

Edgar Wallace

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

EDGAR WALLACE

Mutation in Pearls

MICHAEL GILBERT

It Pays to Advertise

BERNARD NEWMAN

Nothing on Paper

JOHN ROWLAND

The Small-Time Murder

No. 12

Vol. 2

Edgar Wallace

3/-



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Mystery Magazine

Vol. II No. 12

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Mystery, Crime, and Detection for the Aficionado

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UNLESS they have a definite plan to reform everything in sight, or are completely overcome by their own rectitude in comparison with a naughty world, editorials tend to beat firmly on some sort of favourite drum.

This page, then, has touched gently on several subjects this year—crime; iconoclasm; Edgar Allen Poe; Sherlock Holmes, and the mortality of crime writers. But always mildly, without interposing the editorial person.

Briefly But as this magazine grows (and, steadily, *grows*) certain factors emerge—readers' tastes, enthusiasms or prejudices; discoveries of new writers; controversy; changes . . . and all the events of the month. Certain things take on a definite slant; one emerges which remained unknown until this magazine appeared, or, perhaps, acted as a cataclyst?

Edgar Wallace has been remarked on, his continuing popularity, his immense sales today, always the 'life' of EW where other writers live only through their characters.

And now, from his mass of fans, a curious camaraderie has shown itself, something remarkable, perhaps unique. It is no less than a fellowship. The *EW Book Mart* appears to have been the actual fulcrum and, from constant letters, news emerges of more and more readers who have contacted each other, or who have introduced a third party, which has stimulated a pen-friendship.

The books are discussed, that is certain, and they pass back and forth to improve or augment collections. Some are exchanged, sold, or lists used to fill holes in collections aiming for completeness. 'Edgar', as he is always called, is brought into letters between readers, and to the Editor, as if he were present as a personality. It is no ghost at the feast of bibliography but a sort of continuation as if he is *there*. He is taken for granted, his habits or ways mentioned *en passant*.

He was, one knows, neither a stylist of Macaulay's quality nor did he wield a pen tipped with flame, but he was, always, a storyteller, a man who loved people, a gregarious, warm-hearted person to whom the world was a lovely place. His ready affection for everything round him is returned tenfold, invoking him not in hushed solemnity but in that amiable fashion of race-course crowds, who, during his lifetime, always greeted his appearance with a jocular, hearty, 'Good old Edgar'!

The Editor

Earl Wallace

MUTATION

in

PEARLS

*Insurance detective Bob Brewer
and the thefts which could not
possibly happen*

LORD HEPPLEWORTH looked over his glasses at his young wife, who sat at the other side of the breakfast-table — as far as she could get from her lord and master — and remarked :

"My dear, the young man from the insurance company will be here at ten o'clock precisely."

Maureen, Countess Heppleworth, yawned.

"What is he coming for?" she asked indifferently, and Lord Heppleworth shuddered.

"My dear," he said, "how often have I told you never to employ a sentence which ends in a preposition? You should ask — 'Why is he coming?' or, 'For what reason does he come?'"

Lady Heppleworth looked wearily out of the window and suppressed a sigh.

"He is coming, of course, to inquire into the loss of the Heppleworth

Holidays?

*At home ; abroad ?
Either way it's the season. But this minute you can also travel in another fashion — vicariously but enjoyably — with this issue of EWMM. Turn the pages to visit China ; France ; Iran ; an 'Iron Curtain' country ; Italy ; Switzerland ; Turkey ; the United States and, of course, Great Britain.*

pearls," said his lordship; "a most mysterious and baffling business, which I confess puzzles even me."

Lord Heppleworth was something over fifty, a lean, fair man, innocent of humour and wholly devoid of imagination. The mystery of the Heppleworth pearls was not, in the eyes of his friends, so great a mystery as that of his marriage. The last person in the world one would have imagined this childless widower would take to wife was Maureen Masters, a small-part actress. Society was shocked and grieved, and waited for Lord Heppleworth's explanation. The possibility that he had fallen in love with a pretty face did not occur to them, because they were of the opinion, as are so many people, that there are certain types of men to whom a pretty face does not appeal.

The truth is, of course, that no such type of man exists and it is true to say that Lord Heppleworth never regretted his marriage. It is equally true that Lady Heppleworth seldom ceased to regret it. She had had dreams of a most wonderful time - of parties, of holidays on the Continent, of living in a gay whirl from morning till night, year in and year out. The reality was a little different.

Lord Heppleworth had an estate in Shropshire, where he spent eight months of the year, and a town house in London where he spent four months of the year. He left his town residence for his country seat on precisely the same day and at exactly the same hour every year, and he returned as punctually. He dined at the same restaurant every night; he went to the opera in the season; he attended committee meetings at his club, and took a mild interest in bees, with special and particular reference to the Mason bee. He did not dance or go to the theatre, nor do any evil thing, save play auction bridge for penny points.

Lord Heppleworth folded his copy of the *Times* and rang the bell for the maid.

"Parker," he said, "there are three pieces of bacon left; kindly preserve them. I like cold bacon for supper."

"Yes, m'lord," said the girl.

"And I notice," said his lordship, "that there were six loaves of bread purchased last week in excess of the quantity usually ordered. Can you account for this?"

"Yes, m'lord," said the girl. "Her ladyship had the extra bread to take into the park to feed the ducks."

Lord Heppleworth raised his protruding eyebrows at his wife.

"My dear, my dear," he said reproachfully, "isn't that a terrible waste? Don't you realise that there are thousands of poor children who would be most grateful for this bread that you are literally throwing to the ducks?"

Lady Heppleworth shrugged her shoulders.

"Well, I'll send the bread to the poor," she said.

"That is unnecessary," he said, "absolutely unnecessary. There exist philanthropic societies and institutions, with one of which I am associated, which carry out the distribution of food in a properly systematic manner."

"What do you expect me to do?" asked the girl, exasperated. "Am I to sit here all day long, twiddling my fingers?"

Lord Heppleworth raised his hand in protest.

"One moment, my dear," he said. Then turning to the servant, "Parker, you may go. Now, my dear," he said when the door had closed, "let me ask you again to control yourself in the presence of servants. You have really nothing to complain about. You have a very generous allowance."

"Generous!" scoffed the girl. "Three hundred a year!"

"A very generous allowance, I assure you," said his lordship. "When I was at Eton my father allowed me fifty pounds a year and expected me to save money on it. And, what is more, I did," he said with some satisfaction.

"I'll bet you did."

There was a discreet knock at the door, and Parker was back again.

"There's a gentleman to see your lordship," said the girl.

"Hasn't he a card?" demanded Lord Heppleworth, then looked at his watch. "It must be the man from the insurance company," he said in a quieter tone to his wife. "Show him in here, Parker. You had better be present, my dear, because you will be able to supply him with information."



Bob Brewer came into the sunny breakfast-room, bowed to the girl and nodded to the man, whom he knew by sight.

"You are the young man from the insurance company, I suppose?" said Lord Heppleworth. "Will you please take a seat? Will you entertain Mr. — er — ?"

"Brewer's my name."

"Will you entertain Mr. Brewer, my dear, whilst I get the pearls?"

"I think there's a great deal of fuss being made over the loss of a pearl," said the girl when her husband had gone.

"A pearl?" repeated Bob, interested, "I understood it was the necklace that had been stolen."

"Oh, no," said Lady Heppleworth quickly, "Only one pearl. I suppose he has insured them with you?"

Bob nodded.

"Yes; the pearls are insured with us for fifty thousand pounds. I suppose you have informed the police?"

"No; I do not think he has informed the police." She never referred to Wilfred Emmerly, Earl of Heppleworth and Viscount

Chipstone, in any way' otherwise than 'he'. "He'll tell you all about it when he comes back," she said; "I think a great fuss is being made."

Further conversation was interrupted by the return of Lord Heppleworth, carrying in his hand a flat, black leather case. This he opened, and displayed against the blue velvet interior one of the most beautiful ropes of pearls that Bob had ever seen.

"In that string," said his lordship, "are, or were, sixty-three pearls. They are famous amongst jewels, having been acquired by my great-grandfather who, as you know, was one of the Governors of Madras in the reign of William IV. They were originally the property of an Indian rajah, who gave them to my ancestor for services which he was fortunate enough to render to his highness."

"I know the story," said Bob readily. "Your relation ran away with the rajah's wife, or something of that sort, and she happened to be wearing them."

Lord Heppleworth coughed.

"There was some scandal, I believe," he said hurriedly, "but we need not go into that question. At any rate, here are the pearls—the finest in Europe. It is a practice of mine, and has been for years, to insist on my wife wearing the Heppleworth pearls whenever I take her out.

"I am so particular about these pearls," he added impressively, "that I make a point of counting them every night when they go out, and every night when they come in. That also is an old practice of mine, and one which, perhaps, may seem odd to you, if you did not know that I am a very careful man. Her ladyship will tell you that I am most particular, and that I even check the laundry, both coming and going."

"And it needs checking," said Bob grimly.

"Very well," said his lordship. "Last night we dined as usual in the restaurant of the Magnificent Hotel. I counted the pearls, and there were sixty-three, as I have counted them night after night—a fact that my wife will confirm."

"Oh, yes, I'll confirm it," said the girl, and Bob was a little startled at the undercurrent of hostility in her tone.

"I counted sixty-three," said his lordship impressively. "We went to the restaurant and, except while she went to the cloak-room to take off her fur coat, my wife was never out of my sight for a second. We dined, taking an hour and a half over the meal, and during that period nobody approached her ladyship except the waiter. Naturally, I am proud of my pearls, and I scarcely took my eyes off them during the meal. My wife went into the cloak-room, put on her coat and returned with me in the car to the house. She took off the pearls in my presence, and I placed them in this very case; but before doing so I counted them. There were only

sixty-two."

He looked at Bob.

"Only sixty-two," repeated Bob. "You counted them again of course, and you have counted them since."

"I have counted them a dozen times since, and there can be no mistake. Every pearl in that rope is familiar to me, and the pearl which is missing is one of the largest."

Bob picked up the rope and examined it carefully.

"There seems to be no sign of a break here," he said; "if a pearl has been taken off it is the work of an expert. At what do you value the missing pearl?"

"Between fifteen hundred and two thousand pounds. It was one of the best."

"Is there a possibility of it having fallen off in the car coming back?"

"None whatever," said Lord Heppleworth with asperity. "What a ridiculous question to ask! You've seen the string."

"Yes," said Bob slowly; "I've seen the string. I'll make a few inquiries. Her ladyship has no theories, I suppose?"

"I don't know anything about it," said the girl. "I don't even know how many pearls there were."



Bob went back to the office of the Federated Assurances and saw Douglas Campbell, the managing director.

"Well?" asked that anxious man.

"It is rather a curious business," said Bob. "I suppose old Lord Thingumyjig is as honest as the day?"

"Oh, he's honest all right," replied Campbell. "Just tell me exactly what is wrong."

Bob described the loss and the circumstances which preceded it; Campbell nodded.

"He is perfectly right. There were sixty-three pearls insured, and if there are now only sixty-two we are liable for the other one. Did you count them?"

"I took that trouble before I left," said Bob; "and the old man counted as well."

"What do you think of him?"

"A mean old devil. I should imagine that his unhappy wife would be glad of the loss of the pearl if it's only for the sake of the excitement."

"He's all that," said Campbell. "As I say, I know him well. He's the sort of man who allows his servants so many ounces of bread a day, and wants to have all the bones accounted for. He has plenty of money, but doesn't know how to spend it."

Bob pursued his inquiries in unexpected quarters, and on the

second day he returned with a whole lot of information.

"I can find out nothing about Lord Heppleworth," he said, "except that, by common consent, he is an unmitigated bore, painfully mean and frantically pedantic. Lady Heppleworth was in real life Maureen Surpet - that wasn't her stage name, but it was the name she acquired through the accident of birth. She has no mother or father living, but has one sister and one brother. The sister has been in a lot of trouble, and was associated in the Manchester bank fraud. The case was never brought home to her, but there's no doubt that she was the woman who passed the drafts on the bank at Carlisle.

"The brother has not been as fortunate. He was convicted of larceny six years ago, and served twelve months in prison."

"What do you suggest?" asked Campbell; "do you think the brother is in it?"

"I am certain he is not in it. As a matter of fact, he is in Australia. The last heard of him was that he was poor but honest. The sister, on the other hand, is still in the black books of the police. And what makes the case look rather strong against her is that she is known to be an expert jeweller. Old man Surpet was a working jeweller in a small way of business, and the children, except Maureen, apparently worked in the shop."

"That doesn't explain the loss of the pearl," said Campbell.

"It may help," replied Bob; "at any rate, I am going to renew my acquaintance with the family, his lordship having condescended to invite me to dinner. I may learn something fresh.

He was at the house to time, and found Lady Heppleworth waiting for him in the drawing-room. She was dressed for dinner, but he noticed that she was not wearing her pearls. She followed his glance and smiled.

"You're looking for the pearls?" she said. "Lord Heppleworth does not invest me with them until we leave the house - Lord Heppleworth is rather careful, you know."

"I have noticed that," said Bob.

Further conversation was interrupted by the arrival of Lord Heppleworth, carrying in his hand the familiar leather case. This he opened and lifted out the pearls.

"Sixty-two, my dear," he said with heavy jocularly. "I don't think you'll lose any to-night, with Mr. Brewer's eye on you."

She smiled faintly and picked up her coat from the chair.

"The car is at the door," she said, and led the way out.

Lord Heppleworth was by no means an engaging companion. There were two subjects on which he could speak at length, but without any great point. One was the habits of the Mason bee, the other was the high cost of living and the extravagance of servants. They arrived at the Hotel Magnificent and waited a few seconds

whilst Lady Heppleworth divested herself and her coat in the ladies' room, and his lordship led the way to the table which, it was his boast, he had occupied every night for the past eighteen seasons.

The dinner was no greater intellectual pleasure to Bob than the drive to the hotel had been. Lord Heppleworth was voluble but uninteresting; Lady Heppleworth was for the most part silent; and Bob found himself wondering what she was thinking about as she sat there staring ahead of her, her fingers idly playing with the pearls about her neck.

"I want you to wait and come back with us," said his lordship, when at long last the dinner ended. "I have one or two theories which I worked up this morning, and have written down for your examination."

"I have one or two theories myself," smiled Bob, "but I shan't write them down for your lordship. Perhaps, if you sent your notes on to me I would —"

"I would rather explain them to you," said Lord Heppleworth.

Bob groaned inwardly, and entered the car, bracing himself for another two hours of boredom. He was spared that ordeal. When they reached that drawing-room Lord Heppleworth put out his hand, and obediently his wife removed the necklace and gave it to her husband. Carefully he counted pearl by pearl, and suddenly gasped.

"Impossible!" he said, and counted again.

"There are only sixty here — two have gone!"

There was a dead silence. Bob took the rope from Lord Heppleworth's hand. He had spoken the truth; there were only sixty pearls left.

"But — but —" stammered his lordship, "how could it have happened? It is incredible!"

"Are you sure you did not make a mistake in the counting?" asked his wife mildly.

"Don't talk like a fool. Didn't this detective fellow count them, too? Now, what is your theory, Brewer?" he demanded.

"My theory is a very simple one," said Bob, "namely, that those two pearls have been taken from the rope by some person or persons unknown."

"That is a very clever piece of reasoning," sneered Heppleworth. "Can't you do better than that?"

"Not till to-morrow," said Bob. "I will call on you at ten o'clock, and with your permission I will take the pearls to an expert and ask him a few questions."

"I will accompany you," said his lordship.

"That is quite unnecessary," said Bob. "You can trust the pearls with me, since we are guaranteeing their value."

At ten o'clock he called, and carried the pearls to the best

jeweller in London.

"I want you to see these and tell me if there are any joins in the string, and if it is possible that two pearls could be detached from the centre without disturbing the others."

"It isn't necessary to unstring them," said the jeweller. "I can tell you straight away that it is quite possible to detach two pearls from the centre, if the person who took them had sufficient time."

"Suppose you wanted to remove two pearls from the centre," said Bob, "what would you have to do? I mean, to leave the rope apparently untouched."

"I should have to unstring the pearls one by one, take out the selected pair, shorten the string by a corresponding amount, which means refitting the string to the clasp - rather a lengthy business."

"How long would it take you?" persisted Bob.

"If I worked hard at it I should probably do it in an hour," said the jeweller.

"Would it be possible to do it in a few minutes or a few seconds?"

"Absolutely impossible."

Bob nodded.

"Suppose, for example, that the lady who was wearing them wished for any reason to detach a pearl or two, could she do it, if she were an expert, during the time it takes a lady to powder her nose and leave her coat?"

"Impossible!" said the jeweller. "There's nobody in this world who could fix that job under an hour, and I'm speaking as a man who has had years of experience."

"Thank you."

Bob put the pearls in their case and returned them to Lord Heppleworth.

"Yes, sir; I have a theory," he said, "and if you will be kind enough to allow me to take Lady Heppleworth to dinner to-night without you, I think I can guarantee a discovery."

Lord Heppleworth pursed his lips.

"It is not my practice, sir," he said, stiffly, "to allow my wife to go to dinner with a stranger."

"I don't want to know anything about your practices, good, bad, or indifferent," Bob said wearily. "I only know that if you wish your pearls returned, and do not want to incur further losses, you would be well advised if you do what I ask."

"It's a lot of money," said his lordship, "but of course, the insurance company will pay."

"I am not so sure of that," said Bob. "Certainly, unless you agree to my wishes, I shall throw up the case."

"Very good," said Lord Heppleworth after a while; "I will inform my wife."

"She must be wearing her pearls, remember."

His lordship nodded.

At eight o'clock Bob presented himself and the pearls were produced with the same ritual which had been observed on the previous night.

"Sixty," counted Lord Heppleworth. "Now, check them yourself, Mr. Brewer." Bob checked them, and found that there were sixty. He made no explanation to her ladyship until they were in the car.

"I don't understand all this," she said, a little petulantly; "why do you want me to go to dinner? Is there anything wrong?"

"I don't know yet," said Bob, "but I am under the impression that you're as anxious to clear up this mystery as anybody."

"Of course I am," she said sharply. "Why should you think otherwise?"

He waited for her a few seconds while she deposited her coat, and then followed her to Lord Heppleworth's table. No more was said about the object of the somewhat chilly dinner party until they had reached the coffee stage. Then, suddenly, Bob asked:

"Lady Heppleworth, you are not particularly happy with your husband, are you?"

She stared at him for a moment, and went red.

"I don't see what business that is of yours," she said defiantly; "and I don't think Lord Heppleworth would like to know that you asked that question."

"You can tell him, if you like," said Bob carelessly, "I am not interested for the moment in what he thinks of me. I am very much interested in what he will think of you."

"What do you mean?"

"Let me ask you again," said Bob, "are you particularly happy with your husband? Do you, for example, harbour any idea of running away from him and retiring to some quiet little country town in Australia, and living your life free from the irritating atmosphere in which you now move?"

She dropped her eyes. "I don't know what you mean," she said in a low voice.

"Let me put it plainly. You have a brother in Australia and you are anxious to get there. Lord Heppleworth allows you just about enough money as would pay an ordinary woman's car fares. He is, not to put too fine a point on it, extraordinarily mean. And you, who were expecting a very brilliant life as a peeress of the realm, find yourself very much in the position of a servant who hasn't even a Sunday out."

"Yes, that's God's truth," she blazed. "He watches me like a cat. Why, a year ago, when my brother was starting in Australia, I couldn't raise fifty pounds. Think of that!"

"You could have pawned a ring," suggested Bob.

"He counts the rings every morning and every night," she said,

struggling to suppress the laugh which her sense of humour provoked. "Isn't he silly? Sometimes I feel I'll cut his throat and run away. I would, too," she said, "if it wasn't for the fact that there's nowhere to run to, and there's no money to run with."

"And now as to the necklace," said Bob, looking at her neck. "Will you let me see it?"

She hesitated.

"Why do you want it?" she said.

"I want to put it in my pocket," he said.

Her hand went to her throat.

"You'll do nothing of the kind," she protested.

"Now, do me a favour," said Bob. "You have a sister, I understand?" Her face went very white. "At the present moment she is acting as cloak-room attendant at this hotel. When I say 'at this present moment' I am perhaps wrong," he corrected. "She is more likely engaged in taking a pearl from the rope you slipped off when you went to leave your coat, and neatly doctoring the string so that it cannot be detected. You can do a great deal in the way of stringing pearls in an hour. You usually sit here for an hour and a half, don't you?"

She was deathly white, but she did not speak.

"The rope you have about your neck," said Bob, "is a rope of imitation pearls which match yours as near as possible. They were purchased in the Burlington Arcade two months ago by a woman answering to the description of your sister. The *modus operandi*, as I understand it, is simple. You come in, with your husband, you take off your coat, slip off the string of pearls and receive instead the imitation string. With these, you sit at dinner while your sister is engaged in pinching whatsoever her hand findeth to pinch. When you go out, you exchange the imitation for the real, and on arriving home it is discovered, to the consternation and horror of your ungenerous husband, that you are one or two pearls short – correct me if I'm wrong."

"What are you going to do?" she asked in a low voice.

"I suggest you go to your sister, and ask her to restore the pearls she has taken, and to give her time to do so we will go to a theatre, for which I have already booked seats."

"What shall I tell my husband?"

"Tell him nothing," said Bob.

"I wanted the money – I wanted it badly," she burst forth. "I don't want to steal. Though Fanny is wrong, I have never done a dishonest thing in my life. We are going to share the money. I was going to use my share to get to Australia – out of this strifling, horrible place."

Bob thought for a while.

"I think I can get four hundred pounds from your husband as a

reward for the recovery of the pearls," he said. "You can take that money and leave just as soon as you like."

"But what am I to tell my husband?"

"Tell him it was pinched by a Mason bee," said Bob flippantly.
(from *The Big Four*) © Edgar Wallace Ltd, 1965.

Some EWM Contributors . . .

Ray Dorien. Won the Gilchrist Medal in 1946, an expert journalist and traveller to many countries. Her first venture in crime writing, *Miss Dorien* has written some 48 books, mostly romances.

Michael Gilbert. Became famous with the classic *Smallbone, Deceased*. Born Lincolnshire, 1912, lives in Kent, and is an enthusiastic pillar of the Crime Writers' Association. Likes writing best while travelling in trains.

Bill Knox. Another professional journalist and newspaperman, Bill Knox was born in Glasgow, 1928, where he now lives. Works a lot for television; travels, and is deeply interested in crime-writing.

Patricia McGerr. Nebraska-born, and now living in Washington, D.C., 'Pat' McGerr is close on the scene where most of her famous 'Selena Mead' stories begin, and visits foreign capitals in search of 'background' material.

C. M. MacLeod. Primarily an artist, Charlotte MacLeod is Canadian-born, many of whose pictures have been bought for private collections. Graduated via advertising to writing, and has two books coming out in the States, where she lives.

Bernard Newman. A British 'institution', Bernard Newman is a leading authority on espionage, has written many novels including the brilliant *Centre Court Murder*.

John Rowland. Author of many factual books on crime, and many novels, John Rowland is Cornish born and, in private life, a Unitarian minister.

Paul Tabori. A long-time professional journalist, Paul Tabori graduated from the brilliant stable of writers which learned (or improved) their trade in *Lilliput*. Travels widely and works both on fiction and political material.

THE FLYING CARPET

PAUL TABORI

*Adam Venture, man-about-the-world,
is a newcomer to EWMM, one
you may like to meet
again — and will*

OUTSIDE the rain poured down with bleak persistence; I studied the pages of the Teheran *Daily News* with a jaundiced eye. I had flown in from the arid heat of Karachi the night before, dreaming of caviare, sturgeon and the roses of Shiraz. But this was a city built on a plateau three thousand feet up; the flowers were sodden and the women, most of them in their black cloaks, looked like wet bundles of charcoal. I had to wait three days for my plane to Beirut and the only man I knew in the Persian capital was up in the north.

I surveyed, in turn, the prospects of entertainment. There were six cinemas, four of them playing ancient Hollywood movies dubbed into Persian; the fifth was showing an interminable Bengali epic and the sixth a French film I had seen four years ago. I could go to the Park Hotel and watch the 'incomparable Fernando and partner'. Another 'incomparable' Spanish couple — at least their names were Iberian — were performing at a night-club. It seemed that Iran was going through a Spanish phase. I thought I'd rather go to bed with a bottle and a two months' old magazine.

Then, as I turned to the last page of the skimpy *Daily News* my attention was caught by the personal advertisement column. It was only half-a-column — in Teheran people were not very communicative, I thought — most of which were filled by the plaintive appeals of American residents for domestic aid. I was about to throw the paper aside when the last-item-but-one arrested me. I read and re-read it, thinking my eyes had played me tricks. It said:

FLYING CARPET FOR SALE. No agents. Bids, personal, to 99 Rue Nedjar. Phone for appointment, 440104.

I'm not unreasonable, but I have a reasonably agnostic mind.

I always liked the flying carpet cartoons and thought what a convenient means of transport it would be if it existed outside the pages of the Arabian Nights. And here, between two ads, one seeking a housemaid and the other offering a 'good-as-new' car for sale, someone was actually bringing my dream to life. I wondered whether one would be expected to pay in gold, in emeralds and rubies or whether U.S. dollars would do? The *genie* and *ifrits* of Harun-al-Rashid's time had become travel bureau clerks and black marketeers in this prosaic age. I thought I'd call the number—just for the fun of it.

Under the watchful eye of the desk porter, who disdained time as an affectation of the degenerate West but wore a uniform with yards of tarnished gold braid, I wandered over to the telephone. I almost backed out at the last moment—it seemed so foolish. But what was the risk? I dialled four-four-nought-one-nought-four.

The phone rang a long time. Then a voice answered—feminine, musical low-pitched. I couldn't understand a word it said.

"Hallo," I tried to sound business-like, "d'you speak English?"

There was a little pause. I thought she'd rung off; but it was only a change of cast. A man's voice, *basso profundo*, with a thick and unplaceable accent: "Who is it?"

"My name's Venture. I'm calling about your advertisement in the *Daily News*. About the . . ." I gagged on the adjective, "about the carpet."

There was another little pause; again I thought I'd lost him. But no.

"Are you an agent or a principal, Mr. Venture?" the deep voice asked. He could be Syrian, I thought; or maybe Egyptian. I couldn't quite tell.

"A principal," I said truthfully, without hesitation.

"What is your nationality?"

This was getting foolish. Maybe they wanted a vaccination certificate number, too, before they'd have anything to do with me.

"Canadian. Why?"

Basso profundo seemed to be amazed at this information. His voice expressed utter disbelief.

"But then you aren't a principal," he said.

"Canada's a pretty big country to be disqualified—whatever the race."

"I meant no disrespect," the deep voice told me, primly.

For an unaccountable reason, I was getting angry.

"Let me tell you, Canada's bigger than the United States. It has more uranium, more gold, more . . ."

"I apologise," he cut in hastily, obviously uninterested in my Chamber of Commerce talk. "But the carpet's sold. Good-bye, Mr. Venture."

He rang off before I could say anything.



I went back to the tiny bar off the hall and ordered a *vodka sec* and a Turkish coffee. It was still raining and my mood hadn't improved. There was a small fact nagging at the back of my mind. "Are you a principal?" the voice had asked. The ad had said: 'no agents'. Whoever had a flying carpet to sell, didn't want to pay a commission. On the other hand, if it was sold, why put me through a catechism? Were there several on sale? The ad had only spoken of one.

I looked at my watch. Half past six. I couldn't face an early dinner; the evening would be interminable. I went back to the desk and asked the porter where Rue Nedjar was. Not far, he said, off Villa Avenue, behind the Russian Embassy. Fifteen minutes' walk. Or did I want a taxi? No, I said, I didn't mind walking in the rain.

I stepped from the hotel and crossed Naderi Avenue, walking along the high walls of the British Embassy compound which fronted on four streets and looked like a very solid fortress of a still defiant Empire. The rain was thinning and a procession of cars passed, driven at furious speed and all hooting violently though, otherwise, the traffic was by no means heavy. My Persian friend had once explained that such a procession always meant a wedding; evidently the Persians wanted to tell the world that a happy couple has tied the knot. Sometimes they proclaimed this at three o'clock in the morning, which was the reason I had changed my front room at the hotel to one at the back. It didn't make much difference but at least I didn't wake up two or three times a night, blighting the marital future of some newly-weds with my blasphemous bad wishes.

I turned down Ferdowsi Avenue and now the rain had almost stopped. The steep, narrow canals between the sidewalk and the road were filled to the brim, the clear water chattering and hurrying to some distant meeting. I remembered the old poet who had talked of their 'gossiping and conspiring' as if they were living souls. Every second shop sold carpets and I stopped in front of one. The pride of place was given to a carpet depicting the Shah and his Queen; it was an awfully bad likeness and the weaver could have prosecuted for *lèse majesté*. If I ever bought a flying carpet, I decided, I would insist that it should be a real work of art.

I found the Rue Nedjar without much difficulty, but when I turned into its snaky, narrow length, I hesitated. This was stupid. The carpet – if it existed – was sold. *Basso profundo* had told me so. If he had lied, on the other hand, I was obviously disqualified

as a customer. Canadians weren't good enough even if, like myself, they had an American mother and had spent a fair part of their lives in God's Own Country.

Number 99 was almost at the end of the street. I decided it would do no harm just to look at it. Darkness had fallen by now and there were only a few reddish-yellow electric lights along the twisting street.

The house was set back behind a tall brick wall with a narrow iron gate. Teheran looked an ugly, nondescript city because of these walls, though gradually they were coming down – the Shah was setting the example – to disclose the fabulous gardens, the delicate façades that tradition had been hiding for centuries. Here the wall was still unbroken and there were pointed spikes on top of the gate.

Should I ring the bell? My mind was made up for me when a small door in the wall opened and a man emerged from it. He wore a fur-cap and a fur-collared coat; I couldn't see his face. He brushed past me and was swallowed up by the murky gloom. I pushed at the small door. It was open and I entered.



Someone chuckled in the darkness. He was so close – for it was a man, I sensed – that I jumped. Then he spoke and I recognised the voice, *Basso profundo*. He spoke in a language with which I had a fair acquaintance though my grammar was atrocious – Russian.

"So you've changed your mind, Comrade?" the deep voice said.

Give a dog a bad name and hang it. I inherited one from my ancestors that had more than once landed me in the immediate danger of sudden death while I was trying to live up to it. I suppose I should've admitted my identity; but there's that perverse devil lurking in me. So I just mumbled: "*Da*", hoping the single syllable wouldn't give me away.

"Come in then," the voice continued. "It's better to talk business over a drink."

I heard his footsteps and followed the sound. The garden was larger than I thought and in complete darkness. A few steps led up to the front door. My host didn't stand on ceremony; he preceded me, apparently confident that I would follow.

