

THE TOP SELLING BRITISH CRIME MAGAZINE

# Edgar Wallace

## MYSTERY MAGAZINE



**EVELYN WAUGH**

*Mr. Loveday's Little Outing*

**WALTER REISCH**

*The Mystery House in  
Beverly Hills*

**PLUS NINE NEW STORIES**

and (unpublished)

**EDGAR WALLACE**

**Ricochet in Pearls**

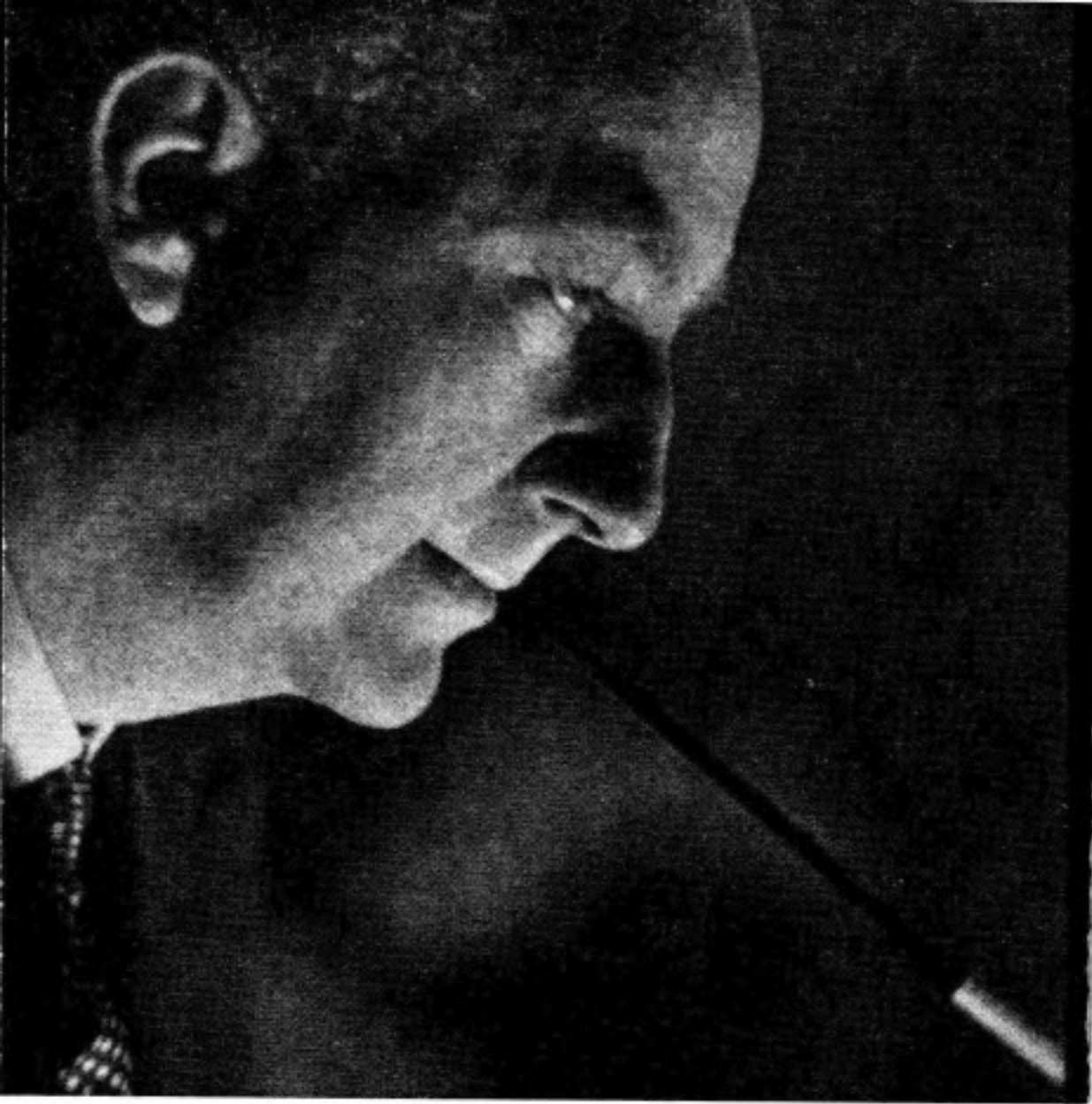
February, 1967

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*Edgar Wallace*

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# EDGAR WALLACE

## Mystery Magazine

Vol. IV No. 31

February, 1967

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*Mystery, Crime, and Detection for the Aficionado*

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*Cartoons by MACIEK*

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LAST MONTH there were some alarmed notes published in the *London Evening Standard*, recording the death of *London Life*, a magazine from the Thomson organisation which took over the old, well loved *Tatler*, and replaced it with a somewhat 'swinging' image.

The death of any magazine, or story magazine, in these days is to be regretted, for there are far too few published in this country. This dearth, it is recorded in the *Standard*, appears to be due to a national obsession with television; loss of advertising to other media; Sunday newspaper competition; and changed travelling

## Briefly

habits—magazines were largely bought by the train travelling public and, today, this has been replaced by the car. These facts may well be correct, and *EWMM*, in the most friendly spirit, suggests that every reader of this magazine should not only help to get new readers for it (the life blood of every magazine), but should extend this patronage by asking friends who read other types of magazines to apply the same principle—a well supported periodical press is a good one.

What *EWMM* takes exception to in the *Standard* report is a quote from Macdonald Hastings, the last editor of the classic *Strand Magazine*, when he says: 'The most serious loss is the death of the short story. There is hardly anyone doing it now; there is no market for it. It is the death of an art form'.

That there is hardly anyone doing it now may be so, but the short story is by no means dead, at least, not the crime short story. Here is a flourishing writing style and *EWMM* is well qualified to give its views, for this magazine receives well over 1,500 short stories annually for consideration. The standard is now astonishingly high, and the cream of these submissions appears in these pages where, if readership praise is anything, *EWMM's* claims are correct. And new (*good*) short story writers are evolving every week—this applies not only here, but in every English-speaking country.

The crime short story is the essence of a fine art form; it possesses all the qualities which exemplify the best in the short story, and its practitioners today show as much or more skill as their predecessors. Admitted the classic scope of 3,000 to 6,000 words has few British shop windows, but *EWMM*, at least, is helping and encouraging an art form that must never die.

*The Editor.*

Earl Wallace.

## **Ricochet in Pearls**

*Another adventure, in the Robin Hood tradition, of Michael Hex and his henchman, Belshazzar Smith. New, and never - before - published, this story is exclusive to EWMM*

**T**HERE WAS a sound of revelry by night in the gilded halls of the Grand Revendriex Restaurant. The hour was late but the revelry was very exclusive, being confined to the guests of Mr. Montague Sluis. An orchestra played, champagne in unlimited quantities cooled beneath the buffet, cups amber and cups crimson glittered refreshingly—peaches, grapes, early strawberries, all that was rare and refreshing from orchard and hot-house, was piled in the silver dishes at the back of the side-board. And across the polished floor moved youth and beauty in the arms of much that was neither youthful nor beautiful to look upon. For Mr. Sluis did not choose his business acquaintances for their personal attractions nor his lady guests for their business acumen.

Well might Mr. Sluis spend his money with seeming recklessness. He was a director of 14 companies and his activities were narrowly on the right side of the law.

He was a keen business man, who yet had his tender and hilarious moments.

The feast of music and movement was at its height when the skeleton appeared in the doorway. He was a good-looking skeleton in correct evening dress, and he walked with a slight limp. He nodded easily to the janitor, who took it for granted that he was an invited guest and after a cursory examination of the room,

he strolled across to the small but expensive knot of stout gentlemen who stood in one corner of the room, surveying the revels with an approving eye.

Mr. Sluis, a stocky man with a mop of curly blond hair and a disposition to perspire at the slightest excuse, peered at the newcomer through his glasses and frowned.

"I thought I'd look you up," said Hex cheerily.

"Did I invite you?" asked Mr. Sluis meaningly and without any warmth or enthusiasm in his voice.

"To be exact, you didn't," said Hex, "But I thought that on this festive occasion, when the hearts of the hardest are necessarily softened at the sight of so much beauty and virtue, or at any rate, of so much beauty, you might take a more favourable view of my proposition."

"Mr. Hex," said Mr. Sluis closing his eyes, "I do not give money to charity. Today, yesterday, it seems for eternity, you have pestered me with requests that I should subscribe heavily—I repeat, heavily—"

"I heard you," said Hex, "heavily, you said."

"To your Hex Home for Children, a society which is not even in the list of permissible charities-to-collect-for."

"Quite right," said Hex.

"And now you come to me, with all my friends here, uninvited and, if you will pardon me, objectionable."

"Don't say that," pleaded Hex.

"Objectionable, I repeat," said Mr. Sluis. "Why? To give you ten thousand pounds. It is absurd."

"I don't agree with you," said Hex, "you see, Mr. Sluis, I have to get money. My hobbies are expensive."

"I tell you definite," said Mr. Sluis, "I give you nothing."

"Then I'm afraid I shall have to take from you the sum of ten thousand pounds."

Mr. Sluis smiled. You might have thought that the idea of anybody taking £10,000 from him amused him. As a matter of fact, the mere prospect would have given him exquisite pain, but because he did not believe that there was in the world a power which could extract this enormous sum from his banking account, he permitted himself to advertise his amusement.

"There is nothing else?" he enquired.

"Yes," said Hex, "I'll have a drink."

He made his way out to the buffet, selected his drink with great care, helped himself to a cigar and, with a nod to the small and

speechless group, faded from the room.



Michael Hex drove straight away to the House of Commons, at which grave institution he had dined. He knew the House was sitting all night and that his one friend among the legislators would be expecting him. His friend was a jovial man who was only grave when he spoke about Ireland and only grave then because Ireland was a grave subject—especially when it had to be discussed with an Englishman.

Michael Hex and Septimus O'Brien had met in exceptional circumstances and, indeed, the O'Brien was an exceptional man. He had been the reporter of a Dublin newspaper and had been sent down to report a by-election which was being bitterly contested. On the day when the candidates should have been nominated, the rivals—attended by large, vociferous, and pugnacious retinues—had met in the market place and had delayed their progress to the Town Hall to indulge in the bitterest of recriminations. In the meanwhile, time, which waits for no man, was progressing. A dozen citizens, waiting at the Town Hall to witness the nominations, looked at their watches and one, with that love for the grotesque and the absurd which is the Irishman's chiefest characteristic, had suddenly exclaimed:

"Boys, do any of yez want to be a member of parliament?"

And Septimus O'Brien had said: "Yes."

Whereupon the Irish humorist had seized three nomination forms, secured the signatures of the necessary number of citizens and, as the clock was on the point of striking, had deposited those forms with the returning officer. And the rival candidates sprinted to the Town Hall to discover, like the Foolish Virgins, that they had arrived too late and Septimus O'Brien, the reporter of a Dublin newspaper, had been returned unopposed. The constituents received the news with shrieks of joy. It was the Irishman's conception of a grand joke and the bitterest of the partisans united in cheering their new member. Since that day Septimus O'Brien had been a member for Donnyballagh.

