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Edgar Wallace

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

EDGAR WALLACE

The Christmas Cup

AGATHA CHRISTIE

The Dead Harlequin

PLUS FIVE NEW STORIES

and (exclusive)

COLIN WILSON

The New Trend in Murder

THE TOP SELLING BRITISH CRIME MAGAZINE

No 29
Vol 3

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This drawing of Edgar Wallace, by Carlo Tora (Chamberlain Studios, London), was made in 1966, the original being in the Press Club

EDGAR WALLACE

Mystery Magazine

Vol. III No. 29 December, 1966

Mystery, Crime, and Detection for the Aficionado

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FEATURES

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Briefly

LIFE IS USUALLY larger than literature, and twice as remarkable; this is an ancient truism, which can be profoundly irritating to many writers. Time and again an author has finished a story containing some wild, highly improbable event. And that event occurs just about the time his work is published; it is automatic that the unthinking cry: 'Copycat!'

This theme is offered because such a thing has happened with this issue of *EWMM*. When much of it had been long in production (many magazines are prepared, even printed, months before the dates on their covers), President Johnson visited South Vietnam, an event most authorities would have regarded as not only unlikely but almost impossible. But our story '. . . *China* '*Crost the Bay*' anticipated the event, and, we sincerely hope, with a danger that never threatened in real life. The story is so good that we think it right to protect Geoff Taylor from that word 'Copycat'.

Crime fiction frequently pre-dates, or steps on the heels of, fact. There was a story last year that was almost a blueprint for the 'Moors murders'; there was a novel about the Leopard Men of Africa (written when they had been quiet for decades) and the week it was published the Leopard Men were suddenly on the rampage again . . .

Science fiction often anticipates remarkable things. This is prescience when they come about. The authors to be pitied are those who invent some wildness and have real life pinch the idea—when you read a crime novel that seems to copy some actual drama, check the publication date and remember the book was no doubt written as much as two years before that date (or if it could not find a publisher, perhaps years before!)

The exceptions of course are those novels which deliberately take a real life theme for a plot; this is usually specified in the book.

Dates of a sort having been under discussion, a most important date is coming on the 25th. *EWMM's* readers are such a friendly, co-operative body of men and women that we feel a personal and genuine wish is the thing, that and a hope for the New Year to bring you everything you desire. It is said that Christmas has become commercialised, so let a commercial concern send you Seasonal Greetings, but as one friend to another.

The Editor.

Edgar Wallace.

When Mark proposed to ride for the Cup, the stakes were big

The Christmas Cup

COLONEL DESBORO was an easy-going man and, for himself, did not greatly object to patched carpets, an odd-handled knife or two, and chintz covers that had faded and thinned through over-much washing. But he had no desire that Joan should go through life in an environment of patches and make-shifts.

"He's a very nice fellow, Martin, but—" He shook his head.

The big 'but' was put more definitely by Miss Æthel Bainton later in the day, when Joan Desboro called at Matte Hall, a little too early for the 'club' but in nice time to absorb from experienced 26, the wisdom so vitally necessary to 21 and three months.

"Men," said Æthel, with an air of finality, "are naturally children." They boast and they lie, and they mean no harm by it. Children. They never grow up." She said this in the manner of one who had wrapped a clever thought in a gossamer of paradox.

The girl who was perched on the fender in Æthel Bainton's sitting-room, sighed and knit her forehead in a tremendous frown. She was more than pretty even in the searching light of a March morning. Her figure was slim, every movement revealed a new and pleasing grace; but she was no philosopher, and her views about men were too concentrated to be of any use in a broad and general conspectus of their merits.

To rich people like Æthel, philosophy comes as natural as

purring to a cat, but with the poor, philosophy is a painful exercise. And the Desboros were so poor that they could not afford to hide the fact.

"Mark is a little difficult," she admitted reluctantly, "but I don't think you quite understand him, Æthel."

"He's American," said Æthel significantly, and when Joan murmured "Canadian", she ignored the distinction.

"He's a boaster and, of course, quite impossible," said Æthel. "We don't even know that he has any money. And he's not 'county'. We'd better be very careful." She nodded ominously.

"Why?"

But the warning obliquely flung was not amplified, and there was really no reason why it should have been.

"Martin must be well off—he paid a thousand pounds for a horse," said Joan with some spirit. A thousand pounds was an awful lot of money.

"Money for horses means nothing," said the practical Æthel. "Quite dreadful people buy horses. Of course he must have money—he does no work. Papa says he's probably living on his capital. And that can end only in bankruptcy."

Not by candlelight or moonlight could Æthel Bainton be described as pretty. She had been 'Ethel' in the baptismal register, and 'Ethel' she would have been to the end of her days but for the advent of Ælfred Burdenlast, a young man of considerable musical attainments, but with no particular gift for earning his daily bread.

The association was of a transitory kind. He came, made love with a certain delicacy, was figuratively thrown on to the ash-pit by Mr. Bainton, and faded from human ken. Some say that he went to Hollywood and became a film star. He left an additional vowel in Æthel's name, and a heart which never again glowed to the music and banners of romance.

The Baintons were the Baintons of Braystone, in the county of Westshire. There was another branch in Northumberland, but nobody knew anything about them; how they ever got to Northumberland is a mystery.

Arthur Persimmin Bainton was very rich, an owner of 10,000 acres, a deer forest, a trout stream, a tract of territory in Angola, a ranch in Canada and a flat in Park Lane.

He was a large pink man, who rode to hounds with the greatest care, and knew every gate and safety path in Westshire. He had never seen a live fox, except at the Zoo, for he was rather short-

sighted. Nevertheless, his picture appeared in certain illustrated weeklies with great regularity as 'Mr. Bainton, the well-known huntsman'. Thus he was depicted on his horse and off, or else with a very black face—flashlight photographs produce that effect sometimes—in a very white shirt and his pink jacket—which also photographed black—at the annual hunt ball.

It is a copybook axiom that riches do not necessarily bring content, and this was the case with Mr. Bainton. He was a hard bargainer and a shrewd buyer; the sight of money flowing past his golden reservoir, untrapped by the many channels which maintained its height, made him a very unhappy man. And money came easily to him: his luck was phenomenal. He invariably returned from Monte Carlo with an addition to his capital; he never played at the Paddock of which exclusive club he was one of the most respected—or, at least, one of the oldest members—without rising from the table a winner, though it was uncharitably suggested that he chose his table judiciously, preferring the society of callow and monied youth to the competition of hard-faced men to whom the playing of poker was a natural instinct. And when he had a house-party at Matte Hall the male guests were chosen as carefully.

He once won £4,000 at a sitting from a youth named Jones, and derived great satisfaction from his coup, for, by so doing, as he said, he 'knocked the infernal nonsense out of the young cub'.

All foolish young men were 'young cubs' to Mr. Bainton, just as all gentlemen who never went beyond half-crown bridge were 'old foxes'.

Jones is a very usual name, sometimes borne by unusual people. Bill Jones, for example, was an unusual youth. He had been desperately in love with Æthel, and had advanced the impossible suggestion that with the £4,000 left over from his patrimony he should turn Sunna Lodge into a poultry farm, marry Æthel, and live happily ever after.

Long days had passed since Æthel lost her heart to an impecunious violinist. She had acquired balance and a sense of what was due to wealth. Important people had looked wistfully at her, a rackety peer had once kissed her. She consulted her father about Bill. Mr. Bainton frowned at his cigar and invited Bill to spend a week-end at the Hall.

It was a fair game, if anything is fair when one player of poker had learnt the game only a few weeks before, and the other could draw cards in his sleep.

So Bill Jones went away, and Sunna Lodge appeared in the back page of The Times as:

> A desirable hunting box in a good hunting district. Two packs. Company's water, own electric plant. A bargain . . .

Once a week during the winter it was the usual thing to drop in at Matte Hall for tea. Nobody knew how the practice started, but Matte Hall on Thursday afternoons became a sort of county club.

The big oak-lined banqueting hall, with its huge fireplace piled with blazing logs in the colder weather, was crowded with people between the hours of five and six-thirty. They sat on the ancient settles, or they perched on the window seats or leant against the panelled walls, adding new lustre to the polish.

And everybody talked at one.

"We got on to a new scent at Figgerty Farm—a vixen, and she gave us a run for two and a half hours, my boy! Killed at Reverly Copse . . . went to earth near Crawford's place . . . He's a half-brother to Bachelor's Fancy—a fine 'lepper' with legs as sound as a bell of brass . . . You can't do better than go to Critchfords; the breeches I bought there four years ago are like new . . ."

They all talked at once—all except Mark Martin, who drifted from group to group, listening, with a smile on his good-looking face.

Nobody took much notice of Mark. They were too polite to pull his leg, too satisfied with the possession of his guilty secret to pursue enquiries any further. And when he found an opening, as he sometimes did, they listened with extraordinary courtesy.

"You don't get hunting in this county that any way appoaches the sport we have in Canada. I remember an old hunter of mine . . ."

They listened, not looking at one another, interjecting in the proper places a conventional expression of their surprise and wonder. But everybody knew that he couldn't ride.

Whether Mark Martin was an American, a Canadian, or plain English, he was certainly an amiable man. His age was something under 30 but not very far under, and it was he who purchased, from the agents of the departed Jones, that desirable residence, Sunna Lodge.

He was not considered to be 'county'. You could not be 'county' unless you had an immediate interest in a family vault, or could claim part proprietorship in one of those commemorative tablets which adorn the walls of so many parish churches, and

which usually start off with a coat-of-arms and end with:

Also the wife of the above
Sir. Thos. Smithington, Kt.

But hunting breeds a sort of democracy. Stout men and women, hard-riding and wind-bitten—as they are described by local reporters—grow tender towards one another in the common bond which unites all who go forth on horses to the destruction of *vulpes alopex*.

★

Mr. Martin had a stable of horses in training, and was a member of the hunt, and he had often appeared in the field, but generally on foot. Sometimes he would come to a meet in his expensive car, but never had he appeared on horseback. It was regrettable, he explained, but he had kicked an ankle, or he had bruised a knee, or he had one of those fearful headaches which made riding a positive torture.

He had also been photographed in hunting pink and his picture had appeared alongside of Mr. Bainton's. He had been photographed at the hunt ball sitting side by side with Lady Mary Seprals—that hard-riding, wind-bitten woman. But nobody had ever seen him riding a horse.

There was an occasion when he turned up at the Highcliffe Point-to-point wearing jockey's breeches and top boots, and it had been announced, not only in the local newspaper, but in those stately metropolitan organs devoted to the sport of kings, that he would ride his own horse, Ripple Along, in the Highcliffe Handicap.

But this time he had a sprained shoulder, and with great regret handed over his mount to a professional rider, who won. Indeed, many of Mr. Martin's horses won races, though in other hands than his.

When it was given out that he would ride Lumber in the Hunt Gold Cup, people remembered the sprain and gave him another chance. But this time he cut his finger—and there was the hugely bandaged digit in proof. Some talk there was of asking him to resign from the hunt, but nothing came of it.

And then came the supreme bluff. He entered Lumber in the Christmas Cup at Wolverston Races. The Christmas Cup is to hunting the blue ribbon of steeplechasing. It is the 'paramount

and Olympic Prize' which brings the shires in full force to Wolverston.

Moreover, it was publicly announced that Lumber would be ridden by Mark Martin himself. Colonel Desboro heard this news at first hand, and wriggled uncomfortably in the deep and none too comfortable armchair.

"What a weird beggar you are, Martin!" he said, becoming frank in his irritation. "Enter the horse by all means, but why tell people you're going to ride it?"

Mark looked at him thoughtfully. "I don't know. I thought I would," he said. He tapped his long riding-boots with his hunting-crop—he never went abroad without this evidence of his horsemanship. "I rather like to see fellows riding their own horses."

"But Mark, is it necessary you should ride at all?" broke in Joan. Her voice was troubled, and that frown of hers had become almost immovable in the past few days. "People are so horrid about—things."

His look of astonishment was badly simulated.

"And the Wolverston course wants an awful lot of riding, Mark. Captain Burnley, who won the race last year, told me there wasn't a course in England, not even the National course, that took so much out of a horse and a rider."

"In Canada—" began Mark.

"This isn't Canada," interrupted the Colonel shortly. "This is Wolverston, and the Christmas Cup isn't a point-to-point affair. You'll have to compete against men like Ridley and Burnley and other fellows who are as good as the best professionals. I think your horse has a good chance—I was telling Joan just before you came—and I suppose in the end it will win. But why on earth commit yourself to the statement that you'll ride ?"

He glanced across at his daughter and signalled her to leave the room, and when they were alone he said: "I'm going to talk straight to you, Martin. Joan and you have developed rather a friendship in the past six months. What is there in it?"

The younger man eyed him steadily. "There's a lot in it, Colonel," he said quietly. "I love Joan and I'm hoping that you'll let me marry her—one of these days."

Colonel Desboro filled his pipe with great deliberation. "It comes down to a question of your prospects, my young friend," he said gruffly.

It required a physical and spiritual effort on his part to mention

so mundane a subject as money, but he braced himself.

"You have an income, I suppose?"

Mark Martin nodded. "I have five thousand a year," he said.

The Colonel looked up quickly in surprise and fingered his chin. "That's a pretty good income," he admitted.

"So Mr. Bainton seems to think," replied the other gravely.

"Bainton? What has he to do with it?"

The young man studied the bone crook of his crop as though he had only just discovered its use.

"He's been making enquiries about my position, fortunately through a friend of mine in London. He happens to be a commercial agent, and enquiries of that character come to him."

The Colonel sat upright, pipe in hand. "The devil he has!" he said softly. "Do you play cards, Martin?"

Mark Martin shook his head. "No," he said. "I like an occasional gamble, but not on cards. Why do you ask, Colonel?"

But Colonel Desboro was too charitable to give expression to his thoughts. Instead:

"Do you mind if I speak plainly to you, my friend?"

Mark shook his head, guessing what was coming.

"You're not really a very good rider, are you?"

Gently as the question was put, it was blunt enough, and the young man resumed his study of the hunting-crop.

"I'm one of the best riders in Canada," he said doggedly, and the Colonel smiled.

"We've all got our weaknesses, my boy," he said kindly. "I remember when I was a kid I upset my mother—who'd rather have died than tell a lie—by describing a dog-fight that I hadn't seen!"

He waited.

"I've never seen a dog-fight, either," said Mark simply. "If you want me to say that I'm a bad rider, I'm afraid I must disappoint you. I'm really awfully good. And, Colonel—I'm very fond of Joan and everything, but I've not asked her to marry me—yet."

Colonel Desboro looked at him sharply. "Is there any special reason?"

The other nodded. "A very good reason. Nothing discreditable to me, but—well, I don't know. Would you mind very much if nothing was definitely settled until after the Christmas Cup?"

Colonel Desboro considered this matter.

"No," he said slowly, "there's no desperate hurry. But why the Christmas Cup?"

"Until after I've won it."

Mark was avoiding the questioning eyes of the older man.

"Till after you've won it eh?" The Colonel pursed his lips, and then: "All right, let it go at that. Jackson trains the horse, doesn't he?"

Mark nodded.

"I'll come over one morning and see you do an exercise gallop," said the Colonel, not without malice, and had the satisfaction of seeing the young man start.

"I'd rather you didn't," he said; "I'm really fearfully nervous—that's my only weakness. If I knew anybody was looking on, I should feel terrible. It's sort a of stage-fright," he explained lamely. "I don't know whether you ever had it?"

"I've never been on the stage." The Colonel was unusually blunt that morning. "In fact, I've never pretended to be anything else but what I am, and I think other people would be happier if they followed my example."

"I must tell Bainton that," said Mark innocently, "because he's pretending that he has taken a violent liking to me!"

★

Arthur Persimmin Bainton was a gentleman who had many of the attributes of the eagle. He could hover on extended pinions and, to the uninitiated eye, appear to be motionless, when in reality he was planning a devastating swoop.

It was the news in *The Westshire Gazette* that made him hover a little more tensely.

> Lumber is a certain runner in the Christmas Cup. He will be ridden by his owner, Mr. Mark Martin, the wealthy young Canadian who a year ago purchased Sunna Lodge, which has been unoccupied since Mr. William Jones went abroad. Mr. Martin is an enthusiastic huntsman and is certain to take a lot of beating in the Cup.

Amongst the many channels which drained into the golden pit of Mr. Bainton was one labelled *Westshire Gazette*, of which he was the principal shareholder and chairman of directors. He rang up the editor, a civil and obliging man.

"Where did you get the paragraph about Martin?" he asked.

The editor begged him to wait one moment whilst he interviewed the chief reporter, who was also the chief sub-editor and all the other sub-editors there were. After a while he came back.

"It was written by Mr. Martin himself," he said.

Bainton smiled into his trim white moustache. "I thought so," he said.

The training of Lumber for the Christmas Cup was taken in hand during the month of November. Every morning Mr. Martin could be seen driving in the direction of his trainer's stables, and invariably was attired in riding breeches. And every day, a few hours later, he would alight from his car at the end of the village, and come walking briskly up the street, his boots splashed with mud.

And at that hour there were quite a number of people to be met with in the village. Joan met him twice. Mr. Bainton saw him on several occasions and was rather amused. To Æthel one evening he said:

"What are you doing about Christmas, my dear?"

Æthel was doing nothing about Christmas.

"You might ask the Desboros to dinner, and ask that fellow Martin over. And, in case I forget it, I'd like you to put the Desboro girl next to this young cub."

"Good heavens—why?" asked Æthel.

Mr. Bainton was lighting a cigar, and she had to wait till he stopped to breathe. "A whim of mine."

"Is he really training his horse?" asked Æthel. "The vicar told me that he had seen him come in, his boots and breeches splashed with mud."

"He does that half-way between here and Jackson's place," said Mr. Bainton without smiling. "Breaks off a twig, dips it into the nearest puddle and flicks it around. I've had a man watching him for a week."

"But has he been riding the horse?" insisted Æthel.

"He hasn't been near the horse," replied her father. "All the riding has been done by Jenkins, the stable jockey."

"Is he mad?" demanded Æthel, who could find no other explanation.

"No, my dear—vanity, just vanity. Not a bad fellow apart from that infernal nonsense of his. I suppose these Americans like to be thought well of, and cut a dash with their money. Don't forget the Christmas Eve dinner. Write pretty soon in case they make another engagement."

It was Bainton's practice to go to London once a week to a board meeting. He was methodical in his habits. He usually walked from the terminus to Piccadilly, where his London car was

waiting for him. This walk supplied the constitutional which was denied him by his early departure from Matte Hall. He knew Priggin's Riding School very well, and passed its gates every morning he came to London. Indeed, he had a friendly feeling for Priggin's Riding School, because over the office entrance, by the side of the gate, was a small sign, supported on wrought iron brackets, depicting a noble-looking huntsman in a beautifully fitting pink coat, jumping a huge fence with a confident smile on his handsome face. Once he had taken Æthel that way and had pointed out the curious resemblance between the handsome, smiling gentleman and himself.

He had turned into the street which holds Priggin's establishment, when ahead of him he saw a familiar figure. It was Mark Martin, and he was hurrying along, evidently having left the taxi which was turning as Bainton came into the street. He moved furtively and, with a nervous glance round, disappeared through the gates of the riding school. Mr. Bainton's jaw dropped in astonishment, and then a curious gleam came to his eyes. He stopped opposite the open gates and looked into the sand-covered court yard. It was empty. Without hesitation he turned into the little office, and gathered that the gentlemen in riding breeches and highly polished boots who was writing a letter as he came in was either Mr. Priggins himself or some one in authority. It proved to be both.

"Oh yes, Mr. Bainton," said Priggins respectfully, when the visitor had cautiously revealed himself, with a request that the object of his call should be treated confidentially. "I know your name very well, sir; I saw a photograph of you in *County Sport* the other day."

"Very likely, very likely," said Bainton, with a great air of indifference. "Now I want you to tell me, Mr. Priggins, in the strictest confidence, do you know that young man who came into your yard a few minutes ago?"

There was a small window above the desk which commanded a view of the courtyard, and Mr. Priggins had duly noted the arrival.

"Oh, him." He chuckled as at a good joke. "He's a gentleman from the country—Martin by name."

"What does he do here?"

Again Mr. Priggins smiled. "Well, to tell you the truth, he's rather a source of income to me, Mr. Bainton. He's been taking riding lessons off and on for the past month, but I've never been able to get him out of the school."

A slow smile dawned on Mr. Bainton's pink face.

"A good rider, is he?" he asked almost joyfully.

"Good rider! If I only could get him to sit on a horse properly, I'd be happy! I've given up trying, and I've handed him over to one of my assistants. There are some people you can never teach to ride: they haven't the gift for it."

Bainton considered. "Is it possible to take a look at him?" he suggested.

Mr. Priggins nodded, took down a key from the board-lined wall and, leading the way through a door, traversed a harness-room and conducted the enquirer up a steep and narrow flight of dark stairs. At the top he paused, his hand on a door.

"If you don't want him to know you're here, you'd better not speak," he said, and Bainton nodded.

The riding-master opened the door cautiously. They were on a small wooden balcony overlooking the school, which was a fairly large hall, its floor covered deep with peat moss. Riding at a jog-trot was Mark Martin. His back was towards the observer, but even if he had faced the other way it seemed doubtful whether he would have noticed anything but the extreme unsteadiness of the large roan horse he was riding. He swayed in the saddle like a drunken man, and bumped up and down at the psychologically wrong moment in a manner which was curious to see. And all the time there was an exchange of instruction and protest between the rider and a sad young man in gaiters who directed the lesson.

"Keep your elbows down, sir. Your toes in, sir. Put your shoulders back, sir. No, sir, don't hold him by the mane. Walk!"

"Can't walk! Beastly thing jolts. Whoa, you brute! Am I doing any better today?"

Even the riding instructor, inured as he was to the habit of praise, would not answer in the affirmative. Bainton shook with laughter and his face grew purple.

"Now, sir, just try trotting again. Keep your elbows down by your side. Your hands up—that's right, sir. Now sir. . . .",

The indignant horse broke into a steady trot. Mark Martin rolled like a ship in a heavy gale. He lost an iron and clutched at the mane. He slipped forward on the horse's withers, he pushed himself back on to the horse's quarters, and finally slipped ungracefully from the horse's neck to the tanned floor.

"Good heavens! Phew!"

A touch on Bainton's elbow and he withdrew through the door and down the stairs. A few minutes later he was walking away,

swinging his umbrella, a beatific smile upon his face.

★

Christmas Eve at Matte Hall: the countryside still white with the heavy snows that had fallen on the Monday; cedar logs burning in the great fireplace; holly wreaths decorously hung on the panelled walls; and a gay company about the generous board of Mr. Persimmin Bainton.

And everybody—except one—was happy, for the very season was as a vintage wine, and Mark found himself, to his comfort, placed next to Joan Desboro. There was a whisper that Æthel's engagement to Lord Winderley was to be announced but this proved to be premature, though his lordship—who was a fawn-coloured man with a heavy yellow moustache—was seated next to her, and from time to time they looked at one another understandingly.

There was no talk but of the Wolverston races and the Cup. The redoubtable Captain Burnley was there, an apple-faced man who regarded all public meals as tiresome preliminaries to the consumption of old brandy, and Lady Mary, who had bought a new hunter at Tattersalls' and had discovered unsuspected values in her purchase. There also was the Rev. Walter Affelow, the famous hunting parson who was famous rather for his prowess over the country than for his other Christian qualities, and Connington-Drake, one of the leading lights of the Paddock Club; even Boultby Malcolm, the hunting banker and, facing Mark, Colonel Desboro, a very uneasy man, but not quite so uneasy as the nervous girl who sat by Mark's side.

"Oh, there'll be racing all right," said Burnley confidently. "The course dries up easily and gets most of the sun that's going. I went round the track this morning. By God those fences will take some jumping! A horse has only got to touch them and you're down—stiff as a park wall!"

"The water kills them," said the Rev. Walter Affelow complacently. "After weather like this the take-off will be like batter pudding!"

"Riding yours?"

It was Bainton's careless enquiry that cut through the conversation.

Mark nodded with a smile. "Yes, I shall be riding mine. What is more, I shall win. Don't any of you people miss Lumber!

I went down into Wolverston yesterday and had a look at the Cup —it's a beauty! Of course, I've got dozens of 'em," he went on, and with one accord the whole table stopped talking, "but curiously enough, I've never had a gold cup."

"I don't remember seeing them on your sideboard," said the vicar.

"I've got a packing-case full of 'em. I haven't troubled to get them out," said Mark carelessly.

"How's the horse?" asked Burnley.

"Never better," replied Mark complacently, as he sipped his wine. "He gave me a wonderful ride this morning. I'm a little worried about the water jump, too, but I think I can get over that. The wretched people who bet at Wolverston would scream if you asked them for the odds to fifty pounds."

Everybody agreed about this, for the poverty, or parsimony, of Wolverston bookmakers was notorious.

The girl by his side was groaning inwardly. She tried ineffectually to turn the conversation in another direction.

"I thought of keeping Lumber for the National," Mark rattled on. "One could win a fortune there."

"You can win a fortune at Wolverston," said Bainton slowly. "Come now, Martin, to oblige you I'll turn bookmaker for your special benefit!"

There were eight people at that table who saw the fly thrown and waited breathlessly for the fish to rise. And he rose nobly.

"Good Lord! Would you?" said Mark.

"He'll be at least six to one against," said Bainton, "especially if you ride him yourself. Now, I'll make you an offer. I'll lay you twelve thousand to two that Lumber doesn't win the Cup."

"I'll take you," said Mark, half rising from his seat.

"Wait a moment. This is the only condition—*that you are the rider*."

They saw the change that came to the young man's face. The girl was looking at him appealingly, and her heart sank as she saw the smile fade.

"That—er—that isn't necessary, is it?" he asked. "I mean, suppose anything happened to me—and I had rather a twinge of rheumatism this morning."

"You say you're going to ride the horse, you're the best rider in Canada, and I'm offering you a wager that you couldn't get and will not get on the course."

And the company knew just why Mark Martin had been invited

to dinner, and why the girl had been placed by him. He must either refuse, humiliate her hopelessly, and be completely and finally exposed, or he must save his face at the cost of £2,000. He looked left and right as though seeking a way of escape.

"I'll take your wager, Mr. Bainton," he said loudly.

"You can make it eighteen thousand to three thousand, if you like," suggested Bainton.

He leaned back in his chair, his eyes never moving from the face of the Great Sham.

"I'll take that!"

"There you are," Bainton beamed, "there you are, my boy! You've made eighteen thousand pounds! If I don't pay you," he said jovially, "you can post me at the Paddock Club!"

And that, for the girl, was the tragedy of the evening.

Mark drove her back in his car to the little cottage. Colonel Desboro sat in the back and brooded on the vanity of youth. As for Joan, she did not speak until he helped her out of the car.

"Why did you do it, Mark?" she asked, and he knew from her voice that she was really hurt.

"I'm awfully sorry, but I had to do it, Joan."

When Colonel Desboro had gone in, she lingered.

"Mark, why did you tell father—" She did not finish the sentence.

"About not asking you until the Cup was run?"

She nodded: her face in the moonlight was very pale, and he thought he had never seen her look so eerily beautiful.

"Is there some reason—why I shouldn't—bear your name?" she asked.

"There is—yes," he answered awkwardly. "But I think that reason will not exist after Boxing Day."

★

The authorities invariably drafted large forces of police to Wolverston for Boxing Day, and they were needed to control the crowd which flocked up to Knight's Field, where the races were held. An unclouded blue sky, an invigorating, frosty morning, and the little stands and paddock were crowded; the field where the cars were parked was black with shining roofs.

Joan did not see Mark until after the second race, and then with a groan she noted that, although he was wearing his breeches and boots, he walked with a limp.

"It's nothing," he said almost savagely. "I knocked my knee getting into the car."

"You won't be able to ride?"

"I think so." He was almost brusque.

Mr. Bainton in his big tweed coat was also an amused observer of the limp. He saw Mark disappear into the stewards' room, and laughed softly.

Æthel was never at her best on a cold day—her nose had a tendency to redden in the northern breezes—but there was a very good reason why she, who never went even to point-to-point meetings because of this disability, which even make up would not overcome, should have an interest in the Christmas Cup. For Mark Martin was to give her an additional wedding present. It was true that he did not know that his £3,000 would be invested in a most luxurious car, but that, indeed, was its destination. Moreover, she had a very natural and proper desire to be present on the occasion of the great exposure.

"He has gone in to tell the stewards he can't ride and, by God, he's only just in time!" said Bainton for already the riders were coming from the weighing room, their gaudy caps showing incongruously above heavy overcoats and turned-up collars.

"It's too late to alter it on the card or even on the number-board. You'll have to go out as you are," said the senior steward. "Have you notified the change, in accordance with the rules, to the Hunt Committee?"

"Yes," said Mark and showed the letter he had received from the august secretary of National Hunt Racing.

"That's all right," said the steward. "You'd better hurry up: the saddling bell will be ringing in a few minutes. Have you weighed out?"

Mark smiled. "Yes, I've weighed out," he said and, to the everlasting amazement of Mr. Bainton, he came out from the weighing-room swinging his whip, limping a little, but showing no other sign of perturbation.

Mr. Bainton watched like a man in a dream, and saw him get up on the back of the big chestnut. He cantered down to the post and did not fall off. When the flag fell he was the first away, heading his field by half a length. The preliminary fence was an easy one, but it was sufficiently difficult to make an inexperienced rider fall. So far from falling, Mark seemed part of the horse. He overleapt his protagonists at every fence, and took the water jump in his stride.

Joan stood by her father on a farm waggon, open-mouthed, amazed, dreaming, she thought, so that she pinched herself. But she was wide awake. Lumber was leading by a field. He hopped the two last fences like a bird and cantered up the straight, an easy winner by a distance.

★

Mr. Bainton said nothing. He was incapable of speech. He could only stare, in a mad kind of way as, with a smile on his brown face, Martin touched his hat to the applauding huntsmen, and then he said hollowly:

"I've been caught."

But he sent his cheque that night. The cheque had been cleared when he met Mark Martin, and he would have passed him with a glare, but Mark stopped him.

"I think you ought to know, Mr. Bainton," he said, "that I raced in an assumed name."

"Eh?" said Bainton suddenly alert. "That isn't allowed under the rules."

"The horse was not nominated in my name, but in the name of my trainer," said Mark quietly, "and at the last minute I notified the Hunt Committee that I was not Mark Martin, but Mark Martin Jones, and received permission to ride."

"Jones!" The name had a familiar ring.

"You knew a brother of mine—Bill. He's on my ranch now in Canada, Bainton. He had the effrontery to fall in love with your daughter, and you cleared up that entanglement by taking four thousand pounds from him at a card game he knew nothing about. I'm not saying it wasn't a straight game: I'm merely stating a bald fact. I'm sending him four thousand out of the eighteen thousand you so kindly gave me." He emphasised 'gave'. "And it was a gift, Mr. Bainton." There was a smile in the eyes that met the glare of the infuriated man. "You see, I *am* the best amateur rider in Canada. By the way, did you enjoy your morning in the riding school? That was the fourth occasion on which I tried to lure you in—you hadn't noticed me before. Four is my lucky number!"

Mr. Bainton waved his hands wildly, gurgled something and passed on.

"I still don't know," said Joan that night, "what was the

dreadful secret you had to tell me. Why shouldn't I bear your name?"