Of course, that was the end of it. There was a long hall with a tiled floor and a staircase ascending; and there was light. *Basso profundo* had a body like several balloons fitted rather carelessly together; he was bald but had an impressive black beard. His eyes were slightly slanted under bushy eyebrows. They were wide-open now and his small mouth was pursed in an unpleasant way. He also held a gun.

He said something in Persian which I couldn't understand ; but I don't think I'd have liked it, anyhow.

I said the first thing that came into my mind.

"My name's Smith. I came about your advertisement - the carpet . . ."

The gun was still trained on me and we were only three feet apart.

"In the garden, just now," the balloon-man said in his thick accent but with unhesitant colloquial fluency, "you pretended to be someone else. You answered me."

"Did I? Well, I understand a little Russian."

The gun wavered for a moment. Then the fat man laughed, his belly and his chins shaking like light-browned jelly.

"You're a remarkable man, Mr. Smith. Either you're the biggest fool on earth or you've the most colossal cheek."

"Now look here," I protested, "I don't like to be insulted. If you don't want my custom, I'll go."

"Not just yet," he said. "Not until we've cleared up this little misunderstanding."

He gestured with the gun towards a door half-way down the hall. This time he was polite - he let me enter first. In fact, he insisted.

The first thing that struck me in the long, narrow room was that my host wouldn't go short of carpets even if he sold a score or so. There were carpets everywhere - on the floor, on the divans, on the walls; even the three windows were hung with them instead of curtains. I am no expert but they looked old and valuable.

Perhaps it was boorish of me ; but it was only *after* the carpets that I saw the lady.

She was sitting cross-legged on one of the low divans, smoking a cigarette. She was slim and young; the low-cut evening dress showed arms and shoulders the colour of polished bronze. She gave me a rather bored look and returned to her occupation ; she was putting polish on her toe-nails. She was barefoot ; she had the narrow, high-arched feet of the Berber dancers.

Basso profundo - I really ought to ask his name - growled at her. She nodded coolly. East of Istanbul that meant a categorical 'no'. The fat man shrugged and turned to me:

"Now then, Mr. Smith - a famous name, isn't it? - who sent you?"

"Nobody. I'm a principal."

His eyes narrowed and I realised I had made a mistake. I can do certain things to my accent but there's a limit. And *he* had a good ear.

"You are? Are you sure? Are you sure your name's Smith? It

wouldn't be something else?"

"You tell me."

"Earlier to-day I had a telephone call. From someone calling himself Venture. You don't know him, Mr. Smith?"

I felt we'd done enough fencing. "I told you I came about your advertisement. Either you want to do business with me or you don't."

The young lady had finished her toe-nails and they were works of art. Now she looked up and remarked, conversationally, in excellent French: "You're an idiot, Habib. Put that gun away and ask him how much he's willing to offer."

Habib gave her a disapproving look but he put the gun away. I sat down.

"Thank you, mademoiselle," I bowed to her. "I'm of a nervous disposition and guns make it worse."

She said nothing but her look was far from unfriendly.

During the ensuing brief silence Habib massaged his chins and gazed at me.

"You know we want cash?" he asked.

I didn't but I said: "That can be arranged."

"Within a week."

"That depends on the sum."

"We already have two offers. One for half a million, the other for six hundred thousand. They are in writing."

"*Rials*?" I asked. It must be a fabulous carpet, whether it flew or was grounded.

He laughed contemptuously.

"Dollars, of course."

This was getting out of my class. I was supposed to bid for something I hadn't any idea about—with money I didn't possess.

But it was too late to retreat. I said, with as much dignity as I could: "Well, I'll have to think it over. But first, of course, I want to see it."

Almost instantly I knew I had said the wrong thing. Habib's small, red-rimmed eyes froze; the girl looked at me as if I had committed a grave social error. Then he smiled:

"Of course you can see it. It's right next door."

He pointed to a curtained recess at the far end of the room. I went first. One should never be over-confident. As I stepped over the threshold, I felt something descend upon my skull and I remembered nothing else.



The porter, dozing behind the hotel desk, opened one eye, then jumped, staring at the spectacle I presented. I murmured: "Accident . . . got to clean up . . ." and climbed the stairs, a

little stiff and dizzy, to my room.

When I had dug through several layers of what felt like half-liquid mud and had come to the surface, I had found myself in a narrow alley, propped against a damp wall. I had a massive headache and a bump at the back of my head; otherwise I was all right. I had felt my pockets; nothing was missing. I thought. Habib had simply coshed me and dumped me somewhere in the neighbourhood. There had been a light at the end of the alley. I was within a few hundred yards of the Rue Nedjar; but I had no desire to return there. Not for the present, that was.

The light turned out to be one on Shah-Reza Avenue and I had found a taxi on the stand near the Ritz Hotel. The first thing I did in the cab was to go through my wallet. The money was there, so Habib was no petty thief. I never carry any papers that identify me; an old, wartime habit I'd acquired in self-defence. So maybe he still didn't know whether I was Smith or Venture, or who I was.

I cleaned up in my room. There was a long tear down the back of my left trouser leg and my head still throbbed. I decided to call it a day and went to bed.

I seldom dream; at least not so that I recall it next morning. But this time I had a complex nightmare in which tinted toe-nails, bass voices and a carpet that was shaped like a mighty condor were mixed up. Some small part of my brain insisted all the time that this was a dream, but the rest of me wasn't convinced. I woke at dawn with a parched throat, soaked in perspiration and with the nagging consciousness that I had omitted to do something important.

I fell asleep again and when I woke the sun was shining and I felt less fragile. I remembered I had to call at the police. In Iran bureaucracy has evolved some beautifully quaint regulations. When you arrive, you report to the police; then you get an exit permit—even if your stay is only twenty-four hours; and when you had the permit, you are obliged to report to the police once again. It is practically a full-time occupation, getting out of the country though it could be somewhat simplified by the judicious application of *baksheesh*.

I breakfasted in the garden where the flowers glistened from the night's rain. I dealt with the police business and then took a taxi to the Great Bazaar. I'd visited it once before but I felt an obscure urge to see it again.

It is a fantastic place, a mixture of old and new, of the tawdry and the beautiful. The galleries were an intricate maze; the whole place covers about forty or fifty acres. Most of the shops are just holes in the wall. The heaped-up merchandise is lit by neon-tubes twisted into circular shapes though here and there oil and carbide

lamps are still used. *Hamals*, porters, stagger under huge packing cases, bales, parcels roped together, calling throatily to the throng to let them pass.

In a long street the coppersmiths were at work, their fires illuminating their half-naked bodies. The place looked like Vulcan's mythical forge, echoing with the clamour of a thousand hammers. I fled from these caverns before I was deafened and, of course, in the end I landed in the Street of the Carpets.

Before I had penetrated more than fifty paces into those arched passages where carpets were piled up I was captured by an old gentleman with a flowing moustache and a single fierce eye. He spoke English with great fluency but with a superb disregard of grammar or pronunciation. So great was his enthusiasm that he managed to communicate his meaning in spite of these handicaps.

"Ekchellencee," he addressed me, "you show to me like great expert. Let me disgrace to you my oomble treasoor. . . ."

This should give some idea of Mahmoud Kutchuk's - that was the name displayed in Persian, French and English over his shop - special brand of English. I thought I might as well learn about carpets even though I had no intention of buying one. I was travelling light and I wasn't sure where I would land next - Iceland or Timbuctoo.

I asked a few questions and Kutchuk was only too happy to give me a lecture. He showed me a prize specimen of *kali* which was cut like plush and had a lovely thick pile.

"Two hundred twenty k-nots," Kutchuk explained, pronouncing the 'k' with special emphasis. "Werry rich. Werry bootiful. Chip rugs - only sixty squeer inch. This took five jeers make."

I admired it and said it was a little large for my purpose; he immediately produced a *kalicheh* which was a smaller version of the same type and came, he said, from Ferahan. But he reeled off a lot of other names - Khorasan and Koradagh, Yezd and Kerman, Sultanabad and Kurdistan. He had rugs and carpets from every one and they were all 'werry bootiful'. Then he showed me some *gilim* which were smooth and incredibly soft and which had come from the north. I liked best of all a long, narrow one which was a brilliant, dew-fresh green. Kutchuk noticed my admiring look and quickly exploited it "Ekchellent toast," he said. "This colour and silk - just like King Solomon's . . ."

I didn't know that King Solomon had a carpet of his own - or that it had been green. But Kutchuk, a merchant who believed in giving his customers all the time they required, launched into an ecsatic description of the original, the chief magic carpet of all. He quoted the Koran and assured me that indeed it had been of green silk. When the great King travelled, his throne was placed on it - and it was large enough to accommodate all his armies, the men

and women on his right, the spirits he commanded on his left. When all had taken up their positions, the King informed the wind where he wished to go – and the carpet rose into the air, duly setting them down at the appointed place. The birds of the air formed a canopy with their outspread wings to protect the travellers from the sun.

All this Kutchuk related at great length and with the most picturesque malapropisms. Then, a little breathless, he delivered the commercial:

"For you – only five thousand *rials*. A begotol."

I managed to understand that he meant 'bagatelle'. I did some quick figuring. A little over a hundred and fifty dollars. I had learned a lot about carpets; for the time being I saw no use at all for this knowledge but you could never tell.

"All right," I said, "I'll take it."

The reaction wasn't so frosty as Habib's when I told him that I wanted to see *his* carpet; but Kutchuk's face showed that he was disappointed. Half the pleasure of trading in the Orient is in the bargaining, and I had refused to haggle. However, he hid his disappointment, barked at one of his assistants to wrap up my *gilim*, asked me whether I wanted any *nimads* – which were felt carpets – and then dismissed me with a blessing:

"May this carpet bring you as much bliss as did Prince Housain's. . . ."

I felt ashamed of my ignorance so I didn't ask who Prince Housain was. I paid for my purchase, took my bundle and turned into the main gallery. I had only covered a few yards towards the exit when I heard a low whisper that seemed to come from just behind my left ear. Someone said: "*Monsieur Venture*," pronouncing it in the French way.

I turned. There stood the girl who liked to paint her toe-nails. She was dressed in a turquoise-coloured two-piece suit and she looked ravishing. She stood in the door of a small café – one of the many dotted about the bazaar – and she was beckoning to me with a seductive smile in the best tradition of all beautiful spies I had always dreamt about but rarely met before.



"I do not expect you to tell me who you work for," she said when I had joined her at a small inlaid table at the back of the café.

"Obviously."

She wore a ring with a huge, square-cut topaz – it caught the light as she lifted a tiny cup and sipped thick, sweet coffee.

"Habib is very crude," she added.

I felt my head. It was still throbbing a little. I agreed.

"And greedy," she offered the afterthought.

I clicked my tongue at such boorishness. As I had nothing to give away, that was my entire contribution. It seemed to annoy her. She drummed on the table, her bronzed fingers beating an impatient tattoo.

"After all," she went on, "I did the hard work."

"I'm sure you did," I agreed soothingly.

"Would you give me forty?" she came to the point – whatever the point was.

I had to step warily. I didn't know of what she expected forty. Maybe winks or thieves or millions.

"Why not?"

She put her hand over mine. It was a small, warm, firm hand and its touch was pleasant. What a pity I couldn't follow this up – not unless I found out what she was talking about. I decided to take the initiative.

"Where is it?"

Her almond-shaped eyes flashed with sudden suspicion. I hastened to retreat: "I mean, I just wanted to know whether it would take long to make delivery."

"No."

"You see – time is of the essence," I went on, feeling more and more idiotic every moment.

"You don't have to tell me that. Habib has two offers – but he's greedy, as you know. I can deal with him but I must be sure that afterwards everything's settled quickly." She shuddered prettily. "Corpses are sometimes a nuisance."

Our crazy double-talk was becoming macabre. I couldn't carry on very much longer.

"If I make the arrangements," I said, "where do I reach you?"

She hesitated. "I'm moving up to the Ferdowsi. You can call me there."

"I could – if I knew your name."

She smiled. She really had very pretty teeth.

"Ask for Fahrúnissa."

"A lovely name."

She rose. "It means 'Glory of Woman'. But let's not mix business and pleasure, Monsieur Venture. . . ." There was a little pause and then she added, deliberately, "Not yet. . . ."

She was gone in a cloud of attar or something similar. I stared at the empty coffee cups and wished I had a clue. It needed no brilliant deductive powers that Miss Glory of Woman intended to double-cross Habib and that she wished to enlist me. She would be content with forty per cent. of the proceeds. The proceeds of what? What was a flying carpet that could not be inspected and had an asking price of six hundred G's? I couldn't very well ask the porter at my hotel, the knowledgeable Kutçuk, or the clerk at the

air terminal who had promised to try and get me a place on the Lufthansa plane if he could. I wished I hadn't yielded to my curiosity about that ad; but then, I wouldn't have met Fahrnunissa which would have been a great pity. I picked up my *gilim* and walked past the piles of carpets, the pyramids of brass samovars, the trays of turquoises, silver and gold rings, out into the rain that had started again. Instead of a flying carpet I had to be content with an old taxi that smelled of mice and stale cigar smoke. But that perfume was still in my nostrils. If it depended on me, she could have her forty – whatever it was.



With me, there is one sure remedy if I'm worried or out-of-sorts – a good meal. There's nothing more reassuring when it is prepared with loving care and eaten with due respect and deliberation. So that night I went to dine at the Suren which is Teheran's *Four d'Argent* and *Osteria dell'Urso*.

The rain had stopped and it was a mild evening, with only a slight nip in the air. I dined off caviar which is no luxury in Persia, and a large slab of sturgeon prepared with black butter and the usual soupçon of garlic, ending with one of the luscious Shiraz pears. Two glasses of vodka and half-a-bottle of red wine had mellowed my puzzled anger considerably. I lit a cigar and ordered coffee. The pool at which I sat was softly lit and golden carp darted through the sky-blue water; fountains played in the large garden and I felt at peace. I had chosen a table near the back of the restaurant and had deliberately turned my back on the rest of the guests. But now I shifted my chair so that I could survey the scene.

The very first person I saw was Abdul Ramsar, my old friend and comrade-in-trouble. He sat near the stairs that led from the indoor restaurant into the garden and he looked as if he'd dive into the pool any moment to drown himself. This was a shockingly unexpected sight for, normally, Abdul was the most carefree fellow in the world. It couldn't be unrequited love, I decided, while I watched him emptying a large glass of vodka, for he was a well-favoured young man, lavishly paid as a mining expert and outrageously lucky with women. I went over to him and called his name. He looked up and at first I thought he didn't recognise me – his eyes were blank. Then he jumped to his feet, almost upsetting the table and embraced me with true Oriental abandon.

"Adam!" he shouted loudly. "Adam! You are a dream!"

Abdul spoke fluent English but sometimes chose his words with a certain lack of care. I assured him that I was quite real, thank you; neither a nightmare nor an apparition.

"No, no," he apologised while he pressed me down into the chair

next to his. "I meant I was dreaming about you – well, somebody like you! I am devastated. I need you."

"Anything to oblige an old pal," I said. "What's the trouble?"

"The scoundrels! The bastards of a moth-eaten, spavined camel! And as for her – if I could get my hands round her pretty brown neck, I'd squeeze and squeeze and squeeze!"

He demonstrated his intentions graphically.

"It is useful to start at the beginning," I suggested. I had enough of riddles; here, at least, I could ask questions.

He looked around and must have become conscious of our surroundings and the curious stares we were attracting.

"Not here," he said. "Come with me."

He got up and I realised that he was slightly drunk. This, again, was unusual; for Abdul could carry his liquor superbly and had long discarded the Koran's precepts about wine. I thought I'd better fall in with his mood; I didn't want a fight. So, paying the bill, I walked with him into the street. There were a few taxis waiting, but he steered past them to a small car. Now that he was on his feet, he seemed steadier, but I wouldn't let him drive. He didn't protest but slumped down beside me as I took the wheel.

"Where to?" I asked.

He made a vague gesture. "Anywhere. No. you'd better come up to my place. Got a room at the Ferdowsi."

The name rang a bell but for the moment I couldn't quite connect. "You got to navigate," I said. "I don't know where it is."

"Up in the hills," he pointed. "I'll tell you."

Then he went to sleep.



I mustered my smattering of Arabic and, with the help of the Suren's commissionaire, I got my directions from one of the taxi-drivers. It wasn't difficult – but it proved a longish drive. Half-past eleven, by my watch, when I turned into the driveway of the Ferdowsi, which was built on a hillside. The garage was at the bottom of the hill. Abdul woke when we stopped; yawned, stretched and then noticed me. He seemed to be considerably surprised at my presence; but then, he remembered. He was quite sober.

We climbed some stairs and walked along a path above a large courtyard. In the middle there was a swimming pool and a small bandstand – deserted and looking ghostly in the dim light. It had started to rain again. Abdul marched into the lobby, past the porter's desk, into a small lounge. He said: "Pardon me!" and retreated. I caught a glimpse of half-a-dozen bearded figures in turbans but Western suits; one of them was singing softly and the others listened enraptured. "Delegation of Sikh poets," Abdul

explained as he tried another door along the corridor. This was a slightly larger lounge and empty. He collapsed with a sigh and said: "I'm through, Adam. Ten years' work gone down the drain. If you can find me a job - any job . . ."

"But I thought you were saying up north another six months or more?"

He moved so quietly that I thought he'd gone suddenly crazy. He slipped off his jacket and tore open his shirt, pulling it up.

"Look!" he said savagely.

There was a long scar running from the left shoulder-blade almost to the hipbone. It had the raw look of a wound freshly healed.

"Not very pretty," I sympathised.

"Six weeks in hospital. No, not pretty at all." He was buttoning his shirt again. "You know what I was doing up there?"

"Surveying work, you told me. Didn't want to be nose . . ."

He laughed, a bitter laugh. "I might as well have told you - and the world. We were doing an aerial survey - but a very special one. Uranium. Maybe you heard of these new Geiger counters - work from the height of several hundred feet. We knew it was there - but we had no idea how much and where. Well, we found plenty the first few weeks. Of course, they clamped down immediately. Security above all. They even assigned us a code name - Operation Prince Housain."

I stared at him.

"What did you say?" I asked, slowly. My brain felt like a Geiger counter; things were clicking furiously.

"Operation Prince Housain," he repeated impatiently. "Don't you remember the *Arabian Nights*?"

"I . . ."

The scream rose like a rocket, hung for a moment, suspended in the air, shattered, then started again. We both jumped. A moment's pause - then it was repeated - echoing, desperate. We ran for the door.

It was raining heavily now and within a few yards we were both soaked. Lights blazed along the covered walk above the courtyard; voices, steps, a confused pattern of alarm. I was in front of Abdul. From the top of the stairs we had a grandstand view of the swimming pool, the forlorn bandstand - and something lumpy, motionless between the two. There was the slim figure in a transparent, plastic raincoat and hood, standing over it.

A moment later Abdul had vanished from my side. I ran after him. He vaulted over the low stone balustrade and, like an insane man, trampled his way across the flower-beds on the fringe of the courtyard. I sensed the emergency and flew after him. But I was almost too late.

I barely had a moment to realise that the shapeless heap on the concrete was someone I'd met, however briefly – Habib. His body was oddly deflated. He was dead. Then I was busy enough, trying to stop Abdul from strangling the girl in the transparent raincoat, the lady of the tinted toe-nails, the *Glory of Woman*.

His hands around her throat, his eyes glared with mad fury. She had been obviously taken by surprise, for on her face was more amazement than fear. I pulled and tugged at Abdul's arm, trying to loosen his grip, but made little progress. Then a silk-clad knee shot out, hitting him in the groin. He cried out and must have weakened his hold, yielded to the double attack. That was enough for Fahrúnissa. She ducked and freed herself; then she turned and was running. Abdul started after her but stumbled over Habib's inert body, clutched wildly at thin air and fell. By the time he was up again she had disappeared in the darkness behind the bandstand.



It was five o'clock in the morning and at last I'd succeeded in restoring Abdul to something like sanity. The police were busy outside, taking photographs, questioning a lot of people who knew nothing about the murder. Inspector Chalus, a tall, thin, hook-nosed man, had assured me that the murderess would be 'apprehended' any moment, that she couldn't possibly slip through the net he had spread. He spoke fluent English but obviously preferred four-syllable words whenever a monosyllable would have done. In any case, there was nothing I could or wanted to do about it; my hands were full with Abdul.

A pot of black coffee and a lot of patience had made him almost coherent. Even so, his story was full of gaps and I'd some difficulty putting the pieces together.

The survey had been most successful. After months of patient work they'd compiled a map, a master-plan of all the uranium resources plus a few other things that had been discovered almost incidentally. All this was done in complete secrecy; the Government knew that it couldn't exploit these vast treasures itself, lacking technical know-how and equipment, but was firmly determined to keep control of them and, in granting any concessions, remain the senior partner. A week or so before the vital conference at which the next steps were to be decided, Abdul met Fahrúnissa. He was a little vague about the circumstances and I didn't press him – anyway, they weren't important. But it was evident that he fell, and fell heavily for her. Not that he was a fool; she was making such an obvious play for him that the possibility of 'ulterior motives', as Inspector Chalus would put it, did cross his mind and he took certain precautions. These proved

quite insufficient in the end. A rendezvous in a night-club – a dark alley – and then a knife. He woke up in hospital, two days later ; for weeks he was on the danger list. By the time he started to recover, he was told the harsh truth: his keys had been stolen, his safe rifled, the master-plan had disappeared – and so had the girl.

"There was no copy," Abdul kept on repeating. "That was the most terrible about it. We were going to have some made for the various departments – but we kept postponing it to the last moment just because we wanted top security."

When he was discharged from the hospital, he was also dismissed from his office. The girl had vanished without a trace. There were no clues. Two nights after the attack on Abdul, another man had been found dead – a Kurd who was suspected of being an agent of an 'unfriendly power'. That only confused things more ; the police had actually suspected him of being mixed in the theft of the master-plan. But a dead suspect wasn't much use.

As soon as I had a chance, I told Inspector Chalus about the advertisement in the *Daily News* and my visit to the Rue Nedjar. He glared at me and said: "You should have proffered this information at an earlier opportunity." I wanted to point out that I'd tried to talk to him three times and had been stopped by a beefy sergeant outside his office on each occasion ; he was no longer listening. I had put a couple of sleeping pills in the last cup of coffee I'd persuaded Abdul to drink, and he was asleep now. I suggested to the inspector that he let me accompany him to the late Habib's hang-out. He said: "I was just about to make the same tentative offer." So I got my first ride in an Iranian police car, and a very harassing experience it was.

The nest was empty, the birds had flown. Habib, of course, was resting on a slab in the Teheran morgue. The apartment consisted of four rooms – the large one with its collection of carpets, the smaller sitting-room in which I had been coshed, and two bedrooms. One of them had been obviously occupied by Habib ; the other must have been Fahrúnissa's, judging by various feminine bits and pieces. My respect for the inspector grew as I watched him at work. He did not bother much about fingerprints, but his search was thorough and rapid, including the most unlikely places. It wasn't his fault that he found nothing – not a scrap of paper, no trace of Abdul's master-plan nor any valuables.

"We've searched Habib's body," he informed me. "The results were negative."

"Then maybe she's got it off him," I suggested.

"That is not unlikely. In which case it is only a matter of hours before we recover the document."

The inspector didn't look an optimist ; but you must never judge by appearances. I personally thought he was indulging in an

outside wish-dream.

Then I remembered something else. Miss Glory of Woman had told me that she was moving – moving to the Ferdowsi! The question was whether she had had time to check in. When I told Chalus, he began to mutter darkly about ‘obstruction of justice’. I said that maybe it would be best to make sure first, and so we drove back to the hotel, at the same breakneck speed.

Yes, Miss Fahrnunissa had booked a room, the clerk said. The inspector snatched the key and raced upstairs to the second floor. There was nothing in the room suggesting a hasty departure. On the contrary, the lady had unpacked and hung her clothes most tidily; her toilet articles were arranged on the dressing-table and in the bathroom a pretty silk wrap was hanging inside the door. I wondered why she needed three toothbrushes. If she had been present, she’d have needed smelling salts. For an hour Inspector Chalus searched, probed, ripped, squeezed and unzipped everything that could have provided a possible hiding place for the papers, but nothing was found in the obvious or not-so-obvious places. Nothing except a small metal tag which I discovered. It was tied to one of the toothbrushes that had awakened my curiosity. It had an Arabic number on it and I turned it over to the inspector. He was breathing heavily by that time. He examined the tag with a lack of enthusiasm. Then something came into his rather expressionless eyes. He muttered in Persian. I pointed out that, having found the damned thing, I was entitled to information.

“I’m not sure,” he said. “But I think it’s used at the airport – if you deposit some luggage. . . .”

“We *could* find out,” I suggested gently. I got myself a third suicidal drive within the same morning hours. This time we barely missed three camels, a donkey-cart and a car but we got there.

The inspector was right. It *was* a baggage check. We got the locker open.

It was empty.



Three days later I was driven by Abdul to the airport. The inspector’s optimism had proved unjustified; Fahrnunissa was still ‘unapprehended’ and no trace of the missing master-map had been found. Abdul was in a slightly better mood; he had been offered a geologist’s job in Tunisia. But he swore that as soon as he had enough money saved, he would track down that ‘she-devil’ and get his revenge. I told him it was better to forget if not to forgive but I didn’t really expect him to take my advice.

We said goodbye outside the airport building. I checked in at the Lufthansa counter, forcing my way with some difficulty through the crowd. I passed through Customs, managing to convince the

suspicious officer that I had neither gold nor other precious metals in my luggage. I had to unwrap my *gilim* but was allowed to take it out. I had my passport stamped and my exit permit checked; a little hot, I sat down in the sleazy restaurant and had a cup of coffee and a vodka on the rocks. I knew there was still plenty of time, for a couple of tables away the crew of the Lufthansa plane were having breakfast. They were all blond, tall and goodlooking and talked in a German that sounded slightly *berlinerisch*.

"Where's Frederika?" asked one of them.

The others laughed.

"Squeezing the last drop out of Teheran," said the tallest and blondest of them. "She met a colonel two nights ago - very dark, very handsome. But she's never late, you know."

"She'd better not be," the first man said. "How can a plane fly without a stewardess?"

A few minutes later they gathered their overnight bags and papers and disappeared; Frederika, whoever she was, hadn't arrived. And after another ten minutes' interval, the loudspeaker announced in execrable French and just as bad English that passengers for Beirut, Lufthansa Flight No. 303, were to proceed to the aircraft.

The crowd at the Lufthansa desk must have been made up mostly of relatives and friends; there were only a dozen of us on the plane and I found myself alone in the front compartment. The last few days and nights had been hectic and sleepless; I was glad to relax. It would be a pleasant, not-too-long flight with a short stop for refuelling at Damascus. The sign flashed on: FASTEN SAFETY BELTS - NO SMOKING, both in English and German. I put on my belt and pressed the button on the side of my seat to a comfortable reclining position.

The engines sprang to life; we started to taxi. I closed my eyes. Then I heard light footsteps and a low, feminine voice spoke at my elbow:

"Would you take one, sir?"

I opened my eyes and sat bolt upright, almost tearing the safety-belt from its socket.

Fahrunissa stood over me with a tray that held acid drops and chewing gum. The light-blue uniform fitted her perfectly. Her hair was dazzling gold under the pertly set cap.

"Sit down," I commanded her.

"I can't do that," she smiled. "I have my duties."

I hesitated. The pilot's cabin was only three feet away. But then I realised that she couldn't escape. We were in the middle of the runway, the engines being revved up for the take-off - and I had at least three hours to deal with her. Still, I decided to assert myself.

"I'll give you ten minutes," I said. "If you aren't back here by

then, I'll speak to the pilot."

She smiled again, a delightful smile. "Passengers aren't allowed to enter the cabin. But I'll be back."

She was, too, in less than ten minutes. We were now airborne, high above the mountain plateau. She sat down in the empty seat beside me.

"You were just a little too late, M. Venture," she said. She'd reverted to French – our previous conversation had been in German which she spoke, I noticed, without an accent.

Her self-composed effrontery almost took my breath away.

"Late for what?"

Her eyes widened. "I thought you'd come to the Ferdowsi to make me an offer."

This was truly epic impudence. She was admitting, in so many words, that she had the plan.

"If I had," I said, "you'd have been too busy. Killing Habib, for instance."

"But I didn't kill Habib."

She spoke quietly, conversationally; she did not put any emphasis on the words. She wasn't trying to convince me. She was just stating a fact.

I looked at her. She was arranging a golden curl and seemed to be more concerned with its position than her own. "I saw him killed, though," she added. "That's why I screamed. And then, of course, I had to run."

"A likely story," I mocked her, for it was all I could say.

She turned to me and gave me the dazzling brilliance of her eyes, her smile.

"You see," she explained, "I'd told Habib I wouldn't stand for murder. First the Kurd had that nice Abdul knifed – which wasn't how we'd arranged our bargain. Then Habib provided for the Kurd's removal. I knew I was next on his list – even though I'd done all the hard work. But the Kurd's brother got Habib first – which was lucky for me . . ."

"Tell me," I asked, determined to find out how good she was at spinning this web of lies, "why did Habib put that advertisement in the paper?"

She smiled again. "Hadn't you guessed? He knew the Kurd was getting the map – but he didn't know *who* his prospective customers were. He was certain they would understand the message. And they did. Everything would have been simple, if you hadn't come into it. You didn't really want to buy the plans, did you? At least, you didn't have the money."

"No, I certainly hadn't."

She got up. "I'd better do my chores. The passengers will want their coffee."

I grabbed her wrist. "Just a moment. Have you got the master-map?"

She smiled, full-lipped, self-assured.

"Oh, yes, I have it."

I thought of Abdul's ruined career; the secrets of Iran were no skin off my nose – but I couldn't let her get away with this.

"Better hand it over," I said.

"And if I don't? You going to spank me?" Her smile deepened.

"I'll radio Beirut. I'll have you arrested as soon as we land."

She looked at me and sighed. "Such a handsome man," she murmured. "And so cruel."

"Flattery won't get you anywhere, my girl."

There was a moment's pause. Then she said: "All right. Close your eyes."

I did. I heard some mysterious sounds – a zipper being unzipped, the rustle of silk, maybe – then she told me: "You can open them now."

She handed me a small package done up in oilcloth. "You can look for yourself," she said. "To make sure."

I tore it open. There were several large sheets of thin paper, folded, inside. I had a look at one of them. They seemed genuine, though of course they could have been charts of the moon.

She got up. When she had closed her zipper, she hadn't done it quite properly. She bent over me and I caught her elusive perfume; a few inches of bare brown skin were within an inch of my lips. She kissed me – and was gone.



When we landed in Beirut, she wished me, demurely, a pleasant stay in the Lebanon. There was a hint of mockery in her smile. I went through customs and immigration; as I came out of the airport building, she was sitting in a cream-coloured sports car with a good-looking Lebanese officer at the wheel. She beckoned. Like a fool, I went over to her.