"Did ye find the devil?" he asked as he came across the lobby to greet Hex.

"I found him."

"Did he put up the money?"

"He did not."

"Bad cess to him," said the legislator, "come and have a drink and tell me what you want to see me about. It's an all-night sitting and we shan't be disturbed. If it wasn't for the corruption of the English government and the pernicious blindness of Mr. Shpeaker, the House would be counted out."

Over their refreshment, Hex explained the position.

"Now you know Sluis," he continued. "Frankly that is why I got in touch with you yesterday and explained the matter to you."

"But he's no friend of mine," said Septimus quickly, "Although I've slept at his house, d'ye mind?"

"I know that, Septimus," said Hex nodding, "but you can tell me something about him. What is his weakness?"

"Faith, he has no weakness except a love of money,"

"Has he any hobby?"

"Getting more money, the black-hearted hound, and, be hivens! I nearly forgot his pearls."

"Pearls?"

The other nodded vehemently.

"'Tis the finest collection in the world he has; have ye never heard of them. '

"Pearls, eh?"

"Ropes of them, stacks of them. 'Tis his passion."

"That is good news," said Hex thoughtfully.



For the following days Hex pursued his enquiries, aided by the faithful Belshazzar Smith, who succeeded in getting in touch with one of Mr. Sluis's house staff.

"Met him in a public house off Grosvenor Square," said Beishazzar, "in the saloon bar an' quite the gentleman. As Keats says, 'Conviviality—' "

"What's the matter with 'Errick?" asked Hex; "isn't he on duty today?"

"Well, sir, 'Errick made a similar remark about wine; he said—"

"Tell us about the gentlemanly butler."

"Well, sir, I asked him, as per your instructions, about the pearls. They're kept in a strong-room on the first floor—opening from the library. There's always a man on duty, day and night."

"You asked that, did you?"

"Yes, sir—you told me to. Also I asked whether Mr. Sluis buys pearls privately or only through jewellers."



"That's good," said Hex admiringly, "really Belshazzar, you seem to have succeeded most admirably."

"Tact," said Belshazzar Smith proudly, "is one of the things I pride myself on."

"And with reason," said Hex, "I wonder you weren't pinched."

He had not finished speaking when there came a knock at the door. Belshazzar Smith opened it to discover a district messenger with a letter written on House of Commons stationery, addressed to Michael Hex and marked 'Urgent.' It was from Mr. Septimus O'Brien and ran:

Dear Captain. I was in the city this morning and I heard all about you. It appears that your attempt to extract money from the loathsome millionaire has earned you indecent fame. Sluis is on your track. Both you and your man are being watched by private detectives. I thought you ought to know this. Sluis is an unforgiving devil and has made up his mind to get you.

Hex folded the letter.

"I had noticed the detectives," he said, "so had you, Belshazzar Smith."

"Me," said the startled Belshazzar, "no, sir, I didn't notice anything."

Hex laughed.

"I saw them follow you in the street and shepherd you into the house. Come here," he led the way to the window. "Do you see that man at the corner, picking his teeth? That's one of them. Where's the other? Oh, there he is."

He indicated at the further end of the street, a quietly dressed man who was standing on the edge of the kerb, apparently reading an evening newspaper.

Belshazzar Smith looked serious.

"Does this mean we are going to get into trouble?" he asked.

"I should worry," said Michael Hex.

It was not a pleasant task which Mr. Sluis had set his sleuth-hounds. Hex was a very nimble and energetic person. It seemed to the weary man who dogged his footsteps that he would never tire. The annoying thing was that he insisted on walking. To follow a man in a taxi, when unlimited expenses are allowed, is a luxurious proceeding. Even to follow him on a bus has its merits; but to walk and walk and walk, from ten in the morning to five in the afternoon, brought iron to the soul of two amiable

members of Tilletson's Detective Agency.

But their patience was rewarded. On the fourth day of their vigil, Hex made a visit to Hatton Gardens and there purchased from a dealer in such things, a very handsome jewel case, on which he had engraved his initials, *M.H.* This he carried home with him. The case, as one of the detectives learnt, was empty, the firm in question being a manufacturer and supplying most of the wholesale jewellers in the neighbourhood.

The day following produced no results for the watchers, who had reported their discoveries to their employer. The day after that, however, was one rich in possibilities. Michael Hex drove to Willington Arcade in Piccadilly at the end of which stands the dazzling establishment of the Persian Diamond Company. You cannot pass its windows on a sunny day without smoked glasses, for from a score of beds of velvet and rich silk, flash and scintillate, gleam and glow, gorgeous brilliants and milk-white pearls, few of which can be purchased under £2.

To this maker of artificial stones went Hex and his purchases were large. He bought pearls, a whole string of them, of moderate size and of perfect colour and showed an almost fastidious taste in their selection.

"They look almost like real, don't they," said the smiling assistant, and it was at this moment that a detective strolled in aimlessly and began to examine one of the show cases.

"None but a connoisseur could tell the difference," said Hex. "Will you string them together for me?"

He waited till this was completed, watched the 'pearls' being placed in an ornamental case, paid £15—their price—and, with his purchase under his arm, stepped out into the arcade.



That night there was a conference in the library of Mr. Sluis. He gathered his friends round him to tell them the good news.

"You would never think it possible—such audacity!" he beamed, "I have had a telephone message from Hex offering to sell me his pearls."

He laughed long and loud.

"What have you done?" demanded one of his cronies.

"I have invited him here tonight to negotiate." He chuckled again and slapped his stout knee, then lugged a watch from his pocket, "In five minutes the little mouse will walk into the lions'

den," he said jovially.

The little mouse came in later, very cheerful, apparently unresentful at the cavalier treatment he had received. He carried under his arm the jewel case of blue leather which had cost him much more than his pearl purchases of that morning. Mr. Sluis was all affability and with his own moist hands brought forward a chair.

"You want to sell pearls, eh," he smiled, "Well, well, I can purchase pearls. I have the finest collection in Europe."

"So I have heard," said Michael Hex, "and I am anxious that you should add these to your collection."

He opened the case and displayed a string of beautiful white shimmering objects. Mr. Sluis made a pretence of examining them.

"Very beautiful," he said, "what are you asking for these?"

"Twelve thousand pounds," said Hex.

Mr. Sluis shrugged his shoulders and gave a sidelong glance at his companions.

"It's a lot of money," he said, "a string of that description should not be worth much more than four thousand, but I am not a haggler, and I daresay if you come tomorrow night about this time we can make a deal."

"At the price?" asked Hex anxiously.

Mr. Sluis smiled.

"Certainly. I'd like to do you a good turn and I will not haggle with you."

Hex drew a deep sigh of relief.

"There is only one thing," he said softly, "I should like you to pay me—"

"In cash, of course," said Mr. Sluis, "you don't like cheques. But perhaps you will tell me how you came in possession of these pearls."

"I bought them for a purpose," said Hex, "and now I am anxious to sell them. That is the only explanation I care to offer."

"Surely, surely," said Mr. Sluis quickly, "I should not pry into your business, eh? Very good, Mr. Hex." He offered his hand. "Till tomorrow night at six o'clock."

When the front door had closed upon Hex, Mr. Sluis unfolded his plan.

"I have already been in communication with Scotland Yard," he said, "and I find I can prosecute this fine fellow for obtaining money by a trick. Tomorrow you shall be here, my friends, also

the good Inspector Smith who will be dressed like one of us and we will teach this philanthropist a good business."



Mr. Sluis was a born organiser. Not once was Hex lost sight of in the next 24 hours. On the following afternoon the secretary of Mr. Sluis drew from the bank the sum of £12,000 in ten pound notes. The numbers were carefully taken and marked under the supervision of Inspector Smith. All was ready for the discomfiture of Hex when he arrived that evening, accompanied on this occasion by his bodyguard.

He introduced the embarrassed Belshazzar to the assembled company. The moment he came in he recognised the atmosphere of hostility, sensed danger as a pointer scents the game, but was not greatly perturbed.

"Here we are, Mr. Hex. Let me introduce you to my friends. Mr. Julius Brown, of whom you have heard, another subscriber to your little scheme, eh?"

"It is very likely," said Hex taking a good view of a gentleman who controlled quite a number of metal companies in England.

"This is Mr. van Richter."

Hex bowed to the second.

"And this," indicating a severe-looking man severely dressed and unmistakably a police official, "is Mr. Tom Jones, from Liverpool."

"I'm glad to meet you, Mr. Tom Jones from Liverpool," said Michael Hex.

"And now," said Mr. Sluis, "to business. You have the jewels?"

Hex took the case from under his arm and flicked it open.

"Very good. They look splendid."

"You have the money?" asked Hex.

Mr. Sluis pulled open a drawer of his desk, took out the notes and threw them on the desk.

"Count them," he said.

Hex went through them with the rapidity of a bank cashier.

"Correct."

"Here is a pen and paper, Mr. Hex," said Mr. Sluis. "You will please write at my dictation."

Hex took up the pen.

"Are you ready?"

He nodded.

“‘Received from Mr. Montague Sluis,’” dictated that gentleman, “‘the sum of twelve thousand pounds in payment for one string of pearls’—you had better put ‘genuine pearls,’” said Mr. Sluis airily and Hex obeyed, “‘which I certify,’” continued Mr. Sluis, “‘are my property’—have you got that?”

“Yes,” said Hex.

“Now sign it.”

The other signed in a large hand ‘Michael Hex’ and put the date. He picked up the money and put it into his pocket and suddenly the smile on the face of Mr. Sluis faded.

“That’s all,” he said quietly. “Inspector, you will do your duty.”

Inspector Smith stepped forward.

“Do you charge this man?” he said.

“I charge him,” said Mr. Sluis, reciting the formula which he had committed to memory, “with obtaining twelve thousand pounds by means of a trick, and with defrauding me by selling artificial pearls as real.”

“You have heard the charge,” said the inspector, “you had better not say anything now. I shall have to take you down to Bow Street.”

“You do so at your own risk, Inspector,” said Hex. “I suppose you are an inspector.”

“My name is Inspector Smith, of Scotland Yard.”

Hex nodded.

“I repeat that you will take me at your own risk,” he said. “In the first place there has been no trickery. I sold this man the pearls for a price. I have given him the receipt and I have the cash in my pocket.”

“Persian pearls, my friend, Persian pearls,” smirked Mr. Sluis. “I purchased genuine pearls.”

“Of course you did,” said Hex. “Surely a connoisseur like yourself can distinguish between the artificial and the real.”

He took a note-book from his pocket and produced a printed bill which was stamped and receipted.

“I bought these from Liffany’s in Regent Street,” he went on. “There is the receipt for them—four thousand pounds.”

Mr. Sluis went pale.

“If you can prove that I have been defrauded,” said Hex virtuously, “that I have purchased artificial pearls—I shall be awfully glad because naturally I shall have an action against Liffany’s.”

“Real pearls,” gasped Mr. Sluis.

He picked up the necklace with a trembling hand and carried it to the light. Long and earnestly he looked, then came back and laid his purchase on the table.