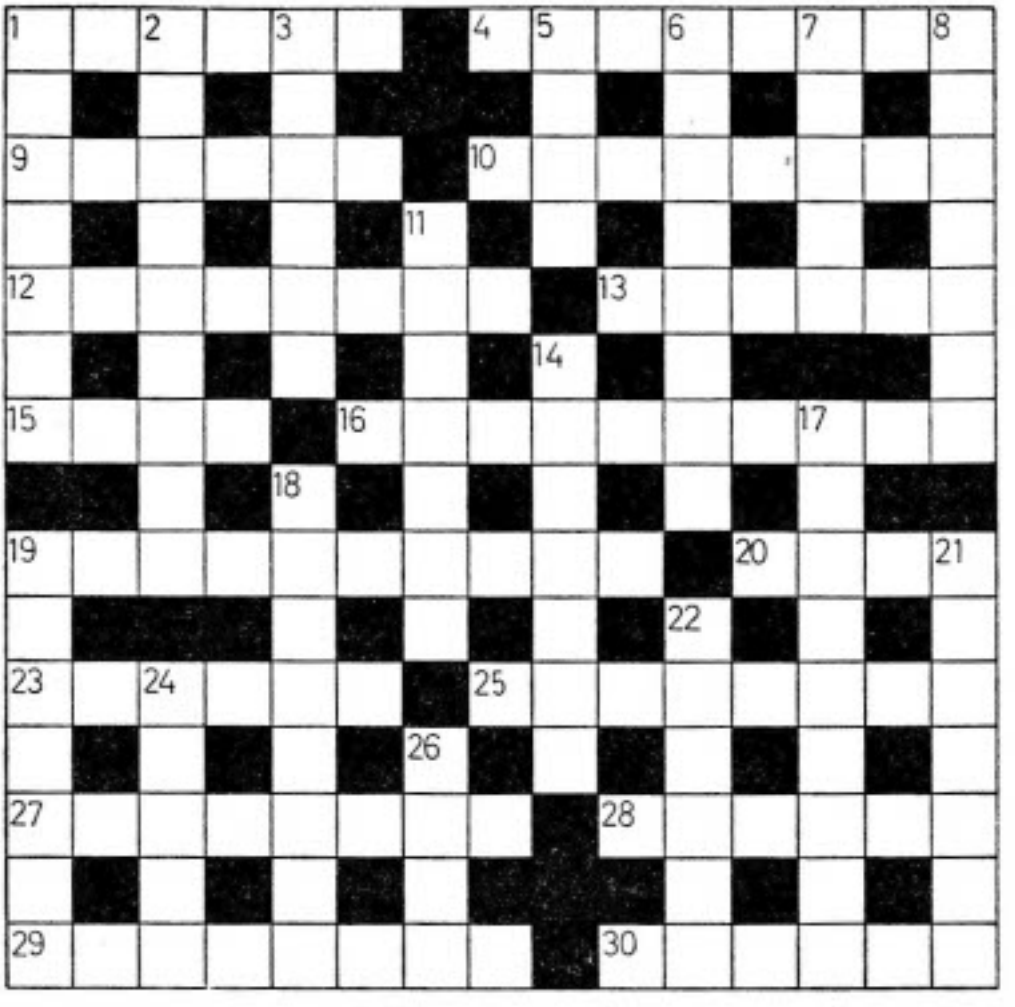
He shook his head with gentle melancholy.

"Jones!" he said.

"And a very nice name," she said with conviction.

From 48 *Short Stories*

EWMM Crossword No. 23



ACROSS

1 How a picture may be taken (6)
4 Found out (8)
9 It's a chancy business (6)
10 Patrolling by the boys in blue? (8)
12 Made an offer to do the job? (8)
13 More than one genus of a green variety (6)
15 Down-trodden fellow who's not . . . (4)
16 . . . of the highest standard (5-5)
19 The brains of the outfit (6-4)
20 Ruler once—of the underworld? (4)
23 Wrong 'uns! (6)
25 Trial Underground? (4-4)
27 Allocates by animal brands, it seems (8)
28 By itself was Eric (6)
29 Journalist engaged in rocketry? (8)
30 Shipping reporter! (6)

DOWN

1 What one may be in for (7)
2 Those sentenced to walk the plank? (9)
3 Girl I use for support? (6)
5 Sharpshooter in a circus! (4)
6 Witness in court! (8)
7 Once more (5)
8 Periods to follow in another's footsteps? (3-4)
11 Spiritualists' agencies? (7)
14 Not abnormal practices (7)
17 Also subjected to battery? (9)
18 Produce electrically? (8)
19 Perhaps capital offences (7)
21 Smoking jackets? (7)
22 Knock for six? (6)
24 Perhaps drag a lake! (5)
26 Bird others overturn (4)

(Solution will appear in our January issue.)

The Reluctant Traitor

DICK SHARPLES

The thorny path of espionage has a not unpleasant way of becoming a greased slide

WHEN THE TAXI turned into the seedy market street and came to a halt outside the old and faded greengrocer's shop, Henry Johnson felt sure he had been given the wrong address.

After all, he reasoned, as he looked up at the crumbling facade of 32a Ackers Street, Hackney Wick, London, E.3., it was hardly the sort of place where one might expect to find the recipient of an important Foreign Office document.

For a moment he seriously considered telephoning Whitehall for official confirmation. But only for a moment.

Henry had been a Civil Servant (third assistant cipher mechanic, grade C—temporary, unconfirmed) long enough to know that, like the Almighty, the British Foreign Office moved in mysterious ways, its wonders — the more cynical said blunders — to perform.

So carefully subduing what his superiors would have considered to be a most undesirable impulse to use his own initiative, Henry moved over to the entrance of Commercial Chambers, immediately next door to the greengrocer's shop. He read the peeling business-signs with mounting incredulity:

J. RICHIE (*Turf Accountant to the Nobility*) TOP FLOOR
THE ACME SUPPLY CO. (*Tricks and Novelties*) LIMITED
THIRD FLOOR
MISS SYLVIA (*French Lessons and Swedish Massage*)
SECOND FLOOR

And lastly:
IMPEX LIMITED (*Import-Export Agents*)
ONE FLIGHT UP.

Again he hesitated. But realising that this was a classic case of Hobson's Choice, Henry entered the building and climbed the rickety wooden staircase to the first floor landing.

As he stood in the dim half-light outside the door of Impex Limited, his conviction that Someone in Authority had dropped a rather resonant clanger grew, instead of lessened. But Henry shrugged, peered at the badly-typed invitation to RING FOR ATTENTION—and obediently rang for attention.

The door opened almost immediately and he found himself face to face with Mr. John C. Armitage.

If John C. Armitage had not embarked upon his chosen career, it was very possible that he could have made an extremely handsome living as a photographic model. To Henry, he was the personification of the immaculately-attired habitué of so many full-colour advertisements who, with a glass of whisky in one hand and a supercilious blonde in the other, posed against a background of Ascot, and Ambassadorial banquet or a luxurious London restaurant.

But despite his incredibly well-bred features, with just the right amount of grey at the temples, John C. Armitage had chosen to devote his life to the running of an organization with its offices over a greengrocer's shop in the heart of London's East End. Which is probably why he always got a great deal of satisfaction when observing the reactions of those seeing his inner-office for the very first time. And the reactions of Henry Johnson were no disappointment.

★

Henry stared, open-mouthed, around the unexpectedly large room with its deep-pile carpets, antique furniture and expensive drapes. The subdued lighting cleverly emphasised what appeared to be three original Picassos and a couple of Gaugins on the walls. The background Musak seemed to be half-way through a selection by Mantovani. In short, as Henry told Armitage later, the mind boggled.

Armitage smiled to himself, gestured towards the chair facing his Louis Quinze desk and as Henry sank to a sitting position,

Armitage brought up the question uppermost in his mind.

"Would you say the firm of Impex Limited was successful, Mr. Johnson?"

Still feeling a little dazed by such a dramatic change in his surroundings, Henry shook his head, confused.

"I don't know what to say. Judging by this room—yes. But by the look of the outer office, the building, the whole street in fact . . ." He hesitated. "Well, to be quite honest, it doesn't create a very good first impression, you know."

Armitage seemed extremely pleased by his remark. He nodded, cheerfully.

"Not a *good* impression, perhaps. But it's certainly the *right* one. You see, Mr. Johnson," he continued smoothly: "the whole purpose of this building is not so much to *attract* potential customers—but to drive them away."

Henry thought about that, decided it seemed a rather peculiar way to run a business and said so.

Armitage's smile grew broader.

"That all depends on what sort of business you're running, surely?"

"Does it?"

"*I* think so."

"Then what sort of business *are* you running?"

Armitage chuckled aloud. He always enjoyed the next bit. He leaned forward in his chair and almost whispered the words:

"Deception, Mr. Johnson. The art of international dishonesty, deceit and intrigue. In short," he ended dramatically: "Espionage!"

It took seconds for the full portent of Armitage's words to sink through the various layers of Henry's understanding. Then he gulped, jumped to his feet and pointed a shaking accusatory finger.

"You're a spy!"

Armitage nodded happily.

"How very perceptive of you. But before you rush away for assistance, let me assure you we're both on the same side."

But the damage had been done. Henry turned and made for the door. Armitage, cursing himself for his incurable sense of the dramatic, ran after him.

Henry was half-way down the stairs before Armitage could persuade him that he had *not* been falsely lured to the building with the intention of being drugged, kidnapped and smuggled

behind the Iron Curtain. It took him further time to convince Henry that he had actually been sent to 32a Ackers Street by his superiors at the Foreign Office for the purpose of being interviewed by Armitage, with a view to joining his staff.

"You see, Mr. Johnson," explained Armitage wearily: "Impex is just the front for a special sub-department of MI.6., which, as you know, is primarily concerned with counter-espionage."

"No, I didn't know," said Henry, going on to inform Armitage he knew so little about such things that, until recently, he had been under the impression that James Bond was the name of a popular brand of writing-paper.

Armitage sighed. He knew it was going to be a long, hard day.

★

"But why me?" demanded Henry for the third time. "I'm a cipher mechanic, not a secret agent."

"That's just the point," said Armitage irritably: "We need someone unknown to the other side. Someone they'd never believe to be a British secret agent. Someone they'd take one look at and say to themselves—'A British secret agent? An idiot—a man like him?' " amended Armitage hastily: " 'Impossible!' "

"So I don't *look* like a secret agent," said Henry: "But who does? I know *you* don't," he added pointedly. "I mean, you're not even wearing kinky boots."

Armitage took a deep breath. Then he forced a wide, ingratiating smile. "Look at it this way," he suggested smoothly. "This is a very big opportunity for you. There are all sorts of little perks in this department."

Henry sniffed, unconvinced: "Such as what—a couple of trading stamps every time I get shot?"

"Shot?" repeated Armitage, aghast: "No one gets shot in this department." He saw no point in bringing up the unfortunate affair of Agent Double-O Six. After all, the man had been told time and time again to make sure his safety-catch was on before pulling his Biretta ·32 out of his shoulder holster. It was hardly Armitage's fault that the trigger had caught on the buckle of his braces and drilled a hole through the top of his right foot. "Believe me, Mr. Johnson," continued Armitage, disarmingly: "All we require you to do is make contact with a new arrival at a certain foreign Embassy."

"Oh? Then what?"

"Become his friend. His confidant. His little English chum. He's a very lonely man. And with a little kindness, warmth and genuine English hospitality, I'm sure you could persuade him to turn traitor."

This time, Henry almost got as far as the street before Armitage managed to catch up with him.

"I can't see what you're so upset about," complained Armitage: "It's nowhere near as difficult as it might seem."

"Difficult? It's utterly impossible!"

Armitage shook his head, confidently: "Take my word for it, Mr. Johnson. Every man has his price. You show me a Communist—and I'll show *you* a frustrated Capitalist . . ."

★

Major Igor Androvitch, Head of Security and holder of the Grand Order of Lenin, looked at the subdued little man sitting opposite him and wondered if he was making a big mistake.

The new arrival at the London Embassy seemed singularly unsuited for the task for which he had been sent. Androvitch thought the time had come to offer the man a little idealogical encouragement.

"Believe me, Captain Proshnik," he said: "In every Englishman there is a hidden Communist." He grinned: "Not the brand of Communism we have found it necessary to practise in our own country, of course—but the type of naïve, idealistic nonsense they discuss at their universities." He chuckled aloud at the thought: "Where the State is pictured as a cross between Karl Marx, Santa Claus, and the Pope."

Captain Alexander Proshnik huddled deeper in his chair and blinked nervously through his pebble-glass spectacles towards the large, bull-necked figure of his superior.

"I'm sure everything you say is quite true, Comrade Major," he lied diplomatically. "But how will this help me to contact this—" he hesitated: "What is his name?"

"Johnson. Henry Johnson."

Androvitch took a piece of paper from the drawer of his desk and began to read, aloud: "Age twenty-eight. A bachelor. Recently employed as a third assistant cipher mechanic at the British Foreign Office. Observed yesterday by agent Nicholi Nicholiev entering thirty-two a Ackers Street carrying his transfer papers in a brown manilla envelope."

Proshnik frowned: "How do you know it contained his transfer papers?"

"It *always* contains transfer papers," snapped Androvitch impatiently. "The British Foreign Office uses a special size envelope for that purpose alone." He returned to the piece of paper. "Hobbies and interests include photography—for which he displays great enthusiasm, if little imagination—the cinema, but most important of all, a marked interest in the opposite sex."

Proshnik blinked in surprise. From what he had read in *Pravda*, he was under the impression that most single, unattached young men at the British Foreign Office invariably sent each other inter-office memos on pink, scented paper.

"Well, now," said Androvitch encouragingly: "Any questions?"

Proshnik studied the face of his chief and for a moment, he was lulled into a state of false security.

"Yes, Comrade Major," he said firmly: "Are you sure you wouldn't prefer to use someone else? I mean," he added generously: "I wouldn't mind stepping down in favour of someone younger, brighter . . . braver."

Androvitch's smile vanished. "Next question?'

Proshnik sighed. "Why me?" he asked plaintively: "I'm an assistant air attaché—not a secret agent."

"Ah, but that's just the point, you see," said Androvitch cheerfully: "A genuine agent would never be allowed to get anywhere near Mr. Johnson. But you? A Foreign Embassy official?" He chuckled. "They'd probably encourage the association in the hope that you could be persuaded to defect to the West."

Proshnik was shocked.

"Defect? Me? I'd never do that, Comrade Major. Never!"

Androvitch smiled, thinly: "It never occurred to me that you would, Captain Proshnik. Or should I say 'dare'?"

Proshnik gulped. "I prefer 'would'."

Androvitch nodded, satisfied. "Anything else?"

"Just one thing. How do I meet this Englishman in the first place?"

Androvitch looked at him in some surprise. "How? By accident of course, Captain Proshnik. By accident . . ."

During the next few days, by virtue of what Henry Johnson believed to be a great amount of guile, initiative and brilliant manoeuvring, he managed to bump into Captain Alexander Proshnik at various times and places in London.

The odd thing was, for every time Henry managed to bump into Proshnik, Proshnik seemed to bump into him. While Henry regularly 'just happened' to be sitting in the seat next to Proshnik when he took his usual bus to the Embassy gates, Proshnik, with equal regularity, 'just happened' to be sitting in the seat next to Henry during his regular visits to the cinema.

Both men congratulated themselves on the apparent ease of arranging such accidental meetings and it was only a matter of time before the first words were spoken between them.

It happened one rainy Tuesday afternoon during the matinée performance at a well-known Soho establishment dedicated to the Arts. More specifically, the Art of what is known in the trade as 'The Bumps and the Grinds'.

Mademoiselle Eve D'Amour and Les Girls had just completed their own artistic interpretation of 'Bath Night in a Yemeni Harem' and were being followed on to the tiny stage by another well-made young lady and her Educated Python, when both Henry and Proshnik were genuinely surprised to find themselves sitting next to each other in the front row.

Both had come quite independently to the Club des Nudes. Both had felt the need to have an afternoon off from his wearying assignment, And both were distinctly aggrieved to find the other apparently encroaching upon his private life.

But as Princess del Rocco and her Python were replaced by an even more generously-endowed young lady—('The sexational, the unbelievable eighteen year-old Miss Loo Ching Twang direct from Hong Kong, China, in her own, original interpretation of that famous old Chinese Folk Dance—the Willow Pattern Strip!')—neither Henry nor Proshnik could resist exchanging a conspiratorial grin of mutual appreciation.

And when Miss Loo Ching Twang was herself replaced by the finalé Henry and Proshnik realised they had a genuine, common bond.

It seemed only natural for Henry to invite Proshnik for a cup of coffee at the little Italian café round the corner—and even more natural for Proshnik to accept. They were soon through the initial introductions. Henry chuckled as he recalled a particular attraction of that afternoon's entertainment.

"How about that little blonde?" he grinned: "Did you ever see anything like it?"

"The one with the swinging tassels?"

Henry nodded. Proshnik started to laugh. He laughed until

the tears came into his eyes. Then he shook his head, soberly.

"Unfortunately, no," he said sadly, going on to explain that in his country, the official list of desirable art forms did not include rotating bosoms.

"Ah well," said Henry sympathetically: "That's bureaucracy for you."

Proshnik was silent for a moment. Then, wistfully: "I don't suppose you know any of these young ladies? Personally, I mean."

"Afraid not. Why d'you ask?"

Proshnik shrugged: "I was just thinking. It would be rather nice to ask a couple of them out to supper."

"It would be wonderful," agreed Henry: "But to be quite honest, I wouldn't have the nerve."

Proshnik nodded, understandingly: "You too, eh?"

"Me too," he admitted wryly. Suddenly, Henry realised that he and Proshnik were very much alike in more ways than one. He sensed that, like himself, Proshnik was something of a social misfit. Always on the outside, looking in.

"To be quite frank," said Henry abruptly: "When it comes to chatting up the birds—to meeting young ladies," he amended quickly: "I'm utterly hopeless."

"Oh?"

"I don't know why," he continued morosely: "I just never seem to get anywhere."

Proshnik gave him a long, sympathetic smile. "Never mind, Mr. Johnson," he said gently: "You're not the only one. As it says in my dictionary of Colloquial English Expressions—'Welcome to the Club.' "

★

Henry scowled unhappily as Armitage strolled round Henry's bachelor flat. Armitage examined the furniture, the décor and the profusion of bric-a-brac, which included a gaudy 'Souvenir from Broadstairs' paper-weight, a set of beer-mats with the inscription 'Elbow Bender's Club' and a Coronation Drinking Mug. He winced. With a great effort of will, he managed to mask his inner feelings of aesthetic revulsion and turned back to Henry.

"Charming," he said: "Quite charming. It should serve the purpose admirably."

"I wish I hadn't told you now," muttered Henry miserably: "Old Sacha's a very nice bloke once you get to know him."

"Sacha?"

"Short for Alexander. What he told me about women was confidential," continued Henry: "And you've got no right to use it."

Armitage sighed and turned to look out of the window. Then he turned back again. The view across the Earl's Court roof-tops was even more depressing than the interior of the flat.

"Come now, Henry," he said: "Once we've discovered an Achille's Heel, we must take advantage of it. We can't let your natural liking for the chap stand in the way of you doing your job."

"But why does it have to be done this way?" persisted Henry: "Surely you can get what you want without going as far as this?"

"Possibly," admitted Armitage: "But not as quickly—ah, there you are, Sylvia."

They both turned towards the girl coming out of the bedroom door, her eyes eager with anticipation for the job in hand.

Sylvia D'Arcy-Bennett smoothed the cocktail dress over her ample hips and smiled, shyly. "Well, will I do?"

Henry and Armitage looked her over, carefully. Sylvia, or Agent Double-O Two F (for female) was a big girl. Pretty, in a full-blown, farmer's daughter way, she had managed to convince herself this was due to an inherited glandular complaint rather than her tendency towards the fifth Deadly Sin. After Roedean and Girton, she had gravitated to the Foreign Office typing pool, from whence she had moved over to Armitage's department. Her natural good-temper and simplicity had made her an ideal member of the little group. Under the guise of Sylvia, (French lessons and Swedish Massage), she had happily taken her place in that second floor flat at 32a Ackers Street, to await assignments.

The assignment for that evening was more or less routine. To meet a Captain Alexander Proshnik. To ingratiate herself into his good graces. Then compromise him in the time-honoured manner. Proshnik, apparently, had swallowed the bait with incredible ease and had seemed only too willing to accept Johnson's invitation to meet his 'sister'.

The meeting had been arranged for that evening, in half an hour's time. Armitage prepared to leave them to it.

"Well," he smiled benevolently: "Good hunting."

"Don't worry," replied Sylvia confidently: "We'll have the chappie just where we want him by this time tomorrow." Henry was not so sure. He moved over to the doorway with Armitage

and lowered his voice.

"I'm not very happy at your choice," he informed Armitage grimly: "I mean, Sacha will never believe she's my sister."

"After the first couple of drinks it won't matter what he believes," replied Armitage. "If he's as frustrated as you say he is, he'll take one look at her and that'll be that; anyway," he added: "It was you who said he liked his women on the big side."

Henry looked sourly towards the bulging Sylvia and gave a short, derisive laugh: "That's just as well, isn't it?"

As the door closed behind Armitage, Henry moved miserably over to the well-stocked sideboard bar and poured himself a very large scotch. He was half-way through his third glass by the time Proshnik arrived. Which is why he remembered so little about the rest of the evening.

The next morning, with heavy heart and aching head, Henry arrived at the Soho coffee bar, a large manilla envelope under his arm.

Proshnik was already waiting for him. They sipped their strong black coffees in silence as Henry tried to pluck up the courage to tell his friend how he had betrayed him.

"Quite a night, wasn't it?" he said at last.

"Yes indeed," said Proshnik. He smiled. "A nice girl, your sister."

"Who?" said Henry blankly.

"Your sister. Sylvia."

"Oh, Sylvia! My sister!"

"Yes."

Henry hesitated. Then gently: "She thought you were a very nice man, too."

Proshnik was pleased. "Did she? That's very good of her."

"And she meant it, Sacha," said Henry earnestly. "She really meant it. No matter what."

"I'm very glad to hear it—" Proshnik paused suddenly. "What d'you mean, no matter what?"

Henry wriggled uncomfortably in his seat.

"Sacha, how much do you remember about last night?"

Proshnik considered. "Almost everything," he said finally. "Why d'you ask?"

Henry sighed—then miserably opened the envelope, producing the batch of photographs he had picked up from Armitage earlier that morning. Proshnik stared open-mouthed at the many and

varied revealing poses of himself and Sylvia on Henry's couch.

"So," he said at last: "The whole thing was arranged to compromise me, eh?"

Henry nodded unhappily. "The idea is to use these photos to blackmail you. For secret information," he added, unnecessarily: "I'm sorry Sacha, I really am."

"Not half as sorry as I am," snapped Proshnik. "Where was the camera?"

"In the standard lamp. That's why the pictures are a little over-exposed."

"The *pictures* over-exposed?" snapped Proshnik bitterly: "What about *me*?"

"I'm sorry Sacha," said Henry again: "But I had no choice."

Proshnik looked at him for a moment, then nodded, slowly.

"No, Henry," he said. "I don't suppose you had. But as a matter of interest," he continued: "How much of last night do *you* remember?"

"Not much," admitted Henry: "As a matter of fact, I was already three-parts cut by the time you arrived."

"By the time Anya and I arrived," corrected Proshnik.

"Eh? Oh yes, that's right," said Henry vaguely. He dimly remembered that Proshnik had finally turned up accompanied by a pretty dark-haired girl. "Who was she, anyway?"

"Miss Anya Ulova," said Proshnik, promptly: "A senior Embassy stenographer—and part-time secret agent."

It was then that he produced the set of photographs he had picked up from his Embassy earlier that morning. Henry stared open-mouthed at the revealing poses of himself and Miss Anya Ulova on his own bedroom divan.

He whispered: "You mean that while Sylvia was busily compromising you in the living room, this Anya was actually . . .?"

His voice trailed off as Proshnik nodded apologetically and placed one set of photographs on top of the other. "As it says in my dictionary of Colloquial English Expressions—snap!"

★

"It'll never work," said Henry: "We'll never get away with it."

"Probably not," agreed Proshnik as he photographed the drawing of the Illushin Type 547 low-level bomber pinned to the wall of Henry's flat. "But we've still got to try."

"Look," said Henry earnestly: "Why don't we just tell them

the truth?"

Proshnik looked at him in blank disbelief. "Tell our superiors that we've made a complete mess of something they've been planning for weeks?" He shook his head. "In any case, I don't know about you, but if Comrade Major Androvitch ever saw those photographs of me and Sylvia, I'd be finished."

Henry looked worried. "You mean they'd send you to the Siberian salt mines?"

Proshnik chuckled. "You're a little out of date, my friend. They don't send people to the Siberian salt mines these days."

"Oh. That's all right then," said Henry, relieved.

"They send them to Outer Mongolia," continued Proshnik, soberly: "And that's even worse." He was silent for a moment as he tried to picture himself as a trainee-stoker in some remote Mongolian power station—and failed. Then he thought of Henry. "What would happen to you?" he asked.

Henry shrugged. "I'm not quite sure. But knowing Armitage, I'll probably be transferred to some fever-ridden outpost of what's left of the British Commonwealth."

"For how long?" asked Proshnik.

"For as long as it took me to go native or catch beri-beri, I suppose."

"There you are, then. We've got no alternative, either of us."

Henry was still unconvinced. While Proshnik's plan was extremely simple, it was also quite lunatic. His idea was for them to supply each other with what appeared to be secret information for delivery to their respective superiors. As both men were extremely patriotic and had no intention of betraying their own countries, the only problem appeared to be the selection of 'secret information' which would be accepted as the genuine article by both sides.

Proshnik had duly arrived at Henry's flat with a drawing taken from an old technical magazine. A drawing of an aircraft which had gone out of service some five years previously. But by carefully using his technical knowledge to modify the wings, add two turbo-jets to the tail-section and draw in a quite fictitious fuel injection system, he had been able to produce a most convincing drawing of what purported to be a revolutionary new low-level bomber.

For his part, Henry had simply taken an old cipher-machine handbook, drawn in a couple of completely superfluous printed circuits and ended up with what appeared to be the plans of a machine constructed on an entirely new principle.

The final step was simple. With Henry's knowledge of photography and his wide range of equipment, it had not been difficult to photograph the drawings for transfer to the traditional micro-film negative.

It was Proshnik who raised the obvious question.

"What would happen, if our people tried to build this machine? From your drawing, I mean."

"That's the least of our worries," said Henry: "It would take years of research and development before your scientists could really be sure it just wouldn't work."

Proshnik nodded, satisfied: "That goes for the Illushin, too," He grinned: "Heaven knows what would happen if they tried to get *this* aircraft off the ground."

It was Henry's turn to be amused. "Probably fly in ever-decreasing circles before finally disappearing up its own exhaust pipe."

"Very likely," said Proshnik seriously, taking another look at the drawing: "Very likely indeed."

There was a long pause. Then: "Well?" said Proshnik: "Do we or don't we?"

Henry hesitated. Then he gave a gesture of complete resignation. "As you said—we've got no alternative. Neither of us."

And so it began. The following evening, Henry deposited a roll of micro-film behind a gate-post in the Earl's Court Road. No sooner had he walked quickly away and disappeared round the corner, than Proshnik stepped out of the shadows and retrieved the little packet. He delivered it straight into the hands of Androvitch.

The evening after that, it was Proshnik's turn to deposit his roll of micro-film behind a telegraph pole in Kensington Church Street. Almost immediately, Henry appeared from a nearby shop doorway, retrieved the little packet and delivered it to Armitage.

Proshnik had insisted that there was a proper, laid-down procedure for the passing of secret information and the least they could do was work strictly according to the book.

Thus Armitage eagerly studied the micro-films of the revolutionary Illushin type 547 low-level bomber, while Androvitch studied the micro-films of the unique Cipher Machine Type 583/9 (Amended). Both were more than satisfied.

The possibility that they were actually examining nothing more than what Henry had accurately described as a 'right old load of utter cods-wallop' never entered their heads.

Over the next few months, Henry deposited 20 rolls of microfilm behind the Earl's Court Road gate-post. Proshnik reciprocated with a regular delivery to the Kensington telegraph pole. Each received nearly £5,000 for his services from the grateful foreign power concerned. And each had long forgotten his earlier doubts, fears and apprehensions.

At first, Henry and Proshnik had been most reluctant to accept any payment for their endeavours. But both their superiors held the view that such payments were vital. They committed the recipient once and for all. They constituted, claimed Armitage, a symbolic 30 pieces of silver. Henry and Proshnik had been more or less forced to accept the wages of sin.

That was their first mistake. Their second was spending it.

Henry switched on the new record player, walked across the new carpet to the new cocktail bar in the living room of his newly re-decorated flat and started to mix a very dry martini. Anya Ulova sat on the couch and watched him, affectionately.

They had seen a great deal of each other since that very first meeting. Androvitch had not only approved of their association but actually encouraged it. He considered such a relationship an insurance against Henry's continued loyalty. In the same way, Armitage had been more than pleased to learn that Proshnik and Sylvia were spending a great deal of time together after office hours.

For Henry, the last few months had been amongst the happiest of his life. He had realised more ambitions than he had ever thought possible. His usual rear balcony seat at the local cinema had been ignored in favour of a couple of front circle seats at the West End premières—complete with a shark-skin tuxedo and a beautifully-dressed Anya.

His regular visits to the local Bunch of Grapes had long been discontinued in favour of the more exclusive cocktail bars, night-clubs and restaurants. Henry knew that no matter what happened to him in the future, he would never regret what he and Proshnik had done.

Which was just as well. Because only two nights later, Sylvia D'Arcy-Bennett was about to enter her favourite West End restaurant on the arm of Sacha Proshnik, when she saw Henry about to leave the very same restaurant—on the arm of Anya Ulova.

Armitage received Sylvia's report in grim silence. "Good God,"

he said bitterly: "Even *I* can't afford to eat at that sort of place. You're sure it was the same girl Proshnik brought to the flat that night?"

Sylvia nodded: "Anya Ulova. Late of their Embassy in Washington. The Americans have a file on her an inch thick. Last year, from what I can gather, she almost succeeded in compromising half of the staff of the entire Pentagon."

Armitage muttered a string of colourful phrases under his breath and reached for the telephone. His instructions to the head of Scotland Yard's Special Branch were simple and to the point.

"You're positive that Johnson didn't see you?" he asked Sylvia as he replaced the receiver. Sylvia was quite positive. Even Proshnik had not noticed the preoccupied Henry and Anya, their heads close together in intimate conversation. A classic picture of International togetherness.

Henry had just deposited his latest micro-film creation behind the original gate-post and collected the usual bundle of bank-notes in return, when he felt an unmistakable hand on his shoulder.

The two Special Branch men looked strangely over-dressed for such a warm June evening as they escorted him towards the waiting car. Henry could not help feeling rather sorry for the men as they sat on each side of him, silently perspiring in their regulation trench-coats and bowler hats. And he told them so.

"Shut your mouth," said the man on his right, absently.

"Or we'll shut it for you," added the man on his left, with an equal lack of enthusiasm. Henry assumed that this was the official reply to any overtures from a man in his position and he maintained a discreet silence as the car drove swiftly across London towards Hackney Wick.

As the car entered the familiar surroundings of Ackers Street, Henry was surprised to realise that his feelings were that of relief. Even though the thought of never seeing Anya again was extremely upsetting, he suddenly found himself quite pleased at the prospect of being able to end his double-life.

But, he was totally unprepared for what Armitage had to say to him.

"You do realise," said Armitage grimly as Henry was escorted into his office: "that you'll get forty years for this?"

"As long as that?" repeated Henry, horrified.

"What did you expect?" snapped Armitage: "A two-quid fine and a slap on the wrist? Good God, man," he continued bitterly:

"Compared to you, Judas Iscariot deserved a seat on the First Vatican Council."

