



## Tool of the Trade

*Joe Haldeman*

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Nicholas Foley appears to be an ordinary American psychology professor. He is, in fact, a Russian spy, inserted into the United States after World War II, joining the American army, attending American universities, falling in love and marrying an American, but always in touch with his Soviet superiors. All he ever does in the way of spying is turn in the names of people who might be "turned." But then he makes his momentous discovery. He isolates an ultrasonic frequency that causes anyone within earshot to do whatever he is told. A few demonstrations send both the Russians and the Americans after Foley with a vengeance. Eluding both, Foley uses his tool to strike a blow for world peace, as envisioned by a Sixties hippie, his wife.

## Tool of the Trade Details

Date : Published June 1988 by Avon Books (Mm) (first published April 1987)

ISBN : 9780380704385

Author : Joe Haldeman

Format : Mass Market Paperback 248 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Fiction, Thriller

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## From Reader Review Tool of the Trade for online ebook

### Timothy Boyd says

I never know what Joe Haldeman is going to do to a SiFi story, but I do know I will enjoy the read. He always does an excellent job of combining SiFi with military fiction, Mystery and suspense and horror fiction. Now, in this book I get a SiFi and spy novel all blended together. Another excellent read, Very recommended

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### Gunn says

One of the better books I've read recently by one of my preferred authors. This one was a little harder to track down as I had to get it via inter-library loan. I suspect it's because one of the main forces in the story - the KGB - no longer exists.

Set in the mid-late 80s, this is a character driven story about a man who discovers a unique ability and then finds himself being hunted by both the CIA and the KGB. The scifi element of the ability aside, the fleshing out of the characters and their influences makes this fairly quick read quite entertaining.

I'd recommend it despite the dated setting.

-g

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### Graeme Dunlop says

Dr Nicholas Foley -- who was born Nikola Ulinov -- has a problem. He's a deep-cover Russian spy living in America. Several years ago, he accidentally invented a way to not just hypnotise, but command people to do whatever he says. He's been careful with it, but now the CIA are closing in on him, and his beloved wife Valerie has been kidnapped by... who? The CIA? the KGB? The FBI?

What does he do?

And what would you do with the power to command anyone?

These are the central questions of this book, "Tool of the Trade."

I remembered reading this over 25 years ago because I like most of Joe Haldeman's work. A friend recently went through an impromptu book sale and bought a copy for maybe \$AUD2. He emailed me about how he'd bought a few books and this was one of them.

I then waxed lyrical about how I remembered this book, and could I please borrow it when he was done?

Well, he just gave it to me, before he'd read it himself. How good is it to have friends who understand books??

It is as good as I remembered, but I had forgotten quite a bit. I'd forgotten that Nick was Russian, but I remembered the end and it's as cool as when I first read it. I don't think all of that spy stuff would work anything like that today. But, this book was written in 1987 and if you can cast your mind back to that time, it holds up rather well. (I can. I'm that old.)

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### **Liz Gibbs says**

This was a suspenseful and fun book, bordering on scifi since we do not currently have (in the public eye) the technology it describes. It is also based on a land that no longer exists and makes the book all that more intriguing.

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### **Thomas says**

Haldeman, Joe. Tool of the Trade. Avon, 1988.

A Soviet sleeper agent acquires a simple ultrasonic tool that makes anyone do exactly what he says, no matter what. But in the end, he shows his controllers that all powerful weapons are double-edged. This is not really a spoiler because the fun is in the how, not the what. It has gained a bit of new relevance from the recent sonic attacks on U.S. diplomats. If you buy the premise, this is a well-told espionage story.

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### **Eric says**

This is a pretty typical Joe Haldeman yarn - it's about the guy who has the power to change the world, and he does his damnedest to do the right thing. It hits a lot of the typical Haldeman tropes, but the tight storytelling makes this one a keeper.

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### **Mark Isaak says**

For a science fiction story about the Cold War, set in the 1980s, this book has held up rather well, although I would now call it historical fantasy. The plot suffers from actually being two consecutive plots, but the writing is engaging.

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### **Brian says**

Haldeman's stories are generally variations on the theme of academics going to war. Usually, the outcome is peace, in so many different ways. In this case, it's a cold war novel, with our protagonist being a polyglot growing up in WW2 Leningrad, being trained as a KGB sleeper agent, who is installed as a psychology

professor in Cambridge, MA to recruit communist sympathizers. (The author even jokes that this isn't hard, as anyone who's been to Cambridge will readily agree.) It's in the course of his research that our main character discovers a powerful new tool for persuading people, which he uses for good and bad.

It's a 3-star book because of the intricacy of the writing. Maybe it's the fact that I read it in fits and starts, but it was a complex book that required going back and re-reading to catch up on the litany of characters parading in front of you.

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### **Viriam says**

First non SF book by Joe I've read, and it was well worth it. reminded me a little of the Invisible man, as it presents with a person with fantastic powers being hunted by goverment(s). great story, quick read. I enjoy JH's use of multiple points of view and voices to tell a yearn.

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### **Nic says**

Very clever book. Well worth the read.

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### **Sean Randall says**

This is, without doubt, the best and most thrilling espionage story I have read in the last six months. not, perhaps, in the sense of a thriller in the traditional mould; after all, it's clear where the story is heading. The Humanity, the action, the backdrops both US and Russian and the sheer pace of the thing kept me turning pages until the very end.

Of course, should the leading nuclear proliferates decide to disarm themselves today, all it would take would be a single terrorist or even a trigger-happy president to annihilate the other. But a happy dream.

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### **Nate says**

If you could control people's minds what would you do? Answer: start a night-life making pimps shoot themselves, and then combine it with your history as a spy to reduce the Soviet and U.S. nuclear arsenals.

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### **Deb says**

I really don't know WHY I read this book! Somehow, it made it into my little book of books to read. This will teach me to look at the synopsis BEFORE I order the book, even if it is on my list. It's a Russian spy-not-a-spy novel written in the late 80's. It's boring and I am really upset that I didn't listen to myself some 30 pages in when I knew I was not interested. But I stuck it out because it was supposed to have a shocking ending. NOPE. Wish I had the last 6 days back to have read something else!

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## **Tony Atkins says**

"Tool of the Trade" belongs to a sub-genre of SF that could be called "Simon Says".

What if someone had the power to make other people do what they wanted, if free will came with an asterisk? This is entertaining source material that's mined over and over again in comic books (1 2).

For the story to work, there have to be limitations on the power, a class of people who are immune, or some other reason why life isn't infinitely easy for someone who can just order people to do what they want. This story is no different. It plays with the material, but only goes so far in exploring the limits.

Haldeman's take on this sub-genre interesting is notable for its Cold War setting, its spy-novel flair, and its ending (which I won't spoil). It's also yet another example of Haldeman's enduring skill as a writer, which lies in taking a slice or two of SF and applying it on a human scale, with both drama and humor mixed in. Even when his subject is the nature of the universe itself (as in "Forever Free"), he still fills his characters with desires, with intelligence, with a sense of humor.

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## **David Cain says**

This is a pulpy, fast moving science-fiction espionage thriller. Although many of the characters are not well developed and some of the plot details are kind of ludicrous, this is nevertheless a really entertaining book. I guess the whole was better than the sum of its parts. The writing is solid and I recommend this as a quick and diverting read.

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