"Are they real, sir?" asked the inspector.

Mr. Sluis could not trust himself to speak. He nodded. The inspector smiled.

"Well of course sir, you have no action against this gentleman."

"But they are not worth more than four thousand and I have paid twelve thousand."

The inspector shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm afraid that's your look-out sir," he said.

"But I've paid eight thousand too much," insisted Mr. Sluis, tremulously.

Hex laughed, thrust his hands into his pocket and crackled the notes.

"That is exactly the amount I intended you to pay," he said. "If you hadn't been such a hog and hadn't been so keen on catching me out so you agreed to any price I asked, you might have gone through the formality of examining the pearls and seeing they were genuine."

"But you bought artificial pearls," said the agitated man. "You were seen to purchase them. For why did you buy these if not to defraud me?"

"I bought those," said Michael Hex as he made his way to the door, "to wear at your next party. Now be sure you invite me!"

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# THE MONEY MAN

BILL KNOX

*Private eye Cam Gordon, an EWMM favourite, returns to seek a crooked needle in a Glasgow haystack*

"I SAW a television programme recently." Mr. Deathstone gave a pale smile. "A cartoon of sorts, with a cat which kept declaring it—er—intensely disliked mice.

"You know, Cameron, sometimes I feel that way about our V.I.P. visitors."

Cam Gordon, sole partner and half the staff of Gordon Investigations, wondered if the elderly Glasgow solicitor ever actually used any of the law books behind him. At the same time, Cam waited for what was to come next. A summons into Mr. Deathstone's office was generally the prelude to a particularly awkward job of work.

"V.I.P. visitors—in this case, one in particular. French." Mr. Deathstone sighed.

"He arrived in Scotland ten days ago, to join a private house-party in Ayrshire—that seems to be the way diplomats get their work done nowadays. Two nights later the house was burgled, the safe blown, and everything inside it taken. Including a number of papers which would have best been left in France."

"A political-type burglar?"

Deathstone shook his head "A perfectly ordinary but rather skilled thief. The safe contained the usual cash, jewellery—and a valuable stamp collection, worth eight thousand pounds on its own."

Cam gave a sudden whistle. "I'm with you—Lord Robinton's place. And the Frenchman was one of their Foreign Office big-shots. I read that a delegate was coming over."

"Correct. The meeting was to persuade a group of British firms

that it would be safe to invest in one of the French overseas territories. The documents gave a long-term picture of French intentions—and if they reached the wrong people, they could cause considerable blood and misery. The thief may have thrown them away—or maybe he didn't."

Cam knew the next portion without it being said. The private telephone line which led from an obscure department in Whitehall to the Glasgow lawyer's office had been busy again. Mr. Prince, the man at the London end, wanted action.

"So we want to find the burglar," he mused.

"Not the burglar, the papers," corrected Deathstone. "The burglar was a man called Batchy Ford. The police established that, and were looking for him. Unfortunately, he's dead. A river dredger—ah—recovered his body. It was working on the Clyde near Queen's Dock, and the late Mr. Ford came up with some other debris. He'd been stabbed. The police have picked up some vague story about Ford having quarrelled with a fence. They don't know the fence's identity, simply that he's called 'The Money Man.' We want the papers, Cameron—nothing else."

Cam rose to his feet. "Do the police know about them?"

Deathstone looked down at his desk. "Detective Superintendent Taggart is in charge of the case. He knows. But he has his own priority, catching a murderer. We have another, finding the papers—which may be completely unrelated. Any method, my boy. But find them."

The interview over, Cam stopped in the outer office just long enough to say hello to Beth Taylor, the elderly lawyer's red-headed secretary.

Her eyes twinkled. "Into battle again?"

"Uh-huh." He rubbed his chin reflectively. "Trying to find someone called the Money Man."

Beth raised one well-shaped eyebrow. "From what I heard, that might not be easy."

Half an hour later, Andy MacKinnon put it more emphatically.

"Downright ruddy well impossible, laddie," declared the bulky ex-cop, who had packed in the force because his feet had begun hurting after years of pounding the beat.

The two men were in Cam's small office, across the hallway from Mr. Deathstone's law firm.

Cam shrugged. "We'll try. I phoned Superintendent Taggart—who's friendly, but cautious. Batchy Ford got out of jail a week before the robbery. The buzz is he was contacted, and told the



robbery was lined up, waiting him."

MacKinnon gave a critical, professional judgment. "I knew him—Batchy was a good peterman. A bit heavy with the soup, maybe—used enough explosive to wreck a battleship. Still, he got results."

"Supposing the Money Man decided on Batchy for the job," mused Cam. "Perhaps Batchy tried to work a double-cross—did the job, then decided to keep the loot."

"But that's playin' dirty," protested MacKinnon.

"It's a cruel world, Mike. Have a talk with some of your old pals. If the Money Man didn't collect the stuff Batchy got from that safe, then someone else may have it hidden. Spread it around that there's solid cash waiting for the Frenchman's papers—and no questions."

MacKinnon lit a cigarette, borrowed five pounds for expenses, and wandered out. Cam watched him go, then turned back to the scrawled notes he had gathered from Deathstone.

The Money Man had been whispered about for a year or so now. He was a fence who made quite sure what was coming his way by the simple method of lining up the job then contacting the crook best suited to it. His nickname came from his willingness to advance cash to meet any outlay—to be deducted, plus interest, once the operation was completed.

Rare stamps? Lord Robinton's collection had been famous—and foreign stamps could be more negotiable than currency. Sold abroad, a few items at a time, they would be virtually impossible to trace.

Cam rose, stopped to check an address among the scribbled notes, then pulled on his coat and went out into the chill morning. It was time to pay a call on Batchy Ford's widow.



The address was out Bridgeton way—two floors up in a crumbling grey-stone tenement. But inside the little room and kitchen, everything was sparkling clean. The girl, small, dark-haired, tired-eyed, was bitter.

"You're not the police—or a reporter?" she asked again.

"I told you, I'm only concerned with what was taken in the robbery," said Cam patiently. "Anything you tell me goes no further—but it might help turn up who killed your husband."

She glanced at the pram in one corner of the room.

"It isn't so simple, mister. If it got out that I'd talked—" she broke off for a moment. "There are other people who can take care of this, our own way."

"Mrs. Ford—did the Money Man have Batchy killed? Because he wouldn't hand over?"

She went to the door. "You'd better go, mister. I'll tell you this. I don't know who's got the stuff from the country house, if that's what you're after. I wish I'd never heard of it—or of Pete Launton either. Good-bye, mister."

"Launton. I'll remember," said Cam softly.

He met Andy MacKinnon a little later, in a busy public-house in Partick.

"Launton?" MacKinnon echoed the name. "Could be. He's a hard man—hired muscle. But he couldn't be the boss. More like the errand boy."

"The contact," said Cam. "You've spread the word?"

"For what good it does."

"Can you speak French, Andy?"

MacKinnon spluttered. "Don't be ruddy daft."

Cam nodded. "But if you got hold of some papers which looked important, you'd want to know what they were all about. Put the Money Man in the same position. He couldn't go to a translation bureau—so the next best thing would be to get hold of someone who could tell him what the stuff was all about."

"Would Pete Launton know anyone who'd fit the bill?"

Andy concentrated. "Well, there's Marie Roland. Her old man was French. But I heard she's doing sixty days for shoplifting. Couldn't raise the fine."

Cam finished his drink. "Let's check."

A phone call to Greenock Prison gave surprise number one. Marie Roland was no longer a guest. The balance of her fine had been paid four days before—by a Mr. Peter Launton.

Marie Roland's home was in Anderston, a sub-let room up another of the inevitable tenement stairways. About 40, bleached blonde, and hard-eyed, her French might be excellent but she used plain, blistering back-street English. "Pete paid the — fine? So? We're old pals. Now get lost, Mac. And don't — well come back" The door slammed shut.

Andy was waiting in the dark green Mercedes a couple of streets away. Cam went back, told him to stay around the area and keep his eyes open, then started up the car and returned into the city.

The telephone was ringing as he entered his office. He lifted the

receiver.

"Gordon?" The voice on the other end was gruff and impatient. "You took long enough."

"I've been out," said Cam briefly.

"Okay. Gordon, I want to see you—alone. No cops, no fuss. Batchy Ford was my good-brother."

"Your what?" The description caught Cam off balance for a moment.

"My good-brother, my brother-in-law," explained the other man patiently. "Lonny Mount's the name. You know the bookshop across the road from your office? I'll be there in ten minutes, in the travel-book section."



The bookshop was large and airy, and its front counters were busy with staff and customers. But further back, as the volumes became duller, the traffic eased off. Cam took his time about moving through to the travel section. Two men were there already. One, elderly, with a white moustache, pulled a thick blue-bound book from one shelf and set off in search of a salesman.

The other, small, dressed in a light grey suit just too tightly cut to be neat, his dark hair heavily oiled and combed hard back, gave Cam a nod.

"I'm Lonny. Thought you'd come."

"What's the deal?" Cam made a show of flicking through one of the books on display.

"Batchy got done because he tried to double-cross the Money Man." Lonny bit reflectively on a black-edged finger-nail. "If they'd smashed him up, well, he asked for it. But it didn't call for a killing, mister."

"Sure of your facts?"

The man grinned. "The mug told my kid sister. She's scared—but she told me you'd been round."

"And now?" Cam let the questions hang.

The other man's harsh voice dropped. "Pete Launton was the contact. But another character, Jakey Marsh, was on the actual killing." He chuckled. "No need to look surprised, Mac. There's a boy owes me a favour or two. He was in the Medical Corps until he got tired of soldiering. Now, he's a handy bloke to know when you need sewing up and don't want to answer awkward questions at some hospital. Jakey had a nice clean cut on his face

which needed fixing. He said just enough. Batchy died difficult."

"You could tell the cops?"

Lonny Mount scowled. "Never mind the comedy, mister. I've got a position to maintain. I run a bunch of boys on the north side. If a relative of mine gets his, even a liability like Batchy, I've got to square things, or some people will think I'm getting soft. I don't work with cops. But maybe we could help each other?"

"In plain English, you're suggesting I hire you?"

The other man sighed. "Naw. I've got to do them, see? So once I've finished, they're ready in a nice wee bundle. Just beaten up enough for nobody to say I've gone soft. And you get a phone call. That worth something. Five hundred?"

Cam shook his head. "No private armies. Information I can use, the rest, no."

The thug was openly disappointed. But he shrugged. "Okay, Gordon. But phone the Sapphire Billiard Hall if you change your mind. I'll be around." He slouched off.

Cam let him go. There were plenty like Lonny Mount in any city's underworld. Vain, self-assured, striving for a reputation. Eager for trouble if they could be sure of having plenty of help behind them to back their play.

Superintendent Taggart might be interested—Cam walked back across the street, into the office building, and took out his keys as he reached the Gordon Investigations door.

Then his eye caught the white edge of an envelope beneath the door-edge. He pulled out the envelope, unlocked the door, and waited until he was inside before he opened the message.