"I just wanted to tell you," she said softly, "that I've two copies of it. I wanted you to know – so you shouldn't worry about my future unduly..."

"Why, you..."

She touched her escort's arm. The car shot forward. I looked after her, and felt pretty foolish myself. That girl would go far, I thought. A pity we couldn't share the same road. But I had sense enough to know that sooner or later I'd come to a nasty accident.

Find the Traitor

PATRICIA McGERR

*America's favourite lady spy,
coming on movies and TV,
in part one of this
duet, and . . .*

FIRECRACKERS, fried chicken, pealing bells and a high-flying flag. That's the Fourth of July in the United States, and in other parts of the world, on each plot of land that the U.S. Embassy makes American soil, there's a more formal celebration. Top dignitaries of the host country, envoys from other nations and Americans abroad for business or pleasure meet to pay homage to Independence Day.

At one of these receptions, in the capital of a country behind the Iron Curtain, Selena Mead accepted a glass of sparkling punch from a member of the Embassy staff named Adam.

"Sip at your own risk," he cautioned. "It's our special Rooney Rickey." At her questioning glance, he added a definition. "Sauterne, ginger ale and white grape juice, dedicated to the congressman who knocked the champagne out of foreign service budgets. It's austerity first these days unless the ambassador has a private fortune. And ours is strictly an up-from-the-ranks career man."

"I know," Selena said. "When my father was ambassador to Spain, your man was commercial attaché."

"That's what I am now," Adam told her. "But it's unlikely I'll ever make the top spot. Not enough seriousness of purpose."

Selena was well aware of his title. Adam was, in fact, one of the three young men that she had, on a few hours' notice, flown from Washington to see. Hugh Pierce, driving her to the airport the evening before, had explained the need for haste.

"Section Q got word late yesterday from our man in their Ministry of Foreign Affairs that they're about to spring a great propaganda coup. His information was fragmentary, but the gist

of it is that they expect a man from our Embassy to defect and ask asylum day after to-morrow."

"Has he been spying for them?"

"A few papers, not of much consequence. His job doesn't give him access to classified material. It's not what he knows or anything he can take with him that worries us. It's the psychological effect. You can imagine the uproar that will follow the announcement that an American on the Embassy staff has gone over to the other side. Congress will howl, the confidence of our Allies will be weakened, and we'll look like dolts in the eyes of the rest of the world. It will be a playback of the Burgess-Maclean case, with the United States as the goat. Explaining that he had no substantial secrets to give away won't help. He's got to be stopped before he crosses the wire."

"If he's still at our Embassy," Selena asked, "why don't you bring him home? Abducting one man should strain Section Q's resources, even if he is in enemy territory."

"We could get him out all right," Hugh answered, "if we knew his name. The trouble is, our agent wasn't able to find that out. All he could tell us was that he's an attaché and that designation applies to three men. A fast check has turned up nothing against any of them. Given a week, we could pin down the guilty one, but we have less than thirty-six hours. And the slightest hint that he's under suspicion could make our bird fly even sooner. So we can't ask questions or make an open investigation. That leaves it squarely up to you. Call the Ambassador as soon as you land. Tell him you've been in Vienna on an assignment for your magazine with a short stopover between planes. He'll invite you to his Independence Day party and the trio of attachés will be in attendance. Your job is to pick out the traitor and get him to the airport. We'll be ready to carry on from there."

"You make it sound so easy."

"I know it isn't," he returned. "But if anyone can do it, you can."

The preliminaries had gone as outlined. She was at the Embassy reception, had met the chief officials of the local communist government, mingled with men and women in the colourful dress and uniforms of half a hundred countries. Now she stood a little outside the milling throng, and turned her attention to the first of the three suspects, Adam, Bernard and Charles. Of them all, Adam seemed the least likely to turn traitor. Short and stocky, with crew-cut hair and a cheerful grin, he appeared more interested in batting averages than trade quotas. What possible inducement, she wondered, could make a boy like that betray his country?

"In view of the occasion," she said, "we should drink a toast to the Declaration of Independence. Doesn't it always thrill you to hear its opening words—'We the people of the United States'?"

"It thrills me now," he answered. "But I don't know whether it's the words or the way you say them or the way you look when you say them. So I'll drink to it – and to you."

"Spoken like an ambassador." She smiled at him over her tilted glass.



Bernard was thin, dark and sharp-featured, with a smile that bordered on the sardonic. As press attaché, he showed a lively interest in her magazine job, asked penetrating questions about the article for which she claimed to be gathering material. Once more she proposed her toast and repeated the opening phrase. At the words 'We the people' his eyes narrowed slightly and his lips parted as if about to speak. But he suppressed the impulse, smoothed away his frown and, touching his glass to hers, said blandly, "To all the noble words in all our historic documents".

Charles was cultural attaché. Tall and blond, the best-looking of the three, he had the seriousness of purpose that Adam disclaimed. Her toast, worded just as before, brought an instant response.

"Oh, no," he said quickly. "You're confused. That's the beginning of the United States Constitution. The Declaration of Independence starts, 'When in the course of human events . . .'"

"It does?" Selena showed innocent surprise. "Oh, dear, you must think me very stupid to make such a silly mistake."

"Not at all," he said magnanimously. "Many people get the two mixed up. But we who represent our country have a particular responsibility to be correct in these matters. I hope you don't mind my pointing out your error?"

"Indeed I don't," she assured him. "I'm most grateful to you for putting an end to my confusion."

Not long after that she spoke her thanks and farewell to the Ambassador, accepted his offer to have her driven to the airport.

"Do I have a choice of escort?" Her eyes went quickly round the circle of young men who had gathered to say good-bye.

"I would give myself the pleasure," the Ambassador answered. "But the Prime Minister is still here and he might take it as an insult if I left my own party before he does."

"How about me?" Adam volunteered. "My absence will never cause any accidents."

"It's kind of you." Selena acknowledged the offer with a smile. "But I think –" Her glance moved past Bernard, rested on Charles. "Would it be a great imposition to ask you to drive me?"



The Embassy was on the outskirts of the city, on the side near

the airport, so the ride was short. She had difficulty in keeping her mind on the conversation and away from what lay at journey's end. As they neared the field a bell clanged loudly behind them.

"An ambulance," Charles murmured. "There must have been an accident. I hope it's nothing to do with your plane."

He turned aside to stop in the small unlighted parking area, and the other vehicle followed, pulled up behind them. Selena sat tensely waiting while Charles walked round to the back to get her suitcase. In the rear-view mirror she saw two uniformed attendants get out of the back of the ambulance, move towards him as he bent to unlock the trunk. His cry was no more than a gasp, cut off at its beginning. Then a third man came to open the door.

"Quickly," he ordered, "go inside. I'll bring your luggage." The initial letter assured her that Section Q had the situation well in hand.

At the check-in counter, while the bell still rang, she heard one airline employee tell another, "That must be the emergency case they phoned us about. An American tourist had some kind of seizure and has to be put on the first plane out." She had no doubt that the pseudo-tourist was Charles.

It was not, however, till the next day that she learned the details of the drugged needle that had rendered him limp and speechless, the advance planning and forged papers that speeded his inert form past the local authorities. Nor did she know that, attended by a Section Q physician, he had ridden in the freight compartment of the same plane that carried her back to the States.

"It would have been embarrassing," she suggested when Hugh filled her in on these facts, back in Washington, sitting in her Georgetown garden, "if I'd brought the wrong man to the airport."

"Very," he agreed. "But I've learned to trust your judgment. And it was proved right again. Charles has admitted everything. As usual, it began with a woman. With his looks, he was used to easy conquests and he didn't know until too late that this one was loaded. They got some compromising pictures and traded them one by one, for Embassy cables. The information in the cables was of little use to them, but by passing them on he gave them the hold on him they wanted. When he was in so deep that he could be ruined by exposure, they ordered him to come over to their side. He wasn't strong enough to say no. He'd even memorised the statement they wrote for him to make at a press conference this morning. A ringing deunciation of democracy and endorsement of their way of life. It would have been a smashing victory for them, propaganda-wise. How did he give himself away?"

"A rather simple trick," Selena answered. "Based on the fact that a patriotic statement, taken out of context, will sound familiar to most Americans, but few will be sure of its exact source. So I

misquoted the Declaration of Independence to each of them. I expected an innocent man to react in one of two ways. Either he'd be like the majority of our countrymen and absent-mindedly accept my version. Or if he recognised it, being a gentleman and a diplomat, he'd be too polite to contradict me. That's how it was with the first two."

"But not with Charles?"

"The delicacy and danger of his situation kept him constantly alert. Probably for weeks he'd had to watch every word, be on guard against saying or doing anything that might arouse suspicion in the people around him. He knew I was a magazine writer with important government connections. So he couldn't risk flunking even a harmless-sounding loyalty test.

"Normally, he was meticulous in the forms of courtesy, but his need to appear a super-patriot overrode even that. Adam was too relaxed to notice my mistake. Bernard, I think, knew I was wrong but diplomatically let it pass. Only Charles, under the pressure of his own guilt and fears, was compelled to show off his knowledge."

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E W M M

August issue includes

Edgar Wallace

T. H. C. Jacobs and
the Rattenbury Case

'Vignette from Life'
of 'The Ringer'

and many other top-level stories and features

Ticket to Peking

Christopher Curtis

*... now an EWMM 'first' spy tale
(no cloak, no dagger) and more
fact perhaps, than
fiction?*

I REACHED the Sherbrook Hotel in Hongkong while there was still light in the winter sky: the BOAC flight had been on time, which meant I could keep that after-dinner appointment.

My hotel room was typical – neat, lifeless, comfortable. In the looking-glass on the right of the window, above Queen's Road, I appeared trim enough for a man of forty – tall, solid, with one of those placid English faces belonging to anything from a diplomat to the manager of a pub; in the Special Branch we are picked for our lack of outstanding physical characteristics. In a crowd we sink into the mass.

By eight I was shaved, bathed, and dressed. The door porter found me a taxi-driver who knew the colony (not always easy, that). It was pretty breath-taking when I got out, up there on the Peak. Hongkong was spread out like a carpet, speckled with electric lights though where I stood it was reasonably dark, and quiet.

My host opened the door of the bungalow himself, shaking hands indifferently. In a small back-room he checked my credentials then waved me to a chair, proffering cigarettes and a drink. He was as ordinary as I am myself, but lacked the trick of warming to one – a rather bloodless Civil Service type.

"The Department gave me full information about you," he explained. "Borrowed from the Special Branch five years back, and still with us." He sighed. "Personnel Recruitment at home can't get the right men; I suppose this borrowing from Central Headquarters will go on." He made it sound as if Scotland Yard supplied poor substitutes for real operatives.

"Counter-espionage is not unknown in the Special –"

He waved me down.

"Never mind that. You've been seconded to me for an urgent

chore." He pushed a pile of papers over the desk with one forefinger. "Everything here for you - money, passport in your own name and well used, business cards . . . everything."

I skimmed through the collection. Without the usual inspector before it, my name looked bald - Richard Lamb. In fact it looked dull and gutless.

"I see I'm by occupation a publisher - that's what I was in a small way before I decided life might be more exciting in the police force."

He said, in an admonitory voice: "In the Department we *are* very fully informed . . . however, you are a publisher on holiday, Lamb" - he mentioned the well-known firm to which I was supposedly, and no doubt properly, attached - "and you are journeying to Peking, and back, perhaps picking up the odd manuscript here and there."

"And if I do get hold of one?"

"Buy it," he snapped; he certainly did not seem to care much for me, the permanent man and temporary staff, of course. "See that it's properly entered and get my authority on the chits for any moneys paid. Now, here is an address. A man named Jevvons is living there. Remember the case?"

"Defected to the commies? Singapore man, and worked there -"

"Wholly genuine, an honest man but muddle-headed. There are apparently no restraints on him in Peking after all this time. But what the Department wants to know before closing his file is this: he had access to classified material," he recited some details.

"Yes?"

"He is aware of those projects, Lamb. Now, he *is* a very straight man as I do know, so we want advice as to whether his defection is because of his convictions and it ends there; otherwise, did he tell his new colleagues of what he had been doing before he left his job. Off you go and get it sorted out; you know the drill?"

"Yes. Will he tell me?"

"Unless in a few months he's switched the standards of a lifetime, he will."

"Very well." I gathered my papers. "I go first to the Chinese People's Travel Service -"

His impatient gesture cut that short.

"It's all there, man - tickets, official entries, every bit of paper you need. Kowloon in the morning, then Shum-chun Station. . . ."



Like a dismissed schoolboy I was sent off into New China with an efficiency I found surprising. It had all been arranged without flaw, and at my first railway station behind the bamboo curtain - clean as a sandpapered pin - I rested one hand for a moment on

a bright green wall stencilled in Chinese characters stating, I felt convinced, something like 'Long Live the Organic Law of 1949' that almost sacred slogan about new China's birth. When I looked at my soiled palm I realised the characters probably said no more than 'wet paint'.

At the frontier Customs' houses the Communist officials were more or less searching incoming and outgoing people to their back teeth, but I was courteously treated and told, after a cursory glance through my zip-bag, to go along to my train.

They changed my money for a stack of tattered NPR banknotes and then I wandered into the great station hall to await my train. That unfailing Chinese politeness saw to it that nobody gazed overlong or impolitely at a rare foreigner like me.

It was remarkably strange to western eyes. Every fifth person wore a protective gauze mask over mouth and nose, particularly those who handled food or drink, or were cleaners. Clothes in general were blue denims and most of the men wore those bulging peaked caps which are ruin to native features. The girls were pretty and there was little shabbiness, but everything was so clean. I trod my cigarette stub on the ground. It was instantly swept up by a gauze-masked, reproachful-eyed coolie who gestured delicately to a trash bin. Mussolini, they used to say, made the trains run on time; Chairman Mao Tse-tung has abolished dirt, and flies.

It was almost like home when I finally got on the Peking Express – moquette-covered seats, mirrors, communication cords and luggage-racks, old rolling-stock with a familiar plate, just outside the toilet, showing that it had been built in Rugby, 1935.

The stations beyond my carriage window flicked by at long intervals. Little rice or sugar fields were often tended by farmers still wearing the old-fashioned cartwheel hats of rice-straw, for peasants cannot easily be changed . . . the loud-speaker in the carriage droned for the whole journey with political facts and achievements, or crashed out Russian marches interspersed with wailing native music; my polite, white-coated carriage steward saw to it that I was well-informed on everything, and well cared-for.

I could have gone by air, I suppose, but my masters had laid on a train journey as proper for a publisher on holiday; the Department may not be imaginative but it is thorough.



Peking was the new age. Thronged, busy streets, portraits of Chairman Mao wherever you turned – gauze masks again, and lurid billboards with slogans and improving pictures. Aged and beautiful old buildings rubbed shoulders with the dreary new – indeed, the vast blocks of government offices along Tien-an Men Avenue were much uglier than anything in the western world.

In my utilitarian hotel room, at the best end of what was called, in Chinese, 'former' – Benson-Street-now-Living-Peace Street, I took brief stock.

Here I was, a Special Branch man practically permanently attached to the Department which, in the manner of such departments, made sure its right- and left-hands never so much as knew each other. I had to see, and even question, a man named Jevvons and if I acted or spoke out of turn I would no doubt quietly disappear. In the New China, I was to find, nobody ever saw or got near to the powers-that-be – no other nation has so completely invisible a government – but one bad slip on my part and the swoop on me would be like the strike of a hawk.



Jevvons, of course, was no longer at the address I had been given, but in the Department we don't put on false moustaches and meet mysterious men at Rendezvous X – we do as I then did, try the obvious and most disarming way first. I found a telephone kiosk in the hotel foyer and, with the help of a girl from Reception, I got on to the editorial section of the *Chinese People's Daily* where I explained to a friendly English-speaking voice that I used to know an Englishman named Reg Jevvons, whose address, I had lost, and how could I get in touch with him?

Another girl arrived at lunch-time, very pretty, quite charming, from a ministry whose name I never quite got. She took me to an anonymous building in Hata-men Road. A polite young man in spectacles too small for him questioned me delicately, kindly, but with the precision of a skinning knife. The girl, who told me to call her Mei-lan, was given instructions when it was over.

She took me to the street door, and signalled. A pedicab driver appeared – wearing an ancient velour and patched clothes, for they, like London taxi-drivers, are unbowed individualists.

Mei-lan spoke to him, then to me.

"He will take you to Comrade Jevvons. It is proper that we check first, you understand. No rudeness is meant." She bowed. "Happy journeys in People's China, sir."

The pedicab rushed me into a main thoroughfare, into a screaming uproar of bells, horns, and loud-speakers. The traffic was all red buses, Zims, Buicks, Skodas, Bentleys, in one superb racketing tangle like home. We dodged past the great dove of peace on the Tien-an Men Gate and at last arrived at something looking like a run-down old café on an outer London lorry route. But, inside, the You I-Shuan Restaurant would have delighted Escoffier's heart, from the mutton cooked on the table in a fire-pot to the little shrimps in cream . . . and, neat-suited and polite, Jevvons was my host as relaxed and as normal as if we were taking drinks together

in the Savoy Bar.

Reg Jevvons was a tall, sad-faced man who was not surprised to see me. At our table was his friend, a thin Chinese with startled eyebrows and heavy-framed spectacles, a Comrade Chieh who was as courteous as Jevvons but no doubt remembered every word we spoke – or had a miniature tape-recorder tucked under his gown.

We talked of England, of China, of everything save politics; we agreed on China's progress, its peaceful intentions, and by the time we reached coffee I was baffled.

Either the Department was crazy or I was; this was a mild and gentle Englishman, as worldly as a village spinster and as innocent of evil as the Picasso dove one saw everywhere.

Only when we parted did I get a small clue.

Comrade Chieh ordered me a pedicab, wished me well, and practically stood on my feet when he shook hands. Jevvons bowed, and smiled.

"So nice to renew our acquaintance, dear friend. Tell them in England how happy I am, how well it all goes. If you get the chance, tell the people I knew, my friends in the Army; tell the Marines . . . oh, tell them all. That's right, Chieh?"

He bowed and Jevvons bowed, and I went back to the hotel with every sense alert. And Jevvons turned up at two in the morning, scratching gently on my bedroom door. He came softly into the room, walking rather stiltedly and sat in my sole armchair with a sort of impassive dignity.

"We'll be safe for not more than an hour, Lamb. They told you I'd defected, of course?"

"Yes; my Department is anxious about classified material –"

"Bloody civil servants! Always the way; one department fools another, and the third goes off at right angles. I was unofficially sent on a job – bloke named Li. I publicly defected from Singapore via Hongkong when I was supposedly on furlough."

"I see." I was warily cautious; this *could* be some sort of double-trickery to trip me up.

"You got my hint?" He made a small grimace.

"The Marines? Yes."

"Had to get you on your toes, or you'd've thought me a ripe one. But I've been tumbled, dammit, Lamb; you know of this man, Li—Quiet Li?"

"Li-an, the Scholar; Vietnamese number one native son?"

"Exactly. Quiet because he's clever and an asthmatic; it doesn't make him any less dangerous." He paused unexpectedly for a moment; I thought he must be listening to something. "You know he's taking over in North Vietnam from Ho, the biggest thing since Genghis Khan, they say."

"'The Scourge of the Imperialists' and all that? I've heard the

scuttlebutt."

"He's going there, Lamb. Leaves on the Peking Express, Thursday, for Hankow; stops there a night and on to Nanning."

"And . . . ?" This was becoming bewildering.

"And then Hanoi, to lead the Vietcong in person, *with* unofficial help – volunteers, nuclear bombs, and God knows what else." Jevvons's eyes were strained. "He's talked China into sticking its collective neck out – that wasn't hard – and it's to be a jihad, a crusade, to sweep poor old imperialism into the South China Sea. He's hypnotised the cautious boys in Tien-an Men Avenue into something like the Boxer Rising-mentality." He sighed and rested a moment.

"Once his Hitler-mania infects China, the Soviet will react, and the Americans will throw everything they've got into Vietnam, then every balloon in sight will go up. I've tried to get him stopped, which was my job, but I couldn't, and it's almost too late now. . . ." He gave me something like a vacuum flask wrapped in paper.

"Now look here, Jevvons –"

"Take it, Lamb; hide it away. Take this paper, read it and get rid of it – all the gen you need's in it. Here's your ticket for the Peking Express, compartment by Quiet Li . . ." he gave me a smile of remarkable kindness and went to the door. "Be wary of thin men; I thought Comrade Chieh was slow on the uptake . . . but he's clever. He doesn't know where I am now, though, and his sights are not on you, but more than that on me, worse luck."

For several minutes after he had gone, walking carefully, I stared abstractedly at the red repp cover of his chair, thinking it out, then I saw the darker stain where his back had rested. And I dare not go after him, for the Department demands one works on the task in hand without stopping to lift those who fall down on the job. . . .

The rest of the night I dozed uneasily. I half expected the Gray Police to appear, or men from the melodiously titled 'Harmonious Peace Section', those elegant thugs originally trained by Moscow and now set up in their own efficient and anti-espionage cadre.

It was a tricky position. I read Jevvons's carefully detailed notes, then flushed them away fragment by fragment.

My desire to travel on that train would arouse no suspicion. The Department had worked well in establishing my innocence as a harmless publisher – bureaucrats in Peking, and most parts of the world, tend to accept the obvious if it is properly buoyed with the right documents, as I was.

That did not help me. Despite popular romances about colourful agents who are licensed to kill, Department fieldworkers are not licensed, or even expected, to do anything even remotely illegal – a little real pressure on a captured agent and out would come the

most appalling propaganda material, *if* we were allowed at any time to act outside established law.

Killing is as wrong for us abroad as it is in England, no matter *what* the circumstances are . . . *but*, unofficially, we use our own judgment and tell the results to no living soul.

For Jevvons admitted there was no way to stop Quiet Li, no way but one and he passed it on to me, just like that.



I went from Peking as inconspicuously as I had arrived. The great station hall was a maze of people in which I was briefly lost until, like a pretty genie appearing at my elbow, Mei-lan was with me, briefed, I daresay, by *her* department to see the visitor on his way.

"We are deeply sorry to losing you, Comrade Lamb." She gestured to a coolie to take my bag and impedimenta which, I tried to forget, contained Jevvons's package. "You have seen friend again, sir?"

"Jevvons? No. Thought he might have looked me up again, you know."

"So sad ; tooken – taken? – seriously sick, am told. Not, perhaps, get better. Very sad."

I expressed suitable alarm and sorrow. Mei-lan seemed most gratified.

"You enjoyed Pei-ching, sir?" I nodded. "Am here to speed you on journey, most regretfully. Come soon, please. New Democratic People always glad to see you."

"Thank you . . . is this my train? There *are* a lot of soldiers."

"Dear me," she laughed. "Policemens. High important Vietnam' official travel, next door to you, she peered at my ticket. "Yes, special section of train." She chattered to a uniformed man who joined her, and, to me: "Must lock your compartment door; do not mind, sir?"

"I don't mind, Mei-lan, but may I not have some food?"

She thought this very funny, and told the audience about us, and they chuckled – there is not a lot to laugh at in China today.

"You will be hokay," she told me. "Compartment alone for you. Plenty warmth from pipes. Guard will open and close door for you when you ring bell," she put open fingers before her eyes in that charming native gesture of modesty, "or require to leave compartment."

And that's all there was to it, really. I travelled for mile after boring mile, ate and slept. I listened to the loud-speaker droning endlessly or Quiet Li's asthmatic coughing in the next carriage. He left the train at Hankow where many people met him and soldiers guarded him. My carriage was then unlocked for the rest of the

journey.

I had just set foot in the safety of Hongkong when I saw a boy selling the *China Mail*. It had scare-heads filled with tongue-in-cheek regrets; through strict censorship had trickled the news of Quiet Li's death in a Hankow hotel from asthma. Later editions told of repercussions in North Vietnam, divided leadership and, soon, open quarrelling with the Leader's guiding hand no longer there.

I went home without another local interview. My Department chief in London betrayed no more than proper interest in my report on Jevvons, and the fact he would not talk about classified material – more important than that were certain items in my modest expense account which seemed irregular.

Nothing was ever said, which is the Department's way. I wondered if anyone had discovered that cylinder Jevvons had given me which I threw, empty, out of the train window at night near Wuchang.

It had been Jevvons's carefully prepared weapon, a flask of pure oxygen – colourless, tasteless, odourless – bottled under pressure, and fitted with a tap and nozzle. Very simple to transmit from one place to another, such as through a communication 'cord' pipe into a neighbouring carriage.

Ordinary enough stuff, as harmless within reason as the air we breathe; that odour in London tube tunnels has a hint of it.

A little *cumshaw* in the right places – it can still be done in China – and Jevvons could have obtained his weapon, a weapon he had been able to pass on to a substitute executioner, naturally acting unofficially. Harmless enough pure oxygen is, but a murderous irritant without antidote to asthmatics.

It makes them cough and cough into eventual exhaustion, and death . . . neither doctor nor post-mortem can find the answer because the method is without clue – unique. One phrase I learned in Peking does seem apposite – 'ask not of the air; it has no banners'.

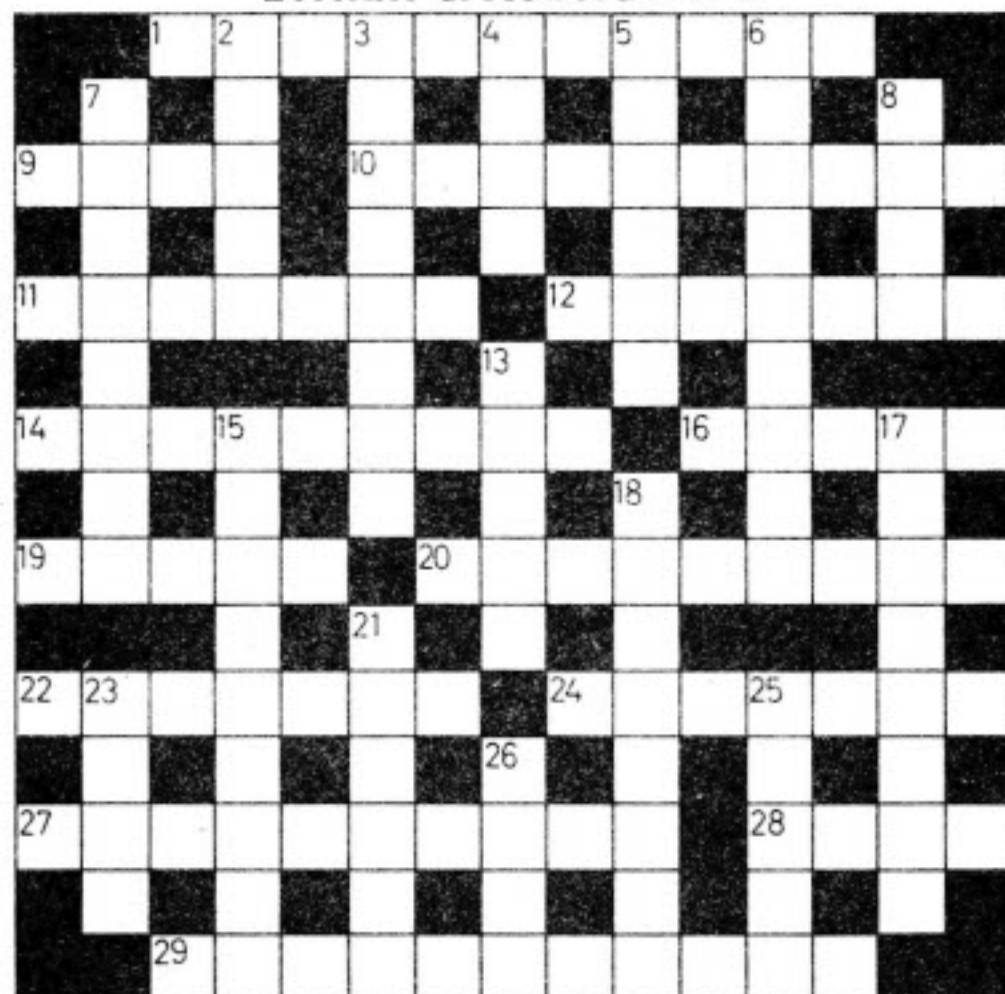
© Christopher Curtis, 1965.

EDGAR WALLACE EXHIBITION

A wholly unusual exhibition is to take place late in November for about ten days in London's West End.

Open to the public, the display will be devoted to exhibits concerning Edgar Wallace, his personal possessions in particular. There will be a great many photographs of him and his life, together with a collection of his works and papers, and many fascinating examples of Wallace-iana. EWMM will be the first to give you the inside details of this unique event in later issues.

EWMM Crossword No. 6



ACROSS

DOWN

- 1 Conceal a weapon in one's trousers? (6-5)
 9 Land unit in a creepy story (4)
 10 Cost of maintaining the suspense in an EW story? (6, 4)
 11 Cheat at the embassy, perhaps (7)
 12 So that cad Rees produced a book (3, 4)
 14 Forgery in the score? (5,4)
 16 Somewhat unbalanced, no doubt (5)
 19 Fuss about love! (5)
 20 People who produce electrifying results? (4, 5)
 22 Nice day takes a deadly turn (7)
 24 Police halts? (7)
 27 Dramatic outburst in court by Shylock? (5, 5)
 28 Uniform colour (4)
 29 Ordinary or extraordinary, they're representatives (11)

- 2 Haunt of a screened phantom (5)
 3 Where things may be getting really hot (8)
 4 To a schoolboy, it's a long stretch! (4)
 5 Such loopholes are certainly not popular (6)
 7 and 23 Where they have the measure of Mac the Knife? (8, 4)
 8 Festive occasion that sounds ominous (4)
 13 Satin could be material for a forensic chemist (5)
 15 Is such a man a weight-lifter? (6-3)
 17 Characters in *The Valley of Ghosts*? (8)
 18 Be a pal — at court? (8)
 21 Poem a fool turns up in the Ukraine (6)
 23 See '7'
 25 Wallace, of course, made the grade
 26 Boy's contribution to the microscope (4)

(Solution will appear in our August issue)

MICHAEL GILBERT

It Pays to Advertise

A gay and airy Petrella story (one of EWMM's occasional reprints) which shows that you can even get to the underworld by Underground

THE CURIOUS and involved transaction which is recorded in the annals of Gabriel Street under the title of Herring Jam may be traced to its beginning in the Court of Mr. Whitcomb, the South Borough Stipendiary Magistrate.

Detective Inspector Patrick Petrella, who was there on duty, was reminded of a remark once made to him by Sergeant Drage of the British Railways police, that the travelling public was divisible into three classes: people who travelled without tickets, people who stole goods in transit, and people who defaced posters.

In the dock when he arrived, he found an apple-cheeked old lady, accused of travelling from Wimbledon to Charing Cross with a threepenny ticket. Her defence, which she was conducting herself, was that she had asked for a ticket to the Kennington Oval, but the booking clerk had misheard her.