Henry bridled at that, but as one of the Special branch men silently handed Armitage the roll of micro-film and bundle of bank-notes, he knew that any protestations of innocence would be not worth the breath they were spoken upon. Armitage examined the micro-film negatives of what appeared to be the Cipher-code Handbook 392/T.S. (for Top Secret) and shook his head, bewilderedly: "I can hardly believe it," he said: "You, of all people, Johnson. I would have staked my life on the fact that you were a Good Chap. A Good *British* Chap," he added, to avoid any confusion. "And yet . . ." he tapped the bundle of bank-notes significantly: "You actually go and sell your birthright for a mess of foreign *shlushtik*."

"*Shlushtik*?"

"Pottage."

"Oh." Henry was silent for a moment. Then: "I don't suppose it's any good telling you I'm not what you think I am?"

Armitage looked at him incredulously: "You're not going to deny you've been flogging micro-films to the other side, are you?"

"Well no. Not exactly."

"Or the fact that you've been using their money to live it up, paint the town and generally have a right old ding-dong with one of their most dangerous female operatives?"

"Well no. I don't suppose I can. But the truth is—"

Armitage interrupted, savagely: "The truth is, you're the nastiest, most treacherous little bounder I've ever had the misfortune to meet."

"Thank you very much. As we're being so frank with each other, I'd like to tell *you* a thing or two." For the first time in as long as he could remember, Henry was shaking with anger. The injustice of it all drove him to his feet with a vehemence that made Armitage blink in surprise. "Let me remind you," said Henry: "It was not *my* idea to become a British Secret Agent—it was yours. I told you at the time you were picking the wrong bloke, but you wouldn't have it. Oh, no. You knew better. And what happened? I made a complete pig's ear of it, that's what. Yes, I admit it! I bungled the job from start to finish. But I'm *no traitor*!"

Armitage yawned, looked at the two Special Branch men and nodded. As they moved forward to take his arms, Henry shrugged them off, angrily. "I haven't finished! I know you'll

never believe me," he went on grimly: "But you can't deny that if you hadn't hi-jacked me into this in the first place, I'd still be a perfectly ordinary citizen doing the job I'd been trained for. What's more," he said quietly: "I'm damned if I'm going to spend forty years in jail for something I haven't done."

Henry was still in full voice as the Special Branch men escorted him firmly down the stairs towards the waiting car. They pushed him, protesting, into the rear seat and climbed in after him. The car had already moved away from the kerb before the two men realised that Henry was no longer with them. He had simply kept on going—and let himself out of the off-side door.

The car screeched to a halt and the men emerged hastily. But they were too late. Henry had already disappeared down the nearest alleyway. A few minutes later, Sacha Proshnik received a telephone call from a public phone booth in Hackney Wick. He listened in silence to Henry's agitated report and nodded sadly.

"Ah well," he sighed. "It was good while it lasted." But as each replaced the receiver, they knew what they had to do.

★

It was the biggest newspaper story for years. Most Fleet Street editors found it extremely difficult to decide which piece should be given the greatest prominence. They finally compromised by running them both side by side:

"FOREIGN AIR ATTACHÉ REQUESTS POLITICAL ASYLUM."	"BRITISH AGENT DESERTS TO THE EAST."

And so, three weeks later, Henry found himself sitting next to Anya in The People's Palace of Culture, Moscow, watching the Bolshoi Ballet and dreaming wistfully of the Earl's Court Road. At precisely the same moment, with a cheerful Sylvia on his arm, Proshnik was walking down the Earl's Court Road, dreaming wistfully of the Bolshoi Ballet.

It had not been an easy decision for either of them. But as it said in Proshnik's dictionary of Colloquial English Expressions: 'If moral rape is inevitable—lie back and enjoy it.'

Or words to that effect.

RACING COMPETITION

EWMM thought you might like a day at the races, as a suitable prize in this competition to round off our Special Christmas Racing Number.

The prize is for the winner, and a friend, to spend a day at a race-meeting at a course under the authority of The Jockey Club or the National Hunt Committee on a date to be mutually arranged. The winner and companion will get V.I.P. treatment, and an excellent lunch—plus a £5 note towards their fares to the chosen course.

The competition is simple. Below will be found five captions for the cartoon opposite. Put them in the order you think most popular. The winner will be the entrant whose choice duplicates or most closely approximates general voting order. In event of a tie, the earliest received card will be judged the winner.

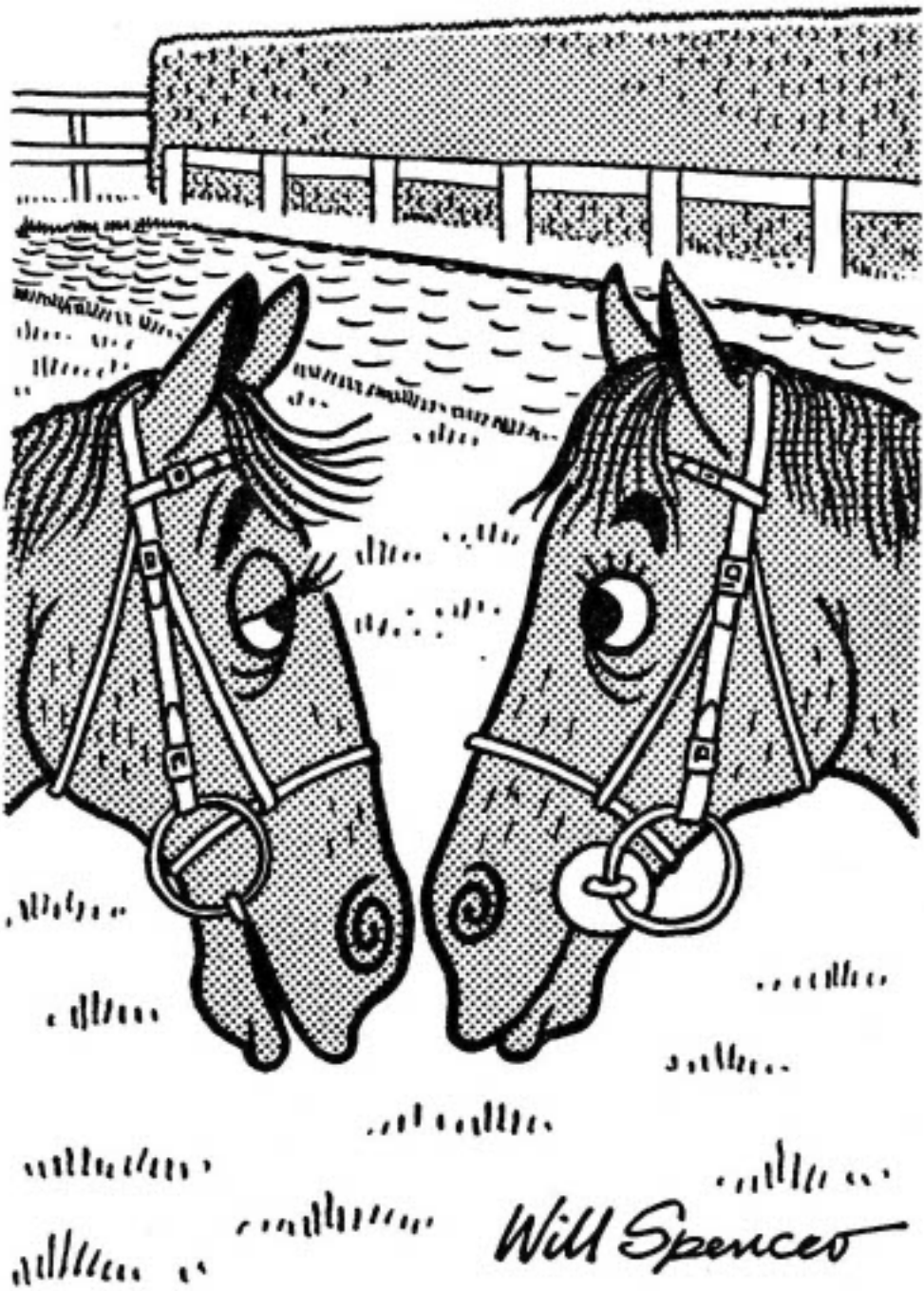
Send in a postcard bearing the caption numbers in the order preferred; add name and address, and post it no later than 1 February, 1967. The winner's name and winning voting order will be published in *EWMM*, March, 1967, issue.

Address your card: Racing, *EWMM*, 5, Bradmore Road, Oxford.

captions

1. 'Shall we take the plunge?'
2. 'Are you leading me up the bridle path?'
3. 'Let's have a fall-down strike!'
4. 'Anything you can jump I can jump better.'
5. 'Jumped any good brooks lately?'

The winner and his guest will be able to spend a day at a race-meeting at one of the following courses: Alexandra Park; Catterick; Cheltenham; Chepstow; Chester; Fakenham; Hereford; Leicester; Ludlow; Market Rasen; Newmarket; Nottingham; Southwell; Stratford; Towcester; Warwick; Windsor; Wolverhampton; Worcester or Yarmouth on a date to be arranged between April and July, 1967, a wide choice of place and time which should appeal to the winner.


Will Spencer

A Merry Christmas from Nicodemus

ERIC PARR

It took Wilmer to pinpoint the Seasonal Joy lurking in the hearts of the Fraternity

DOWN AT WILMERS the conversation is all about Christmas and you'd be surprised how very conventional, even downright old-fashioned the Fraternity is in its attitude to the festive time of giving and receiving.

To be skint at Christmas is to lose face, for every crooked man, be he single or married, has a host of honorary nieces and nephews who expect something handsome in the shape of a Christmas present from an uncle who reckons his wages in the shape of large rolls of pound notes.

Everyone is talking of Christmas past and Flyaway Peter is relating the story of Fanlight Stevens and Pussy Morris, who went out on Christmas Eve on a screwing job which entailed breaking into one of the largest wholesale fur warehouses in the City.

They got into the cold storage and when it was time to get out they found the door of the vault had jammed.

And there the law found them on Boxing morning, huddled under a pile of minks and Persian lamb, half frozen. According to Flyaway Peter the law had to run them all the way to the nick in order to get their circulation flowing.

Wilmer is listening to all this with a little smile on his face, and then suddenly he says:

"Let me tell you about Creeping Jimmy and how he bunged a necklace supposed to be worth about twenty grand into a bird's Christmas stocking."

And at this point I should explain that Creeping Jimmy is one of the few surviving members of a dying race. He is a genuine burglar who conforms with the constitution of burglary as defined by Harris & Wilsher's *Criminal Law*, wherein it states that 'Burglary is the breaking and entering of a dwelling house by night with intent to commit any felony therein. Section 46 (10) of the Larceny Act 1916 stipulates that night begins at nine p.m. and ends at six a.m.'

As burglary or 'the creep' demands such infinite patience and colossal nerve, none of the up-and-comings will entertain it. That is why there are only about five genuine burglars active to-day, and Creeping Jimmy is one of that handful.

Now Creeping Jimmy only works on tip-offs and his sole source of information is his buyer, a geezer named Manny Steinberg, who runs a very smart dining club in Mayfair.

As a result he was able to obtain the best possible information which he passed on to Creeping Jimmy.

"It happened like this," says Wilmer, looking around to see that he had undivided attention from all and sundry. "Creeping Jimmy was tucked away in his little cottage in Surrey and was looking forward to a nice quiet Christmas. His sister was bringing over the kids and Creeping was going to really lay it on. Christmas tree, carol singers and the old gentleman himself."

Three days before Christmas, Wilmer told us, Jimmy gets a frantic phone call from Manny and as a result he takes the first available train to town and makes a bee line for Manny's club.

After the usual formalities Manny gets down to business and this is the queerest thing he has ever stuck up to Jimmy.

It appears that a certain Lord Farningham had given a big dance at his country house, Farningham Hall, and for that occasion the famous Farningham diamond necklace had been taken out of the bank vault. That and a few other bits and pieces which were family heirlooms and never saw the light of day except on rare occasions.

Manny had been tipped off by one of the footmen that the gear would be locked in a safe in the library, after the dance was over and that the next morning it would be swagged back to the jug.

So, as this was not Creeping Jimmy's cup of tea, Manny stuck this good thing up to Barney Wilkins and his little team of musclemen.

They steamed into the library at three a.m. and swagged away the peter which they afterwards opened by the simple method of

ripping off the back.

"I read about it in the papers," says Jimmy, "and a nice little tickle it was, too. I see the insurance company are screaming for fifty thousand pounds."

Manny snarls like a frustrated hyena.

"It sounded alright on paper," he says, "but when I came to assess the value of this little collection it turned out to be paste replicas. Even the Farningham necklace was only a very good imitation which would have fooled anyone but an expert."

Creeping Jimmy whistled.

"Lord Farningham must be very satisfied with your night's work. You've got him out of a nasty situation, for obviously he has flogged the real gear and now he'll cop the insurance money. Do you know what I think?"

Manny shakes his head and Jimmy continues:

"I think he got that footman to find someone who could nick this little lot. In fact he's made a monkey out of you. However, I don't see why you had to pull me away from my preparations for Christmas."

So Manny puts his cards on the table. He points out that if anyone else had made a monkey out of him he would have seen to it that that geezer never walked again. Unfortunately you can't go around sticking it on one of the nobility. Still, there were other ways of skinning a cat and this is what he had found out.

This Lord Farningham was a bastard from the bush. He has been two-timing his old woman with a society scrubber and what with her expensive tastes and his gambling debts, something had to be done so he had replicas made of the family heirlooms and afterwards flogged the originals in Amsterdam.

"He's the biggest liberty taker you have ever known," continues Manny," he even had the impudence to lumber this bird along to the old family home where she is installed for the twelve days of Christmas. She even has the next bedroom to his."

Now Creeping Jimmy, although a confirmed bachelor, has the greatest regard for the marriage vows and he doesn't like this set-up, and says so to Manny.

"I'm very glad you think that way," says Manny, "for this is what I want you to do. I want you to steam into the Hall on Christmas Eve and turn over this scrubber's bedroom. Her tomfoolery is worth about three grand, and what is more, it is not insured. Then I want you to put back the imitation necklace. I want you to stick it in Lady Farningham's bedroom."

Now Jimmy wasn't too keen on this idea. He is a creature of habits and this set up was a bit cock-eyed. Anyway, Manny kept hammering away about the sanctity of the marriage vows and the fact that as this was a personal matter he was prepared to advance Jimmy the sum of £1,000.

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So on Christmas Eve Jimmy takes train for Farningham. He sticks his bicycle into the guard's-van, and when he gets to his destination he pedals away in the direction of his target for tonight.

He sticks the bike into a convenient hay-stack and approaches the house on foot. He settles himself down for a long wait. He finds a summer house and sits there with a flask of whisky and a packet of sandwiches until every one in the big house should be fast asleep.

He steamed into the house by way of the library window, using his diamond ring and a rubber suction-cap to make a hole in the window large enough for the insertion of his hand.

He eased the window up, inch by inch, and then slipped into the room. Once inside he pulled football stockings over his shoes and made for the main staircase.

He stood as still as a statue for a full five minutes, listening and taking in the feel of the house which is a gift granted to the true burglar.

Once he was satisfied he made his way up the staircase, one step at a time, using the part of the staircase nearest the wall in order to avoid creaking.

Every step he took synchronised with the tick of the grandfather clock in the hall. Once on the first landing he stood still and with the aid of his pocket torch, the glass of which was covered in insulating tape with the exception of a tiny hole through which a thin pencil of light filtered, he located the scrubber's bedroom.

Slowly he turned the handle of the door and slipped like a shadow through the small opening. Judging by the weird noises coming from the sleeping figure in bed he realised that nothing short of an earthquake would awaken her.

He located the tom, a nice little collection comprising three diamond bracelets, four rings and a diamond bracelet watch.

Suddenly he came across a man's dress suit slung on the floor. He took another look at the bed and saw that the scrubber was not

alone. Her bed companion was obviously Lord Farningham.

Creeping Jimmy shook his head in silent reproof but that didn't stop him from taking the diamond links and studs out of his lordship's dress shirt. Neither did it stop him from abstracting a bundle of fivers from his crocodile wallet.

He then slipped slowly out of the room but before he left the sleeping couple he stuck a handful of tin tacks on either side of the bed.

Once outside he slipped his hand around the door, removed the key from the inside and locked the door from the outside. The key he buried deep in the earth of a large rubber plant which stood on the landing.

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His next move was towards Lady Farningham's room. His movements were gentle, once he was inside.

He picked up one of her nylons from the dressing table-stool and in it placed the long oblong case Manny had given him. He took a lipstick off the dressing table and wrote on the mirror:

A MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM NICODEMUS

Jimmy decided he might just as well make hay while the sun shone, and flitted from room to room gathering all the hay he could.

He oozed into the last room on his agenda, and was one step towards the dressing-table when a small boy's voice said, "Is that Father Christmas?"

"Yes, cock—I mean, sonny," replied Creeping Jimmy, "but no toys for you unless you go to sleep."

But the kid wasn't standing for that. He switched on his bedside lamp. He looked intently at Jimmy.

"I thought Father Christmas had a long white beard and a red coat," he said. "You're all dressed in black, and you've got footer stockings on your feet."

"Well, you've got to move with the times, son."

"What have you got for me," asks the kid, very insistent like. Creeping Jimmy scratched his head. No good offering this little perisher one of the scrubber's bracelets. Then he had an inspiration.

"I've got something extra special for you, a set of burglar's tools."

"You're a swinging Father Christmas!" said the kid as Jimmy took out, one by one, his jemmy, rubber suction cap, bunch of skeleton keys and his small brace and bit.

"I'll just rub the germs off," said Jimmy and proceeded to wipe every article with a white silk handkerchief before he laid them on the kid's bed.

"Goodnight, son," he said as he slipped out of the door. "A merry Christmas . . ."

★

Christmas morning got off to a flying start at Farningham Hall. Lady Farningham was overjoyed at the return of her necklace. She went along to her husband's bedroom to tell him of their good fortune and that she had telephoned the nice man from the insurance company and had told him the glad news. She knew he wouldn't mind his Christmas at home being disturbed by such a welcome message.

She was puzzled when she discovered her husband's bed had not been slept in and was even more bewildered when the maid told her that she couldn't get into the Countess of Marching's bedroom.

The gardener had to be summoned from his cottage to force the door with a crowbar. When the door crashed open the occupants sprung out of bed, and began to shout with pain. Lady Farningham took in the scene and then, icily: "When you have finished your dance, I would be obliged if you will both meet me in the morning room."

The rest of the guests had a marvellous time, with the exception of one or two who complained of stiff necks, caused no doubt by draughts whistling through circular holes bored in various window- and door-frames by the Hon. Jeremy Farningham.

Wilmer rolled his usual cigarette and waited for comments when he finished the story. I waited for the pay-off, for I had noticed that of late Wilmer had become a member of the local library and consequently he was putting in a lot of reading.

"I don't get that message on the mirror," says Walker the Talker. "What was he trying to do. Lumber someone by the name of Nicodemus?"

Wilmer looked at him in lofty disdain.

"I didn't expect that you would get it," he replies. "Fortunately some of us look further than the midday racing paper. Nicodemus is the man referred to in the gospels 'And there came, like a thief

in the night, one Nicodemus'."

Wilmer puffs a cloud of smoke up to the ceiling, then he says: "Which reminds me. Last week I put a collecting box for Dr. Barnardo's Homes on the counter. Judging by the weight of it, there should be enough to buy one cracker and a mince pie. Now all you budding Nicodemuses, I want to see a piece of silver from each one of you go into that box before you leave the club to-night. Once that's done I'll take great pleasure in wishing you all a merry Christmas."

EWMM TRUE CRIME CLASSIC

The New Trend in Murder

COLIN WILSON

At year's end a variation on our single-case classic crimes series seemed permissible and we invited the controversial author of the best-seller, The Outsider, *to consider modern murder and to offer his views on it*

BACK IN 1959 I compiled *An Encyclopedia of Murder*, aided by Pat Pitman, and tried to deduce some general conclusions on this unpleasant but fascinating subject. Since then a great many interesting cases have occurred. The present article will re-examine the problem of murder, taking into account some of these cases.

Let me begin by being frankly personal. As well as the *Encyclopedia*, I have also written three novels about murder, one of them based on the 'monster of Dusseldorf'—Kürten, and another on the Cleveland Torso murders of 1935-37. Readers of my heavier philosophical works often find this interest in murder incongruous. Many of them write to ask me why the subject has such a 'morbid attraction' for me. The answer is that it hasn't. But it strikes me as an important challenge. Murder is the one subject that has so far defied all attempts to turn it into a 'science'. There is a subject called criminology, but no 'murderology', but I have a few suggestions to make that may prove of interest.

I would like to suggest, first of all, that there seem to be two types of murderer: the calculating murderer, and the violent murderer. The calculating murderers are seldom violent, and

vice versa. And, as often as not, calculating murderers kill a single victim. The violent murderers tend to kill several. My own interest as an amateur criminologist lies entirely with the violent murderers. In fact, in compiling the *Encyclopedia*, Mrs. Pitman dealt with all the calculating murderers—Armstrong, Crippen, Seddon—and I dealt with the violent murderers and mass-murderers—Jack the Ripper, Earle Nelson, Kürten, and so on. Women, on the whole, seem to be fascinated by the calculating murderer, whereas the violent killers only shock them.

Now, obviously, the above distinction has many exceptions. John George Haigh was a calculating murderer, and he killed six people. Fritz Haarmann killed to sell his victims as meat, and no one knows how many he killed. William Herbert Wallace was certainly both calculating and violent, if indeed he *was* the man who battered Julia Wallace to death. Petiot and Landru were mass murderers *and* calculating murderers.

All the same, I think the distinction is not only valid, but significant, or what is really important here is the *psychology* of the two types of killer. And it seems to me that these lie at opposite extremes. The calculating killer has the cautious mentality of a shop-keeper or bank clerk. His dominant traits are meanness and pettiness. The violent killer is a completely different proposition. He may have some of the characteristics of the wild animal; but, on the whole, he cannot be called mean or petty. This means that, from the point of view of the police, and of society in general, he represents a different type of problem from the calculating killer.

★

It is worth noticing that mass murder is a fairly modern invention. If you look through the *Newgate Calendar*, or Camden Pelham's *Chronicles of Crime*, (1840), you will find very few murders with more than one victim, except in a few cases of robbery. In fact, these two works are curiously uninteresting to the modern student of crime because there is so little variety in the murders; the usual motive is robbery, and most of them are obviously the outcome of appalling social conditions. Apart from the legendary case of Sawney Bean and his family, the earliest known cases of mass murder seem to be Burke and Hare and the Ratcliffe Highway killer. But again, in spite of the number of the victims—a dozen or more—the Burke and Hare killings strike one as a symptom of social misery rather than as genuine crimes of

violence. They are an almost classic case of calculating murder. So the dubious honour of being the first true mass murderer in English criminal history probably goes to John Williams, the Ratcliffe Highway killer. Admittedly, these murders, committed in London's East End in 1811, were apparently committed for gain. But their incredible violence and ferocity mark them as the work of a psycopath. He killed two families, seven people in all, smashing in their skulls with a mallet and cutting the throats, as well as hacking at the limbs of some of his victims. Williams was diseased; he might well have been technically insane.

With Williams began the age of mass murder, which has continued until today. (At the time of writing, the most recent examples are the Chicago killing of eight nurses, with which Richard Speck has been charged, and the shooting of three policemen by bandits near Wormwood Scrubs.) Before Williams, there are no recorded cases of murder by criminal psycopaths, although many of the murderers in the *Newgate Calendar* are obviously pretty close to insanity. But, in a way, Williams was before his time. The real age of the mass murderer begins in the last two decades of the 19th century, (although there were always remarkable exceptions, like the psycopathic 'Jeffries the Monster' of Tasmania, who killed simply for the pleasure of it; a brief account of his career can be found in *Mysteries of the Police and Crime*, by Major Arthur Griffiths). The best known case is, of course, that of Jack the Ripper. But there are many other names, unknown except to students of crime, which demonstrate this new 'trend' in murder. America has a large number of such cases—cases that, if they had occurred in England, would have become universally notorious, but which achieved only local notoriety in the States. For example, who has ever heard the name of Jesse Pomeroy? The only account of this case that I have been able to trace is by Guy Logan, in a book called, *Rope, Knife and Chair*, and it sounds incredible. Pomeroy was a schoolboy of South Boston, a big lad with a twisted lip, and an eye covered by a cataract. According to Logan, 27 children were murdered in 1881, most of them mutilated. Finally, an intended-victim escaped and was able to identify Pomeroy, who immediately admitted to being the killer, was confined in an asylum. His age—14 at the time—must have been in his favour. After a year he was released, apparently cured, and—although this seems hard to believe—he was allowed to work in his father's shop. In due course more child murders occurred. A refuse heap behind the

shop was opened up, and bodies were found. At 17, Pomeroy was sentenced to death, this being commuted to life imprisonment in solitary confinement. After several suicide attempts, he settled down to prison life and died in his seventies.

I have cited this case not merely because it is unknown, but because it shows what has happened since the days of the *Newgate Calendar*. It already has the modern touch, the touch of *nightmare* which you also find in the Kürten case, or the 'Moors murders' in England. This atmosphere of nightmare is strangely absent from early murder cases, with the single exception of the child murders of Gilles de Rais (which seem to have been connected with witchcraft and his desire to make gold rather than with actual sadism). No doubt there were plenty of cases of piracy that involved horrors worse than these, but the victims never lived to report on them. No, the notorious murders of the past have a kind of innocence, a naiveté, about them—Thurtell and Hunt, Theodore Gardell, even Burke and Hare. They are easy to understand; they were committed by desperate human beings for money, or for various other quite straightforward reasons. They aroused a kind of morbid interest in the general public—the kind of interest we felt at school when somebody else got caned—but no horror. And this is because these murderers of the past were brutal, but never deliberately cruel. The Pomeroy case shows a deliberate, leering cruelty. (For example, one well-to-do parent sent his son to school with an armed escort. Pomeroy sent him an unsigned letter threatening the boy's life. He then persuaded his younger brother, Harry Pomeroy, to go into class one day and declare that the boy's father was outside and wanted to see him. The boy went out, and was never seen alive again. Harry Pomeroy insisted that a well-dressed man had given him the message).

And from this time onward, most of the major murder cases have this touch of nightmare. This is the reason that Jack the Ripper (1888) produced such an effect of shock. The East End had a murder every night in 1888; they were so common that many were not even reported. And many of them were horrible enough in their details. What is so horrible about the Ripper case is the idea of a man mutilating women *for fun*—out of some curious compulsion of pleasure. The Ripper letters—whether they are genuine or forgeries—have this same gloating quality . Even the name catches the same quality of senseless cruelty.

I do not want to labour this point, but by way of support, let me cite just a few 20th century murder cases that have been notable

for sheer cruelty:

(*a*) Earle Nelson, the 'Gorilla' murderer, a psycopath who committed at least 22 sex murders in America in 1926-27. One of his last victims was 14 year-old Lola Cowan. The details of her death were such that the court was cleared, and they were never made public.

(*b*) The Texarcana murderer, Texas, 1946. This killer—who was never caught—specialised in attacking courting couples, murdering the man, and then raping and murdering the girl.

(*c*) The Black Dahlia case. Hollywood, 1947. The body of Elizabeth Short, known as the Black Dahlia, was found in two pieces. Marks indicated that she had been tortured for some hours before her death. The killer was never caught.

(*d*) The Moors murder case. The details which emerged at the trial were horrible enough, but many crime reporters in Fleet Street know that certain details were suppressed 'in the public interest'. I do not propose to repeat these. But viewers of BBC TV, before Brady and Hindley were arrested, might recall Fyffe Robertson's brief report on the Tonight programme, in which he spoke about rumours of 'orgies in a locked room' and of black magic. Brady and Hindley have been credited with more than 16 victims. The police are still digging at the time I write this, although Brady and Hindley have received the maximum sentence. (Equally interesting was Fyffe Robertson's hint that a *group* of people were involved—not simply two.)

This Moors case is of paramount interest because it seems to indicate that this particular type of murder is finally reaching England. The brutality of the shooting of the three policemen underlines this.

For some fortunate reason, the English temperament does not run to violence and cruelty. Neville Heath is perhaps the only English case—before the Moors case—of genuinely sadistic murder.

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These, then, are the basic facts. Crime in England is still a long way behind crime in the United States. Neither do we have these periodic cases of mass 'lust murder' that are so much a feature of Germany—Pommerenke; Boost, the 'autobahn murderer' (who claimed his sixth victim a few days before I began this article.) A TV reporter, speaking about the killing of the three policemen,

said that the gang situation in England is at present as bad as in Chicago in the 1920s—largely due to the government's failure to do something constructive about gambling.

Now, the first question to be answered is this: *Why* has crime taken this strange turn towards violence and cruelty in the 20th century? We have become so accustomed to cruelty that we accept the sheer viciousness of the James Bond novels as amusing hokum. Why?

The basic reason is one that has never been honestly faced, either by psychologists or social workers. The truth is this: Although man is an animal, he differs from all other animals in one strange respect—*comfort makes him violent*. If you have a racehorse, and you keep it in a meadow with plenty of food and sunshine, it may get a little restive; but more probably it will simply get fat and lazy. The same applies to a dog or a cat; even to a tiger in the zoo. But take a human being, place him in a situation that is fairly pleasant, but boring, and in no time at all he will be fighting and killing.

This is the fact that is never fairly faced by the people who talk about the necessity for world peace, for universal disarmament and so on. World peace is certainly an important aim. But we shall never get it by closing our eyes to the facts about human nature.

This is demonstrated by the 'Black Room' experiments that a number of American psychologists have been working at recently. If you place a man in a specially insulated room, in *total* silence and darkness, he will go insane in a matter of days. This is because there is nothing to see or hear—and nothing to do. After the first 20 hours or so, he does not want to sleep. Soon his own impatience, his need to do something, begins to make him feel like a boiler about to burst. In this state, it is easy to brain-wash him.

Now consider something else. One of the first modern writers to concentrate on crime was Dostoevsky. At least two of his novels provide unique studies of criminals. One is *Crime and Punishment*, a study of an active and intelligent young man who has no money, and therefore feels tied hand and foot. He murders an old female pawnbroker to get money, telling himself that once he can 'make a start', he will become a Napoleon. The reason that Raskolnikov kills is the reason that people go insane in the dark room—the fact that *man was not made to sit still.*

Another novel, *The Possessed*, is even more interesting. Its major character, Stavrogin, does not actually commit a murder.

But he commits various other crimes, including the rape of a ten year-old girl. And at the end of the novel, he makes it clear that he is an even worse case of 'boredom'. He is rich, spoilt by his mother. He is formidably strong. *But he has nothing to do with his strength.* Like Raskolnikov, he finds all life a kind of Black Room, stifling him.

This is the great problem of the 20th century. In the 17th century, the rich were a tiny percentage of England's population—about two per cent. The rest of the population had a hard struggle for existence that kept them occupied from morning till night. As to the rich, they created their own 'challenges'—hunting, shooting and fishing, and travelling. (In those days, merely to get from London to York was a major adventure.) So, this question of boredom did not occur. It began to arise in the late 19th century, as the liberalism of men like Lord Shaftesbury began to have its effect in improving the lot of the poor. It is significant that this was also the beginning of the new era of violent crime. From the little we know about Jack the Ripper it seems likely that he was a 'toff'. (If Tom Cullen's theory in *Autumn of Terror* that the Ripper was Montague John Druitt, a frustrated solicitor, is correct, then it fits perfectly).

It seems also significant that Jesse Pomeroy was a spoilt mother's boy, and son of a well-to-do father, (like Druitt, again). It is the Stavrogin effect described by Dostoevsky.