It was a one pound note. Scrawled across it in heavy red crayon were just two words.

'Lay off.'

The Money Man didn't need a signature.



"Aye, this is the Money Man's visiting card all right. I've seen one before—in Batchy's Ford's pockets once he'd been fished from the river." Detective Superintendent Taggart strode up and down his small, smoke-filled office at the Central Division.

Outside the weather was cold, almost hinting to snow. But Taggart's office had a steam radiator, and a bright glowing coal fire.

"So you've stirred him up a bit," He nodded approvingly.

"Well, it's to the good, provided you're careful."

Cam Gordon flicked his cigarette end into the heart of the fire. "It could only have been one way," he murmured. "The French girl, Marie Roland—she must have passed the word that I'd been round, asking questions about Pete Launton. That in turn means the Money Man has those papers."

Taggart rubbed his chin reflectively. "Well, Launton's hidden himself away. There's not a trace of him. That other fellow, Jakey Marsh—the one your gangster pal Mount mentioned—has done the same. Aye, it looks like they've got your precious papers. But remember, laddie, they may be top priority with you, but I'm after a killer. And so far we've got talk and rumours, not much else. Batchy wasn't meant to be found again. There was an old iron fire-grate tied to him by wire to weigh him down. The stab wound—ach, a typical flick-knife job."

Cam rose to go. "Well, I'll keep in touch."

"Aye, and out o' trouble," warned the detective grimly. "There's plenty of room left in the rivers."

It was four p.m. by the time Cam returned to his own office. The door was ajar, and the murmur of women's voices came from the room within.

Beth Taylor gave a smile of relief as he entered. "I've been phoning around trying to find you."

Sitting in the solitary armchair by his desk, Batchy Ford's widow, her daughter—a child of about two—half asleep on her knee, gazed at him anxiously.

"What's going on?" Cam turned to Beth.

She frowned. "Mrs. Ford arrived about half an hour ago. When she found your place closed, she looked in to Mr. Deathstone's office, across the landing. So I brought her through. We've been talking."

The other woman nodded. "I—I need help, mister. We both do—that's why I came."

"The Money Man?"

Beth nodded. "It seems so. Mrs. Ford had a visitor—Pete Launton."

"He did this." The woman's voice trembled, and she turned her face. There was a purple bruise low on her left cheek. "Said it was a reminder—that if I talked, then it wouldn't be me next time, it would be Betty." She held the child closer.

"But you came here." Cam was gentle. But inwardly a band of anger gripped him.

"For help." Batches Ford's widow bit her lip. "I want to get away, Mr. Gordon. Whether I talk or not, they'll be back—I know."

"Uh-huh." Cam frowned. "But what about your brother, Lonny. Does he know?"

The woman flushed. "I told him about you—but not this. If there's going to be a fight, I'm not lettin' any child get caught up in the middle."

"Anywhere in mind you could go?"

Beth took over. "I've thought of that, Cam. An aunt of mine in Aberdeen runs a boarding house. They could go there until this blows over."

"But—" the woman hesitated. "I haven't much money."

"Mr. Gordon will take care of that," said Beth calmly. "Tell him what you told me. Tell him what your husband said about the Money Man."

"It wasn't much, but it's all I know. Batches did the country house job for him—and he said if he hadn't got out of jail when he did someone else would have blown the safe. They had to have that stamp collection by next Monday at the latest."

"Mrs. Ford—" Cam posed the vital question. "Who is the Money Man?"

But the woman shook her head. "I don't know. Batches spoke to him—but he didn't see his face. Batches was taken to see him by Pete Launton. He was waiting at Pete's place. The room was dark, and the Money Man had a silk stocking mask over his face."

"Did Batches tell you anything else? Think carefully."

"Well—he said he thought he'd be about forty. And—yes—he had a limp. That's right. He walked with a stick."

Beth took the woman and the little girl from the room, promising to look after arrangements for getting them north to their temporary hideout.

Once they had gone, Cam flicked through the telephone directory till he found the number he wanted then lifted the phone and dialled.

The line purred its staccato beat for a few seconds, then a man's voice answered.

"Friedrich here—who is this?"

"Cameron Gordon, Mr. Friedrich. Remember me?" Cam grinned. Johann Friedrich ran a small antique shop in town. He was also in the philatelic trade as a sideline—and Cam had once sorted out a particular spot of bother involving an angry customer

and an allegedly faked antique chair.

"Of course." Friedrich's voice was guttural but warm with pleasure. "Perhaps you want to buy some antique furniture, eh? Maybe you marry that Miss Taylor? To you, there is a special price."

"Not today," Cam protested. "But I do need information. Mr. Friedrich, anything special in the stamp collecting world happening just after next Monday?"

"Uh—*ja*. Is easy. There is the Philatelic Congress in Zurich. It opens Tuesday. Philatelists from all over will go, to talk about stamps, to exchange some, perhaps—"

"Or to buy?"

"Maybe. Why?"

But Cam answered with another question. "Anybody likely to be going from Scotland?"

Friedrich gave a grunt. "I would, myself, but for this shop. There are only four that I know. The invitations came to the philatelic clubs—but it is an awkward time of year."

"Do you know their names?"

"Wait—there is old Colonel Sweetham—he is a club president. And Mrs. Marshall, the secretary. Two more. Now, let me think—*ja*, a man Carpenter and a new member, Janson."

Cam scribbled the names on his desk-pad. "Any of them limp—or use a stick?"

Friedrich sighed. "Questions, questions. Janson is the one you mean. He has a bad leg."

Friedrich didn't know Janson's address. But a phone call to Mrs. Marshall, the club secretary, got that information.



Cam drove out to the home of the stamp club's newest member—a small bungalow in a quiet side street near Clarkston. He parked the car, went up the short garden pathway, and rang the doorbell. The man who answered was tall, thin, and leaned lightly on a black malacca cane.

"Mr. Janson?"

The man nodded.

"The one who's going out to Zurich, to the Philatelic Congress?"

Janson scowled. "Maybe—why? If you're a newspaperman, I don't want publicity. I'm just an amateur, going out as a spectator." He began to close the door.

"It's about Lord Robinton's stamp collection—the one that was stolen," said Cam hastily.

The other man froze. "What about it?"

Cam beamed again. "My name's Gordon—I'm doing some investigation work. Mr. Janson, do you think the thieves might try to get the stamps to Zurich—to sell them there?"

"How should I know? I'm not a detective. Why ask me?"

Cam gave the same innocent smile. "A friend told me you were going to the congress. I thought that if you were an expert, perhaps you'd heard whispers—it was a shot in the dark."

"Well, your shot missed. I'm no expert—and all I know I've read in the papers." The door closed.

Back in the car, Cam started up the engine and felt a grim satisfaction. If Janson was the Money Man, then right at that moment the word was being passed.

He'd set himself up as a bait—a possible dangerous bait, best disposed of in double-quick time. But a bait that might bring the Money Man into the open.

The car murmured its way across the city towards Anderston. It was time he tried Marie Roland again—and checked with Andy MacKinnon on whether the woman had had any unusual visitors. Getting her to talk wouldn't be easy, but there were only two days to go until Janson left for Zurich. And if he took the policy documents with him as well as the papers—

He turned off Argyle Street and into the small side-road. Then he slowed, and stopped. A small crowd was gathered in the roadway. In the middle, an ambulance stood waiting. A uniformed policeman was standing to one side, taking details from an elderly man.

Cam got out, and began walking towards the group.

"She's dead," growled a weary voice. Andy MacKinnon slid from a doorway, and fell into step. "I spend four hours hanging around, practically frozen—and then this happens. She walks out of the tenement, starts to cross the road, and a car comes from round the corner, hits her like an express train, and keeps on going. Looks like someone else thought we'd find her interesting and wanted her crossed off the list."

Cam gave an involuntary shiver. He had an idea who might be next on that list.

"What now?" asked MacKinnon.

"I'll phone Taggart, and break the glad news," said Cam. "I've some other things to tell him. You keep an eye around



here." He gave a sympathetic grin. "Then I'll buy you a drink."

"A double—a large double," MacKinnon grumbled.

There was a telephone call-box further down the road. Cam headed towards it, then stopped, his hand on the door-handle, as he heard feet hurrying behind him.

"Hey, Gordon!"

He turned, then relaxed as Lonny Mount came panting up.

"Got some news for you, Gordon. We've located one of the Money Man's mob—Pete Launton, no less." He half-turned and waved one hand. A dust-coloured little Morris, sidelights glowing in the fast-thickening darkness, crawled towards them and stopped. "C'me on in, and I'll tell you about it."

Cam was cautious. "How'd you find me here?"

Lonny Mount gave a broken-toothed grin. "We didn't come looking for Marie Roland, if that's what you mean. I phoned your office. No reply. Marie was a pal of Launton's—I'd a feeling you might be around. We arrived with the ambulance. Come on, Gordon, time's wasting."

Cam still hesitated. "I've a phone call—"

"It can wait—" the little thug became agitated. "Do you want Pete Launton, or don't you?"

"Okay." Cam squeezed into the rear seat of the Morris. Lonny Mount followed him, and slammed the door. The Morris's driver moved the stubby gear lever, revved the engine, and the car moved off, heading east.

"You're playing it our way," warned Mount. "No cops—not till we've had our own private session. Then you do what you like, and later we'll see how grateful you feel. Okay?"

Slowly, reluctantly, Cam nodded. "I'll watch—nothing more. How did you locate him?"

In front, the white-faced thug behind the steering wheel snickered. Beside him, Lonny Mount gave a sneering grin.

"Luck, mostly," said Lonny. "One of my boys was playin' snooker last night, over at the Palmas hall. He lost, see—you've got to know the bumps on the baize in that dump. But he didn't have enough dough on him to cover his side-bet. So he went back this afternoon."

Cam nodded. A gambling debt was, among an outfit like Lonny's, the only kind regarded as binding. Non-payment had an automatic, painful sequel.

So the loser had trekked across-city with the necessary cash and had gone unannounced into the Palmas hall.

"He was thrown straight out again once he'd handed over the dough," grinned Lonny. "Visitors weren't welcome. And he saw why. Pete Launton was there, using the phone in the cue-man's office. There was another bloke with him—my tip-off didn't know him."

The Morris was through the city centre now, weaving through back-streets in the dusk, dodging the main traffic routes.

"Take it easy . . . we're nearly there, and I don't want to scare them off," Lonny warned his driver. Then the car slowed, and drew in at the kerb. They got out, and began to walk away.

"Hey . . . you left the key in the ignition," warned Cam.

Lonny shrugged. "It was there when we found it."

For the first time, Cam noticed they were both wearing gloves. He'd been in a hot car, which now had his fingerprints plastered over it. Another minor complication which he'd have to explain to Superintendent Taggart when the time came. Life was becoming distinctly awkward.

The street lights shone on a tangled, dreary mixture of slum housing, small shops with faded signboards, and tumbledown factory buildings.

The rendezvous was another 30 yards along. Lonny Mount gave a curt nod to the waiting lookout, a heavy-shouldered thug with a leather jacket.