"But surely, madam," said Mr. Whitcomb, with the courtesy for which he was renowned, "it costs more than threepence to travel from Wimbledon to the Oval."

Certainly, agreed the old lady, but since the booking clerk was clearly stone deaf, what was more likely than that when *she* had said the Kennington Oval, *he* had thought she said Elephant and Castle?

"But did it not occur to you that the fare to the Oval must be more than threepence?"

The old lady rode this one off. She said that she always paid exactly what booking clerks asked for. In her experience, sometimes they asked for more, sometimes less. She never argued with them.

"And why," said Mr. Whitcomb, who believed in leaving no avenue unexplored, "if you had been given a ticket to Elephant and Castle in mistake for a ticket to the Oval, did you ultimately alight at Charing Cross?"

The old lady said she had mistaken it for Trafalgar Square.

It took some time to get this one sorted out – absolute discharge coupled with a severe warning – and Ronald Duckworth was called forward. Mr. Duckworth was charged with an act of wilful damage, committed on the premises of the London Passenger Transport Board, in that he, on the previous Tuesday, had attempted to tear down at Borough High Street Underground Station, a poster the property of Barleymow Breakfast Bricks Ltd., and advertising their wares.

Mr. Duckworth pleaded guilty; and an LPTB inspector stated that at about five minutes past eleven on the evening before last, one of the porters at Borough High Street Station, returning to the platform, had observed the accused, who had apparently thought he was alone, seize a loose corner of the advertisement in question and tear it sharply in an upward direction.

"Are you perhaps not fond of Barleymow Breakfast Bricks?" inquired Mr. Whitcomb, with every evidence of sympathy.

Mr. Duckworth said, "No, it wasn't that; it was just an impulse."

Mr. Whitcomb said that such impulses, though understandable ought to be resisted. He ordered Mr. Duckworth to pay the costs of the prosecution and bound him over conditionally upon his undertaking to leave all posters – however offensive the products they advertised – alone for the next twelve months.

★

Mr. Duckworth departed thankfully. The next case was Petrella's, and it was not one which he viewed with any enthusiasm at all.

The charge against Albert Mundy was one of receiving goods, well knowing them to be stolen. The facts were simple enough. Mr. Mundy, an electrician working in the Wandsborough Power Station, had purchased a television set from a man he had met in the saloon bar of a public house. They had had a few drinks, and the man had told him a long story of a mix-up which had resulted in his being in possession of two television sets. 'It's a brand new set,' he said. 'I've got it outside in the car now. I'd be glad to get rid of it for half what I gave for it.'

Mr. Mundy was not only an electrician. He knew quite a lot about television sets. It was, as he saw when he went to inspect it, a brand new set. The maker's and wholesaler's labels were still on it.

Even if, as Mr. Mundy half suspected, it contained some hidden defect, he was confident that he could put it right, and it was still a staggering bargain. He hurried home, produced the money from a reserve which he kept under a loose floorboard, and clinched the deal. The set proved to be in perfect condition. It also turned out to have been one of a consignment of twelve stolen in transit between Manchester and Crossways Goods Depot;

probably at the depot itself.

There was a good deal to be said on both sides. On the side of Mr. Mundy that he was an honest citizen with a hitherto unblemished record, and that he had no positive proof that this was a stolen set; on the side of the authorities that Mr. Mundy had himself admitted that he thought the deal a fishy one, and that people who buy television sets in ex-works condition for half the list price from strangers in public houses must take the consequences of their actions. There was a third powerful but unexpressed argument; that several million pounds' worth of goods were being lost every year by pilfering in transport.



It was a very close thing, and the sweat stood in beads on Mr. Mundy's forehead before the Magistrate finally decided to give weight to his previously blameless record and dismiss the case.

Petrella thought that substantial justice had been done. Mr. Mundy had been given a bad fright. To imprison him would have been bad luck on Mr. Mundy's family and would not have hurt the real criminals, those who stole and organised the stealing. For the losses were now so large and so regular that they had a look of organisation about them.

"We do what we can," said Sergeant Drage. "We can't watch the men at work. To do that properly you'd need one railway policeman for each worker. Anyway, most of them are honest enough. It's worst towards Christmas. More stuff about, and a lot of casual labour taken on for the season."

"If you can't watch them, how do you hope to stop them?"

"Keep your eyes and ears open. Make the places as difficult as we can to get in and out of, and organise snap searches when they come off duty."

"I see," said Petrella. "The old 'ring fence' system. You can't stop them taking things, but you make it difficult for them to get away with anything."

Superintendent Benjamin held monthly conferences at Causeway, which the detective inspectors in charge of stations attended. Petrella, from Gabriel Street, Groves from the Common, and Merriam from Tooley Street. In October, and again in November, the first item on his agenda, displacing even such established favourites as shoplifting and juvenile delinquency, was thefts from the railways.

"The insurance companies are starting to kick," said Benjamin. "They're bullying the Commissioner, the Commissioner's given a rocket to District, and the tail-end of the stick's landed on me."

"Isn't it really a job for the railway police?" asked Merriam.

"Surely," said Benjamin. "But once stuff's been stolen, it's our

job, too. If they can't stop them lifting it, we must stop them disposing of it. At least, that's the idea. We've got three big goods yards plumb in our area.

"What I suggest is . . ."

He went on to lay down certain principles for patrolling outside these depots. They were sound enough, in their way, but his subordinates knew as well as Benjamin did that it was like trying to watch an acre of rabbit warren with one man and a dog.



It was in the second week of November that Mr. Duckworth reappeared in Mr. Whitcomb's Court. The charge this time had rather more serious elements in it.

It appeared that the staff of Southwark Underground Station had been on the point of closing down for the night. The last passenger train had gone through, and the last passenger, as they imagined, had been shepherded out into the street.

Happening to come down to the platform for a final look round, a porter had heard a suspicious noise from inside the cupboard where cleaning materials were stored.

Being a man of discretion he had fetched the stationmaster and the ticket collector before investigating; the three of them had then returned to the platform. The cupboard door was open, and the accused, who must have been hiding in it, was engaged in tearing down a number of posters affixed that morning to the wall of the station.

Mr. Duckworth looked even more embarrassed, again pleaded guilty, and said that he had acted upon impulse.

"As I said on the previous occasion," observed Mr. Whitcomb, "it is understandable that a man might have a sudden, and perhaps overmastering, impulse to tear down a poster. But to secrete yourself in a cupboard after the station had been closed for the night, and then come out and start systematically to pull down posters hardly seems to me to be conduct which would be properly described as impulsive."

Mr. Duckworth said that he was very sorry.

Mr. Whitcomb, a copy of the record of the earlier case in front of him, pondered for a few minutes, and then announced that he was far from happy about the matter. He wished further inquiries to be made—the Court Missioner sighed audibly—and he would put back Mr. Duckworth's case for one week. He understood that he was a respectable family man. He could have bail on his own recognisances for seven days.

Petrella, who was in Court in connection with another matter, caught the Missioner at the door and said, "When you've finished with him, let me have a go at him."

"Have him first if you like," said the Missioner. "He's daft as a coot. His mother was probably frightened by a railway poster when she was a girl."

"I'm not sure," said Petrella. He had, by now, a fairly extensive knowledge of the cranks, crackpots, and fanatics who take up so much police time and afford entertaining copy for the court reporters of the leading evening newspapers; but he was far from convinced that Mr. Duckworth was one of them.

So he took him out and bought him a cup of tea, and listened with infinite patience to the story of his life. Mr. Duckworth was an interior decorator, and an amateur soldier of the late war, during which he had served with credit in an artillery regiment, rising to the rank of sergeant. He had a wife and three children, whose photographs Petrella inspected. He was a supporter of Charlton Athletic and a keen darts player. And, he added pugnaciously, there was nothing at all wrong with his eyes.

Petrella felt that they might be approaching the heart of the mystery. He ordered a second cup of tea for both of them.

"Nothing wrong with my eyes at all," said Mr. Duckworth.

"Who suggested there was?" asked Petrella.

"No one actually suggested it," said Mr. Duckworth crossly. "It was just that – look here, if I tell you this story, will you promise not to laugh at me?"

"I never laugh on duty," said Petrella.

"No, I mean that. It's – it's quite mad. It's – it's sort of – fourth dimensional. You know what I mean."

"Science fiction," suggested Petrella helpfully.

"That's right, that's just what I mean. You walk out of one life into another. That's why I'd rather people thought I was a crook than they thought I was cracked, if you follow me."

"Lots of people think like that," said Petrella. "Just tell me about it."



It was, in its elements, quite a simple story. Mr. Duckworth had been at a reunion at the Regimental Headquarters in North London, a function he attended annually and which was, as he put it, "the one time in the year I really let my hair down." Being an old soldier, before plunging into the fray, he had carefully secured his line of retreat. The nearest station was Archway on the Northern Line. His home station was Colliers Wood, at the southern end of the same line. The last train left Archway at four minutes before midnight.

With these essential facts firmly engraved on his memory, Mr. Duckworth had settled down to enjoy himself in congenial company, had drunk quite a few pints of beer and a couple – but, he

thought, not more than a couple of whiskies, and had caught his train with some minutes to spare. As soon as the train started, he had gone to sleep.

An unknown number of minutes later he had woken with a start, with the strong conviction that he had reached his own station, and was about to be carried past it. The train, sure enough, was stationary, and the doors open. There was not a moment to lose. Fortunately he was sitting in a seat near to and facing the doors, and as they closed he had hurled himself between them. Behind him, the doors shut and the train jerked into motion and disappeared. A solitary porter in the far distance disappeared also, leaving Mr. Duckworth, still dazed from the joint effects of sleep and violent exertion, alone on the platform.

His overmastering desire was to sit down somewhere for a few minutes to recuperate. Behind him, at the very far end of the platform, was a recess which had possibly once contained a seat. It seemed to Mr. Duckworth to be exactly what he wanted. He got his back comfortably against one end, his feet again the other, and settled down to a period of reflection.



When he opened his eyes, he was in darkness. A sort of dim blue darkness, broken by one very bright light.

His head, he said, was comparatively clear. He had found that before. However much beer he drank, give him half an hour's sleep, and he'd be more or less all right.

Petrella interrupted to say, "How long do you think you had been asleep?"

Difficult to say, said Mr. Duckworth, but not, he thought, more than half an hour. He had then staggered to his feet, and had seen that the bright light ahead of him was a small floodlight at platform level. It was so placed that it lit up the platform side of the station which, he was clear-headed enough to note, was not one of the modern type, all gleaming tiles and cement, but an old-fashioned one with upright wooden hoarding. The light, as he observed when he drew level with it, was shining directly on one of these hoardings. Almost as if it had been placed there purposely to illuminate it; the effect being emphasised by the fact that the hoardings on either side of it were blank.

"I take it," said Petrella, "you'd realised by this time you weren't at Colliers Wood?"

"Oh yes. I realised I'd jumped off the train too soon and should have a long walk home. I wasn't worried about being locked in the station. If there were lights on, there must be people still working. The next bit is something I can't remember very clearly at all. I thought I heard a noise behind me—a sort of scraping noise, and

then the ceiling fell on me. Or that's what it felt like. Something very hard and heavy landed on top of my head and, before I had time to feel anything else, I was falling forward and – next thing I knew, I was opening my eyes. It was five o'clock of a perishing grey morning, and I was on a seat, just off the road, in the middle of South Borough Common."

He waited, defiantly, for comment.

Petrella said, "You might have dreamt it all, of course. Someone might have given you a lift back from the reunion and tried to find out where you lived; you were too pickled to give him your address, so he propped you up on the seat to cool off. Not very friendly, but it could have happened."

"All right," said Mr. Duckworth. "Then how do you account for the fact that I'd still got my ticket with me? I found it in my waistcoat pocket."

"Then," agreed Petrella, "it might have happened just as you said. You butted in on something you weren't meant to see, and got slugged, and dumped."

"I thought that out for myself," said Mr. Duckworth. "Only not quite as quickly, because I had a nasty lump on the back of my head – that wasn't imaginary. It was sore as hell – and the father and mother of a hangover – and I had my wife to deal with. She'd got into a real state and gone to the police, and then when I turned up –"

"I can imagine that bit," said Petrella.

"Yes, well, I thought about it, and I had the same idea as you. I thought I'd start by finding what station it was."

"That shouldn't have been too difficult," said Petrella. "Most of the stations on that bit of line have been modernised and, besides, you saw at least one of the advertisements. The one the light was shining on."

"That's just it," said Mr. Duckworth.

"*Didn't* you see it?"

"Yes, I did. And I wish I hadn't. It's been getting me down. Here's where you've got not to laugh. What I saw, and I saw it quite clearly, and if I shut my eyes I can see it now, was three lines of writing, with one word in each line. It said: GET HERRING JAM."

Petrella stared at him.

"Be honest," said Mr. Duckworth. "Isn't that where you start thinking I've got a screw loose? If you do, you're not the only one. I began to think so myself."

Petrella said, "You say you can visualise it clearly. What sort of print was it, and how was it arranged?"

"Ordinary capital letters. On the large side, but not enormous. The GET was on the top and a bit to the left. The middle line was

HERRING – that ran right across. The JAM was on the bottom line – a bit to the right."

"I see," said Petrella. "I suppose there isn't some other advertisement rather like –"

"I've been up and down every perishing station between Waterloo and Balham, and there's nothing like it at all. Most of 'em are pictures of girls. There's some in writing, like notices telling you to buy Premium Bonds and drink somebody or other's stout."

"But no herrings?"

"Not a fish among 'em. That's how I got the idea that it was an advertisement that had been covered up with another one. They change 'em about once a week. So –"

Light dawned on Petrella.

"So you started pulling off the new ones to see what the old ones were."

"It'd sort of got me by that time," said Mr. Duckworth. "I can't explain it. But what I felt was, if I can find that advert, then perhaps I can find out what happened to me that night – if I can't, well, I'm mad. I expect you think I'm mad, anyway."

"No," said Petrella slowly. "I don't think you're mad."

He said the same thing to Mr. Wetherall that evening.



Mr. Wetherall was headmaster of the South Borough Secondary School, and when Petrella had fallen out with two landladies in succession – in both cases over the peculiar hours he kept and his excessive use of the telephone – he had suggested to Petrella that he set up house in the two empty rooms below his own in the big house in Brinkman Road. It was a bit far from Gabriel Street, but otherwise it suited Petrella perfectly.

It had been great fun furnishing the rooms, and he enjoyed an occasional after-dinner gossip with Mr. Wetherall.

"I don't think I'd have started trespassing and pulling down advertisements," said Mr. Wetherall. "I'd have gone to one of the big agents who does advertising on the Underground, and asked him what advertisements had been showing that week."

"*You* might have," said Petrella, "and so might I. And the agent might have told us. But not someone like Mr. Duckworth."

"Have you located the station?"

"I've had a shot at it. The trouble is, that going from Archway to Colliers Wood, Mr. Duckworth could have gone one of two ways. Via Charing Cross – that's the West End route. Or via Bank. All the stations on the West End route are modern tile-and-chromium jobs. But one or two of the stations on the Bank route would fit. Southwark and Borough High Street are both possibles."

"Since you've done some work on it, I take it you don't think

he made the whole thing up?"

"No, I don't," said Petrella. "But I'm darned if I could explain why."

Mr. Wetherall puffed his horrible pipe for a few seconds and then said, "No, you can't, can you? I mean, you can't tell how you know when people are telling the truth, but it's a fact that you can. I've found that often with boys."

He reflected again, and said, "I think you'd better have a word with my friend, Raynor-Hasset. He'll tell you all you want to know about the London railway system. He used to be a schoolmaster, but he's retired now. He lives in one of those little houses on the Heath. I'll let him know you're coming."



Petrella knew that Mr. Wetherall seldom made recommendations idly. So the following evening he called on Mr. Raynor-Hasset. Mr. Wetherall's friend had a corvine face and a slight stoop as if much of his life had been spent in exploring places with low roofs.

"I don't imagine," he said, when they had settled down in front of the fire, "that you have ever heard of the Spurs?"

"The Spurs?"

"Not the football team," said Mr. Raynor-Hasset, with a thin smile. "The Society for the Preservation of Unused Railwaylines. I have the honour to be their secretary."

"I'm afraid not," said Petrella. "What do you do?"

"Just as spelæologists explore the recesses and convolutions of our caves, we delight in tracking down the railway lines which run under this great city. It is a curious fact, but once a railway line has been constructed, it may be covered over, but it is hardly ever filled in again."

"I suppose not."

"Most people imagine, when they think about it, that our main railway lines stop well short of the centre of London. The northern ones at Euston, King's Cross, and St. Pancras. The southern ones at Waterloo and Victoria. It is far from true, of course. I could name you half a dozen ways of crossing London from north to south by steam train. I conducted a special trip along the Blackfriars-Holborn-Kentish Town line myself last year. And did you know that there was an old, but still usable railway line, part of the original Charing Cross-Bayswater switch, that runs within a hundred yards of the Eros statue in Piccadilly? The entrance to it is through a shop. . . ."

Petrella listened, entranced, as Mr. Raynor-Hasset described and expounded to him that curious system of disused passages and tunnels, of unsuspected tracks, forgotten stairways, and phantom stations, akin to the traces in the human system of some dread but

dead disease, which the private enterprise of our railway pioneers had left under the surface of London.

During an interval, while his host brewed cocoa for them, he explained the idea which had come into his head.

Mr. Raynor-Hasset cleared the table and spread on it a map of large scale. "It's quite a feasible idea," he said.

"I think the Crossways Goods Yard would be the one to start with. You have had losses from there? Serious losses.

"You'll note that although it is now linked to London Bridge by part of the ordinary southern system, its previous history is far from simple. It began life as a private depot for goods coming up the river to St. Saviour's Docks – a horsedrawn tramway connected it to Dockhead, or you could get at it under the river by the old subway – it's disused now – that came out at Stanton's Wharf. Plenty of possibilities there.

"As for the Underground stations" – Mr. Raynor-Hasset shook his head – "if people had any idea what lay behind those shiny, well-lit platforms, they'd be surprised."

He consulted his chart again. "If I had to make a guess I'd say that the connection lies between Crossways and Southwark. And I'll tell you why. Southwark Underground must be within a very short distance of the connecting line which the old Brighton and South Coast – who shared London Bridge with the South-eastern and Chatham – ran across to Waterloo. It was never a great success, as passengers found it just as easy to go straight through from London Bridge, and it was closed to traffic in the eighties. You can see it marked here."

Petrella followed the spidery lines on the map and found his excitement kindling.

"I really believe that you must be right."

"No need to rely on guesswork. Why don't we go and see?"

Petrella looked at him.

"With your official standing," said Mr. Raynor-Hasset, "and my experience, I should anticipate no difficulty. I take it you can square it with the authorities?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Then I suggest to-morrow night. We will meet at – shall we say, eleven o'clock at Bermondsey South? The old station, on the north side of the Rotherhithe New Road. Dress in your oldest clothes."



At a few minutes after eleven the next night, Petrella was following Mr. Raynor-Hasset down a flight of wooden steps. At the bottom of the steps a man was waiting for them.

"I've opened her up," he said. "Had to use a pint of oil. Must

be five years since anyone went through there."

"Almost exactly five years," said Mr. Raynor-Hasset. "I took a party along there myself. Thank you very much, Sam." Some coins changed hands. "You lock up behind. We'll probably be coming out at Waterloo."

"I'll give 'em a ring," said Sam. The door opened into what looked, at first sight, like a brick wall, but which was in fact the bricked-up entrance to a railway tunnel. It shut behind them with a solid thud, cutting off light, air, and sound.

"I should have asked you before we started," said Mr. Raynor-Hasset, "whether you suffered at all from claustrophobia."

"I don't think so," said Petrella. "I've never really had a chance of finding out."

"One man I took with me was so severely overcome that he fell flat on his face, and when I endeavoured to comfort him he bit me in the left leg. Straight ahead now."

It was quite easy going. The rails had gone, and the old permanent way had become covered, in the course of time, by a thin deposit of dried earth mixed with soot from the tunnel roof. The only discomfort was the dust they kicked up as they walked.

"Ventilation is sometimes a problem," said Mr. Raynor-Hasset. "It was originally quite adequate but one or two of the shafts have become blocked with the passage of time. In a really old tunnel I have used a safety lamp, but we should be all right here." He paused to consult the map, and a pedometer which was strapped on to his boot. "There's an air shaft somewhere here. Yes. You can catch a glimpse of the sky."

Petrella looked up a narrow opening and was pleased to see the stars winking back at him. The torchlight shone on something white. It was a tiny heap of bones.

"A dog, I should imagine," said Mr. Raynor-Hasset. "On we go. We've much ground to cover."

They went on in silence. Petrella soon lost count of time and distance. His guide used his torch sparingly and as they paced forward into the blackness, Petrella began to feel the oppression of the entombed, a consciousness of the weight of earth above him. The air grew thicker, and was there – or was it his imagination – an increasing difficulty in breathing?

"We must," he said, his voice coming out in a startling croak, "we must be nearly the other side of London by now."

Mr. Raynor-Hasset halted, clicked on his torch, and said "One mile and nearly one furlong. By my calculations we are just passing under Bricklayers Arms Depot. We go past the north-east corner, and then we should swing through nearly a quarter turn to the right. Yes, here we are. We had better keep an eye open for possible entrances on our left."

He kept his torch alight for two hundred yards, but the brick walls remained unbroken. Ahead of them pink beads winked and flashed in the light, retreating before them.

"Rats," said Mr. Raynor-Hasset, "but a timid bunch. I carry a few Guy Fawkes squibs to throw at them, but I've never had to use them."



They paced on in silence.

Petrella, who was gradually becoming acclimatised, calculated that they had gone forward another mile when Mr. Raynor-Hasset spoke again. "Can you feel," he said, "a slight dampness?"

"It's less dusty, certainly."

"There's a water seepage here. Nothing serious. Some defect in drainage. We must be almost under the old Leather-market."

Petrella tried to visualise the geography of that part of London.

"In that case," he said, "we shouldn't be far from Crossways."

"About two hundred yards."

The torch came on. Ahead of them the surface shone, black and slimy. The smell was unspeakable. Even Mr. Raynor-Hasset noticed it. "Quite fresh, isn't it?" he said. "We'll keep the torch on now for a bit."

When they came to it, the side entrance was easy to see. It sloped upwards, gently, to the right. Mr. Raynor-Hasset took a compass bearing, and marked his map.

"I should think there's no doubt at all," he said. "That's an old loading track, and it goes straight to Crossways Depot. You'll probably find it comes out in a loading pit. Do you wish to follow it?"

But Petrella's eyes were on the ground. "Could you point your torch here a moment," he said. "Look. *That's* not five years old." It was a new-looking cigarette carton.

"No, indeed," said Mr. Raynor-Hasset. "And those, I think, are footprints. How very interesting."

Clearly to be seen in the mud, a beaten track of men's boot-prints led from the mouth of the shaft onwards up the tunnel.

"Keep your torch on them," said Petrella. "This is going to save me a lot of trouble."

"It looks as if an army has passed this way." An army of soldiers, thought Petrella. An army bearing burdens.

Four hundred yards, and the line of footprints turned into a track branching down to the left.

Mr. Raynor-Hasset again checked his position, and said, "Southwark Underground Station, or I'm a Dutchman."

They went sharply down for a short distance, then the track levelled out, ran along, and climbed again, finally emerging into a circular ante-chamber. Above their heads an iron staircase

spiralled upwards into the gloom.

"Southwark," said Mr. Raynor-Hasset, "was one of those stations which was developed forward. I mean that when they redesigned it, they put in a moving staircase at the far end with the lifts, and closed the old emergency stair shaft altogether. That is what we have come out into."

But Petrella was not listening to him.

The light of the torch had shown, strewn round the foot of the staircase, an astonishing jumble of cartons, crates, boxes, sacks, paper wrappings, and containers of every shape and size.

"This is where they unpack the stuff," he said. "I wonder where they store it. Can we get out on to the platform?"

"Certainly. I think this must be the way." There was a door in the boarding ahead of them, secured by three stout bolts.

"What time is it?"

"Just after two o'clock."

"Should be all right," said Petrella. He slid the bolts and swung the door open. They stepped through, and found themselves on the platform of Southwark Underground Station, lit only by the ghostly blue lamps which shine all night to guide the maintenance trolleys.

"What are we looking for?" said Mr. Raynor-Hasset.

"There must, I rather think, be a further storage space. Have you got a knife? It would be about here, I'd guess. Hold the torch steady a moment.

Petrella slid the blade between the boards, choosing the place with precision. He felt a latch lifting, and levered with the knife blade. A section of boarding hinged out towards them.

"Good gracious," said Mr. Raynor-Hasset mildly. The deep recess contained, stacked on shelves and floor, an astonishing assortment of goods. There were piled cartons of cigarettes, wooden boxes with the stamp of a well-known whisky firm, portable typewriters, wireless and television sets, bales of textiles, a pair of sporting rifles, boxes of shoes, cases of tinned food.

"A producer-to-consumer service," said Petrella grimly. His mind was busy constructing exactly the sort of police trap that would be necessary. Two cars in the street above, to catch the people when they came to collect. Men in the tunnel itself, beyond the opening, to seal the far end. A very cautious reconnaissance to find out how the Crossways end worked.

He was standing on the platform, thinking about all this, when suddenly he started to laugh. Mr. Raynor-Hasset edged perceptibly away from him.

"It's quite all right," said Petrella. "I'm not going to start biting you in the leg. Hold the torch on that wall. Now watch, while I open and shut those two doors."

Mr. Raynor-Hasset did so, and then himself gave a dry cackle. "Very ingenious," he said.

Two advertisements stood next to each other on the hoarding. The left-hand one read:

THIS YEAR'S TARGET
BUY YOURSELF ANOTHER
PREMIUM BOND

and the one on the right of it:

RING PARK 0906

JAMES BONE & SONS

Everything for your car

When both doors were opened, this had the effect of neatly cutting away all but the right-hand few letters of the advertisement on the left and the left-hand letters of the one on the right.

"I couldn't help thinking," said Petrella, "that we have, at least, set Mr. Duckworth's mind at rest."

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period piece

THE SCARLET CLOAK

WILHELM HAUFF

German-born Wilhelm Hauff died at 25 in 1827, a genius who never reached writing maturity. This murder story is memorable in its crime, punishment and answered questions which, somehow remain unanswered

I WAS born in Constantinople, my name being Zaleukos; my father was a dragoman at the Porte, and besides, carried on a fairly lucrative business in perfumes and silk goods. He gave me a good education; he partly instructed me himself, and also had me instructed by one of our priests. At first he intended me to succeed him in business one day, but as I showed greater aptitude than he had expected, he destined me, on the advice of his friends, to be a doctor; for if a doctor has learned a little more than the ordinary charlatan, he can make his fortune in Constantinople.

Many Franks frequented our house, and one of them persuaded my father to allow me to travel to his native land to the city of Paris, where such things could be best acquired and free of charge. He wished, however, to take me with him himself gratuitously on his journey home. My father, who had also travelled in his youth, agreed, and the Frank told me to hold myself in readiness three months hence. I was beside myself with joy at the idea of seeing foreign countries, and eagerly awaited the moment when we should embark. The Frank had at last concluded his business and prepared himself for the journey.

On the evening before our departure my father led me into his little bedroom. There I saw splendid dresses and arms lying on the table. My looks were, however, chiefly attracted to a heap of gold, for I had never before seen so much collected together.

He embraced me and said, "Behold, my son, I have procured for thee clothes for the journey. These weapons are thine; they are the same which thy grandfather hung round me when I went abroad. I know that thou canst use them right; but only make use of them when thou art attacked; on such occasions, however, defend thyself bravely. My property is not large; behold I have divided it into three parts, one part for thee, another for my support and spare money, but the third is to me a sacred and untouched property, it is for thee in the hour of need." Thus spoke my old father, tears in his eyes, perhaps from some foreboding, for I never saw him again.



The journey passed off very well. We had soon reached the land of the Franks, and six days later we arrived in Paris. There my Frankish friend hired a room for me, and advised me to spend my money wisely. I lived three years in this city, and learned what is necessary for a skilful doctor to know. I should not, however be stating the truth if I said that I liked being there, for the customs of this nation displeased me; besides, I had only a few chosen friends there, and these were noble young men.

The longing after home at last possessed me mightily; during the whole of that time I had not heard anything from my father, and I therefore seized a favourable opportunity of reaching home. An embassy from France left for Turkey. I acted as surgeon to the suite of the Ambassador and arrived happily in Stamboul. My father's house was locked, and the neighbours, who were surprised on seeing me, told me my father had died two months ago. The priest who had instructed me in my youth brought me the key; alone and desolate I entered the empty house. All was still in the same position as my father had left it, only the gold watch which I was to inherit was gone.

I questioned the priest about it, and he, bowing, said, "Your father died a saint, for he has bequeathed his gold to the Church." This was and remained inexplicable to me. However, what could I do? I had no witness against the priest, and had to be glad that he had not considered the house and the goods of my father as a bequest. This was the first misfortune that I encountered. Henceforth nothing but ill-luck attended me. My reputation as doctor would not spread at all, because I was ashamed to act the charlatan; and I felt everywhere the want of the recommendation of my father, who would have introduced me to the

richest and most distinguished. The goods of my father also had no sale, for his customers came no more after his death, and new ones are only to be got slowly.



I was one day meditating sadly over my position, when it occurred to me that I had often seen in France men of my nation travelling through the country exhibiting their goods in the markets of the towns. I remembered that the people like to buy of them, because they came from abroad, and that such business would be most lucrative. Immediately I resolved what to do. I disposed of my father's house, gave part of the money to a trusty friend to keep for me, and with the rest I bought what are very rare in France, shawls, silk goods, ointments and oils, took a berth on board a ship, and thus entered upon my second journey to the land of the Franks.

It seemed as if fortune had favoured me again as soon as I had turned my back upon the Castles of the Dardanelles. Our journey was short and successful. I travelled through the large and small towns of the Franks, and found everywhere willing buyers of my goods. My friend in Stamboul always sent me fresh stores, and my wealth increased. When I had saved at last so much that I thought I might venture on a greater undertaking, I travelled with my goods to Italy. I must, however, confess to something, which brought me not a little money: I also employed my knowledge of physic. On reaching a town, I had it published that a Greek physician had arrived, who had already healed many; and in fact my balsam and medicine gained me many a sequin. Thus I had at length reached the city of Florence in Italy.

I resolved upon remaining in this town for some time, partly because I liked it so well, partly also because I wished to recruit myself from the exertions of my travels. I hired a vaulted shop, and not far from this a couple of nice rooms at an inn, leading out upon a balcony. I immediately had my bills circulated, which announced me to be both physician and merchant. Scarcely had I opened my shop when I was besieged by buyers, and in spite of my high prices I sold more than anyone else, because I was obliging and friendly towards my customers. Thus I had already lived four days happily in Florence, when one evening, as I was about to close my shop and on examining once more the contents of my ointment boxes, as I was in the habit of doing, I found in one of the small boxes a piece of paper, which I did not remember to have put into it.