Luckily, all this applies only to a very small percentage of human beings—about five percent to be exact. As I have remarked in *Crime and Detection*, this figure of a 'dominant five percent' seems to apply to *all* animals. This means that about five percent of human beings have an even greater craving for activity than the rest. They have to assert themselves, to do something interesting and exciting. Most of the five percent assert themselves in ways which are quite agreeable to society; they become leaders in business, sport, the army, and so on. But as the population increases, the actual number of the five percent also increases. And their opportunity for self-assertion decreases as civilisation becomes more complex. A tremendous frustration builds up, intensified by slum conditions for the overcrowded populations of big cities. It is this combination of Welfare State and slum conditions that produces the new violent criminal of the mid-20th century. And it must inevitably grow worse as the population increases, cities get bigger, and so on.

Now all this sounds very pessimistic. But there are few rays of

light. Although crime in America was up by 14 per cent last year, crime in Chicago it was down by 12 per cent, because of a new anti-crime effort by the whole population. Police pay has been increased, general conditions of service improved, and the public made crime-conscious by an expensive propaganda campaign. Chicago is now America's model city as far as crime is concerned. (Cleveland is its new Chicago, with open gang warfare and a sky-high crime rate.)

So it can be done, by determined action. The British crime rate could probably be reduced below the old pre-war level if police pay was increased, and the present height-limitation for policemen was abolished; also, if the government took some sensible measures about gambling and other types of dubiously legal activity which attract crime.

The result, I am afraid, would be that England would become slightly more of a police-state than at present. But you cannot have it both ways. If you want protection from crime, then you have to give the police more power; if you do that, you are likely to find them more of a nuisance when you park in the wrong place. It cannot be helped.

Still, I agree that the real problem would remain untouched. You would be suppressing it, but not curing it. But this is a problem for psychologists and philosophers as much as for police and government. One of these days, I think the world will have to face the fact that we shall have to take legal steps to keep the population down. It might even become necessary to have forcible restraint of parents who produce more than a certain number of children. I agree that this sounds worse than a police state. But by the end of this century, the consequences of *not* doing it may be even worse. While the population continues to rise, the new trend in murder is bound to continue.

IF instead of footling fines for assaults on police we can get together and agree on prison, borstal or detention centres, assaults on police would rapidly disappear.

—*Lord Parker*, Lord Chief Justice.

POLICE and public may be in general agreement over crime prevention but sections of the public still ignore, belittle and even oppose measures to reduce criminality.

—*The Police Journal.*

THE CARTOONIST AND THE CRIME WRITERS

JULIAN SYMONS

Christmas Vignette from Life

The Tote Riggers

ROGER GARNETT

One of the neatest Turf swindles which grew from Big Steenie's remarkable brain storm

BIG STEENIE died last year, proud in the knowledge that he was the only gangster who found a way of making the totalisator rake him in a small fortune in one crooked coup.

It all began in the early days of the tote when it was still something of a stranger on the British turf. The gangs hated it, for they could not go up to it and kick it in the stomach if it did not pay protection money, nor could a fake battle be staged to wreck it, commonplaces in those days when the then unbroken gangs ruled British racing.

They were riding high, but there was war on the racecourses until somebody realised that money was being thrown away and the police were standing on the sidelines, allowing the gangsters to beat each other to a standstill.

There was a get-together in London's Soho when Big Steenie's lot and several allied mobs talked with the leaders of the north country gangs. A lot of fancy discussion went on but nothing happened until Big Steenie, a nice man indeed despite his profession, made a suggestion. It was sensational because Big was looked on as a strong, tough, able fighting man with, at the same time, a minute brain. Why, Big intimated, couldn't the southerners switch territories with the northerners for a while? The rozzers would be confused and the pickings were there.

When this registered Big Steenie was marked down forever as a Brain. Plans were immediately put into effect for the working

sections of the two mobs to interchange territories for a month. Misgivings were soon dispersed when the delighted gangsters found the police did not recognise them. For a glorious if brief spell things went like a dream, until the novelty wore off and the rozzers got a squeak. Big Steenie went back south with his boys, working very hard at being a brain. It was difficult, without material.

Simplicity was his chief virtue. He wanted money, and his great dream was to beat the tote. When his second great idea came it had the superb obviousness of genius. Why not have his own tote?

The notion was so sensational that his friends considered he had gone round the bend. With the modesty of genius, Big had not thought much of the idea. When opposition rolled up he did what he always did in fights—he nestled his neck into his shoulders, frowned grimly and dug his heels in with the obstinacy of a goaded mammoth. It was the brain-wave of the century, Big was convinced of it.

He tried selling the scheme round the gangs when his own mob would not touch it. There seemed no hope of support. The stunt held too many unknown angles, and too much danger. It also needed capital and even if the gangsters were raking in cash, they refused to spend it on anything but the fabled wine, women and song—or, anyway, beer, floozies, and gambling.

It was carefully explained to the now mulish Big Steenie the difficulties of building a fake tote, the impossibility of fooling the police, and hopelessness of trying to smuggle the necessary materials on to a racecourse—the mass of objections should have flattened the unhappy inventor.

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Then it was seen that Big was slipping. He was so wrapped up in his scheme he did his work carelessly, was arrested on an easy job and the court put him away for three months.

He came out of jail one fine May morning, more determined than ever to make his fortune out of the tote. The fantastic difficulties did not deter him because he was almost too dumb to appreciate them. He was going to have his own tote, and that was that. And, like all obsessions, it became his master but it also sharpened his mind to watch for a means to an end.

Mooching round the West End he saw in the window of a

famous ticket-selling agency on the corner of Rupert Street the details of the popular St. Dunstan's Derby Day Service. Something clicked in Big's mind; he saw how to make his pipe-dream come true.

He began scrounging for help and money, and failed. He was marked as unlucky and a man with a bee in his bonnet. No one wanted any part of him.

Desperation made him streamline his already simple scheme. He tackled the remnants of his gang and talked some of them into joining him. He also managed to co-opt two members of another gang—it was less Big Steenie's formidable personality than the size of his biceps which did the trick.

A leader again, he got back his old self confidence. No money? Even that did not seem to matter. He took round the hat and, perhaps for old time's sake, he managed to collect seven pounds. It was enough.

Big found a sign-writer in Soho, who had no scruples. All was then ready, and a few days before Derby Day the tiny gang headed for Epsom.

It seemed as if luck was back again with Big Steenie, for they say fate loves a trier and Big was that. He discovered a garage which held an ancient lorry, security for an unpaid debt. It was hired for 30/- and Big drove it to an empty factory he knew about which had a large, enclosed yard.

The gang got to work under their chief. Like leaders in the past who have inspired hopeless causes, Big was also inspired. His broken nose and gap-toothed face seemed to shine with confidence and he urged his men on. They disguised the lorry very cleverly, lavishly decorating it with posters, banners, and flags (all stolen in London) and used plywood to complete the work. The sign-writer was brought down and when he had finished the lorry was a real work of art. Big Steenie had bought decorator's long white coats for his men, sun-glasses and straw-hats, called, in those days, 'boaters'.

On Derby Day all was ready.

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In the excitement and chaos of that great morning, when the sun was shining and all England seemed to be heading for Epsom Downs, the lorry somehow managed to get through to a site not far from the unsuspecting St. Dunstan's Derby Day Service

coaches near Tattenham Corner.

When the public began to pour in there it was, a really workmanlike job, the travelling totalisator, its swagger notices proclaiming in red, white and blue and lavishly hung with small Union Jacks: *St. Dunstan's Tote*. Other banners or notices explained the tote only did business on 'the Derby', its clearly marked 5/-, 10/- and £1 windows in the plywood superstructure being closed in the meantime.

Inside this contraption Big Steenie was a glowing, triumphant superman, egging on his scared boys, patting them, encouraging them, or threatening them with his huge fists, holding them down as it were by cajolery, or fear.

Nobody ran away. When the ticket windows were at last opened to offer service, the public swooped. It was as if every sucker in Christendom was there, pleading to be plucked. They even got out of the control of the white-coated stewards outside. Panic struck when the police rolled up. But Big Steenie was burning like a man with a fire inside—with lordly grandeur he condescended to accept police help in organising the suckers into tidy queues.

Right to the moment of the off Big did a landslide business. Money poured in, filling pockets and anything handy, and fake tickets poured out. Then, suddenly, the public vanished. It was that breath-taking moment before the great race began and Big, who knew it all, slammed down the ticket-window shutters in the approved fashion.

As the great howl rolled across the sunny, crowded downs, '*They're off*!' the gang quietly and swiftly eased out of the lorry and headed for London by indirect ways, and there Big Steenie shared out the takings. It has never come out as to the exact total but it was well beyond £3,000.

The trick was tried again the following year, though Big Steenie was not in it. A bigger gang set up 'The National Totalisator' in the shilling enclosure at Aintree.

This time it failed. A racecourse inspector who knew all about Big's Derby Day masterpiece and was at Aintree passed the word along to the unsuspecting officials. The C.I.D. swoop was fast and complete.

I know in my own mind that Big Steenie died a very happy man.

THE DEAD HARLEQUIN

AGATHA CHRISTIE

A Christie for Christmas is a publishing tradition, so we offer this typical Harley Quin story as a worthy addition to our series of classic 20th century reprints

MR. SATTERTHWAITE walked slowly up Bond Street enjoying the sunshine. He was, as usual, carefully and beautifully dressed, and was bound for the Harchester Galleries where there was an exhibition of the paintings of one Frank Bristow, a new and hitherto unknown artist who showed signs of suddenly becoming the rage. Mr. Satterthwaite was a patron of the arts.

As Mr. Satterthwaite entered the Harchester Galleries, he was greeted at once with a smile of pleased recognition.

"Good morning, Mr. Satterthwaite, I thought we should see you before long. You know Bristow's work? Fine—very fine indeed. Quite unique of its kind."

Mr. Satterthwaite purchased a catalogue and stepped through the open archway into the long room where the artists' works were displayed. They were water colours, executed with such extraordinary technique and finish that they resembled coloured etchings. Mr. Satterthwaite walked slowly round the walls scrutinizing and, on the whole, approving. He thought that this young man deserved to arrive. Here was originality, vision, and crudities, of course. That was only to be expected—but there was also something closely allied to genius. Mr. Satterthwaite paused

before a little masterpiece representing Westminster Bridge with its crowd of buses, trams and hurrying pedestrians. A tiny thing and wonderfully perfect. It was called, he noted, *The Ant Heap*. He passed on and quite suddenly drew in his breath with a gasp, his imagination held and riveted.

The picture was called *The Dead Harlequin*. The forefront of it represented a floor of inlaid squares of black and white marble. In the middle of the floor lay Harlequin on his back with his arms outstretched, in his motley of black and red. Behind him was a a window and outside that window, gazing in at the figure on the floor, was what appeared to be the same man silhouetted against the red glow of the setting sun.

The picture excited Mr. Satterthwaite for two reasons, the first reason was that he recognized, or thought that he recognized, the face of the man in the picture. It bore a distinct resemblance to a certain Mr. Quin, an acquaintance whom Mr. Satterthwaite had encountered once or twice under somewhat mystifying circumstances.

"Surely I can't be mistaken," he murmured. "If it *is* so—what does it mean?"

For it had been Mr. Satterthwaite's experience that every appearance of Mr. Quin had some distinct significance attaching to it.

There was, as already mentioned, a second reason for Mr. Satterthwaite's interest. He recognized the scene of the picture.

"The Terrace Room at Charnley," said Mr. Satterthwaite, "curious—and very interesting."

He looked with more attention at the picture, wondering what exactly had been in the artist's mind. One Harlequin dead on the floor, another Harlequin looking through the window—or was it the same Harlequin? He moved slowly along the walls gazing at other pictures with unseeing eyes, with his mind always busy on the same subject. He was excited. Life which had seemed a little drab this morning was drab no longer. He knew quite certainly that he was on the threshold of exciting and interesting events. He crossed to the table where sat Mr. Cobb, a dignitary of the Harchester Galleries, whom he had known for many years.

"I have a fancy for buying number thirty-nine, if it is not already sold."

Mr. Cobb consulted a ledger.

"The pick of the bunch," he murmured, "quite a little gem, isn't it? No, it's not sold." He quoted a price. "It is a good

investment, Mr. Satterthwaite. You will have to pay three times as much for it this time next year."

"That is always said on these occasions," said Mr. Satterthwaite, smiling.

"Well, and haven't I been right?" demanded Mr. Cobb. "I don't believe if you were to sell your collection, Mr. Satterthwaite, that a single picture would fetch less than you gave for it."

"I will buy this picture," said Mr. Satterthwaite. "I'll give you a cheque now."

"You won't regret it. We believe in Bristow."

"He is a young man?"

"Twenty-seven or eight, I should say."

"I should like to meet him," said Mr. Satterthwaite. "Perhaps he will come and dine with me one night?"

"I can give you his address. I am sure he would leap at the chance. Your name stands for a good deal in the artistic world."

"You flatter me," said Mr. Satterthwaite and was going on when Mr. Cobb interrupted.

"Here he is now. I will introduce you to him right away."

He rose from behind his table. Mr. Satterthwaite accompanied him to where a big, clumsy young man was leaning against the wall surveying the world at large from behind the barricade of a ferocious scowl.

Mr. Cobb made the necessary introductions and Mr. Satterthwaite made a formal and gracious little speech.

"I have just had the pleasure of acquiring one of your pictures—*The Dead Harlequin*."

"Oh! Well, you won't lose by it," said Mr. Bristow ungraciously. "It's a bit of damned good work, although I say it."

"I can see that," said Mr. Satterthwaite. "Your work interests me very much, Mr. Bristow. It is extraordinarily mature for so young a man. I wonder if you would give me the pleasure of dining with me one night? Are you engaged this evening?"

"As a matter of fact, I'm not," said Bristow, still with no overdone appearance of graciousness.

"Then shall we say eight o'clock?" said Mr. Satterthwaite. "Here is my card with the address on it."

"Oh, all right," said Bristow. "Thanks," he added as a somewhat obvious afterthought.

"A young man who has a poor opinion of himself and is afraid that the world should share it."

Such was Mr. Satterthwaite's summing up as he stepped out into

the sunshine of Bond Street, and Mr. Satterthwaites' judgment of his fellow men was seldom far astray.

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Frank Bristow arrived about five minutes past eight to find his host and a third guest awaiting him. The other guest was introduced as a Colonel Monckton. They went in to dinner almost immediately. There was a fourth place laid at the mahogany table and Mr. Satterthwaite uttered a word of explanation.

"I half expected my friend, Mr. Quin, might drop in," he said. "I wonder if you have ever met him, Mr. Harley Quin?"

"I never meet people," growled Bristow.

Colonel Monckton stared at the artist with the detached interest he might have accorded to a new species of jelly-fish. Mr. Satterthwaite exerted himself to keep the ball of conversation rolling amicably.

"I took a special interest in that picture of yours because I thought I recognized the scene of it as being the Terrace Room at Charnley. Was I right?" As the artist nodded, he went on. "That is very interesting. I have stayed at Charnley several times myself in the past. Perhaps you know some of the family."

"No, I don't!" said Bristow. "That sort of family wouldn't care to know me. I went there in a charabanc."

"Dear me," said Colonel Monckton for the sake of saying something. "In a charabanc! Dear me."

Frank Bristow scowled at him.

"Why not?" he demanded ferociously.

Poor Colonel Monckton was taken aback. He looked reproachfully at Mr. Satterthwaite as though to say:

'These primitive forms of life may be interesting to you as a naturalist, but why drag *me* in?'

"Oh, beastly things, charabancs!" he said. "They jolt you so going over the bumps."

"If you can't afford a Rolls Royce you have got to go in charabancs," said Bristow fiercely.

Colonel Monckton stared at him. Mr. Satterthwaite thought:

'Unless I can manage to put this young man at his ease we are going to have a very distressing evening.'

"Charnley always fascinated me," he said. "I have been there only once since the tragedy . A grim house—and a ghostly one."

"That's true," said Bristow.

"There are actually two authentic ghosts," said Monckton. "They say that Charles I walks up and down the terrace with his head under his arm—I have forgotten why, I'm sure. Then there is the Weeping Lady with the Silver Ewer, who is always seen after one of the Charnleys dies."

"Tosh," said Bristow scornfully.

"They have certainly been a very ill-fated family," said Mr. Satterthwaite hurriedly. "Four holders of the title have died a violent death and the late Lord Charnley committed suicide."

"A ghastly business," said Monckton gravely. "I was there when it happened."

"Let me see, that must be fourteen years ago," said Mr. Satterthwaite, "the house has been shut up ever since."

"I don't wonder at that," said Monckton. "It must have been a terrible shock for a young girl. They had been married a month, just home from their honeymoon. Big fancy dress ball to celebrate their home-coming. Just as the guests were starting to arrive Charnley locked himself into the Oak Parlour and shot himself. I beg your pardon?"

He turned his head sharply to the left and looked across at Mr. Satterthwaite with an apologetic laugh.

"I am beginning to get the jim-jams, Satterthwaite. I thought for a moment there was someone sitting in that empty chair and that he said something to me.

"Yes," he went on after a moment or two, "it was a pretty ghastly shock to Alix Charnley. She was one of the prettiest girls you could see anywhere and full of what people call the joy of living, and now they say she is like a ghost herself. Not that I have seen her for years. I believe she lives abroad most of the time."

"And the boy?"

"The boy is at Eton. What he will do when he comes of age I don't know. I don't think, somehow, that he will reopen the old place."

"It would make a good People's Pleasure Park," said Bristow.

Colonel Monckton looked at him with cold abhorrence.

"No, no, you don't really mean that," said Mr. Satterthwaite. "You wouldn't have painted that picture if you did. Tradition and atmosphere are intangible things. They take centuries to build up and if you destroyed them you couldn't rebuild them again in twenty-four hours."

He rose. "Let us go into the smoking-room. I have some photographs there of Charnley which I should like to show you."

One of Mr. Satterthwaite's hobbies was amateur photography. He was also the proud author of a book, *Homes of My Friends*. The friends in question were all rather exalted and the book itself showed Mr. Satterthwaite forth in rather a more snobbish light than was really fair to him.

"That is a photograph I took of the Terrace Room last year," he said. He handed it to Bristow. "You see it is taken at almost the same angle as is shown in your picture. That is rather a wonderful rug—it is a pity that photographs can't show colouring."

"I remember it," said Bristow, "a marvellous bit of colour. It glowed like a flame. All the same it looked a bit incongruous there. The wrong size for that big room with its black and white squares. There is no rug anywhere else in the room. It spoils the whole effect — it was like a gigantic blood-stain."

"Perhaps that gave you your idea for your picture?" said Mr. Satterthwaite.

"Perhaps it did," said Bristow thoughtfully. "On the face of it, one would naturally stage a tragedy in the little panelled room leading out of it."

"The Oak Parlour," said Monckton. "Yes, that is the haunted room right enough. There is a Priests' hiding hole there—a movable panel by the fireplace. Tradition has it that Charles I was concealed there, once. There were two deaths from duelling in that room. And it was there, as I say, that Reggie Charnley shot himself."

He took the photograph from Bristow's hand.

"Why, that's the Bokhara rug," he said, "worth a couple of thousand pounds, I believe. When I was there it was in the Oak Parlour—the right place for it. It looks silly on that great expanse of marble flags."

Mr. Satterthwaite was looking at the empty chair which he had drawn up beside him. Then he said thoughtfully, "I wonder when it was moved?"

"It must have been recently. Why, I remember having a conversation about it on the very day of the tragedy. Charnley was saying it really ought to be kept under glass."

Mr. Satterthwaite shook his head. "The house was shut up immediately after the tragedy and everything was left exactly as it was."

Bristow broke in with a question. He had laid aside his aggressive manner.

"Why did Lord Charnley shoot himself?" he asked.

Colonel Monckton shifted uncomfortably in his chair.

"No one ever knew," he said vaguely.

"I suppose," said Mr. Satterthwaite slowly "that it *was* suicide."

The Colonel looked at him in blank astonishment.

"Suicide," he said, "why, of course it was suicide. My dear fellow, I was in the house myself."

Mr. Satterthwaite looked towards the empty chair at his side and smiling to himself as though at some hidden joke the others could not see, he said quietly:

"Sometimes one sees things more clearly years afterwards than one could possibly at the time."

"Nonsense," spluttered Monckton, "arrant nonsense! How can you possibly see things better when they are vague in your memory instead of clear and sharp?"

But Mr. Satterthwaite was reinforced from an unexpected quarter.

"I know what you mean," said the artist, "I should say that possibly you were right. It is a question of proportion, isn't it? And more than proportion probably. Relativity and all that sort of thing."

"If you ask me," said the Colonel, "all this Einstein business is a lot of dashed nonsense. So are spiritualists and the spook of one's grandmother!" He glared round fiercely.

"Of course it was suicide," he went on. "Didn't I practically see the thing happen with my own eyes?"

"Tell us about it," said Mr. Satterthwaite, "so that we shall see it with our eyes also."

With a somewhat mollified grunt the Colonel settled himself more comfortably in his chair. . .

"The whole thing was extraordinarily unexpected," he began. "Charnley had been his usual normal self. There was a big party staying in the house for this ball. No one could ever have guessed he would go and shoot himself just as the guests began arriving."

"It would have been better if he had waited until they had gone," said Mr. Satterthwaite.

"Of course it would. Damned bad taste—to do a thing like that."

"Uncharacteristic," said Mr. Satterthwaite.

"Yes," admitted Monckton, "it wasn't like Charnley."

"And yet it *was* suicide?"

"Of course it was suicide. Why, there were three or four of us there at the top of the stairs. Myself, the Ostrander girl, Algie Darcy—oh, and one or two others. Charnley passed along the hall below and went into the Oak Parlour. The Ostrander girl said there was a ghastly look on his face and his eyes were staring—but, of course, that is nonsense—she couldn't even see his face from where we were—but he did walk in a hunched way, as if he had the weight of the world on his shoulders. One of the girls called to him, she was somebody's governess I think, whom Lady Charnley had included in the party out of kindness. She was looking for him with a message. She called out 'Lord Charnley, Lady Charnley wants to know ——' He paid no attention and went into the Oak Parlour and slammed the door and we heard the key turn in the lock. Then, one minute after, *we heard the shot.*"

"We rushed down to the hall. There is another door from the Oak Parlour leading into the Terrace Room. We tried that but it was locked, too. In the end we had to break the door down. Charnley was lying on the floor—dead—with a pistol close beside his right hand. Now, what could that have been but suicide? Accident? Don't tell me. There is only one other possibility—murder—and you can't have murder without a murderer. You admit that, I suppose."

"The murderer might have escaped," suggested Mr. Satterthwaite.

"That's impossible. If you have a bit of paper and a pencil I will draw you a plan of the place. There are two doors into the Oak Parlour, one into the hall and one into the Terrace Room. Both these doors were locked on the inside *and the keys were in the locks.*"

"The window?"

"Shut, and the shutters fastened across it."

There was a pause.

"So that is that," said Colonel Monckton triumphantly.

"It certainly seems to be," said Mr. Satterthwaite sadly.

"Mind you," said the Colonel, "although I was laughing just now at the spiritualists, I don't mind admitting that there was a deuced rummy atmosphere about the place—about that room in particular. There are several bullet holes in the panels of the walls the result of the duels that took place in that room, and there is a queer stain on the floor, that always comes back though they have replaced the wood several times. I suppose there will be another

blood-stain on the floor now—poor Charnley's blood."

"Was there much blood?" asked Mr. Satterthwaite.

"Very little—curiously little—so the doctor said."

"Where did he shoot himself, through the head?"

"No, through the heart."

"That is not the easy way to do it," said Bristow. "Frightfully difficult to know where one's heart is. I should never do it that way myself."

Mr. Satterthwaite shook his head. He was vaguely dissatisfied. He had hoped to get at something—he hardly knew what. Colonel Monckton went on.

"It is a spooky place, Charnley. Of course, *I* didn't see anything."

"You didn't see the Weeping Lady with the Silver Ewer?"

"No, I did not, sir," said the Colonel emphatically. "But I expect every servant in the place swore they did."

"Superstition was the curse of the Middle Ages," said Bristow. "There are still traces of it here and there, but thank goodness, we are getting free from it."

"Superstition," mused Mr. Satterthwaite, his eyes turned again to the empty chair. "Sometimes, don't you think—it might be useful?"

Bristow stared at him.

"Useful; that's a queer word."

"Well, I hope you are convinced now, Satterthwaite," said the Colonel.

"Oh, quite," said Mr. Satterthwaite. "On the face of it, it seems odd—so purposeless for a newly-married man, young, rich, happy, celebrating his home-coming—curious—but I agree there is no getting away from the facts." He repeated softly, "the facts," and frowned.

"I suppose the interesting thing is a thing we none of us will ever know," said Monckton, "the story behind it all. Of course there were rumours—all sorts of rumours. You know the kind of things people say."

"But no one *knew* anything," said Mr. Satterthwaite thoughtfully.

"It's not a best-seller mystery, is it?" remarked Bristow. "No one gained by the man's death."

"No one except an unborn child," said Mr. Satterthwaite.

Monckton gave a sharp chuckle. "Rather a blow to poor Hugo Charnley," he observed. "As soon as it was known that there was

going to be a child he had the graceful task of sitting tight and waiting to see if it would be a girl or boy. Rather an anxious wait for his creditors, too. In the end a boy it was and a disappointment for the lot of them."

"Was the widow very disconsolate?" asked Bristow.

"Poor child," said Monckton, "I shall never forget her. She didn't cry or break down or anything. She was like something—frozen. As I say, she shut up the house shortly afterwards and, as far as I know, it has never been reopened since."

"So we are left in the dark as to motive," said Bristow with a slight laugh. "Another man or another woman, it must have been one or the other, eh?"

"It seems like it," said Mr. Satterthwaite.

"And the betting is strongly on another woman," continued Bristow, "since the widow has not married again. I hate women," he added dispassionately.

Mr. Satterthwaite smiled a little and Frank Bristow saw the smile and pounced upon it.

"You may smile," he said, "but I do. They upset everything. They interfere. They get between you and your work. I only once met a woman who was—well, interesting."

"I thought there would be one," said Mr. Satterthwaite.

"Not in the way you mean. I—I just met her casually. As a matter of fact—it was in a train. After all," he added defiantly, "why shouldn't one meet people in trains?"

"Certainly, certainly," said Mr. Satterthwaite soothingly, "a train is as good a place as anywhere else."

"It was coming down from the North. We had the carriage to ourselves. I don't know why, but we began to talk. I don't know her name and I don't suppose I shall ever meet her again. I don't know that I want to. It might be—a pity." He paused, struggling to express himself. "She wasn't quite real, you know. Shadowy. Like one of the people who comes out of the hills in Gaelic fairy tales."

Mr. Satterthwaite nodded gently. His imagination pictured the scene easily enough. The very positive and realistic Bristow and a figure that was silvery and ghostly—shadowy, as Bristow had said.

"I suppose if something very terrible had happened, so terrible as to be almost unbearable, one might get like that. One might run away from reality into a half world of one's own and then, of course, after a time, one wouldn't be able to get back."

"Was that what had happened to her?" asked Mr. Satterthwaite

curiously.

"I don't know," said Bristow. "She didn't tell me anything, I am only guessing. One has to guess if one is going to get anywhere."

"Yes," said Mr. Satterthwaite slowly. "One has to guess."

He looked up as the door opened. He looked up quickly and expectantly but the butler's words disappointed him.

"A lady, sir, has called to see you on very urgent business, Miss Aspasia Glen."

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Mr. Satterthwaite rose in some astonishment. He knew the name of Aspasia Glen. Who in London did not? First advertised as the Woman with the Scarf, she had given a series of matinées single-handed that had taken London by storm. With the aid of her scarf she had rapidly impersonated various characters. In turn the scarf had been the coif of a nun, the shawl of a millworker, the head-dress of a peasant and a hundred other things, and in each impersonation Aspasia Glen had been totally and utterly different. As an artist, Mr. Satterthwaite paid full reverence to her. As it happened, he had never made her acquaintance. A call upon him at this unusual hour intrigued him greatly. With a few words of apology to the others he left the room and crossed the hall to the drawing-room.

Miss Glen was sitting in the very centre of a large settee upholstered in gold brocade. So poised she dominated the room. Mr. Satterthwaite perceived at once that she meant to dominate the situation. Curiously enough, his first feeling was one of repulsion. He had been a sincere admirer of Aspasia Glen's art. Her personality, as conveyed to him over the footlights, had been appealing and sympathetic. Her effects there had been wistful and suggestive rather than commanding. But now, face to face with the woman herself, he received a totally different impression. There was something hard—bold—forceful about her. She was tall and dark, possibly about 35 years of age. She was undoubtedly very good-looking and she clearly relied upon the fact.

"You must forgive this unconventional call, Mr. Satterthwaite," she said. Her voice was full and rich and seductive.

"I don't say that I have wanted to know you for a long time, but I *am* glad of the excuse. As for coming to-night—" she laughed, "well, when I want a thing, I simply can't wait. When I want a

thing, I simply *must* have it."

"Any excuse that has brought me such a charming lady guest must be welcomed by me," said Mr. Satterthwaite in an old-fashioned manner.

"How nice you are to me," said Aspasia Glen.

"My dear lady," said Mr. Satterthwaite, "may I thank you here and now for the pleasure you have so often given me—in my seat in the stalls."

She smiled delightfully at him.

"I am coming straight to the point. I was at the Harchester Galleries to-day. I saw a picture there I simply couldn't live without. I wanted to buy it and I couldn't because you had already bought it. So—" she paused, "I do want it so," she went on. "Dear Mr. Satterthwaite, I simply *must* have it. I brought my cheque book." She looked at him hopefully. "Everyone tells me you are so frightfully kind. People *are* kind to me, you know. It is very bad for me—but there it is."

So these were Aspasia Glen's methods. Mr. Satterthwaite was inwardly coldly critical of this ultrafemininity and of this spoilt child pose. It ought to appeal to him, he supposed, but it didn't. Aspasia Glen had made a mistake. She had judged him as an elderly dilettante, easily flattered by a pretty woman. But Mr. Satterthwaite behind his gallant manner had a shrewd and critical mind. He saw people pretty well as they were, not as they wished to appear to him. He saw before him, not a charming woman pleading for a whim, but a ruthless egoist determined to get her own way for some reason which was obscure to him. And he knew quite certainly that Aspasia Glen was not going to get her own way. He was not going to give up the picture of the Dead Harlequin to her. He sought rapidly in his mind for the best way of circumventing her without overt rudeness.

"I am sure," he said, "that everyone gives you your own way as often as they can and is only too delighted to do so."

"Then you are really going to let me have the picture?"

Mr. Satterthwaite shook his head slowly and regretfully.

"I am afraid that is impossible. You see—" he paused, "I bought that picture for a lady. It is a present."

"Oh! but surely——"

The telephone on the table rang sharply. With a murmured word of excuse Mr. Satterthwaite took up the receiver. A voice spoke to him, a small, cold voice that sounded very far away.

"Can I speak to Mr. Satterthwaite, please."

"It is Mr. Satterthwaite speaking."

"I am Lady Charnley, Alix Charnley. I daresay you don't remember me, Mr. Satterthwaite, it is a great many years since we met."

"My dear Alix. Of course, I remember you."

"There is something I wanted to ask you. I was at the Harchester Galleries at an exhibition of pictures today, there was one called *The Dead Harlequin*, perhaps you recognized it—it was the Terrace Room at Charnley. I—I want to have that picture. It was sold to you." She paused. "Mr. Satterthwaite, for reasons of my own I want that picture. Will you resell it to me?"

Mr. Satterthwaite thought to himself: 'Why, this is a miracle.' As he spoke into the receiver he was thankful that Aspasia Glen could only hear one side of the conversation. "If you will accept my gift, dear lady, it will make me very happy." He heard a sharp exclamation behind him and hurried on. "I bought it for you. I did indeed. But listen, my dear Alix, I want to ask you to do me a great favour if you will."