"He's still there," reported the watcher. "The other bloke shoved off half an hour ago."

Lonny took a last pull at his cigarette, then tossed the stub away. "How many of the boys are around?"

The lookout scratched reflectively. "Two inside, setting up like they're having a game. Another two waiting across the street."

Five, counting the lookout. Seven, counting Lonny Mount and White-face.

"Let's get him." Lonny Mount's eyes glittered at the thought. He gestured to White-face. "Keep an eye on Gordon—make sure he stays with us."

White-face leered, his hand in one pocket, and Cam heard the muffled 'clack' of a knife-spring. It seemed sensible to play along.

Together they turned the corner and headed to where a red neon sign proclaimed the 'Palma Billiard Palace.' Cam sensed rather than saw the reinforcements move to join them. Behind, the street had gone suddenly quiet—the locals knew the signs.

Lonny Mount kicked the door open, and they poured through then stopped, poised at the mouth of the hall.

"Well, mister?" The hallman was fat, florid, and uneasily belligerent.

"Take him," whispered Lonny.

A thin youth stepped from the billiard table behind the hallman and smashed the butt-end of his cue hard on the other's skull. The hallman slumped forwards.

The second player swung his cue. "He's at the back, Lonny."

The play-lights shone down on only one other table in the hall, number four, where two frightened snooker players had abandoned their game with one red still on the table.

"Outside."

They nodded, dry-lipped, and bolted past to the street and safety.

Spread out, moving down the aisles between the tables, Lonny Mount's thugs headed for a small door at the back of the hall. Cam hung back a few paces, conscious of White-face's constant watch.

"Come out, Launton," bellowed Lonny.

The door swung open. Emerging from the room beyond, Pete Launton saw he was trapped. One hand reached into a pocket, and the table-lights glinted on fine-honed steel.

"What's it all about?" he growled.

"Batchy Ford."

Launton's eyes narrowed. "He got what was coming to him."

"Maybe." Lonny was indifferent. "We've come to square the book."

As the line of men shuffled forward, Cam decided the time had come to intervene. His right hand moved gently towards a nearby billiard cue—and simultaneously he heard a grunt by his side, saw White-face fold downwards, and felt the prod of a gun in his back. "Don't bother," murmured a voice in his ear.

He froze, and a sudden torrent of men spilled past him into the hall.

"A ringside view," said the voice in his ear. "No charge."

Lonny Mount had spun round at the sound of the rush, his face twisted with sudden, naked fear. He gave a cry of warning, but his men were outnumbered from the start. It was a flurry of close, vicious combat. One of Mount's bunch tried to run, and got less than a yard before he was clubbed senseless. Elsewhere, a bottle smashed and there was a scream of pain as a bicycle chain whipped. One of the invaders collapsed across the green baize of a table as a thrown snooker ball took him high on the temple.

Then Lonny was alone—and Pete Launton moved in. The blade in his hand danced. Lonny Mount felt the fierce stinging slash rake from his chin upwards—and fainted.

“Leave him,” shouted Cam’s guard. “Time to move.”

“Thanks, Jake.” Pete Launton turned away. “Hey, that’s Gordon you’ve got, isn’t it? Well, that saves us a job of work.”

Jake nodded. “Nice and handy. You were lucky, Pete. I was coming back as we fixed, and saw Mount’s bunch hangin’ around. These other boys happened to be handy a couple of pubs away. Now let’s get out of here before the cops arrive. You, too, boys—and thanks. You’ll be hearing from the Money Man.”

The other men in the hall began streaming for the exit, one or two holding handkerchiefs to their wounds. Only Lonny Mount’s broken remnant remained.

“This way, Gordon—” Cam was prodded doorwards.

Outside, a dark blue saloon was parked across the street. Cam was waved aboard, Jake stayed beside him, and Pete Launton drove.

“The Money Man wants to see you, Gordon,” said Launton dispassionately. “You’ve become a nuisance.”

Cam sat silent, uncomfortably aware of the fact that his plan to set himself up as bait had succeeded—only he was bait without a trap to back him.

If he’d managed to phone Superintendent Taggart before Lonny Mount had rushed him out to the billiard hall it would have been different—but that was the trouble with ‘ifs’. They nearly always emerged too late in the day.

The journey didn’t take long. It terminated in a dark side-street, where one short blast of the car’s horn resulted in a wide door swinging open. The car drove in, and the door closed behind them.

“Out.”

Cam obeyed. He found himself in a small, dull-lit garage, obviously part of a warehouse building. The shabby figure who had operated the street door gave his escort a nod, then returned to his small, glass-window cubicle. There was only one other car in the garage area, a small, expensive sports saloon.

His escort led him to the rear of the garage, prodded him up a short flight of wooden steps, and then Pete halted, and knocked on the door at the end.

“C’me in.” The voice was muffled.

Pete opened the door, and pushed Cam forward.

Seated behind a desk in the brightly-lit room, Janson's tall thin figure cast a long shadow on the wall at his rear. There was grim satisfaction on his face as he inspected his visitor.

Jake closed the door as Pete Launton explained. "We didn't have to go looking boss—he came to us. Lonny Mount's mob brought him along. We settled that side of the problem."

"And now," said Janson softly. "We have to take care of Mr. Gordon." One hand reached for the walking-cane propped beside the desk, then he decided against rising. "All right, Gordon, who are you working for? Or have the police begun hiring outside help?"

Cam shrugged. "I've got my own agency. There could be a reward for recovering that stamp collection."

Janson shook his head. "Not good enough. Maybe it's this you've been seeking, eh?" He opened one drawer of the desk, and tossed a package on the desk. Heavy, red-sealed papers, the precious policy documents. "Never mind, it doesn't matter."

"It will when the police arrive," said Cam desperately.

Janson laughed. "Police? No, I don't think so. They would have made their move by now. Whatever you know, Gordon, you haven't had time to pass it on."

"What happens to the papers?" asked Cam. "You've got a reputation as the Money Man, Janson. Does that mean they go for sale abroad?"

"You know, I can't think of a better idea," said Janson coolly. "You find more than stamp collectors in Zurich, Gordon—at least, so I'm told. It shouldn't be difficult."

"Now what? The same as happened to Batchy Ford and the French girl?" Cam waited.

Slowly, Janson nodded. "The same. Batchy tried to double-cross me, and Marie Roland became what you'd term a security risk. But you'll have an hour or so, until the arrangements are made. There's no rush." This time, his nod was directed to the two men waiting behind Cam. Pete Launton took a step forward—at the same time as there was a crash, a shout, and the sound of heavy feet from below.

"What the—" Jake spun round to open the door. The gun's menace removed for a second, Cam took his chance. A backward kick took Pete Launton hard on the shins. As the thug howled, Cam scooped up the heavy malacca cane from beside the desk.

Jake spun round, the automatic raised—and Cam jabbed the cane sword-fashion, its tip taking the man in the throat. The gun

jerked, and exploded ceilingwards.

Pete Launton and the Money Man lunged forward. Then Janson yelled despairingly as Superintendent Taggart led a posse of police into the room.

"All nice and tidy," said Taggart a few minutes later, as the handcuffed trio were led away to the patrol van waiting below. "We came in over the roof, and got the lookout on the way."

Cam helped himself to a cigarette from the box on the Money Man's desk, and accepted a light. He took a gulp of smoke, let it out slowly, then demanded: "All right, how'd you find me?"

Taggart chuckled. "Och, the old-fashioned polis still get things done, laddie. I saw Andy MacKinnon when I got to Marie Roland's place. He wondered why you hadn't contacted me. Then we heard of Lonny Mount's mob being beaten up at the billiard saloon and a car driving off—I put two and two together."

"But how did you get here?" repeated Cam.

Taggart was enjoying himself. "Easy enough. You phoned the stamp club secretary to get Janson's home address. She called us—she thought you might be the stamp thief, trying to locate someone who'd take the collection out of the country. Janson wasn't at home when my lads got there—but this warehouse is registered in his name. There's a lot of interesting stuff lying around it from what I've seen—and it shouldn't be too hard getting evidence on the two murder charges."

Cam picked up the precious bundle of documents. "The Money Man made another mistake, Super."

"Eh?"

"He let too many crooks spoil the broth."

Taggart winced.

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# A GIFT FOR THE BRIDE

THOMASINA WEBER

*It was a simple plan and they  
would have lived happily  
for ever after, but  
for one thing*

VIVIAN'S EYES ached from the constant glare of the oncoming headlights shimmering on the rain-slick highway. The station wagon was stuffy with all the windows closed and the funeral smell of the bridal corsage on the shoulder of her suit sickened her. She could feel the beginnings of a headache from the effort of peering through the streaming windscreen. Vivian had never been one to sit back and relax while someone else was driving.

"I thought we'd reach the border tonight," said Carl, "but this rain is slowing us up."

*It can't slow us up enough for me,* thought Vivian as she rubbed her temples. It was hard to believe she had known Carl Stafford all her life. She had never understood him in school and she understood him even less now. There was something about him that repelled her—an air of superiority, of coldness, of invincibility. She shivered and tried to pull her suit closer about her. She felt lonely and afraid.

It had been raining since Thursday, the night Bernie gave them the party. The tears came to her eyes as she thought about Bernie. It was all right for Bernie to tell her to marry Carl. He could go on living the way he always had. But how about Vivian? She was the one who would have to live with Carl until she could bring on the attack. And she was the one who would have to watch Carl die.

It sounded so easy when Bernie said it. "It won't be for long, baby, not if you work it right. And then it'll be you and me and

Carl's money and well all live happily ever after.'

He had repeated it Thursday night at the party. Bernie lived alone in a sprawling old house in the middle of five acres of land. 'Makes me feel like a rancher,' he often said. 'It's good for the ego.'

It had been a noisy party with plenty to eat and drink and Vivian's head was throbbing. She stepped out on the porch for some fresh air and Bernie had joined her a moment later. He was kissing her when Carl found them.

"Enjoying yourself, Bernie?"

Vivian pulled herself away. "Why Carl, I was looking for you."

"Obviously."

"I mean—"

"Be my guest, Bernie," said Carl, ignoring Vivian. "After Saturday you'll never kiss her again."

Bernie laughed. "True enough, you lucky dog!"

Leave it to Bernie not to get flustered. His assured, confident manner made him popular all through school, and now that he was a salesman, he consistently scored the highest percentage of sales in the company.

She had let Carl lead her back into the smoke-filled room. She was conscious of Bernie following them and she could still feel the pressure of Bernie's arm around her. She closed her eyes, but that couldn't erase the image of Carl. He was as tall as Bernie but almost hollow. His light brown hair, dull and lifeless, lay in a shallow wave above a spotty face with thin lips. His eyes were so colourless as to be almost invisible among his other features. All through high school and college Vivian had thought him the most unnoticeable boy in class, discernible only when he stood against the blackboard.

"Well, if it isn't Junior Ghoul," said Bernie as Vivian's brother approached them.

"Hi Sis," said Skip, as if he hadn't heard. "How's it going?"

Vivian wished Skip didn't dislike Bernie so. She couldn't understand it. But then, Skip was at that sensitive age when he thought everyone was making fun of him.

