

Harmony Tree International Speech Festival (HTISF)
2024-2025 Set Pieces for Asia Division

FINAL

Prose Reading
Born in 2011-2012

Spy School

by Stuart Gibbs

Alexander looked the tiniest bit intrigued. “That’s exactly right. Usually you merely play the games on the kids’ page — at which you performed very well, by the way — but you’ve also browsed the employment and internship pages with some regularity. Ergo, you’ve considered a career as a spy.

And when you express an interest in the CIA, the CIA becomes interested in you.”

Alexander pulled a thick envelope from inside his tuxedo and set it on the kitchen counter.

“We’ve been impressed.”

The envelope was marked, *To be hand-delivered ONLY to Mr. Benjamin Ripley*. There were three security seals on it, one of which required a steak knife to open. Inside was a thick wad of paper.

The first page had only one sentence: *Destroy these documents immediately after reading.*

The second page began: *Dear Mr Ripley: It is my great privilege to accept you to the Academy of Espionage of the Central Intelligence Agency, effective immediately...*

I set the letter down, at once stunned, thrilled, and confused. My whole life, I’d dreamt of being a spy. And yet...

“You think it’s a joke,” Alexander said, reading my mind.

“Well, ... yes. I’ve never heard of the CIA’s Academy of Espionage”.

“That’s because it’s top secret. But I assure you it exists. I graduated from there myself. A fine institution, dedicated to creating the agents of tomorrow today. Congratulations!”

Alexander raised his glass of Gatorade and flashed a blinding smile.

I clinked glasses with him. He waited for me to drink some of mine before downing his, which I figured was a habit you picked up after a lifetime of having people try to poison you.