I unfolded the paper, and found in it an invitation to be on the Ponte Vecchio Bridge that night exactly at midnight. I was thinking for a long time as to who it might be who had invited me there; and not knowing a single soul in Florence, I thought

perhaps I should be secretly conducted to a patient, a thing which had already often occurred. I therefore determined to proceed thither, but took care to gird on the sword which my father had once presented to me.

When it was close upon midnight I set out on my journey. I found the bridge deserted, and determined to await the appearance of him who called me. It was a cold night; the moon shone brightly, and I looked down upon the Arno, which sparkled in the moonlight. It was now striking twelve o'clock from all the churches of the city; I looked up and saw a tall man standing before me completely covered in a scarlet cloak, one end of which hid his face.

At first I was somewhat frightened, because he had made his appearance so suddenly; but was, however, myself again shortly afterwards, and said, "If it is you who have ordered me here, say what you want". The man dressed in scarlet turned round and said in an undertone, "Follow!"

At this, however, I felt a little timid to go alone with this stranger. I stood still and said, "Not so, sir; kindly first tell me where; you might also let me see your countenance a little, in order to convince me that you wish me no harm". The red one, however, did not seem to pay any attention to this.

"If thou art unwilling, Zaleukos, remain," he replied, and continued his way.

I grew angry. "Do you think," I exclaimed, "a man like myself allows himself to be made a fool of, and to have waited on this cold bridge for nothing?"

In three steps I had reached him, seized him by his cloak, and cried still louder, whilst laying hold of my sabre with my other hand. His cloak, however, remained in my hand, and the stranger had disappeared round the nearest corner. I became calmer by degrees. I had the cloak at any rate, and it was this which would give me the key to this remarkable adventure. I put it on and continued my way home. When I was at a distance of about a hundred paces from it, someone brushed very closely by me and whispered in the language of the Franks, "Take care, Count, nothing can be done to-night". Before I had time, however, to turn round, this somebody had passed, and I merely saw a shadow hovering along the houses. I perceived that these words did not concern me, but rather the cloak, yet it gave me no explanation concerning the affair.



On the following morning I considered what was to be done. At first I had intended to have the cloak cried in the streets, as if I had found it. But then the stranger might send for it by a

third person, and no light would be thrown upon the matter. While I was thus thinking, I examined the cloak more closely. It was made of thick Genoese velvet, scarlet in colour, edged with astrakhan fur and richly embroidered with gold. The magnificent appearance of the cloak put an idea into my mind.

I carried the cloak into my shop and exposed it for sale, but placed such a high price upon it that I was sure nobody would buy it. My object in this was to scrutinise everybody who might ask for the cloak; for the figure of the stranger, which I had seen but superficially though with some certainty, after the loss of the cloak, I should recognise amongst a thousand. There were many would-be purchasers for the cloak, the extraordinary beauty of which attracted everybody; but none resembled the stranger in the slightest degree, and nobody was willing to pay such a high price as two hundred sequins for it. What astonished me was that on asking everybody if there was not such a cloak in Florence, they all assured me they never had seen so precious and tasteful a piece of work.

Evening was drawing near when at last a young man appeared, who had already been to my place, and who had also offered me a great deal for the cloak. He threw a purse of sequins upon the table, and exclaimed, "Of a truth, *Zaleukos*, I must have thy cloak, should I turn into a beggar over it!"

I was in a dangerous position; I had only exposed the cloak, in order merely to attract the attention of my stranger, and now a young fool came to pay an immense price for it. I had to yield; on the other hand I was delighted at the idea of being so handsomely recompensed for my adventure.

The young man put the cloak around him and went away, but on reaching the threshold he returned; unfastening a piece of paper which had been tied to the cloak, and throwing it towards me, he exclaimed, "Here, *Zaleukos*, hangs something which I dare say does not belong to the cloak". I picked up the piece of paper carelessly; on it these words were written: 'Bring the cloak at the appointed hour to the *Ponte Vecchio*, four hundred sequins are thine'. I stood thunderstruck. Thus I had lost my fortune and completely missed my aim. Yet I did not think long. I picked up the two hundred sequins, ran after the one who had bought the cloak, and said, "Dear friend, take back your sequins, and give me the cloak; I cannot possibly part with it". He first regarded the matter as a joke; but when he saw that I was in earnest, he became angry at my demand, called me a fool, and finally it came to blows.

However, I was fortunate enough to wrench the cloak from him in the scuffle, and was about to run away with it, when the young man called the police to his assistance, and we both appeared

before the judge. The latter was much surprised at the accusation, and adjudicated the cloak in favour of my adversary. I offered the young man twenty, fifty, eighty, even a hundred sequins in addition to his two hundred, if he would part with the cloak. What my entreaties could not do, my gold did. He accepted it. I went away with the cloak triumphantly, and had to appear to the whole town of Florence as a madman. I did not care, however, about the opinion of the people; I knew better than they that I had profited by the bargain.



Impatiently I awaited the night. At the same hour as before I went with the cloak under my arm towards the Ponte Vecchio. With the last stroke of twelve the figure appeared out of the darkness and came towards me. It was unmistakably the man whom I had seen yesterday.

"Hast thou the cloak?" he asked me.

"Yes, sir," I replied, "but it cost me a hundred sequins ready money."

"I know it; here are four hundred." He went with me towards the wide balustrade of the bridge, and counted out the money. I put it into my pocket, and was desirous of thoroughly looking at my kind and unknown stranger; but he wore a mask, through which dark eyes stared at me.

"I thank you, sir, for your kindness," I said to him; "what else do you require of me? I tell you beforehand it must be an honourable transaction."

"There is no occasion for alarm," he replied, winding the cloak around his shoulders; "I require your assistance as surgeon, not for one alive, but dead."

"What do you mean?" I exclaimed, full of surprise.

"I arrived with my sister from abroad," he said, and beckoned me at the same time to follow him. "I lived with her at the house of a friend. My sister died yesterday suddenly, and my relatives wish to bury her to-morrow. According to an old custom of our family all are to be buried in the tomb of our ancestors; many, notwithstanding, who died in foreign countries are buried there and embalmed. I do not grudge my relatives her body, but for my father I want at least the head of his daughter, in order that he may see her once more."

This custom of severing the heads of relatives appeared to me somewhat awful, yet I did not dare to object to it lest I should offend the stranger. I told him that I was acquainted with the embalming of the dead, and begged him to conduct me to the deceased. Yet I could not help asking him why all this must be done so mysteriously and at night. He answered me that his rela-

tives, who considered his intention horrible, objected to it by daylight. If only the head were severed, then they could say no more about it; although he might have brought me the head, yet a natural feeling had prevented him from severing it himself.

In the meantime we had reached a large, splendid house. My companion pointed it out to me as the end of our walk. We passed the principal entrance of the house, entered a little door, which the stranger carefully locked behind him, and then ascended in the dark a narrow spiral staircase. It led towards a dimly lighted passage, out of which we entered a room lighted by a lamp fastened to the ceiling.

In this room was a bed, on which a corpse lay. The stranger turned aside his face, evidently endeavouring to hide his tears. He pointed towards the bed, telling me to do my business well and quickly, and left the room.

I took my instruments, which I as surgeon always carried about with me, and approached the bed. Only the head of the corpse was visible, and it was so beautiful that I experienced involuntarily the deepest sympathy. Dark hair hung down in long plaits, the features were pale, the eyes closed. At first I made an incision into the skin, after the manner of surgeons when amputating a limb. I then took my sharpest knife, and with one stroke cut the throat.

The dead girl opened her eyes, but immediately closed them again, and with a deep sigh now seemed to breathe her last. A stream of blood shot towards me from the wound. I was convinced that the poor creature had been killed by me. That she was dead there was no doubt, for there was no recovery from this wound. I stood for some minutes in painful anguish at what had happened. Had the 'red-cloak' deceived me, or had his sister perhaps merely been apparently dead? The latter seemed to me more likely. But I dare not tell the brother of the deceased that perhaps a little less deliberate cut might have awakened her without killing her; therefore I wished to sever the head completely.



Fright overpowered me, and, shuddering, I hastened from the room. But outside in the passage it was dark. The light was out; no trace of my companion was to be seen, and I was obliged to feel my way in the dark along the wall, in order to reach the staircase. I discovered it at last and descended, partly falling and partly gliding. But there was not a soul downstairs. I merely found the door ajar, and breathed freer on reaching the street. Urged on by terror, I rushed towards my dwelling-place, and buried myself in the cushions of my bed, in order to forget the terrible thing that I

had done.

But sleep deserted me, and only the morning admonished me again to take courage. It seemed to me probable that the man who had induced me to commit this nefarious deed, as it now appeared to me, might not denounce me. I immediately resolved to set to work in my vaulted room, and if possible to assume an indifferent look. But an additional circumstance, which only now noticed, increased my anxiety still more. My cap and my girdle, as well as my instruments, were wanting. I was uncertain as to whether I had left them in the room of the murdered girl, or whether I had lost them in my flight. The former seemed indeed the more likely, and thus I could easily be discovered as the murderer.

At the accustomed hour I opened my shop. My neighbour came in, as was his wont every morning, for he was a talkative man.

"Well," he said, "what do you say about the terrible affair which has occurred during the night?" I pretended not to know anything. "What, do you not know what is known all over the town? Are you not aware that the loveliest flower in Florence—Bianca, the Governor's daughter—was murdered last night? I saw her only yesterday driving through the streets in so cheerful a manner with her intended one, for to-day the marriage was to have taken place." I felt deeply shocked at each word of my neighbour. Many a time my torment was renewed, for every one of my customers told me of the affair, each one more ghastly than the other, and yet nobody could relate anything more terrible than that which I had seen myself.

About mid-day a police officer entered my shop and requested me to send the people away. "Signor Zaleukos," he said, producing the things which I had missed, "do these things belong to you?" I was thinking as to whether I should not entirely repudiate them, but on seeing through the door, which stood ajar, my landlord and several acquaintances, I determined not to aggravate the affair by telling a lie, and acknowledged myself as the owner of the things. The police officer asked me to follow him, and led me towards a large building which I soon recognised as the prison. There he showed me into a room, and left me.

My situation was terrible, as I thought of it in my solitude. The idea of having committed a murder, unintentionally, constantly presented itself to my mind. I also could not conceal from myself that the glitter of the gold had captivated my feelings, otherwise I should not have fallen blindly into the trap. Two hours after my arrest I was led several steps until I reached a great hall. Around a long table draped in black were seated twelve men, mostly old men. There were benches along the sides of the hall, filled with the most distinguished of Florence. The galleries, which were above, were crowded with spectators.

When I had stepped towards the table covered with black cloth, a man with a gloomy and sad countenance rose; it was the Governor. He said to the assembly that he as the father in this affair could not sentence, and that he resigned his place on this occasion to the eldest of the Senators. The eldest of the Senators was an old man at least ninety years of age. He stood in a bent attitude, and his temples were covered with thin white hair, but his eyes were as yet very fiery, and his voice powerful and weighty. He commenced by asking me whether I confessed to the murder. I requested him to allow me to speak, and related undauntingly and with a clear voice what I had done, and what I knew.

I noticed that the Governor, during my recital, at one time turned pale, and at another time red. When I had finished, he rose angrily: "What, wretch!" he exclaimed, "dost thou even dare to impute a crime which thou has committed from greediness to another?" The Senator reprimanded him for his interruption, since he had voluntarily renounced his right; besides it was not clear that I did the deed from greediness, for, according to his own statement, nothing had been stolen from the victim. He even went further. He told the Governor that he must give an account of the early life of his daughter, for only then it would be possible to decide whether I had spoken the truth or not. At the same time he adjourned the court for the day, in order, as he said, to consult the papers of the deceased, which the Governor would give him. I was again taken back to my prison, where I spent a wretched day, always fervently wishing that a link between the deceased and the 'red-cloak' might be discovered.



Full of hope, I entered the Court of Justice the next day. Several letters were lying upon the table. The old Senator asked me whether they were in my handwriting. I looked at them and noticed that they must have been written by the same hand as the other two papers which I had received. I communicated this to the Senators, but no attention was paid to it, and they told me that I might have written both, for the signature of the letters was undoubtedly a Z, the first letter of my name. The letters, however, contained threats against the deceased, and warnings against the marriage which she was about to contract.

The Governor seemed to have given extraordinary information concerning me, for I was treated with more suspicion and rigour on this day. I referred, to justify myself, to my papers which must be in my room, but was told they had been looked for without success. Thus at the conclusion of this sitting all hope vanished, and on being brought into the court the third day, judgment was pronounced on me. I was convicted of wilful murder and con-

demned to death. Deserted by all that was precious to me upon earth, far away from home, I was to die.

On the evening of this terrible day which had decided my fate, I was sitting in my cell, my hopes were gone, my thoughts steadfastly fixed upon death, when the door of my prison opened, and in came a man, who for a long time looked at me silently.

"Is it thus I find you again, Zaleukos?" he said. I had not recognised him by the dim light of my lamp, but the sound of his voice roused in me old remembrances. It was Valetti, one of those few friends whose acquaintance I made in Paris when I was studying there. He said that he had come to Florence accidentally, where his father, who was a distinguished man, lived. He had heard about my affair, and had come to see me once more, and to hear from my own lips how I could have committed such a crime.

I related to him the whole affair. He seemed much surprised at it, and adjured me to tell him all, in order not to leave the world with a lie behind me. I confirmed my assertions with an oath that I had spoken the truth, and that I was not guilty of anything, except that the glitter of the gold had dazzled me, and that I had not perceived the improbability of the story of the stranger.

"Did you not know Bianca?" he asked me. I assured him that I had never seen her. Valetti now related to me that the profound mystery of the affair, that the Governor had very much accelerated my condemnation, and now a report was spread that I had known Bianca for a long time, and had murdered her out of revenge for her marriage with some one else. I told him that all this coincided exactly with the 'red-cloak', but that I was unable to prove his participation in the affair. Valetti promised me to do all that was possible.

I had little hope, though I knew that Valetti was a clever man, well versed in the law, and that he would do all in his power to save my life. For two long days I was in uncertainty; at last Valetti appeared.

"I bring consolation, though painful. You will live and be free with the loss of one hand." Affected, I thanked my friend for saving my life. He told me that the Governor had been inexorable in having the affair investigated a second time, but that he at last, in order not to appear unjust, had agreed that, if a similar case could be found in the law books of the history of Florence, my punishment should be the same as the one recorded in these books. He and his father had searched in the old books day and night, and at last found a case quite similar to mine. The sentence was: That his left hand be cut off, his property confiscated, and he himself banished for ever. This was my punishment also, and he asked me to prepare for the painful hour which awaited me. I will not describe that terrible hour, when I laid my hand upon the block in the

public market-place.



Valetti took me to his house until I had recovered; he most generously supplied me with money for travelling, for all I had acquired with so much difficulty had fallen a prey to the law. I left Florence for Sicily and embarked on the first ship that I found for Constantinople. My hope was fixed upon the sum which I had entrusted to my friend. I also requested to be allowed to live with him. But how great was my astonishment on being asked why I did not wish to live in my own house. He told me that some unknown man had bought a house in the Greek Quarter in my name, and this very man had also told the neighbours of my early arrival. I immediately proceeded there accompanied by my friend, and was received by all my old acquaintances joyfully.

An old merchant gave me a letter, which the man who had bought the house for me had left behind. I read as follows: *Zaleukos! Two hands are prepared to work incessantly, in order that you may not feel the loss of one of yours. The house which you see and all its contents are yours, and every year you will receive enough to be counted among the rich of your people. Forgive him who is unhappier than yourself.* I could guess who had written it, and in answer to my question the merchant told me it had been a man, whom he took for a Frank, who had worn a scarlet cloak. I knew enough to understand that the stranger was, after all, not entirely devoid of noble intentions. In my new house I found everything arranged in the best style, also a room stored with goods, more splendid than I had ever had.

Ten years have passed since. I still continue my commercial travels, more from old custom than necessity, yet I have never again seen that country where I became so unfortunate. Every year since, I have received a thousand gold pieces; and although I rejoice to know that unfortunate man to be noble, yet he cannot relieve me of the sorrow of my soul, for the terrible picture of the murdered Bianca is continually on my mind.



WITH so much juvenile crime in this country it seems inevitable that police juvenile bureaux will eventually be introduced.

— Inspector S. Horrocks, Salford, Lancs., police in
The Police Review.



THE SMALL-TIME MURDER

JOHN ROWLAND

*A new look at a brutal and
horrible wartime murder, by
an expert criminological writer*

IN THESE days we are often inclined to think that the problem of juvenile delinquency is a phenomenon peculiar to our time. Since the post-war emergence of the 'Teddy Boys', and the more recent explosions of the 'Mods' and 'Rockers' in our seaside resorts, we have been tending to think that this is something quite new, and possibly something stemming in the main from the social developments of the affluent society. A recent Pelican book by Dr. Howard Jones of the University of Leicester, *Crime in a Changing Society*, even suggests that most of the problems of anti-social behaviour by the young people of the 1960s can be attributed to such changes in the life of the modern world.

Now, all this may sound as if it were good psychology and even good sociology. But cases do exist which appear to show that what we are witnessing may be more widespread than in the past, but at the same time that it is not in any way unique. In 1945, for instance, we can find a quite typical example of teenage violence, ending in murder.

Elizabeth Maud Baker was born in 1926. Her home was the Welsh town of Neath. When the Second World War broke out in 1939 she was thus thirteen years of age. She had gone to school and had grown up in an unstable world where the threat of Nazi Germany was in the back of most people's minds.

She was of the type which will tend to erupt into trouble in whatever political or international atmosphere she lives. At the church school which she attended she was known as being difficult. She had more than once run away from school and from home. She had made her way to the nearest large cities to her home town - Cardiff and Swansea. She had been inevitably caught and brought

back. She was in the end dealt with by the juvenile court and sent to an approved school in Cheshire. Her parents – decent, law-abiding folk – had been very puzzled at her behaviour, and admitted that they could do little with her. The parallel with modern teenagers is astonishingly close, though there appears to be no history of drug-taking; 'purple hearts, had not been put on the market in those days.

Her history of rather pointless rebellion continued at the approved school. She was, like so many young people, impressed by the supposed glamour of big cities. The magnet that drew her most urgently was London. On one occasion she took an evening gown which belonged to a mistress at the approved school, and ran away to London, where she managed to get into a public dance-hall. This was by far the most exciting thing that had ever happened to her. She had always been obsessed with the delights of night-club life; now she thought that she knew what this kind of life might mean, and the seeking of such pleasures became her main aim.

She had only the merest glimpse of it, however; the police swiftly caught up with her, and she moved back under strict escort to Cheshire.

For the first time she showed signs of sense. She came to see that this sort of revolt would get her nowhere, and she worked out a plan which she felt might achieve her heart's desire. She could get the acquiescence of the authorities at the approved school only if she showed definite signs of giving up her old rebellious attitude and became more amenable. So she set out to become the model pupil. This was so successful that she was allowed to go home to Neath for a brief holiday around her sixteenth birthday, in 1942.

Thus the first part of her plan came off. She proceeded to put the second part into effect. Since babyhood she had been friendly with a young man called Stanley Jones.

He was now in the army, and was Corporal Stanley Jones. While at home she made herself especially agreeable to him, and asked him, suddenly, how he would like to marry her. Stanley had long admired her flashy beauty, and, though he was surprised at the proposition, he agreed readily enough.

Her parents were not very happy at this teenage marriage; but they eventually agreed. In November, 1942, at the Neath Registry Office, Elizabeth Baker became Elizabeth Jones – the name which was to flare in the headlines, even in the tiny newspapers of wartime.

The marriage really meant very little to her, save that it was planned as part of her path to freedom. Within a few days of her wedding she broke to the bridegroom the news that she was going to leave him. As a married woman, it appeared, she was free from what she regarded as the slavery of the approved school.

She had been married in November, 1942. Early in 1943 she finally left Wales and set off for London. It was wartime London, with dim street lights and austerity. But the lights in the restaurants and the night-clubs were bright enough, and it was these lights which attracted Mrs. Elizabeth Jones.



She quickly found that the world of the glamorous night-clubs was not by any means as easy to break into as she had hoped. She had no special skills ; she was not a stage star. She could dance – but so could dozens of other girls.

So for a time she worked as a barmaid ; then as a waitress ; then as an usherette in a cinema. None of these were the sort of jobs at which she had been aiming. But each of them gave her some sort of a living. Meanwhile, she tried to get to know the kind of people who would be able to help her to break into the world which she felt in her bones should rightfully be hers.

Inevitably, most of those from whom she sought help were men. Elizabeth Jones appears to have always been attractive to them. Yet for her men were no more than the means to an end – the end of carving out for herself a place in the world of entertainment. One of the men she met was a player in a dance-band, and he contrived to get her a trial as a strip-tease dancer in a club which had just opened in Knightsbridge.

Elizabeth was delighted. Now she was at last on the verge of the kind of life for which she had been longing. But she failed. She had not even a command of the fairly simple technique of the strip-tease girl. She was so poor that the rather exacting clients of the club booed her off the floor.

So back she had to go to the routine of the lesser life which she had led before – anything to bring her a living in an atmosphere of bright lights and garish music.

At what stage she made up her mind that the affluent members of the American forces then in London were her best means of reaching a higher position it is not clear. But soon she was calling herself Georgina Grayson (the sound of the name is a fair indication of the state of her mind), and was regularly seen in the various cafés, restaurants and dance-halls most frequented by American service-men.

She was becoming an expert gold-digger, getting from the Americans the money and the gaudy clothes which to her had become the mark of success. Here, perhaps, she departs from what we should now regard as the norm of behaviour for the rebel ; but the days when a certain sleaziness of dress and hair-style has come to mark out the social misfit had not yet arrived. The beatnik had not yet been invented.

Somehow she managed to get a small flat in a Kensington mews – no easy feat in those days. Somehow she managed to pay the rent out of what she could squeeze from her various American boy-friends. Somehow, too, she contrived to keep herself in smart clothes and all that went with them. Clothes rationing meant little to a girl with a lot of American friends.

Soon she had become well known in the more disreputable night-haunts – places where the Americans were fleeced of their money by being encouraged to buy near-beer and inferior liquor at outrageously inflated prices.

By the time she was seventeen Elizabeth Jones had stepped well away from the peaceful life of her Welsh home, and was one of the expert harpies who batted on to any American service-man who appeared to be lonely and to have money to spend on dubious pleasures.

The story, up to this point, may seem in some ways a fairly ordinary one. In those war years there must have been many such girls, on the fringes of the London underworld. After all, most of the Americans in London were well paid. British soldiers resented the fact that the 'Yanks' could spend so much more than they; but there was little that could be done about it.

The story of Georgina Grayson may have seemed a sordid one and an unhappy one. But few of those who saw her thought that she was on the edge of high tragedy. Again, of course, the parallel with the wilder modern teenager is clear. She did not work with a gang; she seems always to have been a lone wolf. But just as there is an occasion when an overdose of purple hearts may lead a rebel of 1965 to an act of overwhelming violence, there was something which was to lead Georgina Grayson to involvement in a murder case.

To-day's delinquent is usually led this way by a crowd of his fellows. Elizabeth Jones was led there not by a mob, but by one man. If she had not met this man, she might have remained an unknown pawn on the chess-board of night-club life.



The determining factor appears to have been Karl Gustav Hulten. He was an American. Born in Sweden, he had emigrated with his parents when he was only a baby. When he met Elizabeth he was just over twenty-one. He was quite an ordinary young man in most ways, but he had been afflicted by a mania for fast driving. He was happy only when he was behind the steering-wheel of a powerful car, racing along the roads at reckless speed.

Hulten was married. Just before he met Elizabeth Jones his wife, back in the United States, had given birth to a baby girl – a girl who was never to meet her father.

In August, 1944, when Elizabeth Jones had been in London for some eighteen months or so, Hulten's unit had been sent to France. This was the time when Hitler's flying bombs were raining on London. Hulten himself had been left behind in England, to help with the organisation of the motor transport of his unit. But he knew that this would be only a temporary respite, and he deserted before he got his orders to cross the Channel.

During 1944 Elizabeth had temporarily gone back to Neath. She had been scared by the horror of flying bombs. Perhaps if she had only been able to stay at home, then, with her parents, she might have been able to break away from the life which she had been leading. But Wales was dull after the excitement of London. Even the flying bombs seemed to be preferable to the sheer boredom of life at home. She made her way back to the station, and took the next fast train to Paddington.

These, then, were the girl and boy who were to meet in such a tragic way. They were to combine in one of the silliest and most pointless murders of the twentieth century. But a murder cannot take place without a victim. The victim, chosen, it would seem, almost by chance, was George Edward Heath.

Heath was a car-driver. He had been injured in the early blitz of 1940. For months he had been under treatment in hospital and at home. But by the end of 1943 he was more or less fully recovered, and was then engaged as a driver by a car-hire firm.

Heath no doubt had some hair-raising experiences in those war-time days. Most professional drivers knew the difficulties of sorting out their passengers, deciding who was desirable and who was not. But he was not to know that, coming together, as if by fate, were two who were to be the most undesirable passengers any taxi-man could have.

Karl Hulten, after his desertion, was picking up whatever sort of living he could as a sneak-thief. He would raid small shops in quiet streets, getting hold of such portions of the stock as he could quickly acquire, and then disposing of it in the flourishing black market. He had stolen a ten-wheeled army truck, which he drove wildly about the countryside around London, and loaded his loot into this. He usually slept in the truck, when he could manage to find a quiet and deserted lay-by where it could be parked overnight. He had also stolen an officer's uniform, as he felt that this would be more impressive than the G.I. uniform to which he was entitled.

It was on October 3rd, 1944, that this outwardly impressive young man made the acquaintance of Georgina Grayson. This occurred at a café in Hammersmith Broadway. It was not a very smart place; Elizabeth, even in her disguise as Georgina, appears on occasion to have come down in the social scale. Possibly she had not recently been able to keep in touch with any of the more

wealthy Americans who had – in part at any rate – been financing her.

She was sitting in this drab place, drinking a cup of coffee and talking to a man who was an acquaintance of Hulten. He introduced the pair to each other as 'Georgina' and 'Ricky'. It was, though they did not know it at the time, one of the more crucial meetings in the history of crime. Not quite so striking as the meeting of Burke with Hare, or Frederick Bywaters with Mrs. Thompson – but not wholly out of that class.

Hulten made a considerable hit with Elizabeth Jones. He had a breezy style of talk, and he described himself as a Chicago gangster who had carried out many a daring and serious crime. He spoke of holding up banks and shooting their cashiers. Elizabeth was entranced. This was the sort of thing which she had never previously met, except on the films, and it appeared to her that she was now in the very centre of an exciting life.



Hulten asked her if she would come for a drive in his stolen truck, which she readily agreed to do. They drove out in the direction of Reading. All the way there Hulten talked . . . and talked. . . . Elizabeth, hearing his boastful tales of his life in pre-war days, saw herself cast for the role of 'gangster's gun-moll' (the words were her own).

In some strange way they agreed to strike up a partnership. Whether Hulten was really as infatuated with Elizabeth as she undoubtedly was with him is not clear. But the fact that the new partnership was embarked on so suddenly suggests something of the sort.

While she was driving about with Hulten they took part in a series of stupid hold-ups, sometimes knocking people off bicycles in the dark lanes, and then snatching the handbags or picking the pockets of the victims. This was not exactly a way to riches, and it can have brought in very little cash.

Elizabeth must have been impressed by all this, though it was small-time stuff compared to the talk of bank robberies and armed hold-ups such as Hulten generally indulged in.

This sort of thing went on for two or three days. On one occasion they gave a lift to a girl leaving London and making her way to Bristol. Hulten contrived to suggest that something had gone wrong with the back axle of the truck. As their passenger walked with them to see what was the matter, Karl Hulten hit her across the head with a heavy bar of iron. They took the girl's small belongings, and threw the unconscious victim into a nearby river.

Fortunately she recovered consciousness and was able to crawl out of the water. But this might easily have been murder for trivial

gain.

It was on October 6th, some three days after they had first joined forces, that Hulten had spent some hours carefully cleaning an automatic pistol which was in his possession.

George Heath, driving for his hire-car firm, was on his way to Maidenhead, where he was expected to pick up a group of Americans and drive them back to London. As he was on his way along the busy Hammersmith Broadway he was hailed by a girl, standing on the pavement. Heath was not precisely a taxi-driver, and he did not often pick up casual fares. But he had a long drive ahead of him, and probably thought that this was a chance to earn some extra cash, if the unauthorised lift did not take him too far out of his way.

"Where do you want to go?" asked Heath.

"King Street, Hammersmith," the girl said. She had an American with her.

Heath agreed to take them to the address given, and added that the fare would be ten shillings.

As soon as the couple were settled in the back of the car, Hulten explained that they wanted to go a bit further, and at first Heath accepted this willingly enough. But by the time they reached the Great West Road, beyond Chiswick, he apparently became suspicious about their intentions. Hulten sat back in the corner, just behind the driver. He had taken the automatic out of his pocket, and the girl appeared to have looked at him, her eyes bright with excitement.

As they drew out towards the Great West Road, Heath slowed down at a traffic roundabout. "I'm afraid that I can't take you any further than this," he told them.

"Here it is," said Hulten. "Stop here."

It had been late evening when they had got into the car. It was now after midnight. The spot at which they stopped was quiet. There was no traffic in sight. The nearest buildings were blacked-out factories; there were no private houses nearby.

As the car halted Hulten fired. The bullet went through Heath's body, and he slumped, partially unconscious, to the floor.

Hulten jumped into the driving seat. Elizabeth stripped everything of value from Heath, even unstrapping the watch from his wrist. They dumped Heath in a ditch, and drove the car back to London.

The car was a fine grey saloon which fascinated Hulten, for it had a good turn of speed. They actually got only about £8 in cash, and the few personal assets which Heath was carrying.

It may be thought that the very method of the crime was almost a sign of insanity, for it was clear enough that the car would be easily identified, and, as soon as Heath's body was found, the hunt

would be on.

The murder of George Heath was quickly and widely reported in the Press. Attacks on hire-car, and taxi-drivers were becoming far too common.

The police at once realised that the car was the first thing on which to concentrate. A network was immediately set up. It is rather extraordinary that the car was not found at once.

Hulten and Elizabeth separated, apparently parting as casually as they had met. But a day or two after the murder of Heath the car was seen by a policeman. It was parked outside a house in Fulham. The policeman 'phoned through to divisional headquarters and a squad car was sent to the area.

It was dark, and the police rigged up a spotlight, which was focused so that it would shine directly on the grey car. When Hulten later emerged from the house, and stepped towards the car, the spotlight was switched on. Dazzled by the light, he stopped. The police seized him before he could pull the automatic from his pocket. It was, in spite of his boasted life of violence, one of the easiest possible arrests.