"Any new murders lately?" asked Bernie.

"Not since the last three," said Skip. "They're still looking for the head of the latest chopped up victim."

"Please, Skip, don't talk about that," said Vivian. "It's bad enough the papers are full of it."

"He's a lunatic, that's all," said Skip, warming to his favourite



subject. "But he's pretty smart. They found the first head in a litter box and the second—"

"Skip!"

"Gee Sis, I don't know why you're so squeamish." Skip was short and fat and wore dark-rimmed glasses which made him look like an overweight owl. When he wasn't tilting his head back to peer through them, he was ducking his chin to gaze over their rims. He was determined to be a private detective when he got out of high school.

Skip was about to resume his report when Dave Watson came up. Dave was Carl's cousin and Vivian had never liked him.

"And how's the Lord of the Produce Department?" asked Bernie. "Everything running smoothly at the Super-Supermarket Bernie. "Everything running smoothly at the Super-Supermarket?"

Dave gave Bernie a twisted smile. Bernie could never seem to remember that Dave had no sense of humour. "For a guy who's running all over the country selling fountain-pens, you sure keep up on everybody's business here at home."

"I'm interested in people," replied Bernie pleasantly.

"And their business," said Dave.

"Bernie, I have a bad headache. Would you mind terribly if Carl took me home now?"

"Of course not, honey. I don't think you'll even be missed. The party's reached the stage where most of them don't even know where they are, much less what the occasion is."

He walked with them to the door. "Thanks, Bernie," said Carl in a flat voice. "Thanks for everything." Bernie smiled and inclined his head.

With Carl's hand on her elbow to guide her, Vivian started down the gravelled driveway to Carl's station wagon, turning to look back at the house before getting inside. Bernie was still standing in the lighted doorway, a solid, vital silhouette. Although she couldn't see his face, she could feel his smile. Slowly he raised his glass to her in a last salute.

"There's a motel up ahead," said Carl, slowing the station wagon. "Shall we stop now?"

"If you like, Carl." She watched him go in and register, then come out a moment later with the key. He backed the wagon up to their door and turned to her with an apologetic smile.

"I'm sorry I can't carry you across the threshold, Vivian."

She reached for his hand. She had to overcome her antipathy

toward him if her plan was to succeed. She could not afford to alienate him. "But darling," she said, "I only weigh a hundred and five." She moved closer to him on the seat.

"All right," he laughed, giving her hand a squeeze. "I'll risk it. Just for you, my sweet."

But the exertion seemed to have no effect on him as he set her down on the thick rug inside the room. He had never done any physical work since that day in high school when he collapsed during a heated debate on miscarriages of justice. No one had suspected he had a bad heart, least of all Carl and his parents, but from that day on Carl lived in a gentle world. His class-mates, who had regarded him with awe because of his wealth, now held him even more in awe because of his affliction. No one wanted to be the cause of another, possibly fatal, heart attack.

The only one who didn't bow down to Carl was Bernie, Vivian thought with a pang. When Bernie's dog had pups and Carl wanted one, Bernie refused. The others, surprised and disappointed when no heart attack resulted, watched the two boys for the rest of the week. They didn't speak, just kept each other at bay with wary eyes. But Bernie didn't really gain anything, for a week later the pup was poisoned. Carl, with an admirable sense of sportsmanship, was the first to offer Bernie his handshake and his condolences. It was about that time that Carl became a smiler.

"Don't you think you'd better bring in the luggage, Carl? You never know what kind of people there are in strange motels."

She looked at herself in the mirror as Carl went out. How was she ever going to go through with it? Bernie shouldn't have made her do it. She didn't want a lot of money. She would be happy just being married to Bernie.

If only she could have seen him once again before the wedding—but maybe it was just as well. The party had been Thursday night. Friday had been a flurry of packing and loading her luggage in Carl's car so they wouldn't have to do it this morning. It wasn't until they were at the Clerk's office this afternoon ready to be married that Carl told her of Bernie's hurried phone call, saying he had to get the next plane out to attend a sales conference in place of his boss who had suddenly come down with a virus. So a witness had been called in from a neighbouring office to take Bernie's place. Vivian felt deserted and lost, but maybe she wouldn't have been able to go through with the ceremony if Bernie had been there.

"That's the last of it," said Carl, kicking the door closed behind him. "Feel's like a head instead of a hat in this thing."

"What thing?" asked Vivian absently as she ran a comb through her hair.

"Your hatbox. It weighs a ton."

"But I don't have a hatbox, Carl."

"Well, there it is, and it matches the rest of your luggage."

Vivian looked at it. "Why, I've never seen it before. I wonder where it came from?"

"It was in the back with the rest."

"Oh well," she said, "someone's probably playing a joke on us. Don't they always play jokes at weddings?"

"I wouldn't know," he said, smiling. "I've never been married before."

Her eyes still on the hatbox, she asked, "Why did you say that?"

"Say what?"

"About the—the head."

"The head? Oh, that!" He laughed as he took off his jacket and reached for a hanger. "I was only joking."

"But, why a head?"

"Association of ideas, I guess. After all, it's a hatbox and a hat is worn on the head and if the hatbox is heavy—well, you know."

She was staring at the hatbox. "It isn't very funny when you remember the police are still searching for a head."

He came across the room and took her in his arms. "Darling, you're getting all upset over nothing. It's probably a last-minute gift someone put in the back of the station-wagon. It was parked in my driveway ever since we packed the luggage in it last night. I never lock it and anyone could have—"

"You know it's not a last-minute gift," she said, pushing him away. "It matches my luggage, doesn't it?"

"Then it was most likely someone's idea of presenting his gift in an original manner. Why, I'll bet there's a card inside explaining the whole thing!" He reached for the box. "All we have to do is open it and find out."

"Open it? Are you out of your mind?"

"Why Vivian, you're not really afraid of this thing, are you?"

"What do you think?" She began to pace the floor, massaging her forehead with cold fingers.

Carl filled a tumbler with ice water from the jug on the bureau. "Here, drink this," he said gently. "There's some aspirin in the glove compartment. I'll get it."

"I don't want any aspirin!"

"But Vivian, you're shaking like a leaf! Now sit down in this chair and relax. I'm going to open that hatbox and prove to you that there's nothing more terrible inside than a toaster or a steam iron."

She pressed her fingers to her lips as she watched him fumble with the clasp. "Seems to be locked," he said. He ran his hands over and under the box. "Can't find a key."

"Here's a hairpin," said Vivian, patting her hair back in place. When the lock clicked, Carl slid the box across the rug toward her chair. She pulled her feet back as far as possible. "Would you like to open it, dear?" She shook her head. A rising sickness crept over her as she watched him raise the lid.

Vivian stared down into the box. "Rocks!"

"Rocks," echoed Carl, picking one up and turning it over in his hand. "Now, why would anyone give us rocks in a hatbox?"

"Is there a note or anything?"

"Nothing. just rocks." He closed the hatbox and carried it over to the wall. "Somebody's idea of a joke," he said shortly.

"Some joke!" Vivian felt weak with relief. Her fears now seemed utterly ridiculous.

"It sounds like Bernie," said Carl. "This is typical of his type of humour. These murders are the big topic right now and they're bound to give imaginative people ideas."

"But Bernie wouldn't do a thing like that!"

"Are we talking about the same Bernie?"

"Now you're the one who's being funny."

"Not at all. You know he's an incorrigible practical joker. That's one reason everybody hates him."

"Everybody doesn't hate him!" Vivian replied. Carl smiled and said nothing. Her nails dug into her palms as she struggled to hold her temper in check. "They're just a bunch of sore-heads, like your cousin Dave," she said. "He's probably the one who gave us the rocks."

"Now, why would Dave do a thing like that?"

"Because he's a bitter, envious man, that's why."

"Envious of what?"

"Of you, of course! His branch of the family has had to work all their lives. Your branch was born rich. Why wouldn't he be jealous?"

Carl shrugged. "Maybe he does feel that way, but I don't think he'd do a thing like this. Scaring you, I mean. After all, he has

nothing against you. No, I still vote for Bernie."

Vivian walked toward the bureau to pick up her purse and give her trembling hands something to do. She couldn't talk about Bernie and remain casual.

"But on the other hand," said Carl, "it could have been Skip. He's the one who brought up the subject in the first place. He might enjoy pulling a ghoulish prank like this."

"That's my brother you're talking about, Carl. He may be a nut on murder mysteries, but he has more sense than to scare the wits out of his sister."

Carl smiled and came forward to take her in his arms. "Let's forget about it, shall we? There's no harm done."

"No, I won't forget about it," she snapped, wrenching away from him. "You not only accuse my brother, but a very good friend of mine, and you won't even consider the possibility that it could have been that sourpuss cousin of yours. No, it has to be someone connected with me!" She knew her voice was rising, but she couldn't help it.

"Is Bernie connected with you?" His voice was bland.

"What I meant was—"

"I know exactly what you meant, darling. I wasn't born yesterday."

"What are you trying to say?"

"Anybody can see how you and Bernie feel about each other."

"You don't know what you're talking about! Do you think I would have married you if I was in love with Bernie?"

"Wouldn't you?"

Vivian looked at his face, calm and composed, smiling now. He was leaning against the bureau with his arms crossed. He could be bluffing. She must get control of herself. She forced a smile and stepped over to him, putting her arms around his neck and pressing her weight against him. "Let's not quarrel, darling," she murmured, closing her eyes.

"We're not quarreling, Vivian. We're clearing the air. A marriage should start on the right foot, shouldn't it?"

"Of course, Carl, but I don't see why we can't just drop the subject. Someone played a tasteless joke on us, but there's no need to let it spoil things. Let's just forget about it, like you said."

"On one condition."

"Yes?"

"Let's forget about Bernie, too."

She stiffened. "I don't know what you mean."

He pulled her close, ignoring her resistance. "If a man and a woman are in love and that woman married another man, a man who happens to be extremely wealthy and has one foot in the grave, why it's obvious she has married him with one object in view: to get the other foot in the grave and get her hands on his money so the two lovers can spend the rest of their lives in luxury."

"Carl!" She tried to pull away, but his grip was unrelenting. "You're hurting me!"

"And you're hurting me, Vivian. I'm very much in love with you, or didn't you know that? I've been in love with you for years."

"You don't know what you're saying!"

"About love, or about Bernie?"

"About anything. You're making the whole thing up. Bernie and I are friends, nothing more."

"Darling, if we can't be anything else, at least let's be honest." He held her far enough away for her to see his eyes. Strange, they had always looked so pale and now they were quite dark. She vaguely remembered reading somewhere that some peoples' eyes grew dark when they were angry. She had never believed it till now.

"Vivian dear, I'm the one who bought the hatbox and filled it with rocks."

"You!"

"Yes. You had a lesson to learn."

"I don't understand."

"Even though you and Bernie had this scheme cooked up to get rid of me, I still love you and I can overlook this. It hurts, of course, but I'll get over it. Since you're my wife now, I just wanted to show you that I'll put up with no more nonsense. You married me, and you'll stay with me till I die, with no assistance from you."

