRY TO FAMILIES WHO MIGHT KNOW THE BROWNS. ONE (DAILY MIRROR, BUT BETTER NOT USE THE NAME BECAUSE WE CANNOT PROVE IT) POSED AS A SOLICITOR, PURPORTING TO BE INVESTIGATING AN INSURANCE CLAIM. ANOTHER GOT INTO A NEIGHBORHOOD HOME POSING AS A SOCIAL WORKER. IN BOTH CASES, IF THEY FOUND ANY LIKELY MATERIAL, THEY WHIPPED OUT THEIR CHECK BOOKS, AND STRIPPED OFF THEIR DISGUISES, IN A KIND OF REVERSE CLARK KENT. ONE MAN WAS OFFERED POUNDS 55 (ABOUT DLRS 100) FOR A SNAPSHOT OF THE HUSBAND, POUNDS 250 FOR A PICTURE OF BOTH HUSBAND AND WIFE. ANOTHER BRISTOL MAN WAS OFFERED POUNDS 750 (OVER 1400 DLRS), AND HE WOULD NOT TELL WHAT THE HANDSOME OFFER WAS TO

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COVER.

ONE OBVIOUS SIDE-EFFECT OF THE CHECK BOOK TREATMENT IS THAT A QUICK THINKER MIGHT INVENT ALL KINDS OF NICE DETAIL IF THE PRICE IS RIGHT.

PRIVATE EYE, THE OUTRAGEOUS SPOOFER OF ALL THINGS BRITISH, COMES UP WITH A COVER THAT INJECTS A NOTE OF LEVITY IN THIS HEAVY STORY. THE COVER SLASH IS THE MANDATORY "TEST TUBE EXCLUSIVE EXCLAM" THE COVER ART FEATURES A GRIM WHITE-COATED DOCTOR, NEEDLE IN HAND. THE CAPTION, IN COMIC-STRIP STYLE BALLOONS: "WILL IT HURT, DOCTOR?" "YOU WON'T EVEN FEEL A LITTLE PRICK."

SENT 1842/KEN

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