Elizabeth had made an arrangement to meet him again ; but he did not turn up at the rendezvous. She had, among her many male friends, at least one member of the Metropolitan Police. In casual conversation she let slip something which suggested that she might be connected with the death of Heath. She was arrested only two days after Hulten.



From that moment the sequel was more or less inevitable. Before her trial Elizabeth Jones thought that, as she had not actually fired the shot which killed Heath, she could not be found guilty. She was soon disillusioned.

On January 16th, 1945, the pair stood in the dock at Central Criminal Court in the Old Bailey. The judge was Mr. Justice Charles. Mr. L. A. Byrne, then Senior Treasury Counsel, led for the prosecution ; the leaders for the defence were Mr. John Maude (for Hulten) and Mr. J. D. Caswell (for Elizabeth Jones). Caswell, in particular, had a great record as a defender, and years afterwards, in his book, *A Lance for Liberty*, he dealt with the case at some length. Caswell, indeed, made the claim that, defending in forty murder cases, he lost only five of his clients to the hangman.

Hulten's defence was that he had not intended to kill ; he had meant only to threaten Heath with his gun, which had gone off more or less accidentally. There was much argument as to how far Hulten's statements, taken partly by U.S. Army police, were admissible in a British court of law. Caswell described how a macabre experiment was performed by Dr. Donald Teare, Home

Office pathologist, in an attempt to prove the angle at which the fatal shot was fired.

He put a skeleton in the driving seat of Heath's car and inserted a metal rod through it at a line coinciding with that which was followed by the bullet in the body. In order that this rod might reach a dent in the nearside door, made by the bullet, it was clear that the shot must have been fired from the off-side back seat (where Hulten was admittedly sitting), but at a time when for some reason Heath was leaning over towards the near side. Hulten had said that he intended to fire only to scare Heath, and that the death had been accidental, because at the moment of the shot Heath had leaned sideways. Caswell says that he believed this to be true. But the jury did not believe it. In law a death that takes place, though unintended, in the furtherance of theft, is still murder.

Elizabeth Jones's defence was very different. She said that she had been terrified of her companion, and that she had been more or less coerced into assisting in his crimes.

The jury found both prisoners guilty, and they were both condemned to death. Hulten was hanged on March 8th, 1945 - his twenty-third birthday. Elizabeth Jones was reprieved, and came out of prison in May, 1954.

They were an unscrupulous and thoughtless couple; they had no pity, it would seem, for their unlucky victims. The money they made was ridiculously small.

One is compelled to wonder if it was only gain which inspired Hulten and Jones. Did they really kill Heath for the miserable £8, which was all they got? Or was there a sense of power and strength which made Hulten pull that trigger? It is not possible to say; perhaps not even the two protagonists themselves could answer the riddle.

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★★★★★ NEXT MONTH . . .

a new short story by

VICTOR CANNING

THE MOUNTAIN

BILL KNOX

*A brisk and realistic
private eye yarn by a
favourite EWMM author*

"**W**HATEVER has happened to him, Mr. Gordon, we've got to know." The tired, anxious man pacing the room stopped for a moment, his hands held wide in unspoken agony of mind. "Peter's our only son – and as for that poor girl, I cannot imagine what she is suffering."

Outside, a cold east wind gusted along the length of Edinburgh's Princes Street. The top floor office of Pearson & White, one of the city's best-known chartered accountancy firms, was warm and snug. But Cam Gordon was picturing a still colder scene than that offered by the Scottish weather. He sat back in the armchair, a frown creasing his face. About five ten in height, stockily built, with dark, wavy hair and penetrating brown eyes set in rugged but still handsome features, Cam didn't often suffer from indecision. But this time was different.

Two days before, young Peter White had disappeared on the lower slopes of a Swiss mountainside, vanished while his bride of little over a week was spending an hour at a hairdresser's shop in the resort village of Grindelwald, perched in the shadow of the Eiger – the terror mountain of so many climbing triumphs and disasters.

"Well, Mr. Gordon?" The man stood before him, blinking nervously. "Will you go? I'd be there now, but there's my wife to consider. . . ."

Cam knew the rest. Peter White's mother had collapsed on hearing that her son was missing. Her heart was bad, and the shock had been such she was still at home, too ill to be moved.

"I'm no mountaineer," he said slowly. "All I can do is ask questions, questions the Swiss police probably know the answers to already."

"But they think it's an accident, that they'll find a body some summertime when the snow melts," said Beth Taylor. The red-head, private secretary to Mr. Deathstone, the Glasgow lawyer who used Cam's tiny Gordon Investigations agency for a variety of semi-

official trouble-shooting assignments, was the reason which had brought Cam through to the interview. "I know Susan White - it's only two weeks since I was a guest at her wedding. If she says there's something terribly wrong about the whole situation, then I believe her. Mr. Deathstone's giving me time off. I'm going by plane to Switzerland to-night. I booked two seats." She stared pointedly towards him.

"That settles it, I suppose." Cam got to his feet. "All right, Mr. White, I'll do what I can. But remember, it may be precious little."



The night plane to Switzerland touched down at Basle at 4 a.m. Peter White's father was sparing no expense - a chauffeur-driven Chrysler hire-car was waiting their arrival. As soon as Cam and Beth had gone through the Customs formalities and were settled in the back seat, the Chrysler moved off on the 85 mile journey to the mountain township.

When dawn broke, they were nearing their destination. Snow lay deep not far from the roadside, and the driver stopped once, to fit chains to the car's rear wheels.

"Is necessary, Herr Gordon," he smiled. "We go up now - you will see."

It was an understatement. The winding road grew narrower, climbing through thick, Christmas-like woodland, ghostly in the half-light. Chains rattled softly as they bit into the first snow-covered stretch of highway - and still the car crept on. Sun-tipped mountain ridges glinted white on either side, streaked black where the naked rock lay exposed by wind or avalanche. Here and there, high above them - reached by no obvious road - little wooden chalets perched in seemingly precarious danger, smoke rising from their chimneys as if defying the towering giants around.

"It's beautiful," gasped Beth. "No wonder Susan and Peter decided to come here . . ." she broke off, remembering what lay ahead.

Grindelwald, high in the Bernese Alps, was a mixture of old-style chalets and the gleaming concrete of modern hotels - all overshadowed by the north face of the Eiger mountain, a 6,000 foot-high almost vertical wall of rock and ice, climbed by the few and the brave in midsummer, unapproachable in winter.

Susan White was waiting in what had been her bridal suite - a two-roomed portion of a quiet brown-wood guest house on the outskirts of the village. Neat in plum-red slacks and a blue twin-set, the girl's voice was firm and level as she made them welcome - too level. Red-rimmed eyes and a defiantly held chin told their own story, Susan White was desperately worried, but fighting hard to retain self-control. She insisted on them having breakfast, talking

while they ate.

"There have been searches, of course – police and some of the mountain guides. But it's all wrong. They think Peter was just a crazy visitor who ignored the warnings, wandered off alone into the foothills, and got into difficulties. They talk about snow-crevices and rock-falls."

Cam gave her a cigarette, lit it, and asked, "Has Peter done any climbing?"

"At home, yes." She nodded. "But only a little. He wasn't – isn't – stupid. Besides, he was due to meet me in an hour."

Beth put an arm round the girl's shoulders. "We know you were going to the hairdresser. What did Peter say he'd do while you were gone?"

"Just have a stroll around, then meet me for coffee." She puffed hard on the cigarette. "When he didn't show up, I looked everywhere for him – then reported him missing."

There was a knock at the room door. It opened, and a plump, round-faced man, his grey hair cropped close in crew-cut style, his suit expensively-cut brown corduroy, entered the room.

"Your friends have arrived, Frau White?" There was only the faintest trace of accent in the voice.

"Herr Gelling – Mr. Gordon, Miss Taylor."

"As a fellow-guest, I have been doing what I can to help in this tragedy," said Gelling, with a small bow. "I am afraid . . ."

"You think he's fallen down a mountain?" Cam put it bluntly.

Gelling raised an eyebrow. "Since you ask, yes. I am sorry, Frau White, but it is three days now."

The girl sat silent.

"I will leave you with your friends," said Gelling. "Perhaps, Herr Gordon, you can persuade the lady to return with you to Britain. There is no more to be done, here."

The door closed behind him. Cam walked over to the window and looked out at the landscape beyond. "Susan, he could be right."

"He was with the search parties," she told him wearily. "He means well – but I'm not leaving. Peter's alive. He must be."

"What you're saying is it couldn't have been an accident," said Cam softly. "Why not?"

"Because he isn't a fool, and –" Susan White hesitated.

"Go on." Cam's manner hardened perceptibly. He ignored Beth's sudden frown. "There's more to it, isn't there, Susan? Beth and I came out here to help. By 'help' I don't mean holding your hand and making soothing noises." He saw the girl's mouth half-open, gauged her indecision, and strapped his next words: "Tell the rest, now – what is it that the police don't know?"

The girl's dark hair fell forward as she buried her head in her hands.

"Cam - of all the -" Beth's angry outburst was cut short as Susan White got up from her chair.

"He's right, Beth. There is - at least, there may be a reason. I just don't know."

"Well?" Cam waited. It had been harsh, but it had got results.

"We came here ten days ago. Friends of ours in Edinburgh suggested the place. About the third day, Peter went out for a while in the evening by himself. I had postcards and letters to write - you know the sort of thing. When he came back, he was excited. He'd met a man in a bar, and, Peter said, the man had offered him a chance to clear all our honeymoon expenses and more."

"Did he say how?"

"Not really - just that it was something to do with smuggling watches, that I wasn't supposed to know a thing about it, but that it was so simple he'd have been a fool to refuse."

"This other man, did he name him?"

"No." The girl was emphatic. "I - I was angry about it. In fact, we had a row. But Peter said we could use the money, and that he'd agreed to do it."

"Why didn't you tell this before?" Beth was openly baffled. "What you're saying is that you think Peter's become mixed up with some smuggler, yet you haven't even hinted at it to the police. Why, Susan?"



It took time to obtain her tangled reasoning. At first, she'd been too concerned over her husband's disappearance even to consider the watch-smuggling proposition as worth mentioning. Later, as its possible significance sank home, she'd been afraid. "Peter may turn up at any moment," she said; "I know he's alive - and if the police knew he'd been involved in smuggling, what would happen?"

Cam gave a sigh close to exasperation. "But he hasn't. Even if he's sitting with a thousand Swiss-made watches somewhere, he's not a smuggler until he's tried to get them into some other country. Stay here with Beth. I'm going round to see the police."

The blue-uniformed sub-inspector of police showed little surprise at Cam's story. He gave a faint smile and a shrug. "Of course, this happens. We are a little country - only about half the size of your Scotland. This kind of smuggling, using your tourists, is inevitable. But, Herr Gordon, is it likely that a smuggler would kill a visitor just because they disagreed? As you yourself have said, there is no offence in making these plans here - it is afterwards, somewhere else, that action can be taken."

"You still think he's lying under a snowdrift?" queried Cam.

Again, the sub-inspector shrugged. "What do you think, sir?"

We are not stubborn, but we see these mountain accidents. Your smuggler, now –" he rubbed his chin. "Carlo Belzoni is probably your man. At this time, he will be at the café Kleine Monch. A harmless fellow, an Italian – friendly to visitors. He arrived a month ago, from Lucerne. If you wish, I could have him brought here."

Cam shook his head. "I'll have a talk with him myself. It might be less embarrassing."



The café Kleine Monch was warm, and still fairly quiet at that hour. The white-coated waiter who approached was a model of Swiss courtesy.

"The herr wishes?"

Cam blessed the fact that for once the legend was true, most of the natives did speak English.

"I'm looking for Carlo Belzoni."

A swarthy, cheery-faced little man two tables away, a cigarette dangling from one corner of his mouth, glanced up at the words, a speculative gleam in his eyes; he crooked a beckoning finger. The waiter faded into the background.

"I am Belzoni," said the little man in a friendly voice. "I can be of service?"

"Maybe," Cam took the chair opposite. "Rumour has it you're in the smuggling business."

"Rumour is right," sighed Belzoni. "You will be the Scotchman who seeks the poor Mr. White. I like Scotchmen; though your Barlinnie Prison can be cold. I was there once, an unfortunate error over currency."

"I will save you time, my friend. I know nothing of your Peter White, though I had planned to attempt an arrangement. Perhaps you might be interested in doing me a favour on your return journey?"

"All that interests me is finding out who made a watch-smuggling proposition to White," said Cam. "Maybe you made a mistake, Belzoni. White didn't keep secrets from his wife."

Belzoni's eyes glittered. "You have the wrong man, Mr. –"

"Gordon."

"Mr. Gordon. But maybe the right one too. You are not of the police. You respect a confidence?"

Cam nodded.

Belzoni stubbed his cigarette and lit another. "I've come here for business, it is true. To make contacts. It pays to move around. The sub-inspector is very efficient, and knows me – but perhaps he misses one thing."

"Mr. Gordon, a Herr Gelling is at the same guest house as the

unfortunate Mrs. White. A gentleman, of course. Mr. Gordon, I am anxious, as you put it, to get you 'off my back'. So I ask you, why does Herr Gelling carry a gun?"

"You're sure?" Gordon's obvious surprise seemed to amuse the Italian smuggler.

Belzoni grinned, and signalled to the waiter. "Two beers; perhaps, Mr. Gordon, you still doubt my word. But there is something else." He paused as the waiter approached, and waited until the glasses had been placed before them. "Hans, I was telling my friend of the unfortunate Herr White—the man who has disappeared."

"Ah, the avalanche!" The man nodded.

"You remember Herr White?"

"Ja." The waiter picked up the ashtray and replaced it with a clean one. "He was here once or twice, with the German, Herr Gelling. A great pity." The man turned away.

"And the gun?" asked Cam, now convinced.

Belzoni shrugged. "You learn to spot such things—the bulge under the jacket, the mark of leather harness. But Herr Gelling is not in the watch business. If he was, I should know."

Cam finished his beer. "I'm grateful."

"Is nothing." Belzoni watched him go, shrugged again, then lit another cigarette, rose, and walked to the telephone in the corner.

Outside, the sky had clouded. More snow was on the way, but that didn't deter the street photographer who clicked his camera then thrust a leaflet into Cam's hand.

Another cameraman was further down the street, and the process was repeated. Summer season over, winter tourists just beginning to arrive, and customers were obviously scarce.

By the time Cam had strolled back to the guest-house, that had been the Whites' honeymoon choice, the first snow-flakes were in the air.

Inside, he found Beth Taylor helping Susan White in the slow, obviously unhappy task of going through Peter White's belongings. The red-head paused as he entered the room. "Any luck, Cam?"

"Maybe. Why the search, Beth?"

"I came up with the bright idea that there might be some clue in Peter's pockets. There isn't."

Susan White gazed at him appealingly. "What did the police say?"

"About the smuggling? That it makes no difference. Susan, how many people have suggested you should go home?"

"You, the police, and Herr Gelling. But I'm staying."

He nodded. "I've changed my mind. Stick to that line, especially with Gelling. Where is he, anyway?"

"Out." It was Beth who replied. "I saw him leave, about half an

hour ago."

"Uh-huh. Which is his room?"

"Third on the left down the hall," said Susan. "Why?"

"I'm planning a visit." He left them.



The hallway was deserted, and a strip of celluloid was enough to push back the Yale-type spring-lock. Cam went in, closed the door behind him, and began a quick search. Gelling obviously travelled light. There were few clothes in the wardrobe. In one drawer, there was an electric razor in its case - then he whistled. A smaller box lay alongside. What was Herr Gelling doing with three spare clips of Luger ammunition?

"Cam -" Beth's voice, low and urgent, came from outside the door. "He's coming back."

Quickly, he replaced the box, closed the drawer, and left the room. Beth had gone, but he could hear Gelling's footsteps on the stairway. He moved in the same direction.

Gelling greeted him with a curt nod. "Ah, Herr Gordon. Have you persuaded your friend she should leave this place?"

"Useless. She won't budge."

"But it would be best. Perhaps another try -"

"Maybe," Cam's tone was doubtful. "Were you friendly with White?"

"Just as one guest to another." Gelling became uncommunicative. "I go to my room now. Goodbye, Herr Gordon."

"And that was that," said Cam a few moments later, as he told the two girls of his find. "Susan, are you up to showing me where the police reckon these avalanches occurred? I'll hire a car."

"I'll come," she agreed. "You can use our Austin - it's at a garage along the road. Peter put it in for greasing the day before he disappeared. It hasn't been used since."

With Beth, they walked down to the garage. The snow flurries had died down, the sun had reappeared, and the whole village had the aspect of a three-dimensional Christmas card. But the mountain, mist-wisped and menacing, shattered the illusion.

The car was ready. Cam paid the greasing bill, slid into the driving seat, and started the engine. They drove off down the valley, then turned to the left, along a narrower, rougher pathway edging along one of the Eiger's lower slopes.

"Near here, Cam," Susan White's voice was quiet.

He halted the car beside one of the inevitable high-roofed chalets. As they got out, a man approached from the building. From a barn at the back they could hear a tinkle of cow-bells; the cattle were obviously in their winter quarters.

The Swiss farmer had little English, but, between them, Cam

established that there had been one large avalanche nearby on the afternoon White disappeared.

"He says there were hundreds of tons of stuff on the move," said Cam grimly. "Doesn't advise us to go near it; there could be another. All it needs is a backfire from a car, any very loud noise –" he broke off, the implication startling him, and turned again to the waiting farmer.

Yes, agreed the man, there had been some sort of a bang the last time. No, he didn't know why or where.

"You girls wait in the car," said Cam. "There'll be little enough to see." He strode off alone. The hill path, rising steeply, was covered in thick snow, but a way had been trodden, probably the search parties. He paused short of the huge slide of snow, its surface pock-marked here and there by tree branches and other debris. The slide had wiped across the path, then spent itself in a gully below.

The mountain guides were right. If a body lay below, it would remain there until summer.

Cam glanced up, took note of the countless heavy overhangs of snow still waiting above, glanced further along, and tensed at the sight of another figure moving away fast along another path two – no, three hundred feet at least above. The bang came seconds later. Not fierce – not even as loud as any army-type thunderflash. It echoed, then was lost in a gathering growl.



The snow was on the move. For a long moment Cam stayed, almost hypnotised, then as a giant snow cornice toppled to the slide, he turned and ran, floundering when his feet sank in soft patches, gulping in chill air, forcing every muscle to greater speed.

The growl became a roar. He didn't look round, tried to go still faster, stumbled, got up again, then a cold white wave hit him, bowled him off his feet, covered him momentarily, then, as he struggled upright, seemed to subside.

Below, in the gully, the avalanche was piling to a halt. Only the fringe of the slide had hit him. Gasping, shivering, he fought free of the loose snow then, slowly, headed back down the path to the farm.

Half an hour later, a tumbler of the farmer's best plum brandy burning with him, Cam drove the car back into Grindelwald. A change of clothing at the guest-house, another, equally potent glass of brandy, and he felt back to normal.

"Don't ever get involved like that again," said Beth. Her hands trembled as she took the empty glass from his hand. "Cam, who was it? Gelling – or that Italian, Belzoni?"

"My hunch is Gelling, or one of his pals," said Cam. "Belzoni, no.

He's a crooked little cuss, but he's not the type who goes throwing avalanches at people." He began to pocket the wallet and other articles he'd removed from his other suit.

"What's the leaflet?" asked Beth.

"That? One of these street photographers."

She smiled. "You can't go out of doors without being snapped by half a dozen -" Then she stopped, the words sparking an idea: "Cam! What if -"

"If one of them photographed Peter White the afternoon he disappeared," he completed for her. "Why not? Beth, go round them - they all work from some shop or office."

"What about you?"

"I'm going to see a certain sub-inspector of police. I want to talk to him about avalanches."

The sub-inspector became a man with a totally changed attitude, once he'd listened to what had happened.

"What you tell me makes a difference, a big difference, Herr Gordon," he said. "I do not tolerate such happenings. But proof . . . I will have this Gelling in here, and sweat it from him. If the avalanche which buried your countryman was similarly started, that is murder."

"The first one was meant for someone - and the second nearly got me," agreed Cam. "But Gelling strikes me as very tough. Supposing he doesn't talk? You can't hold him."

The sub-inspector sighed. "True."

"Someone's under that avalanche," emphasised Cam. "But there's always a chance it isn't Peter White - and Gelling must have had some reason for wanting rid of me. Give him some rope, Inspector."

"Then, as you say, let him hang himself." The policeman nodded. "But be careful you do not tangle yourself in the noose, my friend."

Outside the police office the temperature seemed to have taken a sudden drop. Cam turned up his coat collar, and strode briskly along.

Feet hurried behind him. "Not so fast," gasped Carlo Belzoni. The little smuggler beamed at him. "Already I risk my reputation waiting so near a police station, and now, a heart attack would be too much."

Cam slowed, and the Italian fell into step.

"I hear you are a lucky man," he mused. "There was nearly another avalanche victim, eh? It is my business to know what happens, Mr. Gordon." He glanced sideways. "For instance, another friend who is also in the er - watch-exporting business tells me that Herr Gelling has been in several tourists resorts lately. Ah well, I suppose Mrs. White will soon be driving home, eh? Let us hope she has a smooth journey. An accident to the car would be awkward."

With another smile, Belzoni went away.

At the guest-house, Cam found that Beth had already returned. "There's the picture," she said. "They always print every negative, and date-stamp it. The photo shop says it was taken the afternoon Peter disappeared. But it isn't much help, is it?"

Two men walking down Grendelwald's main street. One was Peter White. But the other had deliberately turned from the camera, one arm covering his face as if in angry protest.

"He's Gelling's build," acknowledged Cam. "That's about all you can say."

"Gelling looked in on Susan while we were out," said Beth. "The same old tune – how sorry he was for her, and how he really thought she should go home. She told him she was staying put. But why, Cam? Why is it so important to him?"

"Belzoni was interested in Susan going home, too." Cam stared at the photograph again. "Belzoni –" he gave a sudden snap of his fingers. "Belzoni! Blast his roundabout ways. We're going to find that answer right now. Susan White's car is the key." Gordon's eyes sparkled. "Gelling wants her to go home, and when she goes, the car goes too. Come on, Beth, let's get down to that garage and see just what's so interesting about her Austin."

Beth Taylor reached for her coat. "What about the photograph – the one with Peter White and that other man?"

"Bring it along too," he told her. "I've a hunch we're going to tie this whole affair up in a nice, neat parcel."



At the garage, a mechanic was on duty in the work-bay.

"Herr White's car? *Ja*, he brought it in for greasing, as you say. That was the day before the avalanche."

"Did he take it out again?"

The mechanic nodded. "That next afternoon, for a little while. He said he wanted to try it out. Then it was brought back here, and –" he shrugged. "After that, he must have gone a walk, and then, the avalanche came down."

Cam frowned. "His wife didn't know about this. She told us the Austin hadn't been out since it was put in for greasing until we collected it today."

The man shrugged. "That is not my business."

"Was White alone when he picked up the car?"

The man gave a grunt and nodded.

"How about when he came back?" asked Cam.

"That I cannot say. It was – how you say it – the coffee-break. He left the car parked outside, with the key in the ignition. Now, I am busy. . . ."

Cam extracted two currency notes from his wallet. "I'd like to

look over that Austin. Properly. Inside, and underneath."

The money changed hands, and they began their search – seats, boot, dashboard, even under the carpets.

"Now the underside –"

The car was driven on to the garage ramp. With a whine of hydraulic pillars, it was raised shoulder-high off the ground.

"Well?" Cam watched while the mechanic checked the Austin's underside.

The man frowned. "I am not sure. But the petrol tank – it looks new."

"Let me see it," Cam rubbed one finger over the light surface of road dirt. Beneath, the metal was fresh and clean.

"Then that was why Peter made his trip without telling Susan," Beth said. "He said if he did smuggle watches, she'd never know a thing about it!"

"Smuggle?" The mechanic had been eyeing Beth with an interest.

"Smuggle," confirmed Cam. "How long to get this tank opened up? My guess is it has two sections – and only one contains petrol."

"Half an hour."

Another idea struck Cam. He heaved himself up into the car, and fumbled under the dashboard. The usual label was there, giving the car's mileage reading when the greasing service had been carried out. He checked the figure against the speedometer's new reading, and gave a grunt.

"I want a map – the largest scale you've got."

The mechanic raised an eyebrow but fetched a good map of the surrounding district.

"Now . . ." on the map Cam traced the route they'd driven the car that day. "Kilometres to miles, Beth?"

"Eight equals five miles, more or less."

"Subtract the distance we drove – . Peter White travelled about fourteen miles. So we want a place roughly seven miles out of town. Here, perhaps – a couple of miles beyond the avalanche site."

"Braunheim's chalet?" The mechanic scratched his head. "I hear of new people there, Herr Gordon."

It took some more francs to hire the mechanic's ancient Renault. "Beth, you drag the police down here. Once the sub-inspector sees that tank cut open, he should be in business."

"And you?" Beth already guessed the answer.

"I'll be around Braunheim's chalet." The Renault was slammed into gear, and he drove off.

Snow began falling as the car rattled its way towards the Braunheim chalet. The single windscreen wiper slapping, Cam drove on – for once, he welcomed the reduced visibility.

Slowly, the map contours came to life. The chalet was set high on the north-eastern slope of the mountain, but a service road was

marked as running right to its door. A week or two more, and it would obviously be blocked till spring. But for the moment, it remained difficult but passable. Putting the Renault in bottom gear, Cam kept to the main highway, but noted wheel-marks on the side-track. Two hundred yards on, he swung off the road, stopped behind a clump of trees, got out, and began heading across-country.

It was slow, difficult going on foot. At times, the snow came knee-high. Once, he floundered in a deeper drift – and the fresh snow falling, though an ally for the moment, made it awkward to keep his bearings.

Then the Braunheim chalet loomed ahead – high-roofed, heavily-eaved, small-windowed. Hugging the shelter of some rocks, Cam saw the wheel-tracks led to a stone-walled barn set to one side. The rough purr of a diesel generator reached his ears. He moved forward, keeping to the blind side of the house, and looked in the barn's single window. The interior was laid out in garage style, with a surprising amount of equipment including what looked like a portable welding plant.

He skirted the chalet. It seemed empty, though smoke curled from the main chimney. Another circuit, and still no sight or sound of life; there was only one way to find out, though it was hardly legal. Moving fast, ready for trouble, Cam smashed one of the small window-panes, reached through the jagged hole freeing the locking handle, and seconds later, was standing in the warmth of the stone-flagged kitchen.

The chalet might be empty, but there were plenty of signs that it was being used, and that the occupants wouldn't be gone for long. He checked swiftly through the room, then stopped, puzzled, as he heard a muffled thumping.



It took a minute or two before he found the cellar trap-door. He drew back the bolts, raised the trap – and a pale, unshaven face peered from the darkness below.

"How about some food . . ." the man's voice died away.

"Peter White?" Cam grinned. "Come on out. You're pretty lively for a corpse!"

The man scrambled up. "Where's Gelling? I – I thought they'd come back."

"Not yet. But let's get out of here before they do." Cam was already hustling White along to the kitchen and the opened window.

They wriggled through – just as, from the front of the chalet, there came the sound of an approaching car. It was near enough to hear the rattle of its tyre-chains.

Nervous, bewildered, White said: "If it's Gelling, he's got two men, and they're armed."

The snow-shower had died. There was only one escape route open, and that was upwards, into the dangerous snow-waste above. It was a scrambling climb, and they'd be clearly visible against the white landscape.

"There's a time for fighting and a time for running," murmured Cam. "Let's go."

They had made about two hundred yards up the mountain slope before Gelling and his two companions raced out of the rear door of the chalet. Half-a-dozen shots were fired at the two figures toiling upwards, then the men below were hurrying in pursuit.

Above them, Peter White stumbled head-long, was jerked to his feet by Cam, then fell again. Their pursuers were getting closer.

Intervention came from a rocky ledge twenty or so feet above.

"Everybody stay still!" Belzoni rose from his cover. One hand held the unmistakable shape of a lightweight hand grenade. He gave a cheerful nod to Cam, then shouted again. "Gelling, this thing in my hand — it could go off."

The men below stopped where they were. They'd already had first-hand experience of the power of an avalanche, and, above, a long, broad overhang of snow seemed poised ready and waiting. Yet Belzoni was safe — the ledge where he stood was protected by an out-jutting section of rock. Any avalanche would skip above him, and keep on going downwards.

"Up here, Mr. Gordon." Cam and Peter White needed no second invitation to join the Italian on his ledge.

Below, Gelling alone took a few steps forward. With casual deliberateness, Belzoni gave the grenade a significant lift.

The German withdrew to his companions.

"Belzoni, we could make a deal." His voice echoed upwards.

"No deals." Belzoni was cheerful but uncompromising. "Unless it is one like you handed out to Guido. He was like me — a lazy, good for nothing Italiano. But he wasn't ready for dying."

Peter White gave a start. "Guido — was he . . . ?"

Belzoni nodded. "Let's say, my associate. He was watching Gelling, because we thought he was moving into our territory. There are rules, even in smuggling. It was the avalanche?"

"Yes." White's voice was low. "I — I'd brought the car to have the fake tank fitted. They caught him sneaking around, and Gelling shot him. They said they'd dump his body and fake the avalanche. I tried to stop them, and got thrown in the cellar."

Belzoni gave a growl. "You were lucky not to end up beside Guido, my friend. Perhaps they thought you might be a bargaining card for later." Then his eyes lit up. "Ah . . ."

Down below, Gelling and his men had turned and were running downhill. With a beaming smile, Belzoni flicked the safety pin from the grenade.

"Now," he said softly. The grenade flicked clear, a black speck against the snow. It exploded down below in a flash of vivid orange.

The snow was on the move before the blast died. A solid curtain of white, it flowed over their shelter, grumbling and growing as it swept downhill. Gelling and his men had almost reached the chalet when it hit them. They disappeared, the avalanche flowed on, and there was silence.

"It was only a little one," said Belzoni apologetically. "If you wish, Mr. Gordon, they can be dug out quite quickly." His eyes twinkled again. "The sub-inspector should soon be here, and I – er – prefer no publicity. It would be bad for business."

Cam brushed snow from his clothes. "Just how did you get here, anyway?"

"I followed you; I decided it would be interesting. But now I must go, and you have digging to do. Mr. White –"

"Yes?"

"Still interested in watch-smuggling?"

Peter White shuddered. "No."

Belzoni sighed. "A pity. But it was not watches you would have carried for Gelling."



"– definitely not watches," said the sub-inspector of police a little later.

A three-car convôy had gone up to the chalet just as Cam and Peter White had extracted the last of their three prisoners from the snowdrift. As Belzoni had said, the avalanche had been 'only a little one' – but enough to knock all fight from the trio.