She couldn't believe what she was hearing. Any other man would have beaten her within an inch of her life. Even Bernie, she admitted reluctantly. But it just wasn't like Carl to forgive such a thing.

"Oh, and there's something else I think you should know, Vivian." As she looked up at his smiling face, she realised she had liked him better before he became a smiler. Some faces are not meant to wear smiles. On Carl, a smile looked unhealthy, almost obscene. Funny, she had never noticed it until now.

"My collapse that day at school during the debate—it was more emotional than physical. Justice and its miscarriages is one of my pet subjects. I guess my enthusiasm that day overwhelmed me." She continued to stare at him, saying nothing. "In other words, Vivian, my heart is as sound as your own."

She could feel her scalp prickle. "You mean you've been pretending all these years?" she whispered. "You let your friends—your class-mates—all of us—tiptoe around you and give you whatever you wanted, when all the time there wasn't anything wrong with you?"

Carl laughed softly. "It was a pleasant way to live, Vivian. But when I was alone I did strenuous exercises and—uh, emotional exercises to prove to myself that I was—shockproof."

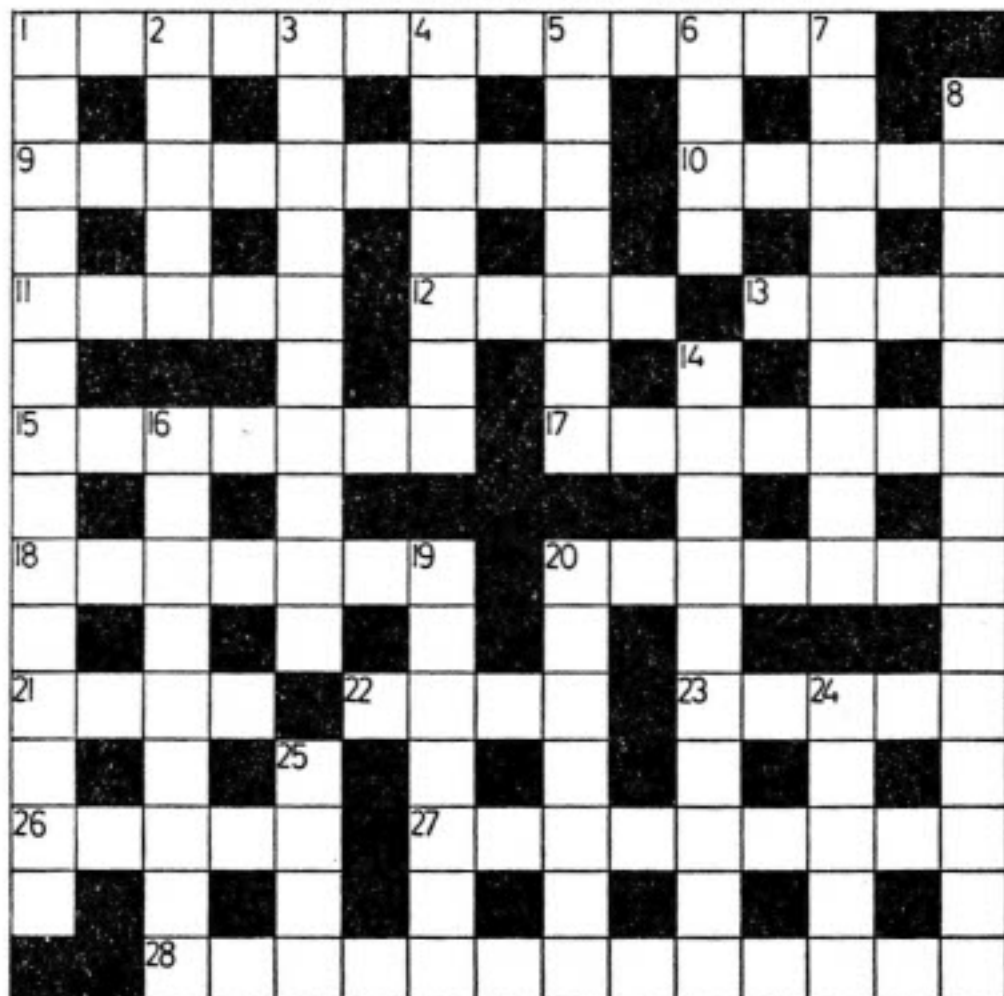
Vivian listened. And as her mind cleared, she began to calculate. She and Bernie had counted on six months at the most until she could bring on a heart attack. This new development made the situation more difficult, but not impossible. Bernie was smart. He would know any number of ways to get rid of Carl safely. All she had to do was be patient, humour Carl, and wait for the day the honeymoon would be over and she could see Bernie again and they could revise their plans together. This new development might even be a blessing in disguise because Bernie might be able to work out something that wouldn't take so long. And as long as she could go on seeing Bernie, she could put up with the marriage.

So she smiled at her husband, although his eyes were incredibly cold and she felt the goose pimples on her arms. She would not be afraid of him, she told herself. After all, he loved her. He wasn't going to hurt her. Everything would work out all right.

She lifted her suitcase to the luggage rack at the foot of the bed and gazed over it at Carl as she unlocked it and raised the lid. "Wait till you see the beautiful gown I bought for tonight," she said. Lowering her eyes and her hand at the same time, Vivian gasped as the world jolted to a stop and she slammed the suitcase shut. She stared at Carl, at his deep, deep blue eyes, the horror pounding in her body, pounding until every vein was stretched to the bursting point. Her throat was rigid with shock but her mind was screaming and screaming and screaming as she stood there silent, unmoving.

Carl's lips parted in a gentle smile. "I always knew someday Bernie would lose his head over a woman."

# EWMM Crossword No. 25.



### ACROSS

- 1 Opponent of the White Friar brought to book? (3, 5, 5)
- 9 Evans' schooling? (9)
- 10 Stretch familiar to Sanders of the River, no doubt (5)
- 11 Towel wrapped round a young flier (5)
- 12 Mail held by Lieutenant Bones (4)
- 13 We may be carried away by them (4)
- 15 Girls' school (7)
- 17 C.I.D. member working out-of-doors? (7)
- 18 Sheds (7)
- 20 Protective overheads (7)
- 21 Listens on the phone? (4)
- 22 Is such a cop a pretty girl? (4)
- 23 Pawnbroker the man came from? (5)
- 26 Just manage to live (5)
- 28 It helps the river police get their man—dead (9, 4)

- 27 Breaking and entering could set it off (4, 5)

### DOWN

- 1 One third of a jury? (3, 4, 4, 3)
- 2 Like the scales of justice (5)
- 3 Go first (4, 3, 3)
- 4 Convicted murderer (7)
- 5 Pardon me, nasty arrangement (7)
- 6 Just one point of the wire (4)
- 7 Dealer who gets confused at remands . . . (9)
- 8 . . . and a left-handed menace? (3, 8, 3)
- 14 One big ape (5-5)
- 16 Putting in the shade? (9)
- 19 Show respect in court (5, 2)
- 20 As one lawyer puts it—deductively (1, 6)
- 24 U.S. makes it a hot seat (5)
- 25 It's known for blowing its top (4)

(Solution will appear in our March issue.)



# MR. LOVEDAY'S LITTLE OUTING

EVELYN WAUGH

*Within the wide range of his writings, Evelyn Arthur St. John Waugh (1903-66) found time to compose an ironic and curious crime story, which is regarded as a minor classic of its kind*

YOU WILL NOT find your father greatly changed," remarked Lady Moping, as the car turned into the gates of the County Asylum.

"Will he be wearing a uniform?" asked Angela.

"No, dear, of course not. He is receiving the very best attention."

It was Angela's first visit and it was being made at her own suggestion.

Ten years had passed since the showery day in late summer when Lord Moping had been taken away; a day of confused but bitter memories for her; the day of Lady Moping's annual garden party, always bitter, confused that day by the caprice of the weather which, remaining clear and brilliant with promise until the arrival of the first guests, had suddenly blackened into a squall. There had been a scuttle for cover; the marquee had capsized; a frantic carrying of cushions and chairs; a tablecloth lofted to the boughs of the monkey-puzzler, fluttering in the rain; a bright period and the cautious emergence of guests onto the soggy lawns; another squall.

It had been an abominable afternoon, culminating at about six o'clock in her father's attempted suicide.

Lord Moping habitually threatened suicide on the occasion of

the garden party; that year he had been found black in the face, hanging by his braces in the orangery; some neighbours, who were sheltering there from the rain, set him on his feet again, and before dinner a van had called for him. Since then Lady Moping had paid seasonal calls at the asylum and returned in time for tea, rather reticent of her experience.

Many of her neighbours were inclined to be critical of Lord Moping's accommodation. He was not, of course, an ordinary inmate. He lived in a separate wing of the asylum, specially devoted to the segregation of wealthier lunatics. These were given every consideration which their foibles permitted. They might choose their own clothes (many indulged in the liveliest fancies), smoke the most expensive brands of cigars and, on the anniversaries of their certification, entertain any other inmates for whom they had an attachment, at private dinner parties.

The fact remained, however, that it was far from being the most expensive kind of institution: the uncompromising address, COUNTY HOME FOR MENTAL DEFECTIVES, stamped across the note-paper, worked on the uniforms of their attendants, painted, even, upon a prominent hoarding at the main entrance, suggested the lowest associations. From time to time, with less or more tact, her friends attempted to bring to Lady Moping's notice particulars of seaside nursing homes, of 'qualified practitioners with large private grounds suitable for the charge of nervous or difficult cases,' but she accepted them lightly; when her son came of age he might make any changes that he thought fit; meanwhile she felt no inclination to relax her economical regime; her husband had betrayed her basely on the one day in the year when she looked for loyal support, and was far better off than he deserved. . . .



A few lonely figures in great-coats were shuffling and loping about the park.

"Those are the lower-class lunatics," observed Lady Moping. "There is a very nice little flower garden for people like your father. I sent them some cuttings last year."

They drove past the blank, yellow-brick facade to the doctor's private entrance and were received by him in the 'visitors' room,' set aside for interviews of this kind. The window was protected on the inside by bars and wire netting; there was no fireplace; when Angela nervously attempted to move her chair farther from

the radiator, she found that it was screwed to the floor.

"Lord Moping is quite ready to see you," said the doctor.

"How is he?"

"Oh, very well, very well indeed, I'm glad to say. He had rather a nasty cold some time ago, but apart from that his condition is excellent. He spends a lot of his time in writing."

They heard a shuffling, skipping sound approaching along the flagged passage. Outside the door a high peevish voice, which Angela recognized as her father's, said: "I haven't the time, I tell you. Let them come back later."

A gentler tone, with a slight rural burr, replied, "Now come along. It is purely a formal audience. You need stay no longer a than you like."

Then the door was pushed open (it had no lock or fastening) and Lord Moping came into the room. He was attended by an elderly little man with full white hair and an expression of great kindness.

"That is Mr. Loveday, who acts as Lord Moping's attendant."

"Secretary," said Lord Moping. He moved with a jogging gait and shook hands with his wife.

"This is Angela. You remember Angela, don't you?"