"Of course. Mr. Satterthwaite, I am so *very* grateful."

He went on. "I want you to come round now to my house, at once."

There was a slight pause and then she answered quietly:

"I will come at once."

Mr. Satterthwaite put down the receiver and turned to Miss Glen.

She said quickly and angrily:

"That was the picture you were talking about?"

"Yes," said Mr. Satterthwaite, "the lady to whom I am presenting it is coming to this house in a few minutes."

Suddenly Aspasia Glen's face broke once more into smiles. "You will give me a chance of persuading her to turn the picture over to me?"

"I will give you a chance of persuading her."

Inwardly he was strangely excited. He was in the midst of a drama that was shaping itself to some foredoomed end. He, the looker on, was playing a star part. He turned to Miss Glen. "Will you come into the other room with me? I should like you to meet some friends of mine."

He held the door open for her and, crossing the hall, opened the door of the smoking-room.

"Miss Glen," he said, "let me introduce you to an old friend of mine, Colonel Monckton. Mr. Bristow, the painter of the picture

you admire so much." Then he started as a third figure rose from the chair which he had left empty beside his own.

"I think you expected me this evening," said Mr. Quin. "During your absence I introduced myself to your friends. I am so glad I was able to drop in."

"My dear friend," said Mr. Satterthwaite, "I—I have been carrying on as well as I am able, but——" he stopped before the slightly sardonic glance of Mr. Quin's dark eyes. "Let me introduce you. Mr. Harley Quin, Miss Aspasia Glen."

Was it his fancy—or did she shrink back slightly. A curious expression flitted over her face. Suddenly Bristow broke in boisterously. "I have got it."

"Got what?"

"Got hold of what was puzzling me. There is a likeness, there is a distinct likeness." He was staring curiously at Mr. Quin. "You see it?" he turned to Mr. Satterthwaite, "don't you see a distinct likeness to the Harlequin of my picture—the man looking in through the window?"

It was no fancy this time. He distinctly heard Miss Glen draw in her breath sharply and even saw that she stepped back one pace.

"I told you that I was expecting some one," said Mr. Satterthwaite. He spoke with an air of triumph. "I must tell you that my friend, Mr. Quin, is a most extraordinary person. He can unravel mysteries. He can make you see things."

"Are you a medium, sir?" demanded Colonel Monckton, eyeing Mr. Quin doubtfully.

The latter smiled and slowly shook his head.

"Mr. Satterthwaite exaggerates," he said quietly. "Once or twice when I have been with him he has done some extraordinary good deductive work. Why he puts the credit down to me I can't say. His modesty, I suppose."

"No, no," said Mr. Satterthwaite excitedly. "It isn't. You make me see things—things that I ought to have seen all along—that I actually have seen—but without knowing that I saw them."

"It sounds to me deuced complicated," said Colonel Monckton.

"Not really," said Mr. Quin, "the trouble is that we are not content just to see things—we will tack the wrong interpretation on to the things we see."

Aspasia Glen turned to Bristow.

"I want to know," she said nervously, "what put the idea of painting that picture into your head?"

Bristow shrugged his shoulders. "I don't quite know," he

confessed. "Something about the place—about Charnley, I mean, took hold of my imagination. The big empty room. The terrace outside, the idea of ghosts and things, I suppose. I have just been hearing the tale of the last Lord Charnley, who shot himself. Supposing you are dead, and your spirit lives on? It must be odd, you know. You might stand outside on the terrace looking in at the window at your own dead body, and you would see everything."

"What do you mean?" said Aspasia Glen. "*See* everything?"

"Well, you would see what happened. You would see——"

The door opened and the butler announced Lady Charnley.

Mr. Satterthwaite went to meet her. He had not seen her for nearly 13 years. He remembered her as she once was, an eager, glowing girl. And now he saw—a Frozen Lady. Very fair, very pale, with an air of drifting rather than walking, a snowflake driven at random by an icy breeze. Something unreal about her. So cold, so far away.

"It was very good of you to come," said Mr. Satterthwaite.

He led her forward. She made a half gesture of recognition towards Miss Glen and then paused as the other made no response.

"I am so sorry," she murmured, "but surely I have met you somewhere, haven't I?"

"Over the footlights perhaps," said Mr. Satterthwaite. "This is Miss Aspasia Glen, Lady Charnley."

"I am very pleased to meet you, Lady Charnley," said Aspasia Glen.

Her voice had suddenly a slight trans-Atlantic tinge to it. Mr. Satterthwaite was reminded of one of her various stage impersonations.

"Colonel Monckton you know," continued Mr. Satterthwaite, "and this is Mr. Bristow."

He saw a sudden faint tinge of colour in her cheeks.

"Mr. Bristow and I have met too," she said and smiled a little. "In a train."

"And Mr. Harley Quin."

He watched her closely, but this time there was no flicker of recognition. He set a chair for her, and then seating himself, he cleared his throat and spoke a little nervously. "I—this is rather an unusual little gathering. It centres round this picture. I—I think that if we liked we could—clear things up."

"You are not going to hold a séance, Satterthwaite?" asked

Colonel Monckton. "You are very odd this evening."

"No," said Mr. Satterthwaite, "not exactly a séance. But my friend, Mr. Quin, believes, and I agree, that one can, by looking back over the past, see things as they were and not as they appeared to be."

"The past?" said Lady Charnley.

"I am speaking of your husband's suicide, Alix. I know it hurts you."

"No," said Alix Charnley, "it doesn't hurt me. Nothing hurts me now."

Mr. Satterthwaite thought of Frank Bristow's words. '*She was not quite real you know. Shadowy. Like one of the people who come out of hills in Gaelic fairy tales.*'

'Shadowy' he had called her. That described her exactly. A shadow, a reflection of something else. Where then was the real Alix, and his mind answered quickly: '*In the past.* Divided from us by fourteen years of time.'

"My dear," he said, "you frighten me. You are like the Weeping Lady with the Silver Ewer."

Crash! The coffee cup on the table by Aspasia Glen's elbow fell shattered to the floor. Mr. Satterthwaite waved aside her apologies. He thought: 'We are getting nearer, we are getting nearer every minute—but nearer to what?'

"Let us take our minds back to that night fourteen years ago," he said. "Lord Charnley killed himself. For what reason? No one knows."

Lady Charnley stirred slightly in her chair.

"Lady Charnley knows," said Frank Bristow abruptly.

"Nonsense," said Colonel Monckton, then stopped, frowning at her curiously.

She was looking across at the artist. It was as though he drew the words out of her. She spoke, nodding her head slowly, and her voice was like a snowflake, cold and soft.

"Yes, you are quite right. I *know*. That is why as long as I live I can never go back to Charnley. That is why when my boy Dick wants me to open the place up and live there again I tell him it can't be done."

"Will you tell us the reason, Lady Charnley?" said Mr. Quin.

She looked at him. Then, as though hypnotized, she spoke as quietly and naturally as a child.

"I will tell you if you like. Nothing seems to matter very much now. I found a letter among his papers and I destroyed it."

"What letter?" said Mr.Quin.

"The letter from the girl—from that poor child. She was the Merriam's nursery governess. He had—he had made love to her—yes, while he was engaged to me just before we were married. And she—she was going to have a child, too. She wrote saying so, and that she was going to tell me about it. So, you see, he shot himself."

She looked round at them wearily and dreamily like a child who has repeated a lesson it knows too well.

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Colonel Monckton blew his nose.

"My God," he said, "so that was it. Well, that explains things with a vengeance."

"Does it?" said Mr. Satterthwaite, "it doesn't explain one thing. *It doesn't explain why Mr. Bristow painted that picture.*"

"What do you mean?"

Mr. Satterthwaite looked across at Mr. Quin as though for encouragement and apparently got it, for he proceeded:

"Yes, I know I sound mad to all of you, but that picture is the focus of the whole thing. We are all here to-night because of that picture. That picture *had* to be painted—that is what I mean."

"You mean the uncanny influence of the Oak Parlour," began Colonel Monckton.

"No," said Mr. Satterthwaite. "*Not the* Oak Parlour. The Terrace Room. That is it! The spirit of the dead man standing outside the window and looking in and seeing his own dead body on the floor."

"Which he couldn't have done," said the Colonel, "because the body was in the Oak Parlour."

"Supposing it wasn't," said Mr. Satterthwaite, "supposing it was exactly where Mr. Bristow saw it, saw it imaginatively, I mean, on the black and white flags in front of the window."

"You are talking nonsense," said Colonel Monckton, "if it was there we shouldn't have found it in the Oak Parlour."

"Not unless some one carried it there," said Mr. Satterthwaite.

"And in that case how could we have seen Charnley going in at the door of the Oak Parlour," inquired Colonel Monckton.

"Well, you didn't see his face, did you?" asked Mr. Satterthwaite. "What I mean is, you saw a man going into the Oak Parlour in fancy dress I suppose."

"Brocade things and a wig," said Monckton.

"Just so, and you thought it was Lord Charnley because the girl called out to him as Lord Charnley."

"And because when we broke in a few minutes later there was only Lord Charnley there dead. You can't get away from that, Satterthwaite."

"No," said Mr. Satterthwaite discouraged. "No—unless there was a hiding-place of some kind."

"Weren't you saying something about there being a Priests' hole in that room?" put in Frank Bristow.

"Oh!" cried Mr. Satterthwaite. "Supposing ——" he waved a hand for silence and sheltered his forehead with his other hand and then spoke slowly and hesitatingly.

"I have got an idea—it may be just an idea, but I think it hangs together. Supposing some one shot Lord Charnley. Shot him in the Terrace Room. Then he—and another person dragged the body into the Oak Parlour. They laid it down there with the pistol by its right hand. Now we go on to the next step. It must seem absolutely certain that Lord Charnley has committed suicide. I think that could be done very easily. The man in his brocade and wig passes along the hall by the Oak Parlour door and someone, to make sure of things, calls out to him as Lord Charnley from the top of the stairs. He goes in and locks both doors and fires a shot into the woodwork. There were bullet holes already in that room if you remember, one more wouldn't be noticed. He then hides quietly in the secret chamber. The doors are broken open and people rush in. It seems certain that Lord Charnley has committed suicide. No other hypothesis is even entertained."

"Well, I think that is balderdash," said Colonel Monckton. "You forget that Charnley had a motive right enough for suicide."

"A letter found afterwards," said Mr. Satterthwaite. "A lying cruel letter written by a very clever and unscrupulous little actress who meant one day to be Lady Charnley herself."

"You mean?"

"I mean the girl in league with Hugo Charnley," said Mr. Satterthwaite. "You know, Monckton, every one knows, that that man was a blackguard. He thought that he was certain to come into the title." He turned sharply to Lady Charnley. "What was the name of the girl who wrote that letter?"

"Monica Ford," said Lady Charnley.

"Was it Monica Ford, Monckton, who called out to Lord Charnley from the top of the stairs?"

"Yes, now you come to speak of it, I believe it was."

"Oh, it's impossible," said Lady Charnley. "I—I went to her about it. She told me it was all true. I only saw her once afterwards, but surely she couldn't have been acting the whole time."

Mr. Satterthwaite looked across the room at Aspasia Glen.

"I think she could," he said quietly. "I think she had in her the makings of a very good actress."

"There is one thing you haven't got over," said Frank Bristow, "there would be blood on the floor of the Terrace Room. Bound to be. They couldn't clear that up in a hurry."

"No," admitted Mr. Satterthwaite, "but there is one thing they could do—a thing that would only take a second or two—they could throw over the blood-stains the Bokhara rug. Nobody ever saw the Bokhara rug in the Terrace Room before that night."

"I believe you are right," said Monckton, "but all the same those blood-stains would have to be cleared up some time?"

"Yes," said Mr. Satterthwaite, "in the middle of the night. A woman with a jug and basin could go down the stairs and clear up the bloodstains quite easily."

"But supposing someone saw her?"

"It wouldn't matter," said Mr. Satterthwaite. "I am speaking now of things as they *are*. I said a woman with a jug and basin. But if I had said a Weeping Lady with a Silver Ewer that is what they would have *appeared* to be." He got up and went across to Aspasia Glen. "That is what you did, wasn't it?" he said. "They call you the 'Woman with the Scarf' now, but it was that night you played your first part, the 'Weeping Lady with the Silver Ewer.' That is why you knocked the coffee cup off that table just now. You were afraid when you saw that picture. You thought someone knew."

Lady Charnley stretched out a white accusing hand.

"Monica Ford," she breathed, "I recognize you now."

Aspasia Glen sprang to her feet with a cry. She pushed little Mr. Satterthwaite aside and stood shaking in front of Mr. Quin.

"So I was right. Some one *did* know! Oh, I haven't been deceived by this tomfoolery. This pretence of working things out." She pointed at Mr. Quin. "*You* were there. *You* were there outside the window looking in. You saw what we did, Hugo and I. I *knew* there was someone looking in, I felt it all the time. And yet when I looked up, there was nobody there. I knew someone was watching us. I thought once I caught a glimpse of a face at the window. It has frightened me all these years. And then I saw

that picture with you standing at the window and I recognized your face. You have known all these years. Why did you break silence now? That is what I want to know?"

"Perhaps so that the dead may rest in peace," said Mr. Quin.

Suddenly Aspasia Glen made a rush for the door and stood there, flinging a few defiant words over her shoulder.

"Do what you like. God knows there are witnesses enough to what I have been saying. I don't care, I don't care. I loved Hugo and I helped him with the ghastly business and he chucked me afterwards. He died last year. You can set the police on my tracks if you like, but as that little dried-up fellow there said, I am a pretty good actress. They will find it hard to find me." She crashed the door behind her, and a moment later they heard the slam of the front door also.

"Reggie," cried Lady Charnley, "Reggie." The tears were streaming down her face. "Oh, my dear, my dear, I can go back to Charnley now. I can live there with Dickie. I can tell him what his father was, the finest, the most splendid man in all the world."

"We must consult very seriously as to what must be done in the matter," said Colonel Monckton. "Alix my dear, if you will let me take you home I shall be glad to have a few words with you on the subject."

Lady Charnley rose. She came across to Mr. Satterthwaite, and laying both hands on his shoulders, she kissed him very gently.

"It is so wonderful to be alive again after being so long dead," she said. "It was like being dead, you know. Thank you, dear Mr. Satterthwaite." She went out of the room with Colonel Monckton. Mr. Satterthwaite gazed after them. A grunt from Frank Bristow whom he had forgotten made him turn sharply round.

"She is a lovely creature," said Bristow moodily. "But she's not nearly so interesting as she was," he said gloomily.

"There speaks the artist," said Mr. Satterthwaite.

"Well, she isn't," said Mr. Bristow. "I suppose I should only get the cold shoulder if I ever went butting in at Charnley. I don't want to go where I am not wanted."

"My dear young man," said Mr. Satterthwaite, "if you will think a little less of the impression you are making on other people, you will, I think, be wiser and happier. You would also do well to disabuse your mind of some very old-fashioned notions, one of which is that birth has any significance at all in our modern

conditions. You are one of those large proportioned young men whom women always consider good-looking, and you have possibly, if not certainly, genius. Just say that over to yourself ten times before you go to bed every night and in three months' time go and call on Lady Charnley at Charnley. That is my advice to you, and I am an old man with considerable experience of the world."

A very charming smile suddenly spread over the artist's face.

"You have been thunderingly good to me," he said suddenly. He seized Mr. Satterthwaite's hand and wrung it in a powerful grip. "I am no end grateful. I must be off now. Thanks very much for one of the most extraordinary evenings I have ever spent."

He looked round as though to say good-bye to some one else and then started.

"I say, sir, your friend has gone. I never saw him go. He is rather a queer bird, isn't he?"

"He goes and comes very suddenly," said Mr. Satterthwaite. "That is one of his characteristics. One doesn't always see him come and go."

"Like Harlequin," said Frank Bristow, "he is invisible," and laughed heartily at his own joke.

Some EWMM Contributors . . .

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Peter Wallace. Born Rhyl; served in Italy during World War Two. Writes his first magazine story for *EWMM*, but has written for periodicals. Married, with two children. Lives in Anglesey. No relation to EW.

Colin Wilson born 1931 in Leicester. Wrote his best-selling *The Outsider* at 24. Co-editor of *The Encyclopaedia of Murder*. Lives in Cornwall but at present is in the U.S.A. for a prolonged stay.

FAST MONEY

PETER WALLACE

The book isn't the only thing that usually wins in racing

I WAS AT Haydock Park and was not enjoying myself very much. My wallet was growing thinner with each race, and the smaller the roll of notes became, the keener and more biting the wind. There were a couple of braziers near the stand and a small crowd huddled round them between races. My luck was right out; if I backed a horse to win it came second, and two which I backed for places came nowhere. Jingle Bob was a clear favourite for the fifth and I checked what cash I had left, found I was down to £17 and put £15 to win on Jingle Bob in an attempt to break the gloomy spell.

Penny Black made the running and built up a commanding lead, ten lengths clear of Jingle Bob as they came round the last bend into the home stretch. But up the straight Jingle Bob closed the gap and they came to the last together. Penny Black was a tired horse, Jingle Bob looked so much fresher that my winnings were as good as in my pocket. Then Penny Black stumbled on landing, fell, and brought down the favourite. I slowly ripped up the ticket upon which I had been hoping to collect and threw the pieces on to a pile of litter overflowing from a bin. The wind caught them and whirled them about. I turned towards one of the braziers, deciding to warm myself before finding a selection for my last two pounds.

The man was standing about 15 yards away, studying his race-card. The first thing I noticed was that he was coatless, which in that weather was unusual. His tweeds were faultlessly cut and he wore a gay flower in his buttonhole. He appeared to be in his late forties, and his hair and trim moustache were greying. He was very tall, and ramrod straight; 'retired Army officer,' I thought, 'wonder how he stands the cold? 'As I was watching him, he turned and began to go towards the paddock. A shabbily-dressed

little man who had been standing just behind him moved at the same time and the two collided. "Sorry, old chap," said the well-dressed man, and the other hurried on his way. There was something furtive in his movement and I thought I saw him slipping something in his pocket as he went.

"Hi!" I cried ,as I dashed forward. "That man who bumped into you, sir; I think he took your—"

I was cut off in mid-sentence by the grip in which the tall stranger took my arm. His bright blue eyes twinkled at me as he said, "Come and have a drink!"

"But he's getting away; if . . ."

"Don't worry about that. Come and have a drink." He moved towards the bar under the grandstand, taking my arm with him. I followed. "My name is Alford; Major Dennis Alford."

"Pleased to meet you," I replied. "My name is Peter—"

"Yes, I know," he smiled, "we've never been introduced but I've seen you several times before with Captain Bartram. Good old Toby," he smiled reminiscently, "we were in Egypt together for a while." By now we had reached the bar. "Scotch?"

"Thank you," I said.

"Two large scotches, dear," he called; and we took the drinks and sat down at one of the tables in the body of the room. I had seen him pay for the drinks from a bulging wallet which he had in an inside jacket pocket and as we sat down I felt an apology was necessary.

"Sorry to have alarmed you. I see you still have your wallet safe. I really thought that little man had lifted it when he bumped into you."

"Albert Stevens? Yes, he always was an inefficient bungler."

"You knew him?"

"My dear chap, I'm only surprised that he didn't know me! If he had done I'm sure that he would never have tried such a clumsy snatch job. Single-handed, too! The best dips work in threes, you know; number one bumps into you, number two lifts the loot and passes it on to number three who disposes of it. That's the professional way of doing the job."

I blinked. "Well, Major Alford, I never knew that!"

"Call me 'Dennis', lad."

"Thank you, Dennis. I must apologise again; you are obviously capable of holding your own without my help!"

"Didn't I see you tearing up some tickets?"

"Yes. I put my shirt on Jingle Bob. Thought it was a racing

certainty."

"Bad luck. I backed him heavily myself. Great disappointment. I was down to a fiver after that." He opened his wallet and counted out a hefty wad of fivers and pound notes. He pushed six fivers and two ones across the table. "Your share."

"But you said you were down to a—"

Major Dennis Alford coughed apologetically. "Er . . . I'm afraid this is Albert Stevens' wallet. It seemed a pity to waste the fact that he was concentrating so hard on lifting mine that he paid no attention to his own."

I began to laugh. "The biter bit. What will he say when he finds out?"

"I shudder to imagine. His vocabulary is probably limited but it will be heartfelt. Fortunately he'd not dare look to see what he'd got until he was well clear and I hardly think he'll call a policeman!"

"But there's no need for you to share the loot with me. I didn't do anything."

"Nonsense, my dear chap. If I hadn't spotted Albert you might have saved me from a very embarrassing situation. It looks as though our luck as turned."

So I accepted the money and we studied the card for the last race together. The name of a horse low down in the list seemed to leap out at me, and Dennis put his finger on it. We were just in time to get £25 each way between us on Redhanded, at 20/1; it ran third, and we left Haydock together, with £75 each. The afternoon had been redeemed.

As the train rattled back towards Liverpool Dennis asked, "Where's your alter ego?"

"Toby? He's in the Channel Islands for a week. Escorting his Aunt Dora. Whenever the old dear wants a holiday the family hold a conference to decide who shall accompany her. Toby is the only one who isn't married and so he always gets outvoted!"

"So you're on your own?"

"Yes; I'm due back in London tomorrow night."

"Why not have dinner with me this evening?"

"I'd love to."

"I'm staying at the Clarence in Rodwell Street."

"I haven't booked in anywhere yet: my cases are still at the station."

"Well, pick them up and you could stay at the Clarence. We'll make a night of it. Can't have you reporting to Toby that the

Fixer didn't look after you!"

" 'The Fixer'. How did you get that nickname?"

"Not racing! It was in the Army, actually; I was in the store side and, well, I knew a lot of people, and I could usually manage to fix chaps up if there was anything they wanted." He laughed. "Remind Toby of the job I fixed for him!"

"What was that?"

"Oh, a rather annoying chap got the wrong side of Toby and so a spot of retribution was called for. Toby got this bloke tight in the Mess, and then escorted him to his billet. Shoved him in the bedroom and locked the door behind him. I'd fixed for three camels to be in the room, too. Chap spent the night crouching on the wardrobe!"

★

We collected my gear at the station and after a short taxi ride I booked into the Clarence for the night. Dennis and I had a drink before our meal and continued our conversation.

"How do you know so much about the Albert Stevens' of this world?" I asked.

"Oh, I did a spell practically in the underworld. I was retained by a very big criminal organization: I suppose you'd have called me a 'swell mobsman'—great fun."

"How did you get into that?"

"Well," Dennis settled into his seat, and sipped his sherry, "when I left the Army in fifty-three there wasn't very much that I could do. But I'd always been interested in racing and it seemed to me that there was a steady living to be made at it. Just as long as one didn't get greedy. My system was very simple. I'd look for a two horse race: now, it didn't matter how many horses were running, what I wanted were races where only two of the horses really had a chance."

"Very often," I agreed, "an outsider wins a three horse race because both the cracks are too busy watching each other."

"Exactly! But you find a race with six or seven starters and only two of them with any real chance and you have the sort of race I aimed at."

"You backed both of them?"

"Yes; but it's a shade more complicated than that. I backed the longer priced one of the two and so helped to shorten its price. Then I'd back the other, when its price had lengthened a bit. If

your maths is any good you can work it so that you come out ahead. Of course, you tend to be laying out three hundred pounds to win fifty; but it's fairly safe."

"Slow way to a fortune!"

"Yes: and every now and then, just as I was building up a stake, the two I'd picked would come nowhere and some rank outsider would turn up. The worst of the system was that your losers were infrequent but it took about ten winners to pay for one loser. Of course, what I really lacked was capital."

We finished our drinks and went into the dining-room where we ordered our meal and started to eat. "How did this system lead you to crime?" I asked.

"Well, I'd been working hard for a couple of years and as I got more experienced the profits were rising. I went down to Lingfield, one of my favourite courses. I waited for the fifth race on the card and then moved in. Plea in Bar was at 2/1 on and Sergeant's Joy second favourite at 3/1. By the time I had laid out three hundred pounds on Sergeant's Joy the price had shortened to 2/1 and Plea in Bar was at 5/4 on. So I put six hundred on the favourite."

"Let me see," I said, "that means that if Plea in Bar won you'd get a thousand back?"

"Of which nine hundred was my own money."

"And if Sergeant's Joy won?"

"Well, I had some of it at 3/1 and some at 5/2. Say eleven hundred—and, again, nine hundred of that my own stake."

"What happened?"

"Well, a big fellow with an abrasive tie and a devastating taste in hair oil had been just behind me in the queue when I put the money on Plea in Bar. The race itself was a good one and the favourite and Sergeant's Joy were neck and neck for the last two furlongs. Plea in Bar won by a short head, and this character came over and congratulated me. 'I was going to back Jeremy,' he said, 'until I saw you laying out the hundreds on Plea in Bar.'

" 'Glad you followed my lead,' I said. 'Good afternoon.' But he didn't take the hint. 'How did you manage to keep so cool? You must have stood to lose a packet on that race if it had gone the other way.'

" 'About one hundred more, I'd have won,' I said. He stood with his mouth open. 'You mean you couldn't lose either way?' He seemed so interested that I took the trouble to explain how I worked. He couldn't follow much of the detail; he wasn't well up on

racing, but the money-making side appealed to him. 'What I really need,' I said, 'is more capital and more staff. If I could have laid out five hundred on Sergeant's Joy, all along the line simultaneously it would have jumped Plea in Bars' price up and then I could have slammed a thousand on Plea in Bar at evens and made five hundred profit.'

"Hair oil stared hard at me, then at the sheet of figures on the bar where I'd been explaining it to him. 'You'll have to meet my father. He may be the very man to help you: how did you come down here? Train?'

" 'Yes.' 'Throw your ticket away! I'll take you to see the old man.' So Nick—that was his name, Nick Rossett—drove me back to town in his yellow sports car—a quite terrifying ride! He took me to a club in the heart of the city and there, in a neat little office over the bar, I met Paul Rossett. A sad little man, with huge brown eyes and a mournful expression. One of the most notorious men in town if I had but known it.

"He listened to what Nick told him. A very accurate summary, and then turned to me. 'We can do business,' he said, 'if you direct the boys what cut do you want?' 'I won't be greedy,' I answered. 'Twenty-five percent of the profit.' 'Done,' he replied, and offered me a hand fresh from the manicurist. That was how I entered the Rossett organization." Dennis paused and replenished his glass. "This steak is excellent, isn't it."

"Superb," I answered, "but go on, what happened then?"

"Well, then I was doing the same work but on a larger scale. We made money steadily: and Paul was very pleased with me! Even when we had the odd loser he never got too annoyed—and before we finished we were laying out anything up to thirty thousand pounds on one race to win a thousand. Looking back I suppose he used the betting to get rid of hot money sometimes."

I nodded. "If he was crooked it must have been useful for him to have the outlet handy. But you said—'before we finished'. How did it end?"

"Well, there were points of disagreement on both sides. I suppose he grudged me my twenty-five percent, though he never gave me any indication. I, on my part, found myself in very strange company. People I had never seen would come up to me, looking fresh out of jail, and say, 'Hallo, Fixer, how are you set for a touch?' Form of blackmail, really; and many of the mob who pulled off a big job would slip me something—either to keep in with the top brass or in the hope I'd give them a tip, I suppose.

When I went home my hall was liable to be loaded with crates of cigarettes or nylons! It all got very embarrassing. But the whole thing blew up with the November Handicap."

"At Manchester?"

"Yes. It was one of the few races that I ever backed straight: it was always a lucky race for me and I had a clear fancy. A horse called Open Sesame."

"Heavens!" I said, "I had a fiver on that!"

Dennis smiled. "I had five hundred and if I could have afforded more I'd have had more. I went to see Paul. 'I've got a fancy for the November Handicap. What's it worth?' 'Straight bet?' he asked. 'On the nose,' I replied. 'Ten percent of the winnings!' 'Done,' I said, and told him the name of the horse.

"Nick and I drove up to Manchester; he was always hanging about, trying to pump me. When we reached the course Paul was there. 'Came to see your fancy!' he explained. I don't think he'd ever been on a racecourse before. Well, Nick and I showed him around, had a drink or two, and then came the November Handicap."

★

Dennis broke off to order cigars and liqueurs with the coffee. As he sipped his Drambuie he went on, "I don't know if you were there?" I shook my head. "Quite a race. Open Sesame bolted before the start and did a complete circuit of the course before they could catch him. Paul was a dull mud colour. 'What do we put a saver on?' he asked, but I told him to stay put. We still had a chance! Then they were off and 'Open Sesame' never looked like losing. 18/1! I made nine thousand on my own bets that day!" Dennis sat back and puffed his cigar smoke in a perfect ring. "Lovely!"

"And Paul?"

"We had a drink at the bar and then Paul said, 'I must fly back to the office; Nick can come with me.' 'What about the car?' I asked. 'You drive it back,' said Nick. I agreed. Then Paul pulled out his wallet and counted out eighteen pounds. 'There you are,' he said. 'I had a tenner on your tip. That's your ten percent.' I sat there open mouthed and Nick put the car keys on the table, and he and Paul went out."

"Only a tenner on it," I said to Dennis. "I would have thought he'd have put more than that."

Dennis got up and we went to the bar; when we were settled there he said, grimly, "I thought he was lying and I was right. When I got to town I made a few enquiries. I'll never know the truth but I reckon Paul made nearly fifty thousand on that race."

"What did you do?"

"What could I do? I was ready for the next organisation coup and went into the office to check the details and have a word with Paul. Jeff Monaghan was there, my right hand man on the betting side, but before I could say anything he said curtly, 'Mr. Rossett wants to see you,' so I went straight up. Paul was there, and he said, brusquely, 'Ah, Alford. You have come to discuss the next coup. Tell him, Nick.' Nick picked up a sheet of paper and read out 'Fontwell, three forty-five; Daheen will start at odds on in the betting and Brandy Snap at 2/1. Back Brandy Snap heavily until Daheen comes to 5/4 against. Then back that.' I sat, aghast, it was the very coup I had been planning; down to the last detail. I hadn't told a soul. Paul must have seen my bewilderment; he laughed. 'Nick has been studying your methods, Alford. It's best to keep our business in the family. Your services are no longer needed. Good-bye.' It's odd, you know, the fact they had cheated me over the November Handicap seemed to have lessened me in their eyes. Perhaps it was imagination but I could feel the contempt of the dips, muggers, con men, all the crowd who had looked up to me the day before."

Dennis began to laugh. "What did you do?" I asked him. "You couldn't leave it at that?"

"I didn't. I phoned Ireland. Mick Fergus was my contact there and he had just seen Daheen working out. He told me the horse was a racing certainty. So I got out my little black book and roped in every friend I had got to help me. I drew every penny I had in the world and borrowed from every friend who would lend me money. I had fifteen men at Fontwell that afternoon and they had nearly a thousand apiece. Daheen opened at 6/4 on, Brandy Snap at 3/1 against. Then the Irish money came in and Daheen shortened to 5/2 on, 3/1 on: then Rossett's men went into action. I was sitting in the stand watching. Nick must have been all out to make a killing to show his father what a good job he could do. I reckon they must have put all of ten thousand on Brandy Snap; it came with a rush from 5/1 down to 2/1 and, of course, Daheen eased: came up from 3/1 on, through 5/2 on, 2/1 on, 6/4 on, evens." Dennis sipped his scotch.

"I suppose Nick put even more on at 5/4 than he had on

Brandy Snap," I said.