"You were foolish, Herr White. Inside that petrol tank was another holding thirty thousand pounds in British five pound notes, the forged variety, the kind the Nazis printed in the war. Herr Gelling will have much explaining to do, enough to keep him till the snow thaws and we find that body."

Susan White clutched her husband's arm. "I'd have liked to thank Mr. Belzoni," she murmured.

Cam shook his head. "We won't see him again." He was wrong. Belzoni turned up in Edinburgh the day after they got home.

"My reward," he explained, "is in the spare tyre of your car."

"Not watches?" groaned Cam.

With a sigh, Peter White handed over the ignition key. "If I'd known –"

"Ah, but you didn't." Belzoni winked. "Which makes all the difference in smuggling. Like your one o'clock time gun when it fires from Edinburgh Castle, it is most effective when unexpected!"

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Nothing on Paper

BERNARD NEWMAN

*Unlike fiction, counter-
espionage is often
dull and very
unrewarding*

WHEN THE First World War began in 1914 I was seventeen – big, and still at school. But I was anxious to get into the war; in the general opinion it would be over by Christmas. But recruiting standards were very high, and I wore glasses, apparently a fatal handicap.

Then came a letter from a recruiting officer I had pestered. Interpreters were wanted – could I speak French? Having just passed my matric., I of course said yes.

I reported at Birmingham for my examination. The officer in charge seemed to have lunched almost exclusively in liquids. My examination was simple. He told smutty stories in French and I had to laugh at the right places. As he himself guffawed heartily, I passed.

I need hardly tell ex-soldiers that the one thing I did *not* do during the next four years was interpreting.

But my French was useful. Army rations were good but monotonous, with potatoes as the only vegetable. So I was often sent to buy fresh vegetables locally.

In the summer of 1917 I took two lorries to Amiens to buy six tons of cabbages. Suddenly, in the Rue des Trois Cailloux, I was hailed from a car. "Get in!" someone ordered. It was a French officer attached to my division – a liaison officer, I had always thought. But now he revealed himself as a senior officer of counter-espionage.

Amiens had long been a centre for German agents. Now the officer wanted to act against their informants – often unconscious traitors. It was certain that railwaymen were talking too freely; a German Intelligence officer could learn much from details of

trains on a main line.

The officer's own agents had failed, but my appearance had suggested a new idea. Soon I reverted to the rank of full private, and was given a companion. Regina was a prostitute. The sight of a British soldier in tow with a woman was very common in Amiens.

We were to visit *estaminets* frequented by railwaymen, and listen. I knew nothing of Intelligence work, but Regina did; she had been well-trained.

And there was I, on my first assignment, merely sitting in pubs. The spy of fiction knows everything, but I did *not*. Regina wanted to make a comment, but she spoke only French, and might be overheard. Apparently getting a midge in her eye, she began to blink – in Morse. And I didn't know Morse.

"That's all right," the French officer consoled me. "You have learned that you must learn. And no one expects quick results in this business; patience is essential. Never fear, I will make a spy-catcher of you yet."

He was obviously a man of authority, for he was always able to borrow me from my division. He appears in some of my spy novels under the name of Papa Pontivy, which is nothing like his own. These stories are fiction, but they include episodes from his career. He has been immensely useful to me: if my story halts, I have only to think: 'Now what would the old man do here?' and my yarn moves on. But I have also occasionally recorded some of Pontivy's actual cases. The French equivalent of the Official Secrets Act is not quite so repressive as ours.



One of my first tasks was unusual for a man of my years; I was still no more than twenty. Pontivy sought my aid in setting up a series of listening posts in the Amiens brothels. It was amazing how much information the women could pick up from their military clients. Regina enlisted some of the more intelligent women to spy on the others – most prostitutes are of low mentality. I helped to pick up soldiers emerging from these houses, and checked if the inmates had been over-inquisitive.

Regina and I would sometimes drop into the *estaminets* frequented by railwaymen, for Pontivy was still on the look-out for talkative fools. Other agents, too, were engaged on the same task. Intelligent railwaymen were enlisted as part-time agents, merely to listen to their workmates in off-duty hours. Pontivy had some minor successes, and more than one railwayman was severely censured for 'careless talk', but nothing really serious appeared. Pontivy's object was not so much to stop the chatter as to catch the German spy who was making use of it.

Weeks and months passed. Pontivy's activities, which covered

most of the region occupied by the British armies, gave him plenty to do. The German offensive of March, 1918, showed that they were very well informed about conditions on the British front. "We are the people who could lose the war," Pontivy commented, bitterly.

His methods intrigued me. He despaired of ever persuading people to keep their mouths shut, French civilians no less than British soldiers. "In wartime a spy's difficulty is not to get his information, but to get it home," he declared. So he concentrated on possible lines of communication. The censorship of letters abroad was keen, and almost every telephone girl seemed to be a Sûreté agent.

Pontivy had a twofold authority. He was a Sûreté man on loan to the Army's Deuxième Bureau.

He believed in the professional approach to a job, though he was always ready to adopt an amateur and make a professional of him, as he did with me. When an ex-detective of the Arras force was invalided out of the Army after sustaining severe wounds, Pontivy at once installed him as a railway clerk in Amiens goods yard, and as one of his own agents.

It was this man, Derocq, who many weeks later gave Pontivy his first clue.

"I've been frequenting the Café de Commerce, as you directed," he began. "There's plenty of gossip there. I can get cases of dangerous talk for you any week."

"Trivial stuff, Derocq."

"That's what I thought. Well, I've only got one other idea. There's a man who comes into the café at the week-end, and he doesn't fit."

"You mean?"

"Practically all the customers are railwaymen or carters working in the goods yard, but this chap isn't."

"What is he?"

"I don't know. He has never said, and nobody knows him. But he wears a suit which no railwayman could afford, not even a clerk."

"Does he join in the conversation?"

"No. But he hears it."

"I shall come to the café with you this week-end," Pontivy declared. "And I shall fit."

He did. I saw him as he set off, as scruffy a goods porter as I ever saw.

His first visit, on a Saturday, was a wash-out; the man wasn't there. Sunday was different; there were plenty of railwaymen present, and plenty of talk.

Derocq gave Pontivy a nudge as the man came in, took a seat at a table, and ordered a drink. To watch him was easy: French

estaminets are very fond of mirrors.

An hour later Pontivy whispered to Derocq: "Lafitte and Grimopont are outside. Indicate this chap when he comes out. They are to trail him home and find out who he is."

The man left, as did Pontivy a few minutes later.

"I'm on to something," he said, when he got back to his headquarters in Amiens. (It was not labelled 'H.Q. Counter-spy Service' but 'Franco-Argentine Export Company'.)

"Derocq's man?"

"Yes. He was right, the man doesn't fit. He is no trained agent, that's certain. He's clumsy, too."

"How?"

"Half-a-dozen times he put his hand in his trouser pocket, but brought nothing out. And he's not been properly trained in the art of writing in his pocket. He was making notes; I could tell that by his movements. A professional could have memorised what he heard, anyway. We'll see who he is."

A man named Ostheim, Grimopont reported, later. He was a commercial traveller, details unknown, but away from home a great deal.

"And he lives nowhere near the Café de Commerce?"

"Oh, no. He has a flat in the Boulevard Carnot, a couple of kilometres away."

"As I said, the man is an amateur," Pontivy said to me. "Let us go and look him up."

He led the way to headquarters. At that time the French police favoured the *dossier* system, keeping a file about everyone, whether respectable or not.

Ostheim's *dossier* contained nothing to his discredit. He represented a well-known firm of paper manufacturers in north-eastern France. Until the war began his centre had been Lille, now in German hands. He had been married, but his wife had divorced him, for infidelity, with ample evidence.

"So!" Pontivy grunted. "We may be able to use Regina here. And there's nothing else on the file, anyway."



There was nothing dramatic in Pontivy's plans, nothing resembling the popular stories in fiction. Pontivy belonged to an efficient organisation, and he used it effectively.

Ostheim was watched. We got long reports of his journeys, to sell paper.

But the man's divorce case intrigued Pontivy, who ferretted out its details. Ostheim had married a woman somewhat ill-favoured but with a reasonable dowry. And the infidelity which had led to his divorce had involved very young girls.

"Right. No doubt Regina will find us a young girl."

She did. At least, the girl was well over 20, but dressed and looked like 16. She had no training in counter-espionage, but in her own line she was expert. Within three weeks she was keeping us well posted of Ostheim's movements, which was the principal task allocated to her.

The man was still being followed, a difficult job, for his occupation kept him constantly on the move.

"He *is* the representative of this paper firm, no doubt about that," said Pontivy. "And he does the job. But one thing I can't understand. Occasionally he makes a journey outside his territory. Last week, for example, he went to Lyon. Why?"

"It's wartime. Maybe the representative for Lyon is away. And Ostheim has lost much of his own territory around Lille, so his firm may use him elsewhere," I suggested.

"That could be so. But we will check it, nevertheless."

Pontivy checked everything. This was one of the reasons for his successes.

Yet his first lead came from another angle. Ostheim's mistress phoned Regina to say that he had gone off for a day and a night.

"We'll have a look at his flat." Pontivy ignored rules about search warrants and the like.

The flat was ordinary enough, and well furnished. Ostheim used one small room as an office, and Pontivy gave it a thorough search. The desk revealed nothing, except a large, bulky envelope.

"We'll have a look inside that." Pontivy was an expert at such things as opening letters without leaving a trace.

Yet the result was disappointing. The envelope contained copies – evidently packed up to forward to his firm – of all the orders Ostheim had booked during the week. But suddenly I noticed a gleam in Pontivy's eyes.

"Ah, this is interesting." He passed over a sheet of paper. "Ostheim's account, travelling expenses. Well, you don't see the point?"

"No. It looks ordinary enough. Very detailed. And he omits no expense; he even claims when he has to use a public lavatory."

"Precisely, he claims for everything, but omits his journey to Lyon! Let's telephone. No, let us go."

The local police at Lyon were helpful. Ostheim had stayed only one night. After dinner, the porter at his hotel reported, he had gone to a cabaret. There a waiter identified him – we had a photograph, of course. But there we came to a dead end.

Pontivy was annoyed. "This is absurd. He *must* have come here for something. We have reason to suspect that he is the man who picks up information at Amiens, and maybe elsewhere on his journeys. But how does he get it home? That is our problem."

Ostheim later visited towns as far apart as Dijon, Orléans and Le Mans. He was of course followed, but his brief stay in each town was singularly unexciting. He stayed at a modest hotel, and apparently met no one. He allowed himself but one luxury: in each place he visited a cabaret or music hall.

"It isn't much," said Pontivy. "But it is the only lead I have – his entertainment. I need a list of the artistes at each place."

When these had been collected, Pontivy's face wore a broad grin.

"So! Now we know how Ostheim gets his information home."

"How?"

"There is one man who appears on each of these programmes, Mnemonicus, the Memory Man. That is clever. Ostheim repeats his information, and Mnemonicus remembers it. No need for notes, even."

"But how does he get the stuff to the Germans?"

"That we must find out. I shall go to Paris. The editor of the cabaret and music hall journal should be able to help. Or these people have a trade union. No, I cannot wait to get to Paris. I will risk the telephone."

Soon he had the information he needed. Mnemonicus was a Swiss. Bilingual, he could perform either in French or German. And he returned home to Berne after his short tours abroad.

"So our problem is solved. Now all we need is the proof. We have to think of judges and juries, and even courts martial demand proof."

But now that he *knew* both his suspects, the proof was not difficult to obtain. He had confirmed that Ostheim and Mnemonicus always stayed at the same hotel in each town. As they never met in public, the inference was that they met in their rooms.

In those days microphones and recorders were very primitive compared with those of to-day, but they were efficient enough to record the conversation in Ostheim's room; one had been fixed in the other man's room as well. Pontivy waited another week and trapped them again before he made his arrests.

He was not proud of this case. When I began to write up his exploits, he held out firmly against the inclusion of this one.

"But it was good work," I argued. "You got your man. Real solid, patient counter-spy work – not the fancy stuff of fiction."

"If it were fiction, it would have a better ending," he said. "I got my man, but –"

I could see his point. The case had been unusually protracted, and Ostheim and Mnemonicus were both arrested about noon on November 12th, 1918. The war had then been over for twenty-five hours.

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Quietly, by Night

C. M. MacLeod

*Seraphine alone knew where
dreams end and reality
begins . . .*

I HAD been sleeping badly ever since my husband died. My first night in the new apartment was not likely to be a good one. I put off going to bed as long as I could ; but at last it was pointless to sit up any longer.

It is a disagreeable business, taking off your warm clothes long after the heat has gone out of the pipes in a house that is not your own. Your night-gown is cold, the bathroom is cold, the sheets are coldest of all when there is no long-familiar, though possibly not great loved body, sharing them. I had a hot water bottle ; but it seemed a ridiculous little thing in the midst of so much emptiness. So I lay and shivered.

At least it was quiet. Below me lived two deaf old sisters. Above was only the dressmaker's place, empty now that the woman had died. Suddenly while at work, the obituary notice had read. There was still a dirty card that said, 'Seraphine Laberes, Dressmaking and Alterations', stuck over the mailbox. If she had gone a week earlier, I could have had my choice of two flats. Perhaps the top floor had better light and air. Still, the middle was always the warmest, my brother-in-law said.

It certainly was quiet. 'Next door to a convent', my brother-in-law kept reminding me, as though this were an advantage ; although in fact, neither of us knew anything about convents, and very little about the Protestant church with which we fancied ourselves to be affiliated. My brother-in-law is one of those fat, red-faced men who like to point out the obvious in loud, firm voices. I was tired of him and his everlasting good intentions.

Gradually, as my body warmed the bed, I began to feel something like a sense of comfort. It was all behind me now ; Henry's funeral, the awkward condolences and the need to make adequate replies, the exhausting and harrowing toil of breaking up my long-established household, the disagreeable business about the insurance. My brother-in-law had really been helpful over that. He had enjoyed making the company disgorge money just because some-

body had died, even though it was not to be his. 'Nicely provided for,' he kept repeating, as pleased as though he had been the far-sighted one himself.

There was plenty for me to live on. Nevertheless, I should find something to do. I was not used to being idle. It might be pleasant to have a job again, if one could be found in our gone-to-seed mill town. I could leave this quiet three-room flat every morning and not come back until supper-time. In between, there would be things to do and people to talk to. Not that I was much of a talker myself, but they would talk and I should hear the cheerful noise of voices. And on week-ends, when my brother-in-law's wife telephoned to invite me to Sunday dinner, I could say, 'Thank you, Martha ; but I've been working all week and I have to stay home and clean my rooms.'

Glad to have a plan, I dropped off to sleep.

★

As I said, I had not been sleeping well, and it took very little to wake me. A flicker of lights on the ceiling did it this time. I lay for some time on my back, looking up at them, wondering what they could be. They were too small and feeble to be car lights ; they moved in a confused, vaguely circular pattern.

Finally, I reached for my robe, stuck my feet into my slippers, and padded over to the window.

Two thoughts passed through my mind at the same time. 'My brother-in-law was wrong.' 'What on earth are they doing?' Next door to a convent was not such a quiet place after all, it seemed. The nuns were conducting some sort of candle-light ceremony in the narrow, iron-railed garden under my window. I could barely make them out, ungainly shapes in their black robes, each with a lighted taper casting occasional yellow gleams on her whitish cowl. The flames looked so feeble I wondered how they could possibly shine into my room ; yet when I looked behind me, there were the tiny spots of light still reflected on the ceiling.

I tried to see what they were doing ; but there seemed to be no sense to their milling about. With some difficulty, I counted them. Fourteen. The number carried no significance that I knew of. After a while, I got bored with watching them and went back to bed. At once, as though I had turned a switch, the lights were gone. Out of curiosity, I got up and went over to the window again. The garden was empty. I lay down once more, wondering if they did it every night and whether I should ever get used to it.

The following day turned out far different and far busier than I had anticipated. To begin with, I still had a great deal of unpacking and settling to do. In the midst of it, the telephone man came. No sooner had he got the instrument installed than I impulsively picked

it up and called the town library where I used to work before my marriage. Miss Harcourt was still there, quite old now, of course, and she remembered me.

"Anna Harris! Oh, yes, it's Anna Goodbody now, isn't it? Indeed we'd rejoice to have you back. It's so hard to get anyone really suitable now, with all the brighter young girls moving away where they can get more pay—" and so on for quite a while. She asked if I could fill in at the North Branch that very evening, as it was Mrs. Somebody's daughter's birthday and she'd been hoping to get off.

Happy to be of use again, I said, yes. I remembered the old routines and no, I didn't mind at all; though not sure whether she was apologising for the short notice or the low wages. After a very complicated series of telephone calls, it was arranged for me to be on duty at seven o'clock. This meant a quick pressing out of a suitable dress, a scratched-together supper, and a fast walk to the North Branch.

I got through the two hours easily, glad to be back in the musty-smelling old building I had been so glad to leave twenty-seven years before. Whoever was running it now was doing an extremely poor job of reading the shelves. I managed to get quite a lot of the non-fiction straightened out, as not many borrowers came in and only three or four teenagers giggled half-heartedly at the reference tables. I went home thoroughly tired and quite pleased with myself.



That night, I had no trouble falling asleep. But I was awakened after a while by the nuns' little lights flickering on the ceiling. I tried to ignore them; but curiosity got the better of me, and I went over to the window. There they were, just as they had been the night before, each with her candle, still doing nothing in particular.

Knowing nothing about Catholic orders, I was free to speculate. Maybe this was one of those cloistered convents, where nobody ever spoke – I could hear no sound of voices – and they never went out in the daytime. To be sure, I saw nuns around town once in a while; but perhaps there were others who had only this means of getting fresh air and exercise. It seemed odd; but the whole concept of the religious life is beyond me. I gave it up, and idly counted them again. Fifteen. One more than the night before; unless, of course, I had counted wrong.

I had not. Every night after that, I saw the same performance; and every night there was one more nun in the yard. It got to be a sort of game. I would drop off to sleep, fully expecting to be wakened a few hours later. When the lights started to flicker on the ceiling, I would get up, count the number of flares – it was easier than trying to sort out the black shapes themselves – and go

back to bed. As soon as I was back under the covers, the lights would go out. It was as though I controlled the amount of time the nuns spent in the yard; and I have to admit it gave me a queer feeling.

These nightly interruptions interfered seriously with my rest. What with my job and keeping up the apartment, I began to feel rather run-down, and I'm sure I looked it.

Friday afternoon, Miss Harcourt spoke to me about it. "I hope this work isn't going to be too much for you, Anna."

"Oh, no," I said. As a matter of fact, we had very little to do. "It's just that I haven't been getting enough sleep because of the nuns."

"The nuns?" She looked at me, quite startled. "What do you mean?"

I told her about the lights.

"That is strange," she said. "I've lived here all my life, and I never heard of such a thing."

"I thought perhaps they couldn't go out during the day, or something," I ventured.

"No, that can't be it. They are a working order. A lot of them teach at the parochial school. We get them in here often, about the Catholic book lists. Some of the others run the Thrift Shop and that little place that sells religious statues and what-not. I believe they also go around soliciting funds for the church. This is a poor parish, you know, since the mill closed down."

She didn't have to tell me that. One had only to walk down our main street and look at the dirt-streaked store windows, many of them empty except for torn paper signs and maybe a fly-specked cardboard display or a forgotten paper cup; and see the women shuffling along in last year's cheap coats with the hems dragging and sleazy kerchiefs tied over their curlers.

"I just don't understand what they could be doing," Miss Harcourt was still fussing. "Maybe if you spoke to the Mother Superior, she could have them use the other side of the yard, or something."

"How many are there?" I asked.

"I really couldn't say for sure. Quite a large group, I believe. They were brought here during the war, when everything was booming. Then they just stayed on. Nowhere else to go, I suppose, like the rest of us." She sighed and went back to her dingy office, leaving me to cope with the week's circulation records.

Over the week-end it wasn't so bad, since I could sleep late both mornings. Then there was the pleasure of refusing Martha's invitation to Sunday dinner. She and my brother-in-law took the news about my job just as I had expected - pleased that they wouldn't have to bother with me; annoyed because I had gone ahead without consulting them. I didn't care. Already, my life was taking on a

pattern in which they had no part.

I did think of dropping a smart remark to my brother-in-law that life next door to a convent wasn't so rosy as he had painted it; but I didn't. I was afraid he might feel it his duty to do something, and I didn't want him interfering. After all, if the nuns wanted to walk in their own garden, it was nobody's business but theirs. All that week-end, I felt quite protective towards them.

By Wednesday afternoon, when I caught myself falling asleep over the books I was mending, the mellow mood had worn off. At that point, my nightly count reached twenty-two. The milkman had told me there were fifty – sisters, he called them – living at the convent. That meant I probably had twenty-three more nights of broken sleep to endure. Then, for all I knew, they would start over again. Really, it was too much!



Looking up from my work, I happened to see a nun pass the door of the staff room. On impulse, I got up and went out to meet her.

"Good afternoon," I said, quite politely, all things considered. "I'm Mrs. Goodbody. I happen to be a neighbour of yours."

"A neighbour?" She was a good-natured, not very bright-looking woman, wearing gold-rimmed glasses that had been clumsily mended with adhesive tape. "Oh, you live next door to the convent. Then you must have known our dear Seraphine." She beamed at me.

"No, I'm afraid I didn't," I said. "I only moved in a little over a week ago."

I don't think she even heard me. "We miss her so," she went on, picking at the frayed edges of her habit. "She was so wonderfully kind to us." She made the sign of the cross and wandered off to join another of her order, who was talking to Miss Harcourt at the desk.

I didn't like to chase after her again. Feeling defeated and cross, I went back to mending books.

A little later, Miss Harcourt came in. "I asked Sister Marie Claire," she said abruptly, "and she says they don't."

"Don't what?"

"She says," Miss Harcourt explained carefully in her patient old lady's voice, "that the rules of the convent compel them all to be in bed at half-past nine every night. She says none of them would dare disobey."

"I don't care what she says," I replied sharply. "I see them out there every night."

She looked at me for a moment without speaking, then went back to the desk. I knew what she was thinking. 'The shock of losing her husband, poor dear.'

That evening, I had the North Branch again. On my way into the house afterward, I thumped at the door of my first-floor neighbours. Their television was blasting full force and I had quite a time making them hear. Finally one of the sisters, Miss Edith, I believe it was, shuffled to the door.

"Come in, come in, Mrs. Goodbody. Helen, it's Mrs. Goodbody from upstairs," she screamed.

The other sister, who seemed to be even deaf, smiled and nodded, then turned back to the television. She was watching a Western, and apparently enjoyed being able to hear the shots.

"I wanted to ask you," I shouted over the racket, "if you ever see the nuns out in the yard at night."

Miss Edith nodded briskly. "Fine. Not a bit of trouble lately. It's the new treatment. What I say is you can't be too careful with all this—" I think the next word was sickness. She had a trick of raising and lowering her voice between a bellow and a whisper, quite without regard to the sense of her remarks. Between that and the gunfire, I lost a good deal.

"Since she died. Though if you ask me she wore herself to death, doing for those nuns."

"Yes, the nuns," I shouted. "Do you ever —"

"Night and day. It was too much for a woman her age; but she was determined. I never knew such a stubborn woman. Did we, Helen?" Her sister smiled and shook her head, not taking her eyes away from the screen.

"We could hear that sewing machine of hers going at all hours. Some nights it kept us awake."

She must have been talking about the late Seraphine Laberes, I decided. It seemed incredible that any noise at all could disturb this pair. Perhaps the empty apartment between had acted as a giant sounding board. I tried once more.

"They've been keeping me awake," I screamed.

Surprisingly, she almost heard me. She looked at me oddly. "It can't be her. She's been dead for two weeks."

"Not her! The nuns!"

"That's what I said. It was doing for those nuns killed her, you mark my words. Working all day at the tailor shop and all night for them and never getting a penny for it, I know for a fact. She even bought the material herself. She told me so. 'I can't stand seeing them going around in rags,' she said. I heard her," Miss Edith finished proudly.

The seamstress must have had stronger lungs than me. I gave it up and fell back, like Miss Helen, on smiles and nods.

"She made one a week, regular as clockwork. I'd meet her Sunday mornings, going over there with a big, black bundle over her arm. She didn't care. 'It's the Lord's work,' she'd say to me.

She meant to finish them all. But she only got thirteen of them done. They found the thirteenth finished on her machine the night she died. It was an unlucky number for her all right, as I said to Helen. Didn't I, Helen?" The last words were spoken in a whisper.

"You certainly did, Edith," said Miss Helen.

I said good night and went upstairs.



That night I never shut an eye. I undressed and got into bed. Then I lay there, staring up at the ceiling, waiting for those maddening pinpoints of light to appear.

Finally, I could stand it no longer. I got up, pulled on the first thing that came to hand, grapped my black coat and a scarf, and went downstairs. I found myself tiptoeing so as not to wake the house, then feeling silly for doing it, considering that only Miss Edith and Miss Helen were below, and nothing above but the empty flat where Miss Edith said Seraphine Laberes had worked herself to death sewing for the nuns.

The garden was still empty when I got down there. I walked over and stood close to the iron palings, beginning to wonder why I had come.

After a few minutes, I saw a glimmer of light over in the far corner, then another and another. I counted them, one by one, until the twenty-third appeared. To my annoyance, however, they stayed huddled over in the corner.

I wish they'd get started with whatever it is they do, I thought crossly. I was getting chilly, standing there.

Immediately, as though I had turned on the power that moved them, the lights started milling about. Still, they stayed away.

"Oh, come over here!" I muttered.

They came, all twenty-three, in a silent semi-circle, looming towards me through the railings.

No hands held the candles. No faces showed beneath the cowls. The robes were empty.

I believe I must have fainted. The next thing I remember, I was pulling myself up by the iron palings, picking dirt and leaves off my coat, staring in at the barren garden, empty now in the bleak dawn.

I was not frightened. I only knew I should never sleep again until I had finished what must be done.

I went back into the house and took down the card that said, 'Seraphine Laberes, Dressmaking and Alterations'. I carried it upstairs and burned it in an ash-tray. Then I bathed, dressed, and put on my hat. It was still very early, so I puttered around making the bed, dusting a little, brushing my coat where I had fallen. Out of habit, I made coffee; but I did not drink it. As soon as it was decently light, I went next door and rang the bell.

The middle-aged nun who opened the door had on a neat, new habit.

"Seraphine made that," I said.

"She – yes, she did," stammered the sister, quite startled by my remark.

"She finished thirteen of them, I believe."

"She did, and may the blessing of Mary rest on her soul forever."

"But she still had – how many to go?"

"Thirty-seven," the portress replied promptly, as though it was a number stamped on her mind. "Me being on the door," she half apologised, "I got the first one."

"What is the name of your order?"

"The Little Sisters of the Poor."

Yes, it would be. I took out my cheque-book.

Eyeing me with a mixture of hope and doubt, she backed away from the door. "I'd better call Mother Superior. Will you step in, please?"

I don't know what I expected a convent to be like. The room into which she showed me reminded me of a dentist's waiting room. An elderly, not very successful dentist, like the ones in our town. One of those hideous pseudo-Renaissance tables stood in the middle, with a couple of straight chairs drawn up to it. I sat down in one.

The Mother Superior came bustling in, her long rosary swinging from her waist. I thought perhaps I ought to stand up. What on earth did one call her? 'Mother Superior' sounded rather a mouthful; and 'Mother' hardly suitable from a woman her own age. I bowed and said nothing.

She waved me back into my seat and took the other chair herself. The portress stepped out; but I could see her black skirts just beyond the door.

I got right down to business. "I must apologise for coming so early; but I have to do this as soon as possible, for my own peace of mind."

The nun's lips formed the word, "Soul."

"My soul isn't involved," I said rather tartly.

"Oh, but the soul's always involved, Mrs. –"

"Goodbody," I said. "I live next door, where Seraphine Laberes used to live."

"Dear old Seraphine," she sighed. "I wish we had more like her."

"I understand she was making you all new uniforms."

"Habits, yes."

"Can you tell me how much each one costs?"

"More than we can afford, I'm afraid." The Mother Superior was pretty shabby, herself. She named a figure that exactly corresponded to my weekly salary at the library.

"And you need thirty-seven more."

"Thirty-seven for the sisters. Thirty-eight counting me," she corrected with childlike shrewdness.

I figured quickly on the back of my blank cheque. "Is that right?"

"It is. I've figured it often enough, myself."

I filled in the amount, signed the cheque, and pushed it across the table. "Please get them right away."

"But Mrs. -- Mrs. Goodbody," she was quite overcome. "This is a lot of money."

"The cheque's good," I said shortly. "My husband left me --" a phrase of my brother-in-law's popped into my head -- "well provided for."

"I don't know how to thank you."

"You must not thank me!" I think I frightened her with my vehemence. "You must take your thirty-seven nuns into your chapel, or church, or whatever it is, and give thanks immediately that new habits have been provided through the efforts of Seraphine Laberes. I mean it! If you don't do it right away, I'll stop payment on the cheque."

"We'll certainly do it," she said nervously, "and we'll also say --"

"No! My name must never be mentioned. They're from Seraphine. Promise me, by all you hold sacred."

"I swear it, on the Sacred Heart of Jesus." She made the sign of the cross, then she looked at me for a long time. I think she saw something. "Seraphine was a very determined woman."

I nodded. I suddenly felt drained of all my strength, as though I had sat up for many nights, sewing. "I must get to work."

She saw me to the door herself.

That night I slept like a baby.

I see the nuns in their new habits now; but only in the daytime, thank goodness. Every so often, I slip into the Catholic church and light a candle. I don't quite know why I do it; but as Miss Edith says, you can't be too careful.

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SOLUTION TO EWMM JUNE CROSSWORD (No. 5)

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PAVANE

RAY DORIEN

IT HANGS in a glass case on the wall of a world famous museum - Exhibit 940, example of English silk embroidery on a gentleman's waistcoat of the Jacobean period. It is of brown stiff silk, and down the front opening accompanying the exquisitely worked button-holes is a pattern of miniature flowers - daisies, lady's smocks, cowslips, gillyflowers, wild roses. At the top is a delicate spray of violets, with curving stalks and heart-shaped leaves. At the last button-hole is also a spray of violets, but instead of the pale heliotrope of the other blooms, the last violet seems to have been worked in red, or is it an ancient stain?



Keziah brought the fresh candles into the parlour where her mistress sat at her embroidery in the window-seat, and gave an exclamation of dismay.

The panelled room had been growing darker in the twilight, although the last crimson glimmer of the sunset was reflected in the oval mirror which hung on the opposite wall.

"There you are, straining your pretty eyes over that waistcoat for Master Edward, Mistress Antonia! In this light! And beautiful it is, too, with all the time you have spent on it."

She stopped suddenly as if she had bitten her tongue, as if she wished she had not spoken the last few words.