Dennis laughed. "Never reached 5/4. As soon as it touched even my money went on. The bookies had been caught before like this and as soon as the money came in on Daheen they cut the price again. It started at 2/1 on. But by the time Nick realised what had happened they were off and running. He never had a chance to cover himself. I made fifteen thousand profit, thanks to his bumping up the odds for me!"

"Heavens," I said, "what a turn up. I'll bet Nick was furious! What did Paul do?"

Dennis smiled. "No malice there! It was as though I had raised myself in his esteem by doing him down! He offered me my old job at thirty-five percent instead of twenty-five. I turned him down. Time to call it a day."

"Did Nick carry on?"

"No! They gave racing a wide berth after that. I've never seen either of them since."

We had a splendid evening and arranged to meet at the course for the next running of the Manchester Handicap. I'm looking forward to it. And if one of the horses should bolt before the race, you'll know where my money will be laid!

CLASSIFIED

period piece

THE RESURRECTIONISTS

SAMUEL WARREN

The 23rd story in this remarkably popular series was written over 130 years ago. Samuel Warren (1807-77) was a medical student who became a lawyer; he treats a grim subject light-heartedly

WHAT I AM going to describe was my first and last exploit in the way of body-stealing. It was a grotesque if not a ludicrous scene, and occurred during the period of my 'walking the hospitals,' as it is called, which occupied the two seasons immediately after my leaving Cambridge. A young and rather interesting female was admitted a patient at the hospital I attended; her case baffled all our skill, and her symptoms even defied diagnosis. *Now*, it seemed an enlargement of the heart—now, an ossification—then this, that, and the other; and at last it was plain we knew nothing at all about the matter—no, not even whether her disorder was organic or functional, primary or symptomatic—or whether it *was* really the heart that was at fault. She received no benefit at all under the fluctuating schemes of treatment we pursued, and at length fell into dying circumstances. As soon as her friends were apprised of her situation, and had an inkling of our intention to open the body, they insisted on removing her immediately from the hospital, that she might 'die at home'.

In vain did Sir —— and his dressers expostulate vehemently

with them, and represent, in exaggerated terms, the imminent peril attending such a step. Her two brothers avowed their apprehension of our designs, and were inflexible in exercising their right of removing their sister. I used all my rhetoric on the occasion, but in vain; and at last said to the young men, "Well, if you are afraid only of our *dissecting* her, we can get hold of her, if we are so disposed, as easily as if she die with you as with us."

"Well—we'll *troy* that, measter," replied the elder, while his Herculean fist oscillated somewhat significantly before my eyes. The poor girl was removed accordingly to her father's house, which was at a certain village about five miles from London, and survived her arrival scarcely ten minutes! We soon contrived to receive intelligence of the event; as I and Sir ——'s two dressers had taken great interest in the case throughout, and felt intense curiosity about the real nature of the disease, we met together and entered into a solemn compact, that, come what might, we would have her body out of the ground. A trusty spy informed us of the time and exact place of the girl's burial; and on expressing to Sir —— our determination about the matter, he patted me on the back, saying, "Ah, my fine fellow!—*if* you have *spirit* enough—dangerous," etc. etc.

Was it not skilfully said? The baronet further told us, he felt himself so curious about the matter that if £50 would be of use to us in furthering our purpose, they were at our service. It needed not this, nor a glance at the *eclat* with which the successful issue of the affair would be attended among our fellow-students, to spur our resolves.

The notable scheme was finally adjusted at my rooms in the Borough. M—— and E——, Sir ——'s dressers, and myself, with an experienced '*grab*'—that is to say, a *professional* resurrectionist—were to set off from the Borough about nine o'clock the next evening—which would be the third day after the burial—in a glass coach provided with all 'appliances and means to boot.' During the day, however, our friend the grab suffered so severely from an overnight's excess as to disappoint us of his invaluable assistance. This unexpected *contretemps* nearly put an end to our project; for the few other grabs we knew were absent on *professional tours*! Luckily, however, I bethought me of a poor Irish porter—a sort of ne'er-do-weel hanger-on at the hospital—whom I had several times hired to go on errands. This man I sent for to my room, and, in the presence of my two coadjutors, persuaded, threatened, and bothered into acquiescence, promising him 10/6

for his evening's work—and as much whisky as he could drink prudently. As Mr. Tip—that was the name he went by—had some personal acquaintance with the sick grab, he succeeded in borrowing his chief tools; with which, in a sack large enough to contain our expected prize, he repaired to my rooms about nine o'clock, while the coach was standing at the door. Our Jehu had received a quiet *douceur* in addition to the hire of himself and coach.

As soon as we had exhibited sundry doses of Irish cordial to our friend Tip—under the effects of which he became quite bouncible, and *ranted* about the feat he was to take a prominent part in—and equipped ourselves in our worst clothes, and white top-coats, we entered the vehicle—four in number—and drove off. The weather had been exceedingly capricious all the evening—moonlight, rain, thunder, and lightning, fitfully alternating. The only thing we were anxious about was the darkness, to shield us from all possible observation. I must own that, in analysing the feelings that prompted me to undertake and go through with this affair, the mere love of adventure operated quite as powerfully as the wish to benefit the cause of anatomical science. A midnight expedition to the tombs!—It took our fancy amazingly; and then Sir ——'s cunning hint about the 'danger'—and our 'spirit'!

The garrulous Tip supplied us with amusement all the way down —rattle, rattle, rattle, incessantly; but as soon as we had arrived at that part of the road where we were to stop, and caught sight of ——church, with its hoary steeple glistening in the fading moonlight, as though it were standing sentinel over the graves around it, one of which we were going so rudely to violate—Tip's spirits began to falter a little. He said little—and that at intervals.

★

To be very candid, *none* of us felt over-much at our ease. Our expedition began to wear a somewhat hare-brained aspect, and to be environed with formidable contingencies which we had not taken sufficiently into our calculations. What, for instance, if the two stout fellows, the brothers, should be out watching their sister's grave? They were not likely to stand on much ceremony with us. And then the manual difficulties! E—— was the only one of us that had ever assisted at the exhumation of a body—and the rest of us were likely to prove but bungling workmen. However, we had gone too far to think of retreating. We none of us

spoke our suspicions, but the silence that reigned within the coach was tolerably significant. In contemplation, however, of some such contingency we had put a bottle of brandy in the coach pocket; and before we drew up, had all four of us drunk pretty deeply of it. At length the coach turned down a by-lane to the left, which led directly to the churchyard wall; and after moving a few steps down it, in order to shelter our vehicle from the observation of highway passengers, the coach stopped, and the driver opened the door.

"Come, Tip," said I, "out with you."

"Get out, did you say, sir? To be sure I will—Och! to be sure I will." But there was small show of alacrity in his movements as he descended the steps; for while I was speaking I was interrupted by the solemn clangour of the church clock announcing the hour of midnight. The sounds seemed to warn us against what we were going to do.

"'Tis a cowld night, yer honours," said Tip, in an undertone, as we successively alighted, and stood together, looking up and down the dark lane, to see if anything was stirring but ourselves. "'Tis a cowld night—and—and—and," he stammered.

"Why, you cowardly old scoundrel," grumbled M——, "are you frightened already? What's the matter, eh? Hoist up the bag on your shoulders directly, and lead the way down the lane."

"Och, but yer honours—och, by the mother that bore me, but 'tis a murtherous cruel thing, I'm thinking, to wake the poor cratur from her last sleep."

He said this so querulously, that I began to entertain serious apprehensions, after all, of his defection; so I insisted on his taking a little more brandy, by way of bringing him up to par. It was of no use, however. His reluctance increased every moment—and it even dispirited us. I believe the turning of a straw would have decided us all on jumping into the coach again, and returning home without accomplishing our errand. Too many of the students, however, were apprised of our expedition, for us to think of terminating it so ridiculously. As it were by mutual consent, we stood and paused a few moments, about half-way down the lane. M—— whistled with infinite spirit and distinctness; E—— remarked to me that he always "thought a churchyard at midnight was the gloomiest object imaginable"; and I talked about business —"soon be over"—"shallow grave" etc. etc.

"Confound it—what if those two brothers of hers *should* be there?" said M—— abruptly, making a dead stop.

"Powerful fellows, both of them!" muttered E——. We resumed our march—when Tip, our advanced guard—a title he earned by anticipating our steps about three inches—suddenly stood still, let down the bag from his shoulders, elevated both hands in a listening attitude, and exclaimed, "Whisht!—whisht!—By my soul, *what* was that?"

We all paused in silence, looking palely at one another—but could hear nothing except the drowsy flutter of a bat wheeling away from us a little overhead.

"Fait'—an' wasn't it somebody *spaking* on the far side o' the hedge I heard?" whispered Tip.

"Poh—stuff, you idiot!" I exclaimed, losing my temper. "Come, M—— and E——, it's high time we had done with all this cowardly nonsense; and if we mean really to *do* anything, we must make haste. 'Tis past twelve—day breaks about four—and it is coming on wet, you see." Several large drops of rain, pattering heavily among the leaves and branches, corroborated my words, by announcing a coming shower, and the air was sultry enough to warrant the expectation of a thunderstorm. We therefore buttoned up our greatcoats to the chin, and hurried on to the churchyard wall, which ran across the bottom of the lane. This wall we had to climb over to get into the churchyard, and it was not a very high one.

Here Tip annoyed us again. I told him to lay down his bag, mount the wall, and look over into the yard, to see whether all was clear before us; and, as far as the light would enable him, to look about for a new-made grave. Very reluctantly he complied, and contrived to scramble to the top of the wall. He had hardly time, however, to peer over into the churchyard, when a fluttering streak of lightning flashed over us, followed, in a second or two, by a loud burst of thunder. Tip fell to the ground, like a cockchafer shaken from an elm-tree, and lay crossing himself, and muttering paternosters. We could scarcely help laughing at the manner in which he tumbled down, simultaneously with the flash of lightning. "Now, look ye, gintlemen," said he, still squatting on the ground, "do you mane to give the poor cratur Christian burial, when ye've done wid her? An' will you put her back again as ye found her? 'Case, if you won't, blood an' oons"——

"Hark ye now, Tip," said I sternly, taking out one of a brace of *empty* pistols I had put into my greatcoat pocket, and presenting it to his head, "we have hired you on this business, for the want of a better, you wretched fellow! and if you give us any more of your

nonsense, by —— I'll send a bullet through your brain! Do you hear me, Tip?"

"Och, aisy, aisy wid ye! Don't murther me! Bad luck to me that I ever cam wid ye! Och, and if ivver I live to die, won't I see and bury my ould body out o' the rache of all the docthers in the world? If I don't, divel burn me!"

"Come, sir, mount! Over with you!" said we, helping to push him upwards. "Now, drop this bag on the other side," we continued, giving him the sack that contained our implements. We all three of us then followed, and alighted safely in the churchyard. It poured with rain; and, to enhance the dreariness and horrors of the time and place, flashes of lightning followed in quick succession, shedding a transient awful glare over the scene, revealing the white tombstones, the ivy-grown venerable church, and our own figures, a shivering group, come on an unhallowed errand. I perfectly well recollect the lively feelings of apprehension which the circumstances called forth in my own breast, and which, I had no doubt, were shared by my companions.

As no time was to be lost, I left the group under the wall to search out the grave. The accurate instructions I had received enabled me to pitch on the spot with little difficulty; and I returned to my companions, who immediately followed me to the scene of operations. We had no umbrellas, and our greatcoats were saturated; but the brandy we had recently taken did us good service, by exhilarating our spirits and especially those of Tip. He untied the sack and shook out the hoes and spades, and taking one of the latter himself, he commenced digging with such energy that we had hardly prepared ourselves for work before he had cleared away nearly the whole of the mound. The rain soon abated, and the lightning ceased for a considerable interval, though thunder was heard occasionally grumbling sullenly in the distance, as if expressing anger at our unholy doings—at least I felt it so. The darkness continued, so that we could scarcely see one another's figures. We worked on in silence, as fast as our spades could be got into the ground; taking it in turns, two by two, as the grave would not admit of more. On—on—on we worked till we had hollowed out about three feet of earth. Tip then hastily joined together a long iron screw or borer, which he thrust into the ground, for the purpose of ascertaining the depth at which the coffin yet lay from us.

To our vexation, we found a distance of three feet remained to be got through.

"Sure, and by the soul of St. Patrick, but we'll not be done by the morning!" said Tip, as he threw down the instrument and resumed his spade.

We were all discouraged. Oh, how earnestly I wished myself at home, in my snug little bed! How I cursed the Quixotism that had led me into such an undertaking! I had no time, however, for reflection, as it was my turn to relieve one of the diggers; so into the grave I jumped, and worked away as lustily as before. While I was thus engaged, a sudden noise, close to our ears, so startled me, that I protest I thought I should have dropped down dead in the grave I was robbing.

I and my fellow-digger let fall our spades, and all four stood still for a second or two in an ecstasy of fearful apprehension. We could not see more than a few inches around us, but heard the grass trodden by approaching feet. They proved to be those of an ass, that was turned at night into the churchyard, and had gone on eating his way towards us; and, while we were standing in mute expectation of what was to come next, opened on us with an astounding hee-haw! hee-haw! hee-haw! Even after we had discovered the ludicrous nature of the interruption, we were too agitated to laugh. The brute was actually close upon us, and had given tongue from under Tip's elbow, having approached him from behind as he stood leaning on his spade. Tip started suddenly backward against the animal's head, and fell down.

Away sprang the jackass, as much confounded as Tip, kicking and scampering like a mad creature among the tombstones, and hee-hawing incessantly, as if a hundred devils had got into it for the purpose of discomfiting us. I felt so much fury and fear lest the noise should lead to our discovery I could have killed the brute if it had been within my reach, while Tip stammered, in an affrighted whisper—'Och, the baste! Och, the baste! The big black divel of a baste!"

We gradually recovered from the agitation which this interruption had occasioned; and Tip, under the promise of two bottles of whisky as soon as we arrived safe at home with our prize, renewed his exertions, and dug with such energy that we soon cleared away the remainder of the earth, and stood upon the bare lid of the coffin. The grapplers, with ropes attached to them, were then fixed in the sides and extremities, and we were in the act of raising the coffin, when the sound of a human voice, accompanied with footsteps, fell on our startled ears. We heard both distinctly, and crouched down close over the brink of the grave, awaiting in

breathless suspense a corroboration of our fears. After a pause of two or three minutes, however, finding that the sounds were not renewed, we began to breathe freer, persuaded that our ears must have deceived us.

★

Once more we resumed our work, succeeded in hoisting up the coffin—not without a slip, however, which nearly precipitated it down again to the bottom, with all four of us upon it—and depositing it on the graveside. Before proceeding to use our wrenches, we once more looked and listened and listened and looked; but neither seeing nor hearing anything we set to work, prized off the lid, and a transient glimpse of moonlight disclosed to us the shrouded inmate—all white and damp. I removed the facecloth, and unpinned the cap, while M—— loosed the sleeves from the wrists. Thus were we engaged, when E——, who had hold of the feet, ready to lift them out, suddenly let them go—gasped, "Oh, my God! there they are!" and placed his hand on my arm. He shook like an aspen leaf. I looked towards the quarter whither his eyes were directed, and, sure enough, saw the figure of a man—if not two—moving stealthily towards us. "Well, we're discovered, that's clear," I whispered as calmly as I could.

"We shall be murdered!" groaned E——.

"Lend me one of the pistols you have with you," said M—— resolutely; "by ——, I'll have a shot for my life, however!"

As for poor Tip, who had heard every syllable of this startling colloquy, and himself seen the approaching figures, he looked at me in silence, the image of horror! I could have laughed even then, to see his staring black eyes—his little cocked ruby-tinted nose—his chattering teeth.

"Hush—hush!" said I, cocking my pistol, while M—— did the same; for none but myself knew that they were unloaded. To add to our consternation, the malignant moon withdrew the small scantling of light she had been doling out to us, and sank beneath a vast cloud, but not before we had caught a glimpse of two more figures moving towards us in an opposite direction. "Surrounded!" two of us muttered in the same breath. We all rose to our feet, and stood together, not knowing what to do—unable in the darkness to see one another distinctly. Presently we heard a voice say, in a subdued tone, "Where are they? where? *Sure* I saw

them! Oh, there they are. Halloa—halloa!"

That was enough—the signal of our flight. Without pause, or uttering another syllable, off we sprang, like small-shot from a gun's mouth, all of us in different directions, we knew not whither. I heard the report of a gun, and pelted away, scarcely knowing what I was about, dodging among the graves—now coming full-butt against a tombstone, then tumbling on the slippery grass—while some one followed close at my heels, panting and puffing, but whether friend or foe I knew not.

At length I stumbled against a large tombstone; and, finding it open at the two ends, crept under it, resolved there to abide the issue. At the moment of my ensconcing myself the sound of the person's footsteps who had followed me suddenly ceased. I heard a splashing sound, then a kicking and scrambling, a faint stifled cry of "Ugh—oh ugh!" and all was still. Doubtless it must be one of my companions, who had been wounded. What could I do, however? I did not know in what direction he lay—the night was pitch-dark—and if I crept from my hiding-place, for all I knew, I might be shot myself. I shall never forget that hour—no, never! There was I, squatting on the wet grass and weeds, not daring to do more than breathe. Here was a predicament! I could not conjecture how the affair would terminate.

Was I to lie where I was till daylight, that then I might step into the arms of my captors? What was become of my companions? While turning these thoughts in my mind, and wondering that all was so quiet, my ear caught the sound of the splashing of water, apparently at but a yard or two's distance, mingled with the sounds of a half-smothered human voice—"Ugh! ugh! Och, murther! murther! murther!"—another splash—"and isn't it dead, and drowned, and kilt I am"——

Whew! Tip in trouble, thought I, not daring to speak. Yes—it was poor Tip, I afterwards found—who had followed at my heels, scampering after me as fast as fright could drive him, till his career was unexpectedly ended by his tumbling head over heels, into a newly-opened grave in his path, with more than a foot of water in it. There the poor fellow remained, after recovering from the first shock of his fall, not daring to utter a word for some time, lest he should be discovered—straddling over the water with his toes and elbows stuck into the loose soil on each side, to support him. This was his interesting position, as he subsequently informed me at the time of uttering the sounds which first attracted my attention. Though not aware of his situation at the time, I was

almost choked with laughter as he went on with his soliloquy, somewhat in this strain:

"Och, Tip, ye ould divel! Don't it sarve ye right, ye fool? Ye villainous ould coffin-robber! Won't ye burn for this hereafter, ye sinner? When ye are dead yourself, may ye be trated like that poor cratur—and yourself alive to see it! Isn't it sure that I'll be drowned, an' then it's kilt I'll be!" A loud splash, and a pause for a few moments, as if he were readjusting his footing—"Och! an' I'm catching my dith of cowld! Fait, an' it's a divel a drop o' the two bottles o' whisky I'll ever see—Och, och, och!"—another splash—"och, an' isn't this uncomfortable! Murther and oons!—if ever I come out of this—sha'n't I be dead before I do?"

"Tip—Tip—Tip!" I whispered in a low tone. There was a dead silence. "Tip, Tip, where are you? What's the matter, eh?" No answer; but he muttered in a low tone to himself:

"*Where am I*! by my soul! Isn't it dead, and kilt, and drowned, and murthered I am—that's all!"

"Tip—Tip—Tip!" I repeated, a little louder.

"Tip, indeed! Fait, ye may call, bad luck to ye—whoever ye are—but it's divel a word I'll be after speaking to ye."

"Tip, you simpleton! It's I—Mr. ——."

In an instant there was a sound of jumping and splashing, as if surprise had made him slip from his standing again, and he called out, "Whoo! whoo! an' is't you, sweet Mr. ——! What is the matter wid ye? Are ye kilt? Where are they all? Have they taken ye away, every mother's son of you?"

"Why, what are *you* doing, Tip? Where are *you*?"

"Fait, an' it's being washed I am, in the feet, and in the queerest tub your honour ever saw!" A noise of scuffling not many yards off, silenced us both in an instant.

Presently I distinguished the voice of E——, calling out, "Help, M——!" (my name)—"Where are you?" The noise increased, and seemed nearer than before. I crept from my lurking place, and aided at Tip's resurrection, when both of us hurried towards the spot whence the sound came. By the faint moonlight I could just see the outlines of two figures violently struggling and grappling together. Before I could come up to them both fell down, locked in each other's arms, rolling over each other, grasping one another's collars, gasping and panting as if in mortal struggle. The moon suddenly emerged, and who do you think, reader, was E——'s antagonist? Why, the person whose appearance had so

discomfited and affrighted us all—*our coachman.*

That worthy individual, alarmed at our protracted stay, had, contrary to our injunctions, left his coach to come and search after us. He it was whom we had seen stealing towards us; his step—his voice had alarmed us, for he could not see us distinctly enough to discover whether we were his fare or not. He was on the point of whispering my name, it seems—when we must all have understood one another—when lo! we all started off in the manner which has been described; and he himself, not knowing that he was the reason of it, had taken to his heels, and fled for his life! He supposed we had fallen into a sort of ambuscade. He happened to hide himself behind the tombstone next but one to that which sheltered E——. Finding all quiet, he and E——, as if by mutual consent, were groping from their hiding-places, when they unexpectedly fell foul of one another—each too affrighted to speak—and hence the scuffle.

After this satisfactory *denouement* we all repaired to the grave's mouth, and found the corpse and coffin precisely as we had left them. We were not many moments in taking out the body, stripping it, and thrusting it into the sack we had brought. We then tied the top of the sack, carefully deposited the shroud, etc., in the coffin, re-screwed down the lid and consigned it once more to its resting-place. Tip scattering a handful of earth on the lid, and exclaiming reverently—"An' may the Lord forgive us for what we have done to ye!" The coachman and I then took the body between us to the coach, leaving M——, and E——, and Tip to fill up the grave.

Our troubles were not yet ended. Truly it seemed as though Providence were throwing every obstacle in our way. Nothing went right. On reaching the spot where we had left the coach, behold it lay several yards farther in the lane, tilted into the ditch—for the horses, being hungry, and left to themselves, in their anxiety to graze on the verdant bank of the hedge, had contrived to overturn the vehicle in the ditch—and one of the horses was kicking vigorously when we came up—the whole body off the ground—and resting on that of his companion. We had considerable difficulty in righting the coach, as the horses were inclined to be obstreperous. We succeeded, deposited our unholy spoil within, turned the horses' heads towards the high road, and then, after enjoining the coachman to keep his place on the box, I went to see how my companions were getting on. They had nearly completed their task.

We took great pains to leave everything as neat and as nearly resembling what we found it as possible, in order that our visit might not be suspected. We then carried away each our own tools, and hurried as fast as possible to our coach, for the dim light had already stolen a march upon us, devoutly thankful that, after so many interruptions, we had succeeded in effecting our object.

It was broad daylight before we reached town, and a wretched coach company we looked, all wearied and dirty—Tip especially, who nevertheless snored in the corner as comfortably as if he had been warm in his bed. I heartily resolved with him, on leaving the coach, that it should be "the devil's own dear self only that should timpt me out again *body-snatching*!"

CHRISTMAS WITH 'MACIEK'

These gay little men have been an exclusive feature of EWMM *for some months, and readers have expressed their appreciation for this new young artist, an* EWMM *discovery*

EXTRA LONG TENSION-PLUS-SUSPENSE STORY

'. . CHINA 'CROST THE BAY'

GEOFF TAYLOR

Their world was small and alone
in the sky, and on them
another world depended

I'D HAVE KNOWN those silver toe-nails anywhere, even at 5,000 ft. on such a dark, lousy night over the coast of Malaya.

Suddenly and inexplicably, there they were as a foot in a thonged sandal suddenly slapped down on the cracked leather cushion of the jump-seat behind us.

It was the first indication I had that there was anybody else aboard the war-surplus C54, apart from myself and the captain, Black Jack Slattery.

Yet, I wasn't too startled to recognise those cute little toes, immediately.

When I looked back and up from the co-pilot's seat there she was, one olive-skinned hand braced on a stanchion of the radio gear as Old Lazy Daisy boomed on up through some turbulence rolling in from the great vortex of Typhoon Lucy, 'way out to the east over the South China Sea.

It was Silver Sally herself—Sally Li Woong, of Singapore. Large as life and twice as lovely. The heart-shaped face. The creamed-coffee complexion. The slanted, brown, doe-eyes which reminded you of dawn over the pagodas at Bangkok. The sleek, shining, black hair parted immaculately as if by a knife.

Now, though, Sally Li Woong looked neither supple nor desirable, the way she always had done in the skin-tight, silver sheath of a cheongsam which had been her gimmick at the Chelsea Bar in downtown Singapore, where transient pilots killed time on

stop-overs or turn arounds, trading drinks and the restless flying gossip of the Far East.

She was wearing sloppy, black cover-alls. Very functional. Very military. Like the blunt-snouted automatic which she was pointing right at Black Jack's head. She was taking the weight of it with one elbow on the knee of the leg she had just flung over the arm-rest of the jump-seat behind Black Jack and myself.

In the soft, luminous glow of light from the flight panel, Sally Li Woong's silvered toe-nails glittered like butterfly wings as she shifted her weight and gestured with the automatic.

"You just keep right on doing whatever you're doing, boys," she said, "otherwise I blow your Caucasian heads off."

Smiling foolishly, I nodded.

She had gentle but firm squeeze-pressure on the trigger.

"I'm doing it," said Black Jack quietly as if he were talking to a tower operator on an instrument let-down.

Because of forecast turbulence swirling in towards the Malayan peninsula from Typhoon Lucy that night, and because the over-worked crew chief back at the Air Orient hangar in Singapore had been too hung-over to check-out the slight drive left malfunction of our auto-pilot in rough air, Black Jack had been making the climb-out from Singapore on manual. Which meant slumping his 250 pounds of sweating obesity back into the captain's seat, wrestling the control column yoke with one great hairy fist and burying his ridiculous corncob pipe in the grip of the other. After more Far East flying hours in command than I'd had Sunday suppers—as he was fond of telling me, his long-suffering co-pilot—Black Jack was as relaxed in the air as he was efficient.

As we dropped into a down-draught that felt like it was doing at least ·95 Mach and my heels floated up and banged down again on to the metal flight deck, Black Jack grunted, levelling the wings on the artificial horizon.

Taking the yellow corncob out of his wide, unlovely Irish mouth, he said, "Just do as the lady says, old buddy."

It sounded like good advice and I decided to take it.

With a fair chance of a typhoon moving west out of the South China Sea across our course to Saigon, we had enough potential trouble already without trying to get heroic about an automatic pointed at the back of Black Jack's neck from a range of about 18 inches.

By the time we'd broken out through the lower-level fracto-cumulus and turbulence, and had trimmed Old Lazy Daisy for

straight and level cruise in calm air and the night's first moonlight at 10,000 feet, I was still worried about Sally Li Woong but also just a little more curious than I was scared. Piracy in the Far East went out with sails, or so I thought.

I was glad when Black Jack leaned forward, cautiously engaged the auto-pilot, critically checked the reaction of the flight instruments and then, satisfied that our rumbling, creaking old C54 was not going to start barrelling down to the right like an F104 on target, folded his sweat-slippery arms and sat back puffing at his pipe.

"Sally," he said, "You better be joking. And if you are I don't think it's very funny."

Sally Li Woong's voice was as gentle as the tinkle of temple bells when the Asian moon is big and yellow and you can hear oxen belching from a thousand yards across the rice paddy.

"I'm not joking," she said. "I want you to know that I quite seriously regard myself as being in command of this airplane."

Like a dog with an old bone, Black Jack bit thoughtfully at the stem of his corncob so that the bowl waggled up and down.

"Sally," he said, "be my guest. But why this bucket of old bolts? Old Lazy Daisy is the most beat-up C54 in the Air Orient fleet. Somebody out there in the front office hates my guts. That's why I'm the captain of an air cargo flight with nothing back there in the freight compartment but a consignment of knock-down packs of do-it-yourself, pre-fabricated Medical Corps combat coffins for the United States Army Quartermaster-General in Saigon. You've got the wrong airplane, Sally, or you've got to be kidding. If you're not kidding you look like doing ten years jail back there in Singapore. All for nothing. Except coffins. What do you think we got on board? Frank Sinatra?"

"I know what you've got on board," said Sally Li Woong.

Irritably, Black Jack poked an exploratory match into the bowl of his corncob. It was so carboned-up he could hardly scour the match around inside.

"I just told you—coffins."

"Coffins, yes," said Sally Li Woong, "And one other thing. It was loaded this afternoon but you won't find it on the cargo manifest. A large packing case stencilled for delivery to the commanding general, Strategic Air Command, United States Air Force Vietnam, at Bien Hoa airfield."

Black Jack's pipe was going again.

Air Orient's operations manual specifically forbade the smoking

of pipes on the flight decks of the organisation's airplanes. Slattery always rationalised his contravention of the regulation by pointing out that nobody in their right mind would ever seriously categorise Old Lazy Daisy as an airplane in the context of modern aviation.

"I don't know of any Strategic Air Command units in South Vietnam," said Black Jack, "And certainly not at Bien Hoa."

"That won't matter," said Sally Li Woong, "Not after tonight."

Black Jack twisted around uncomfortably in his seat to stare at her.

"So you've had a crate smuggled aboard. What is it? Black market booze for the bars of Saigon? I thought the old bucket wasn't handling right for the load configuration on the manifest. What's the weight?"

"Nearly a ton," said Sally.

"Thanks a lot for telling me," Black Jack said sardonically, "We might just never have got off the ground back there in Singapore. Booze don't weigh like that. What the hell is it?"

The spectral needles of the flight instruments quivered gently as the four big Pratt & Whitney motors rumbled in the night, their twin rows of cylinders belching blue flame from behind the stubby cowlings.

"No, Black Jack," said Sally Li Woong, "It's not booze, as you so charmingly put it."

The big, pot-bellied pilot yawned, the stem of the corncob still imprisoned between his teeth.

"O.K.," he said, "Let's stop playing games. I give up. You tell us what you've got back there."

For what she had to say, Sally Li Woong's voice was curiously gentle.

"It's a nuclear device," she said.

★

For, maybe, almost a minute nothing more was said by anybody and I began to wonder whether this was my New Guinea malaria again and that, perhaps, once more, I was adrift on a fevered sea of hallucinations and delusions.

"You mean an atomic bomb?" said Black Jack.

The automatic in Sally Li Woong's slim, coffee-coloured hand did not waver.

"That's right, Black Jack. And I'm really sorry it had to be you boys. I had nothing to do with deciding whose airplane they put

it aboard."

Laboriously, Black Jack had squirmed his bulk around in the captain's seat so that he was looking right up into the barrel of the automatic.

"Sorry? Sorry for what?"

"It's armed," said Sally Li Woong, "There are several alternative ways of firing it. There's an impact striker and a fail-safe, remote-control, electrical triggering system which I can operate from here."

For the first time, I noticed electrical wiring snaking back into the darkness of the freight compartment from a green British army haversack slung over Sally Li Woong's shoulder. I remember thinking that the haversack probably held a battery. Just a dopey little battery like you'd use for a portable radio or a flashlight. It seemed all out of proportion.

"You mean you're going to blow this thing while we're still aboard?" said Black Jack.

Sally Li Woong nodded, her eyes flickering as, away to the east, lightning began to pinpoint the position of Typhoon Lucy.

"I'm sorry," she said.

"You're sorry?" echoed Black Jack. "If you're not kidding we're broken-hearted. Anyway, I don't believe you. It's a lousy joke."

Somehow, it made me feel better to hear Black Jack saying that he didn't believe Sally Li Woong. I didn't want to believe her, anyway.

"Who are you?" he said. "Some kind of a nut? Whatever did we do to you at the Chelsea Bar, back there in Singapore. We always paid for our liquor instead of charging it. We didn't souvenir the knives and forks and chopsticks and glasses. We didn't bust the furniture. We treated your girls like ladies. We even behaved like gentlemen. It wasn't easy but we did. Because we liked your place. We even liked you. Now, you pull a crazy stunt like this. What's the score? I warn you, I'm not getting too many laughs out of this situation. It could even cost me my job and I'm not the youngest transport pilot west of San Francisco. What's the score, Sally?"

The barrel of Sally Li Woong's automatic flipped up and down as we lurched through some more turbulence, a spin-off from Typhoon Lucy.

"If it makes any kind of sense to you," she said, "I am the Dragon Lady."

Anywhere else but in the cockpit of an airplane climbing out of Singapore this piece of news wouldn't have raised a ripple on anyone's martini.

Except in Singapore, where they had heard plenty about the Dragon Lady.

It was then that I began to sweat and what didn't help me any was that I could see Sally Li Woong even had Black Jack worried.

Staring at Sally, he cursed and angrily flicked a thumb seared by the flame of a match which he had let burn right down without putting it to his corncob.

"I'll be damned," he said slowly, looking across at me. "Could be, could be. The Dragon Lady? All those good times we had together and she was really the Dragon Lady. We've hit the jackpot, old buddy. I think we're in real trouble. She's not kidding."

"I already told you, Captain Slattery," said Sally Li Woong, "I am the Dragon Lady. Why else would I be here, doing what I am doing?"

This time, for sure, it wasn't the humidity or the malaria that had me sweating, dry-mouthed and sick right through to my gut.

Often, back in Singapore on stop-overs at the Chelsea, we had put the world to rights over drinks with Silver Sally and her polite, laughing Chinese hostess girls, at the elegant little bar that reminded homesick Englishmen and Americans of other bars like it in Soho or Greenwich Village.

Often, too, we had speculated about the identity of the Dragon Lady, Communist China's top agent in Singapore. Nobody had ever seen her. Nobody had ever met her. Nobody knew her. She had no dossier, no proper name, no face, no profile but she was for real. There was no doubt about this. Ever since the Vietnam war had started to move out of the minor league she'd been keeping a lot of the Singapore security boys busy. One of them, a one-armed, expatriate French major who had survived the cauldron of Dien Bien Phu a decade earlier, had told me she was worth an armoured division to the Vietcong, right there in Singapore. For a couple of years, the Dragon Lady had been real busy in Singapore and further north. Espionage. Sabotage. Riots. Strikes. Bombings. Assassinations. The whole bit. And, all the time, she'd been our cute little Asiatic buddy—Silver Sally of the Chelsea bar in fun-time, downtown Singapore.

"O.K.," said Black Jack, "So I accept the fact that you are what you say you are. The Dragon Lady. I got no alternative. Just

the same, I can't accept the fact that you're going to blow that thing back there. Not with yourself and us aboard. I don't get it. I don't get it at all. Why? When? How?"

Knowing Black Jack as I did I realised that, by talking, he was playing for time and if he was playing for time then he was setting-up some kind of action. Always a big man for the action, Captain Slattery. Had been ever since I'd known him. A slow talker and built like a Brahmin bull but, underneath the beery fat, he had reflexes like a landmine buried in a jungle trail. Once, during a riot in a Hong Kong dance hall when the US 7th Fleet and a task force of the Royal Navy had both happened to make port at the same time, I'd watched Black Jack clear our way to the nearest exit by the simple process of picking up a prostrate sailor by the ankles and advancing, swinging the gob around his head like an ancestral shillelagh. Once he got to an exit he just let go and the sailor flew right back into the mêlée like a human torpedo. There were gobs and girls going down like nine-pins. Ten minutes later we were calling room-service and dealing for poker back at our hotel.

When Black Jack, an impatient man, wasted time talking like he was this night with Sally Li Woong, it seemed to me that anybody getting in his way was inevitably due for an Irish-American demonstration of mayhem. Listening to Black Jack I began to feel better already, but I prayed that he was going to be smart, too.

With the Dragon Lady's finger on the trigger of the automatic covering Black Jack and her thumb just a stretch away from the haversack with the fire-button of an atomic bomb, he'd damned well need to be smart.

"You've got nothing to gain," Black Jack said gently, "We've got everything to lose. What's the score? If you really mean what you say then at least we deserve to know a little more about it. It can't make any difference to you."

In the glow of the panel lights and the blue flicker of exhaust flame from our No. 3 engine, I could see the Dragon Lady was thinking about it. Then the soft, brown, slanted eyes opened wider and she nodded.

"Why not, Captain Slattery?" she said. "I owe you two boys that much. Even if you are boot-lickers and servants of the imperialist American oppressors of our comrades in Vietnam."

Wearily, Black Jack rubbed a scarred and chunky hand over the greying crew-cut that ended in a bog-Irish widow's peak between

his shaggy eyebrows.

"Get her," he said, "Silver Sally, the Singapore operator who used to charge charter pilots and other down-trodden members of the working-class five American bucks for a whisky sour and two dollars fifty instead of one dollar fifty for a small bottle of Tiger beer in the Chelsea Bar."

Sally Li Woong frowned but Black Jack held up his hands in mock surrender.

"Sorry, Sally. Let's have it. What's this caper all about?"

Quickly, Sally Li Woong studied the watch on her elegant wrist.

"I gave you that for Christmas last year," said Black Jack, "The best deal in watches in Hong Kong, as I remember it."

"I know," said Sally. "It keeps good time."

"Time's dragging," said Black Jack.

She stared at him.

"I'll tell you. We've got a few hours yet. The three of us."

"A few hours till what?" said Black Jack.

Suddenly, the No. 4 engine seemed to be running a little rough but, with a violinist's loving touch, Black Jack coaxed the throttles until all four motors were running in synchronisation again.

"Until we land," said Sally Li Woong, watching him speculatively.

"In Saigon?"

"That's right. At Bien Hoa."

"Then you blow the bomb?"

One silver-toed foot braced on the jump-seat behind us, Sally swayed as we hit more turbulence. Even in her black, military denims you could still see she had the kind of figure that had built the bar trade at the Chelsea.

"That's it, Black Jack."

He frowned, genuinely puzzled.

"But why, Sally? Why?"

"I'll tell you why," she said. "Like I told you, I am the Dragon Lady. I'm not Malaysian or even Chinese-Malaysian. I'm real Chinese, born in China. My father and mother were Chinese. I don't remember them. I never knew them. They died fighting the Japanese in Hankow in the big war. I was adopted by foster-parents. They were Communists. I grew up in the party.

"It's all I know. It's all I want to know. They trained me well and I learned well. That is not a matter of conceit. It is a matter of record. I learned to believe in the party. To live for the party. To die for the party, if necessary. I went to Peking. I went to

Warsaw. I went to Moscow. Then I came to Singapore for the party to do what I could to raise an organisation to help our comrades in North Vietnam. The party was pleased with my work in Singapore, with the Society of the Dragon Lady."

Black Jack raised an eyebrow but said nothing, much to my relief. The longer she talked the longer we lived.

With her free hand, Sally Li Woong rubbed the wrist of the slim hand that still held the black, ugly automatic.

"Last month I was ordered to Hanoi and I went."

Black Jack looked genuinely interested.

"How?"

"There are ways," said Sally, "The organisation of the Society of the Dragon Lady is more than adequate. In Hanoi they told me about the president."

"They?" said Black Jack.

"Ho Chi Minh and General Giap."

"What president?"

"Your president. The president of the United States of America."

"What about him?"

"His visit to Saigon. The armistice ultimatum. Peace in Vietnam on American terms or the escalation of American bombing in north Vietnam."

It was then that I remembered the security briefing I'd attended in Air Traffic Control and Operations that night in Singapore standing-in for Black Jack who was busy transacting a small, private and lucrative currency deal with an old friend, the gold-toothed purser of a Japanese liner visiting Singapore on a world cruise. Had it not been for Sally Li Woong's unscheduled appearance on the flight deck of Old Lazy Daisy I'd already have filled Black Jack in about the presidential visit to Saigon, right after take-off.

"The president is arriving in Saigon at o-five-thirty hours, local Vietnam time, tomorrow," I told him, "If we hadn't been intertupted I'd have told you earlier. He'll be met by South Vietnam's Chief of State and the Premier, that air vice-marshal in the sharp sun-glasses."

"Is he, by God!" Black Jack said softly, "I don't remember that on the news. The last I heard he was on his way home with the navy from Tokyo to Hawaii and then the West Coast."

"It wasn't on the news," I said. "It's top-secret."

"Top-secret?" said Black Jack, "You could have fooled me.

What happens, anyway?"

"The president arrives off Saigon aboard the Enterprise at dawn," I said, "Then they fly him ashore by chopper to Bien Hoa. They gave us the big security briefing at Singapore Air Traffic Control tonight. It's the whole bit. As escort he's got a missile cruiser and a missile frigate with the Big E and then there's most of the US Seventh Fleet. Showing the flag. The iron fist in the velvet glove. Standing air patrols, radar pickets, missiles armed, aircraft armed, ships armed. It's been a big security deal ever since the fleet changed course for Vietnam."

Gently, Black Jack tapped at his big, equine, teeth with the stem of his pipe. Beads of sweat rolled down his neck on to his chest. Impassively, he stared at Sally.

"You knew all this?"

Sally Li Woong nodded.

"A month ago. They told me in Hanoi. Like I said, our organisation is adequate. The Society of the Dragon Lady has friends from Hong Kong to Singapore. Even as far away as Washington."

Black Jack shifted his weight, irritably. He hated hot weather and it had always puzzled me why he had stayed so long in the latitudes of the Far East. I'd asked him about this, once, and he'd just said, 'who wants snow?'

"So?" he said to Sally, "What about the president?"

"In Hanoi," she said, "I was briefed for this mission. It has been designated Operation Dragon's Breath. The Central Committee of the Communist Party in China considers that your president's visit to Saigon constitutes an admirable opportunity to demonstrate our solidarity with the National Liberation Front, the political arm of the true defenders of liberty in Vietnam, with the People's Revolutionary Party and with the Vietnam Workers' Party in North Vietnam."

"You mean, basically, the Viet Cong?" said Black Jack.

Sally Li Woong's eyes narrowed.

"That is a derogatory term coined for the National Liberation Front by the imperialistic and war-mongering enemies of the peace-living peoples of Vietnam."

Black Jack yawned.

"Look, if you're not kidding then we don't have very long to live, any of us. Can we cut the big speeches? Joe, here, and myself are pilots not politicians."

I'd never have thought a Chinese could flush with anger but,

right then, it seemed to me that the Dragon Lady did. There was a minute or so of silence which Black Jack used to run a monitoring eye over the instruments and then Sally Li Woong started talking again.

She had all of my attention.

"You want facts?" she said, "I will tell you some facts. Operation Dragon's Breath will take the form of a detonation of a nuclear device, our first exploded outside the territorial frontiers of China. It is not a large device, by your opulent American standards, but it is large enough—Hiroshima-size. The party considers this appropriate."

"Large enough for Saigon," said Black Jack.

"Precisely," said Sally Li Woong. "After I returned from Hanoi to Singapore the Dragon's Breath device was dispatched from China."

"Just how did they do that?" said Black Jack, sceptically.

For the first time since she had appeared aboard Old Lazy Daisy, Sally Li Woong smiled. She seemed genuinely amused.

"By sampan from Canton to Macao and Hong Kong," she said, "Then by Pan-Am, as legitimate air cargo from Hong Kong airport to Singapore."

I looked across at Black Jack and, almost imperceptibly, he nodded. The situation was for real. There was a beautiful, uncomplicated air of clear logic about Sally Li Woong's description of how they had shipped the bomb to Singapore.

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The more I thought about it the more I realised it could only be the fantastic but inevitable truth. If international jets had unwittingly accepted and flown crates containing enterprising global hitch-hikers why not crates containing nuclear devices?

"In Singapore," said Sally Li Woong, "it was even easier. Local party members and friends of the Society of the Dragon Lady who work at the international airport transferred the crate aboard an airplane going to Saigon. There are enough of them flying out of Singapore to Vietnam these days, around the clock, to be sure of getting one to coincide with the time of arrival of your president at dawn tomorrow. It so happened that our friends chose to load the Dragon's Breath device aboard your airplane. On a personal basis, on a basis of mere personal friendship, I regret this. The party would discipline me for my attitude but I

must say I am sorry. For you, not for myself."

Leaning back to check our compass heading, Black Jack casually waved a hand.

"Thanks a lot. Just don't do it again. So what happens now?"

"Nothing unusual," said Sally Li Woong. "This American-built C-fifty-four is American-owned, American-registered, American operated, American-crewed and is under specific charter to the Military Air Transport Service of the United States Air Force. Under the operational control of the Thirteenth Air Force based at Clark Air Base, Luzon, the Philippines, it has been cleared for a routine flight from Singapore to Bien Hoa base at Saigon. You, as crew, will carry out that flight strictly according to the flight plan cleared by Singapore until you reach the point where you would normally start calling Saigon control on your let-down before entering the Bien Hoa approach and traffic pattern."

"You seem to have the operating procedures all squared away." Black Jack spoke with an innocent air of professional interest.

"As the senior field operative responsible for Operation Dragon's Breath I necessarily had to make a study of these things," said Sally Li Woong. She sounded almost prim about it. "Fortunately, the Society of the Dragon Lady has friends in Operations and Air Traffic Control at the international airport in Singapore. In Singapore, as in Saigon, the Society of the Dragon Lady also has good friends in the Government, the administration, the armed forces, the police, the universities and the schools, the professions and the trade unions."

I recalled the expatriate French major in Singapore telling me that the Viet Cong was a faceless enemy with its tentacles reaching out and touching every village and town in Vietnam. It occurred to me that if I ever got back to Singapore again I had news for him.

Black Jack grunted, chewing sourly and restlessly at some gum which he had fished out, squashed, from his shirt pocket.

"So we join the traffic at Bien Hoa. Then what?"

He might just as casually been asking questions at a routine briefing. I had to hand it to Black Jack. He was certainly the type which stayed off the panic button.

Sally Li Woong seemed to have all the answers.

"On joining the traffic pattern at Bien Hoa to make good your ETA of o-six-hundred hours, local Vietnam time, you will cut your number one engine, feather the prop and then call Bien Hoa tower on the Mayday frequency."

So far she had not consulted any notes and her voice was beginning to sound like a tired teacher's, repeating lessons for children.

"Then," she said, "You will tell Bien Hoa that you have an emergency condition, that your number one engine is stopped and feathered, that your number two engine is beginning to malfunction, that your landing gear is inoperative and jammed in the retracted position and that you are having difficulty maintaining height."

"With that kind of trouble they'll probably start firing red flares at us and tell us to go take our airborne disaster area to some other airfield," objected Black Jack.

Sally Li Woong was unmoved by the irony.

"You will then inform Bien Hoa that you have discovered that you have aboard, evidently loaded by mistake in Singapore, a presumably unarmed nuclear device stencilled as originating from the Strategic Air Command, Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, for delivery to Strategic Air Command, Bien Hoa, and that you are making an immediate approach for a belly-landing at Bien Hoa. You will then cease transmission, simulating radio failure. I will be listening on the spare head-set, here, with this gun resting on the back of your neck while you are talking to Bien Hoa tower so I suggest it would be pointless to do anything other than carry out my orders."

Black Jack, I sensed, was still obstinate enough to be playing for time. Whether Sally Li Woong was just some kind of nut or whether she really was the Dragon Lady and our freight for the night did include a nuclear device there was nothing to do but go along with her until we could figure out some kind of a move to get the situation under control again.

"You've really got this thing figured out," said Black Jack slowly, "There's just one thing. With the president in the area they could decide to shoot us down if we came on in after we went off the air. There's enough jet fighters on the Enterprise alone to start a small war. Just one of them could knock down a whole squadron of C fifty-fours before it ran out of ammunition. Not to mention what the Seventh Fleet has in the area. Or the USAF, ashore in Vietnam."

Once again, Sally Li Woong smiled. I found myself wondering how I could ever have found her so attractive.

"No they wouldn't," she said, "Not with a nuclear device aboard, however safe, and particularly with your president, as you

say, in the area. And after the embarrassing affair of Strategic Air Command losing a hydrogen bomb in Spanish air space I think it would be fair to say that the American State Department would be most sensitive to any kind of a repetition of such carelessness. Particularly in South Vietnam, of all places. Would any sensible local field commander dare issue the order to shoot us down?"

Black Jack did not bother to answer the question. Sally Li Woong seemed to have a point.

"In any case," she said. "If they did shoot us down, it would not materially upset Operation Dragon's Breath. It is, as I have already told you, alternatively activated by an impact fuse. It would merely be a case of Americans inexplicably shooting down an American airplane carrying an American nuclear device into South Vietnam. The apparent confusion would only add realism and credibility to the resulting catastrophe—and catastrophe it will be, for the Dragon's Breath weapon, remember, is no ordinary, conventional bomb of the kind which you have dropped in tens of thousands on the villages of Vietnam."

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Black Jack said nothing but looked across at me, his eyes just black sockets in the side-glow of the flight panel lighting on his face.

"What time is the president due to arrive in Saigon?"

"O-five-thirty hours, by navy chopper. Right alongside the Bien Hoa tower. That's why Singapore operations gave us o-six-hundred as our ETA. All civil air traffic to and from Saigon, including military charters like us, is suspended thirty minutes either side of the President's ETA at five-thirty. During these times the only air traffic permitted within fifty miles of Saigon are the navy carrier jets from the Enterprise. They're worried about the collision risk while the president is airborne. And they want plenty of elbow-room in case of enemy air intruders."

Black Jack stared impassively at Sally Li Woong.

"O.K.," he said, "We belly-land. Then what?"

I knew the answer before I heard it but that didn't make it any better.

"The moment you touch down on the runway," said Sally Li Woong, "I detonate the device."

Reaching over, Black Jack parked his gum alongside the throttle of the the No. 1 engine. It looked like a tiny piece of

plastic explosive.

He looked back up at Sally Li Woong.

"Just like that?"

She held up her thumb. The carefully manicured nail was still as silver as it always had been in the discreet, intimate lighting of the Chelsea Bar.

"Just like that."

Suddenly, it seemed like a million light-years since I'd last swirled a twist of lemon around in one of Sally Li Woong's immaculate dry martinis at that friendly little bar in Singapore.

Black Jack nodded, without apparent emotion.

"So you wipe Saigon off the face of the earth. So you incinerate, obliterate, vapourize, calcify, maim, blind or deform every man, woman child who happens to be there. Vietnamese or American. Communist or Anti-Communist. Republican or Democrat. Catholic or Buddhist. Plus Joe, here, me and yourself. I still don't get it. All for what?"

"For peace," said Sally Li Woong, "A protest for peace."

"Ah," said Black Jack, "For peace. Of course. What else? That's a beautiful word, that. Peace."

He had slowly been filling his corncob again and now he put a match to it.

"I may only be a dumb and decadent pilot slaving away for my capitalistic masters on the board of directors of Air Orient," he said, "but isn't there some slight risk of this peace protest of yours, this Operation Dragon's Breath, starting a nuclear war?"

"Neither China nor the peace-loving peoples of Vietnam want a nuclear war," said Sally Li Woong, "Nor any other kind of war."

"But this is a Chinese nuclear device we're carrying," objected Black Jack.

"So far as the world is concerned it will be an American nuclear device," said Sally Li Woong, quite patiently, "A nuclear device carried in an American airplane flown by American pilots. Its accidental detonation will be seen by all nations as yet another American blunder in the arena of global politics like the Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuba or your Mr. Powers' unfortunate flight in the U-two."

"Then it's not just a question of assassinating the American president?" I said.

Sally Li Woong smiled.

"Hardly. The death of the president we could achieve anytime. Without a nuclear device. In fact, we rather hope that the presi-

dent will survive the Saigon protest, the holocaust of Operation Dragon's Breath, so that he will have to live with world reactions to this latest example of American folly and irresponsibility on the brink of nuclear tension."

"O.K.," said Black Jack wearily, "If I was a Commie I guess it would all make some kind of sense to me but you don't have to wipe out a city with an atomic bomb just so you can blame the Americans and prove that their politicians aren't on the ball."

"It's more than that. In the past we have used the American and puppet Vietnamese air strikes with the employment of napalm and defoliation chemicals to prove to the villagers of all Vietnam that the real battle is not between Vietnamese and Vietnamese but against the foreign American invader. After Operation Dragon's Breath, and its implications of preparation for the use of nuclear weapons in Vietnam, there will be no more doubts."

"I still don't see why you need an atomic bomb to convince them," said Black Jack, squinting an eye against the smoke from his corncob.

"There's another, even more important reason for Operation Dragon's Breath," said Sally Li Woong. "It could end the war in Vietnam. After our Saigon demonstration of American intentions, world opinion, backed by the United Nations and even the bulk of the American people, will force the United States to withdraw from Vietnam. In fact, after a nuclear catastrophe such as that which will be unleashed by Operation Dragon's Breath, our party leaders are confident that the United States will be forced to withdraw entirely from her military, political and even economic commitments and objectives throughout all of Asia."

As a C54 co-pilot I'd never had the time or the inclination to keep up with the complexities of world politics but the way Sally Li Woong had just laid it on the line I was beginning to see why, as a Chinese communist, she could easily not be kidding about Operation Dragon's Breath.

There was silence again on the flight deck of Old Lazy Daisy until Black Jack spoke again, calmly and still without emotion.

"Thank you. I think we have the picture. So what happens now? As of this moment, right here, I mean?"

Sally Li Woong gestured at the flight instrument panel with her automatic.

"You stay on course. Just keep on flying. Just like nothing had happened. Like I wasn't here. Just follow the flight plan you filed with operations in Singapore."

"O.K.," said Black Jack, "but there's just one little thing that's going to make it tough to fly on the briefed heading too much longer. And, for once, you can't blame our president or the American State Department."

The automatic, which had been sagging a little, jerked up again.

"Such as what?"

"Such as Typhoon Lucy."

Clearly, Sally Li Woong was more surprised than suspicious.

"Typhoon Lucy? I do not know anything about this Typhoon Lucy."

Privately, I was surprised myself. According to the mimeographed weather forecast on my clipboard, Typhoon Lucy was still away off to the east of us, right out over the South China Sea.

"You'll know all about it soon enough if we stay on this course too much longer," said Black Jack. "Before we took off, Singapore operations warned us that radar was indicating Typhoon Lucy had spun off west towards Malaya and the Gulf of Thailand. That puts her just about right across our flight-plan track for Saigon. The radio compass is already beginning to malfunction, because of electrical interference, if you care to take a look."

I knew, then, with a great inward sigh of relief, that Black Jack was lying, and lying, no doubt, for a very good reason. The C54's radio compass had been malfunctioning for days and just before we had taken off that night for Saigon Black Jack had bawled out the harassed crew chief on the Air Orient flight-line at Singapore airport and had threatened to ground Old Lazy Daisy just as soon as he cut the motors when we got back from Bien Hoa.

Furthermore, Black Jack had been nowhere near the operations room in Singapore that night. While I'd been clearing the Saigon flight-plan for him he'd still been buttoning-up his black market currency deal with the purser of the Neiko Tissan Line cruiseship at the buoys in Singapore Harbour.

Although I didn't know just why Black Jack was lying about Typhoon Lucy and the radio compass and although I knew that he knew I knew he was lying, I suddenly began to feel a lot more optimistic about my immediate future.

★

From where I sat, sweating it out in the lumpy co-pilot's seat of the tired old C54, it seemed to me that theDragon Lady might not know it yet but if Black Jack Slattery had anything to do with it

she was about to join the ranks of a host of violently disillusioned characters from Tokyo's Ginza to Singapore's Boogey Street. They had all been rash enough to gamble unsuccessfully on the quaint and highly inaccurate belief that the big, flabby Irish-American pilot thought even slower than he seemed to move.

Just the same, Black Jack's playmates in the dives and clip-joints of the Far East had only ever wielded flick-knives, bottles, clubs, knuckledusters, chairs, broken glasses and the occasional gun.

What worried me now was that the combination of female selflessness, Chinese fanaticism, Communist ruthlessness and the apocalyptic power of a live atomic bomb might prove too rough a deal even for the indestructible Black Jack.

I comforted myself, though, with the recollection that Old Lazy Daisy's captain had succeeded in surviving the Bataan death march. Lying down and dying was a concept that just didn't exist in Black Jack's lusty philosophy of life.

Sally Li Woong had been staring at him thoughtfully, her eyes slitted.

"This Typhoon Lucy," she said, "You could fly through it. I mean you, personally. You've flown tens of thousands of hours out here in the East."

Black Jack nodded, rubbing the hot bowl of the corncob against the side of his nose.

"I could," he said, judiciously, "but you might have to get out and walk. When the wings come off."

Sally Li Woong's sleek head came up sharply as rain exploded suddenly against the windshield of the cockpit. It sounded like hail. If you hadn't ever heard hail.

Black Jack reached over and switched on the wipers. They made tiny, rhythmic protesting sounds, scraping back and forth in translucent arcs.

"You're quite right. I've flown tens of thousands of hours out here. I know the Far East better than I do where I was born and raised in the mid-west back home. I've seen a lot of South China Sea typhoons. That's why I'm still around. I've usually only ever seen them. Mainly at a distance. I've flown around them, over them, under them and, very occasionally, through them. Tonight I just might have risked it if we'd only had those US Army coffin kits aboard. They're no load at all. Operation Dragon's Breath, though, alters the situation. It we hit typhoon turbulence with that Chinese fire-cracker or yours aboard and the lashings gave out we'd lose both it and half the airplane back there. And you

can take it from me, politics or no politics, for a China Seas typhoon you need all the airplane you can get. Lady, we have a fast decision to make so I'll put it to you straight. You have a command decision to make. Do we fly straight through Typhoon Lucy or do we abort this course and fly around Typhoon Lucy on a dog-leg, diversionary course?"

With the flurry of rain on the windshield had come more turbulence.

Looking out into the night on my side of the cockpit I could see, in the blue, flickering glow of their exhausts, that No. 3 and No. 4 engines were already bouncing and nodding on their mounts as Old Lazy Daisy's wings began to flex and sag, like they were designed to do, in the rough air beginning to surge around us.

Away to the east, through my side-window where the air-flow was sucking the driving rain into crazy patterns, I could see Typhoon Lucy's lightning silhouetting great black profiles of cloud. I pitied any ship, down below, unable to escape that gigantic whirlpool of berserk energy.

"You can't go underneath?" said Sally Li Woong.

Almost, she sounded like any other woman, temporarily uncertain of herself in a man's domain and no longer the enigmatic and politically-dedicated Dragon Lady of despairing counter-intelligence files in Singapore, no longer the living symbol of a political force dedicated to the disruption of the cause of true world peace.

Abruptly, my feet came off the flight deck and Sally Li Woong clutched at a stanchion of the radio gear alongside her as Old Lazy Daisy dropped like an elevator into a vertical down-draft, the altimeter needle spinning backwards.

"Not in this kind of weather," said Black Jack, watching the flight instruments to evaluate the performance of the auto-pilot in the gust. "Even on the fringe of a typhoon you can hit vertical draughts, up or down, of a hundred miles an hour or more. You need plenty of air underneath you if they're going down. Unless you're pretty darned good at swimming with a broken neck and a couple of broken legs. Just to make sure of staying alive in the immediate future I suggest we get smart and start climbing clear around Typhoon Lucy."

Sally Li Woong nodded, jerking the automatic in an expressive gesture.

"But no heroics, please. I don't want to have to use this."

"No heroics," agreed Black Jack. "I'll be too busy, anyway."

Turning around and settling back into his seat he tightened-up his safety harness, clamped his big, hairy hands on the yoke of the control column and nodded at me.

"Tighten your own harness, Joe. Real good. This could be rough. I'll take her on manual for what's up ahead."

Vaguely puzzled because if we were going around behind Typhoon Lucy I couldn't see why we needed the combat-type shoulder harness which Black Jack had long since demanded from Air Orient for bad weather flying on our routes in the Far East, I waited until we were straight-and-level again and then took out the auto-pilot.

"I'm turning on to o-forty-five."

Black Jack had spoken quietly against the rumbling growl of our four Pratt & Whitneys and the screech of rain and slipstream over Old Lazy Daisy's creaking, paint-chipped metal skin. Instinctively, more than consciously, I was still wondering why he had not specifically warned our passenger about the risk of turbulence when I suddenly realized why.

Cryptically, he added, "This should get us out of the woods."

So fast that it might have been a mere facial tic, a nervous reflex as the C54 bucketed into more turbulence, he winked.

Then it was that I knew, Dragon Lady or no Dragon Lady, that Black Jack was still in there pitching.

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Beyond any doubt our new course of 0·45 was taking us clear away from the safe, flight-planned track, across the approaches to the Gulf of Thailand, to Saigon. Instead of flying through forecast clear weather to Bien Hoa we were now heading out, northeast, over the South China Sea, straight for Typhoon Lucy. Black Jack had not been kidding. This was going to be a rough night. On his nod, I sat up and began to follow through with him on my co-pilot's controls. A time was coming, soon, when the strength of both of us would be needed.

Watching the increasingly violent fluctuations of speed, altitude and attitude on the basic flight instruments flickering in front of us as we began to penetrate the outskirts of Typhoon Lucy, 30 minutes later, I realized that I was now more scared of the natural perils about to encompass us than of the Dragon's Lady nuclear device, potentially horrendous but still inert in its big crate behind us.

When, at last, it came, the utter totality of violence of the typhoon so appalled me that, during the first explosion of its elemental forces—lightning, thunder, rain, hail and gut-wrenching turbulence—I thought for one second of terror that the Dragon Lady's bomb had detonated. Then, gradually, I began to realize that no mere nuclear explosion just went on and on like this.

For quite a while—I can't remember how long, for time seemed distorted from its normal dimensions—I was no help at all to Black Jack. The bush-flying experience back in Australia and in Papua-New Guinea which had helped qualify me, on hours, as a co-pilot with Air Orient, had not included any experience of flying in or near typhoons in the South China Sea.

Within five minutes of ploughing into the first area of turbulence spawned by Typhoon Lucy I was no longer merely frightened. I had passed through all the stages of elemental fear.

The stupendous power and scale of this natural phenomenon and the primitive ferocity with which it now assailed us had temporarily robbed me of the ability or even the will to think, to feel, to respond, to act and, even to want to live. Co-ordination of hands and feet on the controls in relation to what was happening to us not only seemed impossible but useless. I remember thinking, vaguely, that it was like having been re-born in some situation out of Genesis.

Like a crouched rabbit, hypnotized by a snake, I waited only to die.

Then, curiously, it was my own laboured breathing which broke the nightmare grip of the torpor of terror which had all but paralysed me.

Staring at the altimeter while it was temporarily readable between plummeting and soaring gusts of vertical turbulence which shook the C54 so hard that the instruments blurred before my eyes, I realized that we had climbed to 25,000 feet.

So far as I could recall the service ceiling of a C54B with a load of 8,000 lb was 22,200 feet. Somehow, though, Black Jack had axed Old Lazy Daisy up to an altitude which she would normally never have achieved but for the fact that we were lightly loaded and that she had just come out of the Air Orient maintenance hangar at Singapore after a complete and long-overdue change of engines.

The next significant discovery I made, as I recovered enough self-control to start following-through again with Black Jack, was that he was deliberately accentuating the gust-induced diving and

climbing.

Puzzling over this I had time, briefly, to look over my shoulder and see that Sally Li Woong was still clinging desperately to the vertical stanchions of the radio gear in the alley-way behind our cockpit seats. Then there was no more time for looking around as Black Jack suddenly bellowed; "This is it, Joe. Stay right with me."