Antonia looked up with a faint smile, as if she had come back from a distant dream.

"Yes, it is a few years now, isn't it?" she said with tranquillity. "But it is almost finished."

Keziah fidgeted with her apron, her eyes on the gentle oval of the girl's face, the dark ringlets above the white neck.

"He'll be here to-night then? You'll be glad to see him. It's been lonely here since your uncle died, poor man. And Mistress Patience, your companion, going so sudden like."

Again Antonia smiled, and reached out her hand to the tabouret, on which her embroidery tools were laid out in orderly fashion - the spools of coloured silk, the fine needles, the small scissors, and the elegant shining stiletto for piercing the holes of the flower centres in the material.

Keziah had placed the branched candlestick on the table. Now she brought the second one to balance it, and stood back to watch the reflection of the flames quivering for a moment in the polished pool of the table surface. The reflection quivered flashingly, then was still.

She bent down to look at the work spread on the girl's lap. The brown stiff silk rustled, and the flowers worked there seemed to stir with the life a woman's fingers had given them.

"La, and it's a pretty thing," she said. "Those first violets—I remember you working those that first spring when Master Edward came, and you've gone on with the other flowers each year."

The white fingers holding the needle were very still.

"Any man would be proud of such a fine waistcoat for his wedding," said Keziah fondly.

The girl bent her head over her work.

"Pity he didn't come straight away when your uncle died, but there, he's had his own concerns in London. And you've the note to say he'll be here to-night. I've a fine capon in the kitchen and there's the bed made ready for him."

The girl reached out a hand, almost as if her eyes were blinded, and her fingers touched the stiletto by accident.

"There now, Mistress Antonia, let me put your work away for you. You'll have no more need for it after to-night; surely it's finished now. And it's always made me fearsome, that little fine knife your grandmother brought with her from Italy."

The girl lifted her head.

"Do you hear?"

Keziah was flustered by the arrival for which she had been waiting, and taking such pains. She bustled away, her best dress crackling with importance, her cap nodding with approval, and her loud, cheerful voice could be heard in the hallway beyond, welcoming the traveller.



The girl rose and laid the finished waistcoat on the back of a carved chair. The delicate colours of the flowers on the stiff silk caught the flickering light from the candles and the dancing light from the wood fire.

There entered a tall, broad young man, advancing as if sure of his welcome.

"My dearest, I am late. Forgive me, I beg you."

"Yes, you are late," she said in a low voice.

He had taken her hand to kiss it in the approved manner, but at her tone he straightened himself.

"Am I not to be forgiven, then?" he asked in a beguiling voice.

She sighed, and his lips touched her hand before she withdrew it.

"Women love to forgive, and you are the gentlest of your sex, madam."

"I should not be so sure of that, Edward. Keziah will bring you your favourite wine."

He had seated himself in a big, carved chair beside the hearth, carefully disposing the skirts of his coat. Yet he kept a wary, uncertain eye on her. Then his attention was caught by the glitter of the small embroidery tools on the tabouret behind her.

"Ah, of course, the embroidery. I must say it always gives me the greatest pleasure to see your white fingers at such elegant, feminine work."

She smiled.

Keziah came in with the wine, and Antonia motioned to him to pour it into the crystal goblet. He lifted it in tribute to her.

"And where is Mistress Patience, your companion?" he asked.

Keziah, standing by with the air of a privileged servant, her arms folded across her ample waist, gave a start at his words.

"She left, when the terms of Uncle Jonathan's will were read," the girl answered quietly.

"The poor old gentleman!" Keziah added. "And the dear mistress sitting by him, all those evenings, him taking so long over his task of dying. The work she has put into the fine waistcoat for your wedding! It's a marvel she made all those little flowers so fine."

"You have duties in the kitchen, Keziah. Master Edward will be hungry after his long journey."

With a puzzled glance the woman went away.

"So that's the waistcoat! I remember," said Edward with an attempt at jocularly. "A marvel, indeed, Antonia."

"Will you be pleased to try it on?" she asked. "It may not fit - after these long years of waiting."

He rose elegantly to remove his fine buff coat and the waistcoat beneath it.

As her words sank in he turned as if affronted.

"Now, my dearest Antonia, you know well why it was better for us to wait, hard as it was. The old man needed you."

"And he was to leave me a fortune," she commented drily. "Let me help you on with the waistcoat."

Over his shoulders went the stiff silk, from neck to hem the flowers caught the light as if they were alive with the hope that loving fingers had worked into them.

He looked down at the garment with an almost childish pride.

"It is very fine indeed, Antonia."

"It is finished," she said. "A fine coat for a bridegroom, is it not?"

His eyelids flickered.

"We will talk about that - later this evening."

Now she moved towards him, still smiling, her thin face touched with colour, the dark unpowdered ringlets swinging above her slender white neck.

"Talk – of what? Of how I waited and waited, cozened by you to wait until my uncle's death, when I should be an heiress? And you could come and please yourself with me, and go when you chose, and I must sit at home and use my needle – on this!"

She put out a hand, and he seemed to shrink back.

"My dearest Antonia, you know we decided it was for the best –"

"I might even have believed again, even now," she said almost dreamily. "But you sent two notes, Edward."

"Two notes? What do you mean?"

He now stepped back from her.

"Your note that you would be with me to-night, as in the dear past days. And with it the note to – to someone else, saying that you must visit an elderly relative in the country, but would soon return to – your beloved wife."

"Antonia, it is – it is not so."

"Your very new dear wife, married when you heard the news that my uncle, after all, had nothing of a great fortune to leave. He had mortgaged all that he could, and chained me here – to work at *this*."

Her shaking finger pointed at the waistcoat.

"But Antonia, you must understand –"

"Understand? That you have cheated me. Seven years of pretence, seven years of dreams, too long, too long. A waistcoat for another woman's bridegroom, indeed! That is all I have to show for my life."

He put out both hands to her, disturbed, pleading.

"Let me counsel you – we can still meet –"

"Counsel! I want none from you."

She had put out a hand behind her, almost blindly, reaching to the level of the tabouret.

"It is finished, to the last violet."

In a surge of anger and passion and misery she drove the stiletto through the work on which she had spent her love, and saw his blood stain the silks to a new and deadly colour.

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ADVERTISEMENT in *The Motor*, October, 1932: 'Bandits! Be prepared. Moseley Rubber Truncheon, 6s. Lays a man out without mess.'

The Hanging Game

FERGUSON PHILLIPS

EACH TIME she bent to pick up the suitcase from the floor her heart began a prolonged tremolo. Should she go to visit Mrs. Mortimer? Was it wise? Yet what choice had she? If she stayed any longer in this house with its brooding atmosphere of death, she'd certainly go mad.

It was the noise of the taxi approaching the house, the wild screech of it braking in the drive, which forced her into a positive decision. She'd made her arrangements – of course she'd go.

She handed out her suitcase to the driver. He gave her a long glance of commiseration. This was another thing she'd be glad to escape – this effusion of sympathy that only a small town could be capable of producing. She'd get away from it all, give herself a chance to decide on what lines she wanted to remould her life. Besides, Mrs. Mortimer was expecting her, wasn't she?

In the taxi she reflected upon what had happened – was it only a month before? Jake, her husband, had been killed suddenly, horribly. He'd been a well-known figure, a member of the town council for many years. The editor of the local newspaper had decided upon a write-up for Jake – his life, his aspirations over the years. She'd thought about this. There'd been precious little money in the bank. Jake had been a big spender, the life of every party, and he'd attended many. Always he was the one who insisted upon paying for the drinks. Her housekeeping allowance had suffered in consequence.

There'd be money for the rights to publish the story. Enough to dispense with a few financial problems for a year at least, enough to keep her going until she arranged some other source of income. She gave Jake's story to the editor. All things considered, there wasn't much to it apart from his share in politics.

Following the story there'd been letters. She'd been led to expect these. Some of them were critical – not all local people, it seemed, had sympathized with the Jake Storey administration. Yet some letters had been sympathetic. One was singularly kind. That letter

came from Mrs. Mortimer.

"Any time", Mrs. Mortimer had written, "you need a rest, a change of surroundings, a solace after your unhappy experience, I will be most glad to receive you. Do come, when you are ready."

Isa Storey was impressed – that a complete stranger should make such an offer. Obviously she was a sincere, deeply thoughtful person.

Though Mrs. Mortimer was not a local woman, she had included in her letter that she'd heard many times of Jake Storey's ability, and had had the deepest admiration for his achievements.

Isa had written to thank Mrs. Mortimer. She felt, in a sense, indebted to her, though she could not fully ascertain why. Maybe it was because, all along, this is what she'd wanted, somewhere to go, away from this town and its associations with Jake Storey; away from the unrelenting glare of sympathy.



She arrived at the station, paid the taxi driver and boarded the train.

Mrs. Mortimer was at the other end to greet her, a tall woman of indeterminable years. Her grey eyes were minute behind thick, pebble glasses, her clothing was archaic.

"I thought you'd be much older," she greeted Isa, "that photograph of you in the newspaper was older." Despite Isa's protests she bent to pick up the suitcase.

Isa was suddenly curious. "Why did you think I'd be so much older?" she queried.

"Because of your husband – his age, I mean, Mrs. Storey. He was almost fifty-nine when he was – when he died."

Isa nodded. "Of course – I forgot that. Jake was fifteen years my senior."

"You're – well, you're not quite the sort of person I expected, either," Mrs. Mortimer continued. "You look well, you're blonde – and –"

"You thought maybe I'd be more impressive?" Isa bit her lip. Jake Storey had married her because she was a 'dolly', as he put it, and then his swift advent into public life had demanded a partner much more compelling. In fact, she'd been a disappointment to Jake.

"You must tell me about him," said Mrs. Mortimer. Her words were not a suggestion, they were almost a demand. It had the effect of making Isa want to turn tail and run.

All her years with Jake Storey had been spent under subjection. He'd been so much of a man of the people and in constant demand; she'd never been more than his subordinate. She had not

been able to participate in the municipal work, the menial tasks were therefore her portion, and she hadn't enjoyed the position. Her years with Jake were not an experience she'd care to repeat, and she fervently hoped that Mrs. Mortimer would not turn out to be yet another dominant personality.

"Tell me," she began, "what made you write that letter?"

Mrs. Mortimer favoured her with a stony glance. "Why—I always write to newspapers. That's my profession you could say. You know how it is—we all have to have some kind of activity, writing letters to newspapers is mine. I'd heard of your husband, though, heard of his work in local politics—who hasn't? He certainly was a man who made his presence felt."

He certainly was, Isa conceded silently. Now he was dead, and by God, she decided with an onrush of feeling—by God she was glad he was dead!



A day after her arrival at Mrs. Mortimer's, she discovered to her dismay that her first impression of the woman had been an accurate one. There was a quality here, not only effacing, but stultifying—even frightening. Mrs. Mortimer was a 'watcher'. She watched through cracks in doors, through chinks in curtains, and always made lengthy observations through mirrors.

One evening, shortly after dark, and before the window curtains were drawn, Isa looked up and there was Mrs. Mortimer's cadaverous face close to the window pane.

It was an uncanny experience. Was the woman mad? Had she been instructed by someone to invite her here and watch her movements? This last thought was worse than any other she'd had since she'd come here.

She had a small room in Mrs. Mortimer's house. More and more she confined herself to it, avidly consulting the calendar each day. She'd accepted an invitation to stay a month, but only five days had elapsed and already she was longing to be home. She should have made some excuse and left right away, but she didn't want to hurt Mrs. Mortimer's feelings, and then again, the food was good. In her peculiar way, too, Mrs. Mortimer could be kind. She would hover around solicitously after she'd served a special dish, wondering if it were suitable.

"I want you to enjoy your stay—in fact I want you to stay, and share my house. I'm lonely, too, you know," Mrs. Mortimer said one day. "I've no one in whom I can confide, really. You are enjoying your stay, Mrs. Storey, aren't you?"

Isa swallowed a mouthful of clear chicken soup. As usual these questions of Mrs. Mortimer's were in the nature of a demand, rather than an inquiry. She nodded, trying to look enthusiastic,

but it was difficult while she was so numb with bewilderment at her hostess's behaviour in general.

"You're very kind," she said at length.

Towards the end of the first week of Isa's stay, Mrs. Mortimer began to discuss Jake Storey. She discussed him deliberately, as though she was performing a weighty, and necessary duty. She began by stressing once more her admiration for his work, and went on to add that his politics, his aspirations in general, had always been compatible with her own. It was as if she had in some way shared his work. Then she wound up swiftly, throwing out the question with deadly accuracy:

"How did Mr. Storey die?"

They were sitting before the television screen at the time. The programme was dull. Isa's jaw dropped. She completely lost control of her features.

"You know how he died, Mrs. Mortimer – you read the account in the press."

"Of course I'm familiar with the press account, my dear – who isn't, but I'm asking *you* how he really met his end."

Isa grew cold. There was a kind of fury mingled with the keen dismay in her emotions, yet her glance clung to Mrs. Mortimer as if she were hypnotized. Her hands moved from her knees to the arms of her chair, and there they finally remained.

Mrs. Mortimer's look was grim. She got up and switched off the television set.

"Now, my dear Mrs. Storey – I think we've just about reached the end of our little game. Let me put my cards upon the table, first. I asked you here, not because I was sorry for you in your bereavement," her face tightened, "but because I suspected you of murdering your husband."

Isa tried to get up, tried to protest. Her body seemed pinioned to the chair and she could not articulate.

"Quite right – best not to move," Mrs. Mortimer advised. "I know you'll want to run away, want to deny all I've said, but it won't do you a scrap of good. Since you're so reluctant to say what exactly happened to your husband, I'll tell you. I'll enact – verbally that is – your unfortunate husband's end."

"You were fond of playing games together – that's one secret you kept from your closest friends – you and your fabulous Jake Storey tale in the press. He wasn't quite the illustrious figure he created for himself in the eyes of the public, was he? To put it bluntly, not quite normal. He had a tendency to play games – childish games, and in order to placate him you had to play along with him. One day you found you could bear it no longer. You decided to play the last game of all before you, yourself, became mentally deranged."

"You fixed a noose from a beam in the ceiling. 'Hangman's wharf' the game is called. He stood on a chair, put his head in the noose and he had to count ten quickly, take his head out of the noose before you came running from the other room to kick the chair away."

"However, the game had only started. He put his head in the noose thinking you had left the room, but you hadn't. Instead you waited, crept up from behind and kicked the chair away while he was still counting."

Horror piled up in Isa's eyes. She swallowed hard, and found her voice. "I've never heard of such a stupid game," she protested. "I think you're crazy even to suggest such a thing. How would I ever have induced a grown man to go in for such a downright stupid act?"

"That's just it, Mrs. Storey - he was a grown man, but not an adult one, mentally, and you know it."

"If you don't mind, I think I'll go to my room, Mrs. Mortimer. There's really nothing more I have to say to you."



Isa managed to grope her way to the door. She'd been a fool to accept this woman's invitation, she told herself. A complete stranger offering hospitality. What on earth had she been thinking of? After Jake's death she'd felt sick, alone. Now - she'd rather have the loneliness.

Once upstairs in her room she locked the door behind her, her fears suddenly dispelled and she worked rapidly. She packed her belongings chaotically into her suitcase. Home would be a haven after this. She'd leave now.

She waited until she heard Mrs. Mortimer's bedroom door close, then started downstairs. When she was only half-way down, the light was switched on suddenly. She suppressed a scream. Mrs. Mortimer was waiting for her at the foot of the stairs, still fully dressed. Her hand was outstretched to take the suitcase.

"I suspected something like this might happen," she said. "Leaving, are you? No one ever escapes from guilt, Mrs. Storey, you should know that. You've tried escaping once before, don't you remember? When you answered my letter - that was a way out for you, you hoped. You came here to me to get away from your home, now here you are faced with another dilemma, and still desperate to escape. Hopeless, isn't it?"

She took Isa's arm in a tight grip. Isa began to protest frantically while attempting to regain hold of her suitcase.

"Oh no you don't, Mrs. Storey! The audacity of you - trying to get away. When you leave my house it will be under police

escort. Confess – confess to your crime! No? Very well. I'm going to ring the police now."

"Please, Mrs. Mortimer – *please!*" Isa tried to grasp the phone. "There's no need – I –" She sat down limply upon the hall chair and faced the woman.

"No need, you say? Perhaps I'd better phone the police anyway, Mrs. Storey. I think maybe after all there is need. You're quite capable of murdering again – maybe a second husband next time. Go on – just before I do phone, tell me how you played that little game with Mr. Storey."

Isa got up swiftly, making a desperate bid to reach the door, but Mrs. Mortimer was there before her.

"Oh no you don't, my girl. I've got you, and I'm keeping you here." She reached for the phone and dialled a number. "Send Inspector Pritchard over here at once," she demanded. "Tell him I've someone here he's been suspicious about for a long time."

★

The inspector arrived within twenty minutes. Isa was still in the hall, cold, desolate, pinioned to a chair by an implacable Mrs. Mortimer. When Mrs. Mortimer went to open the door in answer to a knock, she made no effort to move.

"Now, ladies," the inspector began equably, "let's have this matter thrashed out. Mrs. Mortimer, please go into the kitchen and make us some coffee, and Mrs. – ?"

"Storey," supplied Isa dully.

"And Mrs. Storey and I will have a chat in the lounge, together."

"She murdered her husband – but you know that already, don't you, Inspector," Mrs. Mortimer began. "She's not likely to tell you all the details, but I will – I'll tell you how I discovered them, too."

Isa sat opposite the inspector upon the lounge divan. The tears came for the first time since Jake Storey died. They were not tears for him. Ever since she'd married him she'd been weeping inwardly. This was a final spilling over of despair.

"Come, now," Pritchard said gently. "I'm not so formidable as that, am I, even if I am a policeman? Tell me all about the difficulty."

"That woman – she's crazy!"

"No – no!" Pritchard answered. "Her husband – he was unbalanced – a paranoic, but not Mrs. Mortimer."

"I tell you she's crazy," Isa insisted. "My husband died, it was an accident – a road accident. You must have read of it in the newspapers."

A light of understanding came into Pritchard's eyes. "What – now I have it. Jake Storey, of course! What's all this about murder, then?"

Isa repeated all that Mrs. Mortimer had done and said.

Pritchard's feet moved restlessly. "You know, Mrs. Storey – you may have something after all. She may be after all a mental case, and maybe she's guilty of murder, too. That's exactly the way *her* husband died – by hanging, we thought by hanging himself, but there were one or two unsatisfactory details. I think I'll have a word with Mrs. Mortimer." He got up.

"I really can't understand why she invited me here in the first place," said Isa.

"That's not difficult to understand, Mrs. Storey – not once you know the facts about her. Her husband was in politics, too, during his more lucid years. He led her a devil of a life, though, one way and another. Your case – your husband's story in the newspapers, too. It's possibly brought it all back to her. She's mixed up no doubt, but she's . . . well . . . You stay on here a few minutes, Mrs. Storey ; I'll see you safely back home, in a little while."

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THE JUST MEN OF CORDOVA	
THE RIVER OF STARS	
THE ADVENTURES OF HEINE	
MR. JUSTICE MAXELL	
THE COUNCIL OF JUSTICE	

by Stanley Ellin, this time again at his best with *The Crime of Ezechiele Cohen*.

GREEN GROW THE TRESSES-O, Stanley Hyland (*Gollancz*, 16s.)

A thunderingly good whodunit, told with gusto and a sort of North Country pawkishness. The corpse is dyed green even to the hair (watch that, aficionados). Those who are keen bibliomaniacs will find much to please them. Only criticism: at times the author is just a little too earthy. It's realistic, perhaps, but ugly.

LONELY SIDE OF THE RIVER, The, Donald Mackenzie (*Hodder*, 16s.)

The crux of the story is not unusual: Stephen Venner, lawyer, has an affair with an ex-jail bird's wife, also a client. From this stems a possible insurance fraud. What marks the book out is the style of it all—faintly reminiscent of John Marquand—and the superb way Mr. Mackenzie handles it all.

PAGAN PAGODA, Max Mundy (*John Long*, 16s.)

Another favourite writer of *EWMM* readers. In this third book Mr. Mundy sets the scene in Burma, and opens with a good, normal news-photographer, stopping off to meet his married sister. In a flash, as they used to say, he lands feet first into a chaos of ritual murders, mystery, and insane Burmese politics. Racy, authentic, and thrilling.

PAPER ALBATROSS, Rupert Croft-Cooke (*Eyre & Spottiswoode*, 18s.)

Young Max Toner, on the run, holes up in one of those preserved-in-aspic Cheltenham hotels. With him is £120,000 of stolen money in a suitcase—loot from a raid by a gang. One by one the raiders are picked up; Toner's twists and turns to stay free makes a tense, well-told story.

SIX WHO RAN, M. E. Chaber (*Boardman*, 13s. 6d.)

Milo March, insurance detective, who never puts a foot wrong is told to recover a million stolen dollars, plus more in securities and bonds. Almost from the beginning the crooks are visible, but March's shrewd and relentless pursuit makes the story. His out-witting of a crooked South American policeman adds zest to a good tale.

SKINNER, Hugh C. Rae (*Anthony Blond*, 25s.)

A remarkable and completely horrifying book, told brutally and with no condescension towards delicate nerves. The story must be

read because to try and outline the whole picture of Arnold Skinner would ruin an impressive work. It is, in brief, about a pathological killer but so splendidly done that it becomes outstanding. Set in Scotland, it seems (to this reviewer) in some ways inspired, or at least sparked off by life and times of real-life murderer, Peter Manuel.

WITH INTENT TO KILL, George Harmon Coxe (*Hammond*, 13s. 6d.)

Obviously the similarity is pure chance, but this book's revenge-motive of an accident in which a car driver is held innocent of any crime resembles the motive in *The Man in the Driver's Seat*, by Ira Walker, reviewed in *EWMM*, March issue. From there the stories are wholly separate. Mr. Coxe sets his across the United States into British Honduras, and writes with smooth professionalism that grips the reader.

A SCATTER OF PAPERBACKS

BUDDWING, Evan Hunter (*Mayflower-Dell*, 5s.)

A long, impressive story of a man who wakes without a memory, his attempt to discover his identity. Tense and exciting, the end is a solution without really being one.

CAREER FOR THE BARON, Anthony Morton (*Hodder*, 3s 6d.)

The ubiquitous Mr. Creasey (pseudonymous again) gives us the 35th 'Baron' story in which John Mannering's easily aroused boredom takes him into antiques, and trouble.

GENTLY FLOATING, Alan Hunter (*Pan*, 3s 6d.)

Murder of a boat-builder on the Broads (a term that arouses our U.S. readers to hysteria)—otherwise, English waterways. Brisk, assured, excellently told.

MONEY FROM ROME, Richard Holt (*Mayflower-Dell*, 3s. 6d.)

Hired by a man apparently named Gervasi, the hero of this not previously published story is pitchforked into sheer, brilliant excitement. Tension, pace and everything 007 lacks.

ON HER MAJESTY'S SERVICE, Ian Fleming (*Pan*, 3s. 6d.)

A James Bond fairy-tale (mixture as before) which shows up sadly against the Richard Holt gem. Exploiting sadism to the full is the book's ugly, needless curtain.

Readers Say . . .

Extracts from current letters. Opinions expressed are those of the writers. Publication in this open forum does not necessarily mean that EWMM agrees with any views offered.

Secret Agent

Thanks to your help in answering my letter [February] regarding *The Adventures of Heine*, by Edgar Wallace. I was able to get a copy after I had advertised. Will you be offering any spy stories in EWMM?

Stonor, Oxon.

FREDERICK WELLS

● *Your letter was nicely timed. Spy stories, and more, in this issue should amply satisfy you.*

Dept. of Bouquets

Congratulations on *Waiting for Goody* [April] and Margery Allingham's clever story [May] and, in the same issue, the well-up-to-standard Peter Ardouin tale. And since I am telling you what I think—keep up the crosswords. I find them immensely enjoyable.

Portsmouth.

MISS ELLIE PETERS

I thought the Ben Hecht story [May] a bit shaking; I hope doctors don't behave like it! In the same number I really did enjoy *It's All Part of the Service*, by Margery Allingham, though I wish the story had been longer. Your new series, *Vignette from Life*, is going to be a winner, I think, if you can get enough fresh and unusual contributions.

Chesham Bois, Bucks.

E. M. E. TURNER

With *The Detectives of Ispahan* [May] I have now read my fourth 'period piece' and (as I told you before) I not only think the series marvellous, but consistently first class. I notice, so far, all the stories were written over one hundred years ago. I can only marvel that our ancestors could write such wonderful (and well written) yarns. No other magazine has anything quite like this.

My congratulations for not only finding such stories, but keeping up the supply.

London, W.8.

J. F. PALING

● *It's always nice to be appreciated by readers; Thank you all for your letters. 'Period piece' will be a regular feature for a long time, yet.*

Questions of Reform

The letter from A. F. Rustonji [May] asks if our judges in the courts are qualified. I know nothing about that, but I suggest judges tend to get too far away from people. I have noticed (as a freelance court reporter) that many perfectly innocent people are definitely frightened of the judicial attitude. Time and time again I have seen judges glare at *witnesses* who dither, forget what they are saying, or lose their heads.

Is it not possible to remember that ordinary people are (generally) uneasy or even frightened at going into a court at all? The stern, usually humourless detachment of some presiding judges I consider both reprehensible and very discouraging.

Chichester.

JACK GREENSHIELD

English, Again

T. J. Gahagan's excellent letter [April] on the writing and speaking of English encourages me to offer some further points, for what they are worth.

For example: *double entendre* is a very common error; what is meant is *double entente* (*un mot à double entente*). Another, dearly beloved by a *majority* of printed publications, is 'ponder'. The word needs neither 'on' nor 'upon' after it, but not according to many newspapers, even the best of them!

'Populace' is another. The word has been used quite often to designate gatherings of people. Usage is all very well, but it means the common people, the rabble, not tactful phrases in these socially conscious days. 'Chinaman' is another bloomer, when 'Chinese' is the right word. It might also be noted by a lot of writers that 'Machiavelli' has only *one* 'c', and (another popular 'bloomer') 'dovecot' has no final 'e'.

Come to that, quite a few crime writers do not realise that there is no 'Chief' Commissioner at Scotland Yard, and that the *OED* prefers 'jail' to that Civil Service abomination, 'gaol'—if officials choose to run against *OED* preference, what, pray, happens when they say 'margarine'? And who contrived that inaccurate horror, 'escalate'?

Truro, Cornwall.

D. F. TODD

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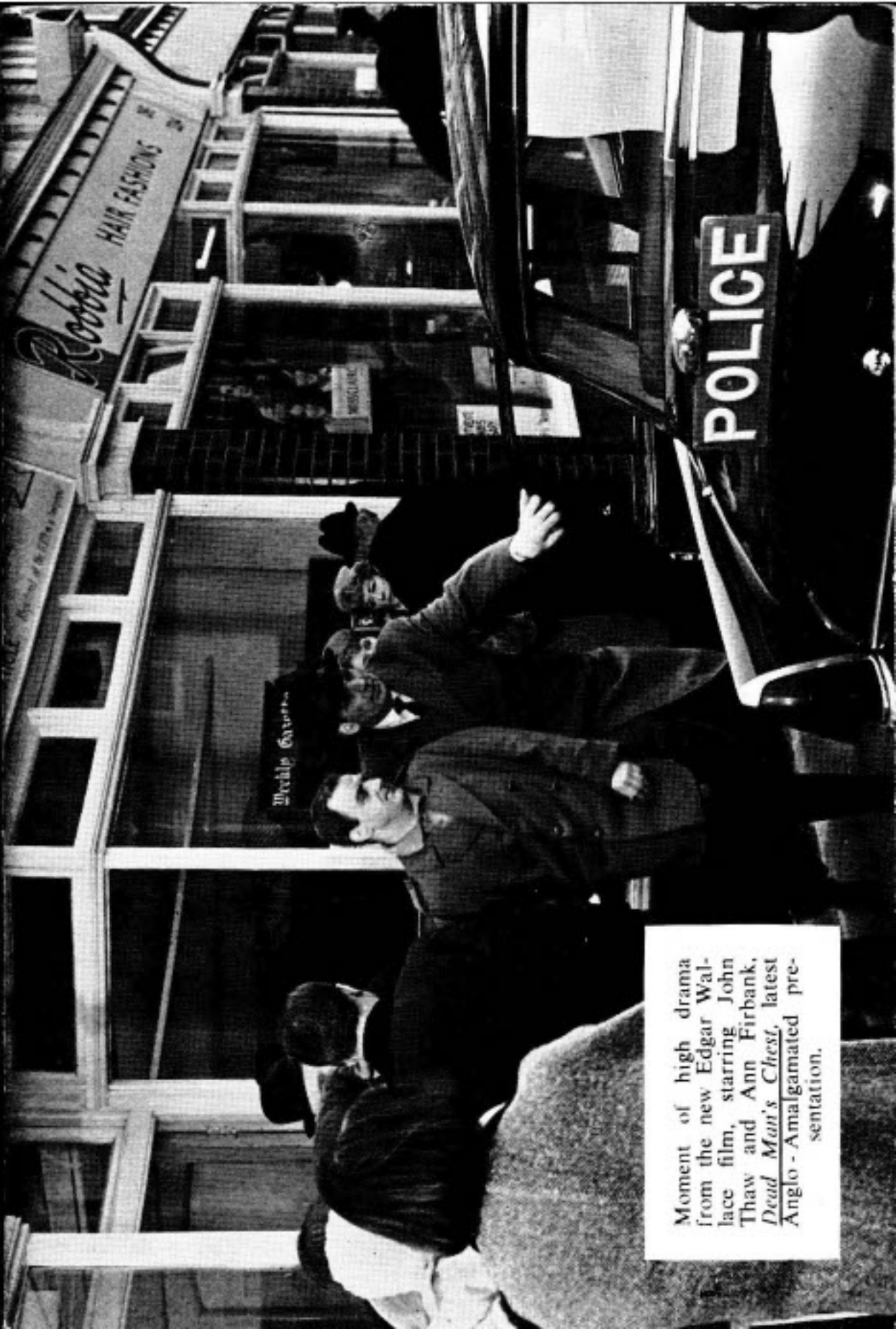
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WANTED: *Barbara on her Own*; *Daughters of the Night*; *Unofficial Dispatches*; *Tomb of T'sin*. R. J. McCarthy, Wetlands, Augathella, Queensland, Australia.

EXCHANGE or SELL: *The Mouthpiece*; *Council of Justice*; *Clue of the New Pin*; *Lieutenant Bones*; *Clue of the Twisted Candle* (paperbacks, clean), and *Man Who Was Nobody* (cloth, 1929, foxed). Box A52, EWMM.



Moment of high drama from the new Edgar Wallace film, starring John Thaw and Ann Firbank, *Dead Man's Chest*, latest Anglo-Amalgamated presentation.