Pitching violently as another vertical down-draught drove down on us, the C54 dropped like a dive-bomber. Just about the time I was estimating that the build-up of air pressure was due to blow-in the windshield, Black Jack's right hand struck like a snake at the stabilizer trimmer, wound it back hard and then, with both feet braced up against the panel and shoulders hunched over both great hands on the yoke, heaved hard.

"Back!" he roared.

Like a drunken sailor, I heaved with him.

The G-force as we pulled out of the dive drove my head down onto my chest so that I tore flesh from my chin where it clipped a buckle of the safety harness. Then, as my vision began to grey-out I registered a curious, peripheral image of Sally Li Woong first floating freely then crashing down on to the deck of the alley behind our seats.

Winding on nose-down trim like a sweating maniac, Black Jack yelled: "The gun. Get her gun."

Climbing out of my seat as we started climbing again I realized there was no hurry to disarm Sally Li Woong. She lay there unconscious, sprawled out on the scuffed, green-painted metal deck like a discarded rag doll. In her slim, olive-skinned right hand she still held the automatic but it was no problem easing it from her grip. The haversack with the remote-control, push-button on the wires leading back to the nuclear device I carefully disconnected and dumped out of my side window.

Black Jack looked back at me as he carefully levelled-out again.

"Put the bracelets on her," he said, "and get on the ball. I want you back up here. There's still plenty of turbulence around."

When I found the handcuffs, a legacy of Air Orient's experiences with airborne Communist terrorists during the days of the British emergency in Malaya, I sat Sally Li Woong on the floor against the radio compartment with her wrists padlocked to a stanchion behind her. She was still unconscious.

"Nice going," I said, "The Dragon Lady's tamed. She's handcuffed to a stanchion of the radio gear. I've got her gun

here. Just the same, you had me worried for a while back there. I was sure as hell you were going to pull the wings off Old Lazy Daisy."

Black Jack frowned, wrestling with the yoke as the C54 started pitching and bucking.

"I wouldn't start getting any complexes about that," he said, "I had myself worried. Take over for a minute. Keep her climbing if you can."

While I flew, head-down and eyes on the flight instruments and blinking against the flare and crash of lightning that seared the wild darkness of total oblivion outside the cockpit, Black Jack tamped tobacco into his corncob as slowly and methodically as if he were riding a rural bus route across the plains of his native Iowa.

With his pipe going, he nodded and took over again.

"What now?" I asked, flexing my shoulder muscles against the muscular strain I felt after having handled the wallowing, kicking old C54 for only a few minutes.

"Back on to course for Saigon," he said, "What else? But first we got to get clear of Typhoon Lucy."

I sighed, gratefully. Like a physical warmth, the thought of life left to live was soaking back into my bruised and startled consciousness.

"That's the best news yet," I said.

Behind us, a voice called softly.

"It won't do you any good. One thing I didn't tell you about the Dragon's Breath Device. It's set for self-detonation at o-six-hundred hours, local Vietnam time. Wherever you go, that's when it will fire."

Sally Li Woong had regained consciousness.

In a big way.

Angered, I reached for the automatic which I had wedged into the seat, alongside my thigh.

"No," said Black Jack, "We might need her yet."

For a few minutes, he concentrated on keeping the C54 straight and level, wrestling with the kicking yoke, riding the rudder pedals and staring quickly, back and forth, from the flight instruments to the howling, roaring cauldron of dark, insensate world of destruction outside.

"Can we jettison that damned bomb of hers?" he said presently.

Earlier, I'd already scrambled back aft into the cargo compartment to check the big crate that looked so much like any other

we'd ever carried.

"Not a hope in hell," I said, "Too heavy. How about we ditch and get away in the life raft?"

Black Jack jerked a thumb down at his side window.

"In this?" he said, "You any idea what it's like down there? We'll do it if we have to but only if it's the way it's got to be. Anyway, the ditching impact would only activate the impact fuse on the thing. Same deal with a crash landing if we had to make for the nearest land. Bien Hoa is the nearest airfield now and we won't get there now by the o-six-hundred ETA. We still got a problem, Joe."

Already, I was sweating again. Whatever we did we seemed to be cornered, destined to die as the enforced human instruments of the first nuclear catastrophe since Hiroshima or Nagasaki.

"Let's face it," said Black Jack, "We can't stay up here at twenty-five thousand feet much longer without oxygen even if she'd stay up, which she won't. We'll have to go back down soon."

Already I had begun to notice the onset of anoxia. The sense of elation and well-being. A wild longing to burst out laughing for no reason at all. A quite unjustified conviction that I was carrying out my co-pilot duties superbly. Black Jack's face, I noticed, was very white. Soon, without oxygen, neither of us would be noticing anything.

"There's just one thing," said Black Jack. He was speaking slowly and with noticeable effort. The words were slurred as if his tongue had swollen. "Seeing we have to go down again anyway we might as well try another pull-out. We could drop that thing clear through the bottom of the fuselage. I lost an air portable bulldozer once, that way, in a C fifty-four over Korea, between Pusan and Seoul."

He looked across at me, grimacing as he fought the yoke against a gust that flung me up against my harness straps.

"We got nothing to lose," he said, "Nothing but our wings. How about it? We've still got nearly twenty-five thousand feet on the clock. God knows how but we've got it."

Suddenly I was fighting mad and wanting out from the whole crazy, loused-up situation. Anything was better than sitting up there waiting for the big bang of Dragon's Breath.

"Any time you're ready," I said. "Let's go."

Almost as if they had overheard us planning our escape from imminent oblivion, the satanic forces which constituted Typhoon

Lucy suddenly erupted in renewed violence below us, hurtling the C54 upward so that the altimeter needle spun clock-wise like a minute-hand run amok.

"Now," roared Black Jack, "Both of us—*down*!"

Together, we both rammed our control yokes forward, thrusting the C54 down in a dive that bucked the giant force of the typhoon-powered up-draught. Before my staring eyes, hail roared like flak on the windshield and I waited for the inward explosion of roaring air and ice and rain to burst upon us, ripping the plane apart like a wet paper bag and scattering us out into the enraged sky. The motors howled and hammered. The flight instruments no longer mattered. The back-lash of the controls pounded against the bones of my feet and hands. The pounding of our plummeting flight shook me so hard that my eyes became disorientated. The flight panel, juddering and vibrating on its rubber mounts, was an unreadable blur of instruments gone mad. Coherent thought, again, was impossible. Time, space and distance suddenly became a new dimension in chaos.

I waited for one thing only, the sound of the rending crack which would come with the disintegration of a tortured wing. Death seemed as inevitable and predictable as the known fatigue-stress factor in either one of Old Lazy Daisy's metal wing-spares.

Then, like a man gone mad, Black Jack was winding-on nose-up trim.

"Now!" he shouted. "*Back and up*!"

With our feet jammed against the flight panel, careless of the glass-faced instrumentation which we normally treated with all the respectful care inherent in any all-weather pilots' regard for their instruments, we hauled together at the control yokes.

For what seemed like an infinity of time, the C54 just seemed to squash, hanging there pinned to the black depths of the sky by G-forces that drove me down so hard in my seat that I wondered just when my eye-balls would burst from their sockets.

Creaking as does a giant tree when the axeman, cutting finished, steps back to run for his life, the C54 groaned a great shivering sigh which increased in intensity, twanging and vibrating, so that I felt it right in the nerve marrow of my spine. I blacked out briefly, then, but as my sight cleared I realised that Black Jack had timed the pull-out perfectly. Typhoon Lucy had hit us with a vertical up-draught as fast and as hard as the down-draught with which we had dived.

Still climbing, Black Jack bellowed; "That's done it. It's going.

The thing's going. I can feel it. Let's get the hell out of here. Hang on, Joe."

Rolling Old Lazy Daisy over into a vertical bank, with all four throttles rammed right forward for emergency power, Black Jack dived for the sea in a long, flat slant from just under 20,000 ft. Provided the altimeters were reading true again, we'd just lost 5,000 ft. in the dive to build up enough inertial force to lose our freight of fear.

Waiting for the Dragon's Breath nuclear device to explode on impact in the South China Sea, astern of us, I desperately tried to recall high school memories of elementary physics. Calculations tumbled through my mind: the terminal velocity of a falling body in still air; the slowing effect of aerodynamic drag on an unstreamlined object like the crate which held the Dragon's Breath device; the forward and upward throwing effect imparted to it as it burst through the bottom of the C54's fuselage when we pulled out of the dive; the fact that our indicated airspeed in the flat dive away on an opposite heading was a desperate 300 mph plus a typhoon tail-wind of at least 200 mph. The further fact, therefore, that, with any luck, we were flying away from the impact area at a ground speed of 500 mph or nearly nine miles a minute.

A minute, I calculated, was about how long it would take the Dragon Lady's nuclear device, in its tumbling crate, to fall 20,000 ft. into the sea behind us.

As it happened, neither Black Jack nor myself was interested in checking just how long we did get.

★

The flash, when it came, was only a reflection from a cloud bank away up ahead of us but for all the fact that we were at least ten miles away and looking in the opposite direction to ground zero, the moment of explosion was still like a blinding, purple dawn that stripped away the dark belly of the night above the South China Sea.

Through sun-glasses and tightly-closed eyes I found myself staring at the incredible, red outline of the bones of my hands, chamois-gloved, as they gripped the control yoke before me.

For quite a few seconds, then, Black Jack and I were silent, watching the storm clouds around us glowing and darkening and glowing again as the fire-ball of Operation Dragon's Breath climbed higher and faster behind us as if fleeing from its own

cauldron of hell in the lonely wastes of the South China Sea.

"Man," said Black Jack, staring at his own great fists and shaking his head, "That's what I call an X-ray."

Then the waves of blast and heat swept by us, diminished by some freak configuration of Typhoon Lucy's cloud formations, and, with the sound of the nuclear burst rolling like thunder above the puny growl of our engines, it was all over.

Down below us, the dark sea shivered, lashed by a spreading, concentric circle of white foam as the bomb's submarine shock wave sprang towards the horizon.

Again, Black Jack broke the awed silence on our flight deck.

"I guess that lets us off the hook, Joe."

Slowly, I reached for a cigarette.

"Where's the nearest Geiger counter?"

Black Jack nodded, staring at his hands.

"You got a point there, Joe. Right now I guess we're flying the most radio-active little old C54 in the whole wide world."

Steadily and smoothly, Black Jack banked away onto a dead-reckoning course for Saigon.

"By the grace of God," he said, "Bien Hoa, here we come."

Grunting happily to himself as we settled down on course, he added, "How's the prisoner?"

Behind us, I heard Sally Li Woong's soft voice.

"The prisoner is fine."

Turning around, I instinctively reached for the automatic which I had stowed inside my belt.

Standing there, Sally Li Woong shook her head.

"You won't need that."

She held up the manacles which no longer pinioned her hands.

"Or these. You see? The gang at the Chelsea Bar always used to admire my slim Chinese wrists. It didn't take me very long. I believe my mother had tiny wrists, too, for a peasant."

She reached forward quickly over the back of the jump-seat and dropped the hand-cuffs on my lap. They fell, rattling, onto the metal deck.

"You won't need those any more tonight. Goodbye."

Then Sally Li Woong was gone, moving like a shadow back into the darkness of the cold and lonely cargo area.

"Quick," snarled Black Jack, "Get her."

Blundering after her through the narrow walk-way between the lashed stacks of kits of pine combat coffins I came to the great, gaping hole torn in the C54's plywood deck and metal-ribbed belly.

Through it had plunged with such inertial violence the crated deadweight which had just become that obscene ball of glowing death searing the dark and lonely waters of the South China Sea.

Cautiously but thoroughly, I searched the crowded cargo space but in the yellow beam of my flashlight I could not find Sally Li Woong.

Standing there, listening to the roar of our slipstream buffeting at the black, jagged hole in the C54's cargo deck I realized that the Dragon Lady had gone home to her ancestors and that Black Jack and I were alone again.

Black Jack cursed and beat a clenched fist against his thigh when I told him.

"She jumped?" he said. "She actually jumped?"

Angrily, he jerked the yoke to pick up a wing as Old Lazy Daisy sagged through a layer of diminishing turbulence.

"Our only evidence," he groaned, "Who'll believe us now? The yarn that was going to be worth free drinks in any bar in the world."

"There's always the bomb," I said, "Anybody who saw that would be convinced about Operation Dragon's Breath. I know I was."

Yawning and stretching, Black Jack handed over the controls.

"I'm going back to take a look at the damage. By the feel of the old bird we've got a lot of drag."

Black Jack was right.

When he returned to the flight deck, muttering darkly to himself and slowly but steadily reduced power on all four motors the C54 began to shudder and squash down as if we were stalling her.

"Looks like a hot landing at Bien Hoa," he said, "We'd fall out of the sky like a bag of cement at anything like normal approach speed."

"We could try dumping the load," I suggested but Black Jack shook his head.

"Not yet awhile. We've dumped enough load tonight. I'm superstitious. Let's just try flying the plane the way it is."

Apart from Black Jack's discovery, by flashlight inspection, that we'd popped rivets over large areas of the metal skin of both wings and lost a useful chunk of the left elevator and apart, also, from the fact that we had to feather the prop on No. 4 engine when it began to run rough, the last hour of our flight to Saigon was comparatively uneventful. With an unexpected tail-wind as a parting gesture from Typhoon Lucy we even picked up enough

time to look almost like making our original ETA at Saigon.

By then we were too busy to try jettisoning cargo so, as the innocent dawn came up over the bland, oily waters of the South China Sea, Black Jack began calling Saigon for a priority emergency approach and landing at Bien Hoa. Remembering Sally Li Woong's briefing for this particular phase of Operation Dragon's Breath I couldn't help shivering at the thought of how different a dawn this might have been. Ahead of us now, though, lay the familiar and unchanged coast of South Vietnam, a smear of bright and treacherous green. Already I could see the glittering fan of the river mouths of the Mekong delta. Behind the coast sprawled a misted patchwork-quilt of jungle and paddy fields, canals and distant mountains. Over to the west, beyond the tip of our left wing, lay the Iles de Poulo Condore. Further away still I could see the peninsula with Point Ca Mau pointing like a hooked dagger across the Gulf of Thailand towards Malaya.

Then, below and ahead of us, I could see ships of the 7th Fleet lying upon the ocean, like toys miraculous in their detail, but still furrowing the alien sea with the white wakes of their stately progress.

I had just identified the Enterprise, majestic in her might, and her missile escorts, the cruiser Long Beach and the frigate Bainbridge, when Saigon gave Black Jack his clearance into Bien Hoa.

When Bien Hoa tower had finished giving us our runway heading, barometric pressure, surface winds and local air traffic status, the controller added: "On your approach to the coast do not, repeat not, fly over units of the Seventh Fleet, in particular the carrier Enterprise. The president is now returning by helicopter to the Enterprise with a party of VIP Vietnamese. The naval force is flying standing patrols with armed fighters and all ships' guns are manned. This is to prevent hazard to the life of the president. I repeat, to prevent hazard to the life of the president. Air Orient Foxtrot Bravo Lima, do you read me?"

Black Jack yawned. Unshaven in the clear light of the dawning sun, he rested a beefy hand on the yoke.

"Air Orient Foxtrot Bravo Lima, I read you."

The radio clicked off and Black Jack grinned at me, rubbing the black stubble of the night with the butt of his free hand.

"Hazard to the life of the president! Are they kidding!"

Quickly, he called Saigon again:

"Air Orient Foxtrot Bravo Lima. We have a radio-active

condition. I repeat, radio-active."

Black Jack killed the radio and closed one tired, bloodshot eye in an evil and conspiratorial wink.

"We'll keep them on the hook for five minutes," he said, "Those armchair aviators down there in the tower might decide Old Lazy Daisy rates an escort, too."

Slightly less than five minutes later we were bucking in the jet wash from a loose, finger-five combat formation of US Navy Phanthom 11s. They had appeared from nowhere, buzzed us, hurtled away like homing rockets and were now sliding around us overhead as Old Lazy Daisy rumbled on towards the coast, dragging her feathered prop like an old soldier with a wooden leg.

Turning his head to watch the supersonic, droop-snooted Phantoms with the angular, paper-dart tails circling us like sting-rays in the sky, Black Jack smiled scornfully.

"Over fifteen hundred miles an hour and very, very pretty," he said, "but a little late for Operation Dragon's Breath."

Leaning forward he patted the top of the instrument panel where he normally stowed his corncob, tobacco, matches and a miscellany of newspapers, magazines and paperbacks with lurid jackets.

"She's no supersonic scourge of the sky but I'll take Old Lazy Daisy," said Black Jack, "And so, I reckon, would the president."

Preoccupied but relaxed, I just nodded.

Over to the right I thought I could see the rising sun glinting on the spinning rotors of the big presidential helicopter dropping down towards the massed parade that was still dwarfed by the functional immensity of the flight deck of the Enterprise.

Watching, I smiled as I wondered if the brass would ever get around to telling him.

SOLUTION TO EWMM CROSSWORD (No. 22)

ACROSS. 1, Tapping. 5, Crowded. 9, Is-let. 10, Assaulted. 11, Planned. 12, Eye-hole. 13, Sad. 15, Detest. 17, Steals. 19, Irate. 20, Sharps. 22, Terror (Keep). 25, Add. 27, In-tones. 29, Allowed. 30, Feathered. 31, Reedy. 32, Rigidly. 33, Emended.

DOWN. 1, Tripped. 2, Polyantha. 3, Intends. 4, Guards. 5, Coshed. 6, Opulent. 7, Ditto. 8, Dodgers. 14, A-ward. 16. 'Tis. 17, Set. 18, Arrow-head. 20, Stiffer. 21, Pinched. 23, Enlarge. 24, Red-eyed. 25, Astray. 26, Dawdle. 28, Twang.

FOR CHRISTMAS—

NEW BOOKS

JOHN de SOLA

non-fiction

CONTEMPT OF COURT, Alfred Hinds (*Bodley Head*, 30*s*.)

The 'Great Escaper's' story of his arrest in 1953 for his alleged part in a robbery in Tottenham Court Road, his subsequent prison sentence and brilliant escapes. Whether or not you believe in his innocence, this is a remarkable book, well written and quite fascinating—but for Hinds' tribulations I would blame the courts rather than the police. Most readable.

CRIME, Julian Symons (*Studio Vista*, 50*s*.)

An epoch-making book, generously produced, and beautifully contrived. It is an illustrated history of crime and law enforcement from 1840 to the present, enlivened with a first class collection of photographs and drawings. The author's text is selective and links the illustrations most effectively. A definite Christmas gift for every crime fan which will go down far better than ties or socks.

GREAT MANHUNTERS OF THE YARD, Leonard Gribble (*John Long*, 25*s*.)

Twelve cases from Carlin at the beginning of this century to Fabian in 1960. The principle is to show how the dedicated work of great detectives has gradually evolved the tradition of hard work and success which distinguishes Scotland Yard. With the men and the material there can be no quarrel, for both are absorbing, but the treatment is somewhat breathy and, as I once said before of Mr. Gribble, given to assuming thoughts of characters about which no man can speak.

PATTERN OF MURDER, Nigel Morland (*Elek*, 25*s*.)

A book in two parts, the first ('The Scientists') deals with four famous cases in which the scientific evidence is given in detail, explained and assessed, a slant usually ignored in books on

certain *causes celèbres*. The second part of the book ('The Killers') is concerned with the Slater case, with new material, and the Peter Manuel case, recapitulated as an inside history based on the author's own pre-trial investigation into the background of this mass murderer.

PROOF OF POISON, Jürgen Thorwald (*Thames and Hudson*, 25*s*.)

The third volume in this history of criminology, written briskly, simply, if a little excitedly, but it is immensely readable. The coverage is as the title suggests and a vast range of poisoning cases in many lands is covered and discussed. The aspect is historical, and, unlike such certain popular histories, this is soundly researched and for reference purposes is most reliable.

SATAN'S CHILDREN, Judge Gerald Sparrow (*Odhams*, 21*s*.)

That current entrant into the Valhalla of incredible and to-be-immortal crimes is the Moors murders. Judge Sparrow dissects the case with skill and a probing care which gets down to facts generally ignored. His resulting criticisms of the legal establishment are not only reasonable but well worth consideration. The scope of this book is wide and comprehensive; it is for the student as well as for the average reader.

SHORT ARM OF THE LAW, The; William Merrilees, O.B.E. (*John Long*, 30*s*.)

A policeman's story, the life of 'Willie' Merrilees, Chief Constable, Lothian and Peebles Constabulary. His life work was to clean Edinburgh from the stigma of having one of the most vice-ridden underworlds in the country (something the Sassenach would never have suspected!) And it makes a gripping and incredible story.

fiction

CRIME APART, A; Michael Underwood (*Macdonald*, 16*s*.)

A suburban strangling is the subject of police investigation, led by Detective Chief Inspector Chudd. This realistic policeman does his job well and the careful investigation of the crime is police work as it really is. A really capable book.

DOUBLED IN DIAMONDS, Victor Canning (*Heinemann*, 18*s*.)
This is a curious mystery, a thriller so taut that its vigour leaves the reader actually breathless. There is a million-pound diamond haul, a shy legatee, a believable private eye and mayhem on a violent level. This is one few addicts will care to miss.

FEBRUARY DOLL MURDERS, The; Michael Avallone (*W. H. Allen*, 16*s*.)
That curious character Ed Noon is the protagonist in this noisy espionage tale where torture, threat, and mystery are equally mixed. The speed is racy and the tale enjoyable, if you suspend all criticism.

FELON IN DISGUISE, Louis Southworth (*Robert Hale*, 15*s*.)
A police story with a largely unfamiliar background, the City of London. A young constable of the city police is murdered when he tackles warehouse thieves; this leads into more murder and a blackmailing racket. The tale is closely knit, and ably told. A new crime writer to watch.

FLYING FINISH, Dick Francis (*Michael Joseph*, 21*s*.)

The hero is heir to an earldom and does not care for it at all. He gets a job transporting horses by air, and gets involved in a clever swindle and some assorted evil. A crackling tale, expertly written about flying and horse-racing, and easily its author's best book to date.

GENTLY IN AN OMNIBUS, Alan Hunter (*Cassell*, 25*s*.)

Comprises three novels, *Gently Does It; Gently Through the Mill* and *Gently in the Sun*. Apart from the value in 600 generous pages, it is a pleasure to re-read these very solid, beguilingly told yarns again. Gently is fascinating, a sort of English Maigret but (to me) much more believable. Get this one; it's a treasure.

GOODBYE PICCADILLY, FAREWELL LEICESTER SQUARE, Arthur La Bern (*W. H. Allen*, 21*s*.)

Ever since *It Always Rains on Sunday* I have been a particular fan of Arthur La Bern, and this new one reaches right back to achieve the biting reality of that first novel. The plot is of a man accused and tried for murdering his own wife. The book is a winner, with a crashing last page climax.

GRAVE DANGER, Kelley Roos (*Eyre & Spottiswoode*, 21*s*.)

I like this gripper of a tale, a simple one of a woman house agent who falls in a new-made grave, gets out, loses a key, and goes innocently home . . . and trailing her is a wife-murderer, who is going to quiet a danger to himself. Pure tension.

JUDAS SPIES, The; Colin Robertson (*Robert Hale*, 15*s*.)

Colin Robertson's best to date, a tight-knit story of a dedicated character named Alan Steel, who is sent on a mission to foil a Communist master-plan. He offers himself as bait, which is taken, and then works hard at his own plan of attrition, and is successful.

LAKE OF FURY, Robert MacLeod (*John Long*, 21*s*.)

An arms-smuggling tale with an unusual hero in the man from UN Field Reconnaissance, who is out to find what is going on. Murder, mayhem and adventure are all here in good supply in an efficient, extremely readable book. It will not surprise thriller addicts to find out that this is really *EWMM's* own Bill Knox, writing under a pseudonym.

OPERATORS, The; Allan Prior (*Cassell*, 25*s*.)

A sort of fictional documentary in which a professional villain and two small-timers work on a big job, the biggest job of the professional's career. The writing is stylish, the story beautifully told in its detached picture of rascality and the underside of London. A definite must this, and a real triumph for its author.

PIT-PROP SYNDICATE, The; and SIR JOHN MAGILLS' LAST JOURNEY, Freeman Wills Crofts (*Crime Club*, 18*s*. *each*).

The first title was issued in 1922 and the second in 1930; both are now detective classics and are re-issued. *The Pit-Prop Syndicate* plot unfolds in France, when a motor-bike owner asks a lorry driver for some petrol. The second tale concerns a public man who vanishes on the way to Ireland. To those who know them these are really re-readable; newcomers will thoroughly enjoy them.

POLICE BLOTTER, Robert L. Pike (*Andre Deutsch*, 21*s*.)

A police procedural tale in a sense, a close look at the 52nd Precinct where the under-life of New York is revealed, raw and ugly. Lieutenant Clancy is the link-pin of the book, a highly believable character. Readable if grim, and capably told.

RUNNING WOMAN, The; Patricia Carlon (*Hodder & Stoughton*, 16*s*.)

An Australian story, a little bit complicated and fluffy in places, but well done. A teenager dies in a creek and a mysterious woman in the case might have pushed the victim into the water. A small town is shocked into action by this and the events suddenly become startling, and curious. The author's best story.

STALEMATE, Evelyn Berckman (*Eyre & Spottiswoode*, 22*s*. 6d.)

This takes marriage for a start and slants it venomously as it sours for a quartet of characters. The husbands make a business agreement and, before long, the police enter the picture and trouble begins . . . a sound book with a lot of wit and a kind of chill ruthlessness.

SUICIDE CLAUSE, Harry Carmichael (*Crime Club*, 16*s*.)

When a woman dies of poisoning it appears to be suicide, but

that amiable and fetching character John Piper, of Cresset Assurance, comes in and his probing reveals some odd facts. An ingenious story, craftily written and very well plotted.

TEN FACES OF CORNELL WOOLRICH, The (*Boardman*, 16*s*.)
Short stories by an author who also writes as William Irish. He is not known in this country as well as he should be; these are stories by a brilliant exponent of the form. Read and enjoy them, from the bite of *Somebody on the Phone* to the strong reality of *I Won't Take a Minute*. A fine book indeed.

THIRD GIRL, Agatha Christie (*Crime Club*, 18*s*.)
With clockwork regularity again here is the Christmas Christie, which opens with Poirot having completed his great study of detective fiction writers . . . then a young girl walks in on him and announces she has committed a murder, and walks out again. From that it becomes a typical Poirot investigation—slick, adroit and expert, right up to the remarkable and unsuspectable denouement in chapter 24.

A SCATTER OF PAPERBACKS

ASSASSINATION BUREAU, LTD., The; Jack London (*Mayflower*, 3*s*. 6*d*.)

An unfinished novel, ably completed by Robert L. Fish. It concerns a syndicate which provides death, but is expertly twisted in an unexpected fashion. Most readable.

BANKING ON DEATH, Emma Lathen (*Penguin*, 3*s*. 6*d*.).

John Thatcher, of Sloan Guaranty, in the course of banking business is involved at second-hand in a murder case, and solves it. A rattling good tale.

COOL SLEEPS BALABAN, Donald Mackenzie (*Pan*, 3*s*. 6*d*.)

Two men, one an expert thief, are involved with diamonds and something more than that in a breathless, realistic thriller that is quite outstanding.

EW BOOK MART

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WANTED: Old paper-back editions of EW books buy or exchange. M. J. Cordwell, c/o Miss Blandford, 8 Cotman St., London, S.W.18.

MANY hard-cover EW's wanted. Please send full lists or can send my wants list on request. George C. Hoyt, Jnr., 10110 Swinton, Granada Hills, California, 91343, U.S.A.

AM in market for any and all EW novels, especially new reprints or paperbacks. Also, most interested in first editions.—Luther Norris, 3844, Watseka Ave., Culver City, California 90230, U.S.A.

HAVE you any EW's to spare ? Please send titles available for sale. Mário Ceia, Avenida 5 de Outubro, 194, Lisbon, Portugal.

HAVE various EW's for sale or exchange. Send lists or write. P. D. Harris Nashleigh Farm, Chesham, Bucks.

MANY EW's for sale, some scarce. Send wants lists. Many EW's still wanted. All letters answered. H. A. Smith, 20, Ransome Avenue, Scole, Diss, Norfolk.

FOR SALE: Hard cover (cheap) editions, mint, of *On the Spot; White Face. Face in the Night; The Avenger; When the Gangs Came to London;* 10s. each post free.—Box A53, *EWMM*.

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.*

Cargo of Innocents

Without in any way desiring to bring up the Hanratty case as such, I would like to mention in reference to this and other such cases that the poor old policeman is getting the raw end of the deal. His task is thankless; too many hands are raised against him, and he has a rotten job in dealing with blood-hungry crooks and getting generally disliked because he has to administer a flock of mainly idiotic laws aimed at the motorist.

Please, let me bang a drum for the British policeman. He's a good man doing a hard job in thankless circumstances. He is picked on by the odious sentimentalists who look on all crooks as wronged innocents, driven to their doom by hard-hearted coppers —no wonder the crooks hide their guns and coshes and stand with lowered eyes and hurt expressions. It assures our dreary reformers of their pure hearts!

Good luck to the British policemen, then. I say, boost him, help him, support him . . . imagine how *you* would like to tramp cold streets all night and never know if you'll reach the station in one piece when it's time to go home!

BARRY CLEVELAN.

Sutton.

● EWMM *is with you all the way in your views about the police, and no doubt most if not all readers will support your views, Mr. Clevelan.*

Murder Book

Further to Desmond Kennedy's letter [October] when he mentioned making a murder book from *EWMM* true crime articles, and with photos he took of scenes of crimes. I'm intrigued about murderers and hauntings. As a personal example, I've slept in the room where Crippen apparently murdered his

wife, in the room in Henley-on-Thames where Mary Blandy committed her crime and, years ago, in the house where Kate Webster killed her mistress.

I admit sitting up half in hope and half scared most of the time. Nothing happened at all! I was also standing on a spot in the Tower of London in my youth when the Tower ghost was *seen* by two people to pass right through me, standing there. Either I'm insensitive or stolid—I saw, heard, felt, smelled nothing! From a discouraged ghost-hunter.

Castle Cary, Som. D. E. H. EADE.

Bouquets

The Swinnerton story [October] was enjoyable and Joel Casavantes's *Throw Time a False Coin* was brilliant. *So Dark the Rose* was a bit startling but permissable, for it was very nicely handled.

E. D. EDMUNDS.

Swansea, Glam.

Blackmail, with Roses [September] and John Dickson Carr/Carter Dickson by Sallon [October] were very fine indeed. More unpublished Wallaces, *please*? D. E. M. LAKER.

Weymouth, Dorset.

I bought the *John Creasey Mystery Bedside Book* because your reviewer, John de Sola, spoke highly of it. A very good buy but, as you said, it was practically an *EWMM* edition as it contained five out of 18 stories from *EWMM*, plus five stories from authors I have read and enjoyed as regular names in your magazine. More power to your elbow! J. R. SWAN.

*London, W.*10.

TRUE CRIME COMPETITION

The entries for this competition were heavier than expected, and it has not been possible to reach a decision in time for the December issue, as *EWMM* intended. The results, and the winning entry will therefore be published in the January issue. The delay has been unavoidable, and apologies are offered.

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FAMOUS EDGAR WALLACE FILMS

(*see back cover*)

THE CALENDAR

Gainsborough (1948)

Director: Arthur Crabtree

Wenda (Greta Gynt); Garry Anson (John McCallum); Lord Panniford (Raymond Lovell); Mollie Panniford (Sonia Holm); Hillcott (Leslie Dwyer); John Dory (Charles Victor); Lord Forlingham (Felix Aylmer); Sir John Garth (Barry Jones); Hawkins (Diana Dors); Andy (Fred Payne).

Photograph shows Fred Payne, Leslie Dwyer and (right) John McCallum.