"No, I can't say that I do. What does she want?"

"We just came to see you."

"Well, you have come at an exceedingly inconvenient time. I am very busy. Have you typed out that letter to the Pope yet, Loveday?"

"No, my lord. If you remember, you asked me to look up the figures about the Newfoundland fisheries first?"

"So I did. Well, it is fortunate, as I think the whole letter will have to be redrafted. A great deal of new information has come to light since luncheon. A great deal . . . You see, my dear, I am fully occupied." He turned his restless, quizzical eyes upon Angela. "I suppose you have come about the Danube. Well, you must come again later. Tell them it will be all right, quite all right, but I have not had time to give my full attention to it. Tell them that."

"Very well, Papa."

"Anyway," said Lord Moping rather petulantly, "it is a matter of secondary importance. There is the Elbe and the Amazon and the Tigris to be dealt with first, eh, Loveday? . . . *Danube*, indeed. Nasty little river. I'd only call it a stream myself. Well, can't stop, nice of you to come. I would do more for you if I could, but you

see how I'm fixed. Write to me about it. That's it. *Put it in black and white.*"

And with that he left the room.

"You see," said the doctor, "he is in excellent condition. He is putting on weight, eating and sleeping excellently. In fact, the whole tone of his system is above reproach."

The door opened again and Loveday returned.

"Forgive my coming back, sir, but I was afraid that the young lady might be upset at his Lordship's not knowing her. You mustn't mind him, miss. Next time he'll be very pleased to see you. It's only today he's put out on account of being behind with his work. You see, sir, all this week I've been helping in the library and I haven't been able to get his all Lordship's reports typed out. And he's got muddled with his card index. That's all it is. He doesn't mean any harm."

"What a nice man," said Angela, when Loveday had gone back to his charge.

"Yes," said the doctor. "I don't know what we should do without old Loveday. Everybody loves him, staff and patient alike."

"I remember him well. It's a great comfort to know that you are able to get such good attendants," said Lady Moping; "people who don't know say such foolish things about asylums."

"Oh, but Loveday isn't an attendant," said the doctor.

"You don't mean he's cuckoo, too?" said Angela.

"He is an *inmate*. It is rather an interesting case. He has been here for thirty-five years."

"But I've never seen anyone saner," said Angela.

"He certainly has that air," said the doctor, "and in the last twenty years we have treated him as such. He is the life and soul of the place. Of course he is not one of the private patients, but we allow him to mix freely with them. He plays billiards excellently, does conjuring tricks at the concert, mends their gramophones, valets them, helps them in their crossword puzzles and various—er—hobbies. We allow them to give him small tips for services rendered, and he must by now have amassed quite a little fortune. He has a way with even the most troublesome of them. An invaluable man."

"Yes, but why is he here?"

"Well, it is rather sad. When he was a very young man he killed somebody—a young woman quite unknown to him, whom he knocked off her bicycle and then throttled. He gave himself up

immediately afterwards and has been here ever since."

"But surely he is perfectly safe now. Why is he not let out?"

"Well, I suppose if it was to anyone's interest, he would be. He has no relatives except a step-sister who lives in Plymouth. She used to visit him at one time, but she hasn't been for years now. He's perfectly happy here and I can assure you we aren't going to take the first steps in turning him out. He's far too useful to us."

"But it doesn't seem fair."

"Look at your father," said the doctor. "He'd be quite lost without Loveday to act as his secretary."

"It doesn't seem fair."

Angela left the asylum, oppressed by a sense of injustice. Her mother was unsympathetic.

"Think of being locked up in a loony bin all one's life."

"He attempted to hang himself in the orangery," replied Lady Moping, "*in front of the Chester-Martins.*"

"I don't mean Papa. I mean Mr. Loveday."

"I don't think I know him."

"Yes, the loony they have put to look after Papa."

"Your father's secretary. A very decent sort of man, I thought, and eminently suited to his work."



Angela left the question for the time, but she returned to it again at luncheon on the following day.

"Mums, what does one have to do to get people out of the bin?"

"The bin? Good gracious, child, I hope that you do not anticipate your father's return *here.*"

"No, no. Mr. Loveday."

"Angela, you seem to me to be totally bemused. I see it was a mistake to take you with me on our little visit yesterday."

After luncheon Angela disappeared to the library and was soon immersed on the lunacy laws as represented in the encyclopedia.

She did not re-open the subject with her mother, but a fortnight later, when there was a question of taking some pheasants over to her father for his eleventh Certification Party, she showed an unusual willingness to run over with them. Her mother noticed nothing suspicious.

Angela drove her small car to the asylum, and after delivering the game, asked for Mr. Loveday. He was busy at the time making a crown for one of his companions who expected hourly to be

anointed Emperor of Brazil, but he left his work and enjoyed several minutes' conversation with her. They spoke about her father's health and spirits. After a time Angela remarked, "Don't you ever want to get away?"

Mr. Loveday looked at her with his gentle, blue-grey eyes. "I've got very well used to the life, miss. I'm fond of the poor people here, and I think that several of them are quite fond of me."

"But don't you ever think of being free again?"

"Oh, yes, miss, I think of it—almost all the time I think of it."

"What would you do if you got out? There must be *something* you would sooner do than stay here."

The old man fidgeted uneasily. "Well, miss, it sounds ungrateful, but I can't deny I should welcome a little outing, once, before I get too old to enjoy it. I expect we all have our secret ambitions, and there *is* one thing I often wish I could do. You mustn't ask me what. . . . It wouldn't take long. But I do feel that if I had done it just for a day, an afternoon even, then I would die quiet. I could settle down again easier, and devote myself to the poor crazed people here with a better heart. Yes, I do feel that."

There were tears in Angela's eyes that afternoon as she drove away. "He *shall* have his little outing, bless him," she said.



From that day onwards for many weeks Angela had a new purpose in life. She moved about the ordinary routine of her home with an abstracted air and an unfamiliar, reserved courtesy which greatly disconcerted Lady Moping.

She read a great deal in the library, she cross-examined any guests who had pretensions to legal or medical knowledge, she showed extreme goodwill to old Sir Roderick Lane-Foscote, their Member. The words 'alienist,' 'barrister' or 'government official' now had for her the glamour that formerly surrounded film actors and professional wrestlers. She was a woman with a cause, and before the end of the hunting season she had triumphed. Mr. Loveday achieved his liberty.

The doctor at the asylum showed reluctance but no real opposition. Sir Roderick wrote to the Home Office. The necessary papers were signed, and at last the day came when Mr. Loveday took leave of the home where he had spent such long and useful years.

His departure was marked by some ceremony. Angela and Sir

Roderick Lane-Foscote sat with the doctors on the stage of the gymnasium. Below them was assembled every person in the institution who was thought to be stable enough to endure the excitement.

Lord Moping, with a few suitable expressions of regret, presented Mr. Loveday on behalf of the wealthier lunatics with a gold cigarette case; those who supposed themselves to be emperors showered him with decorations and titles of honour. The attendants gave him a silver watch and many of the non-paying inmates were in tears on the day of the presentation.

The doctor made the main speech of the afternoon. "Remember," he remarked, "that you leave behind you nothing but our warmest good wishes. You are bound to us by ties that none will forget. Time will only deepen our sense of debt to you. If at any time in the future you should grow tired of your life in the world, there will always be a welcome for you here."

A dozen or so variously afflicted lunatics hopped and skipped after him down the drive until the iron gates opened and Mr. Loveday stepped into his freedom. His small trunk had already gone to the station; he elected to walk. He had been reticent about his plans, but he was well provided with money, and the general impression was that he would go to London and enjoy himself a little before visiting his step-sister in Plymouth.

It was to the surprise of all that he returned within two hours of his liberation. He was smiling whimsically, a gentle smile of reminiscence.

"I have come back," he informed the doctor. "I think that now I shall be here for good."

"But, Loveday, what a short holiday. I'm afraid that you have hardly enjoyed yourself at all."

"Oh, yes, sir, thank you, sir, I've enjoyed myself *very much*. I'd been promising myself one little treat, all these years. It was short, sir, but most enjoyable. Now I shall be able to settle down again to my work here without any regrets."

Half a mile up the road from the asylum gates, they later discovered an abandoned bicycle. It was a lady's machine of some antiquity. Quite near it in the ditch lay the strangled body of a young woman, who, riding home to her tea, had chanced to overtake Mr. Loveday, as he strode along, musing on his opportunities.

# THE CARTOONIST AND THE CRIME WRITERS



© EWMM

VICTOR CANNING



# THE BLONDE IN THE OINTMENT

PETER WALLACE

*A willing horse may be slow  
and lose his race to the  
swift, but the gods  
are humorists*

I'D HAVE HAD the sack long ago if it weren't for Mr. Fautleigh, as he often tells me. "You're slow, Edward," he says, "but you're willing. We make a good team." We run the bar at the Chigwell Manor hotel. Marie helps, too, but she only comes in at opening times and goes at closing times and she's what Mr. Fautleigh calls the 'dressing on the bar.' She never washes any glasses in case it should chip her nail varnish.

Mr. Fautleigh washes up glasses. There's nothing he wouldn't turn his hand to. He's tall, and fat, and when he thinks he looks very mournful but most of the time he's jolly and laughing and his moustache and his eyebrows wave about and everyone is gay when he's around. Mr. Branksome, the manager, says he's a jewel, which is more than is ever said about me. I can handle the pumps and the glass washing and the sandwiches, but I get a bit muddled with all the shorts. If anyone asks me for something complicated like a Pimms, a White Lady or a Snowball, I ask Mr. Fautleigh and he deals with it. Mr. Branksome says I am a 'drug on the market' but Mr. Fautleigh defends me. "He's willing, and he's a worker," he always says; and we've run the bar for two years now and never a cross word.

There are three bars really: the main one in the lounge where the big stock is kept; a small one called the cocktail bar which Marie runs most of the time—I go and wash up when she's busy; and a movable one which we can set up anywhere, on good days we sometimes put it by the swimming pool, on Saturday nights in the ballroom; it's very mobile.

This summer has been a hard-working one but good fun: and one particular week of it stands out. We had a group of racing men in and they really kept the bars humming. When I say

'racing men' I don't mean that they ran races, or that they trained horses or rode them; but it didn't seem that there was anything else in the world that interested them but racing. There were a dozen of them and they got into a routine on the first day and stuck to it. They would come into the lounge as soon as they had had breakfast, and settle down with the papers. I used to clear those papers up in the evening and you can take it from me that except for the racing they were absolutely untouched. The racing pages were covered with jottings, notes, prices, stakes, doodles, everything you could think of. They would argue all morning about what horses they fancied for the afternoon's racing. When the bar opened they would continue arguing while they drank.

It was a fine week, as regards the weather, and after lunch they'd settle by the swimming pool and Mr. Fautleigh would set up the mobile bar. They'd spend the afternoon chatting and betting and swimming. They gave their bets to Mr. Fautleigh and he would come and 'phone them through to the local betting office. After the last race they'd settle up with Mr. Fautleigh if they'd lost and I'd take the money round. If they'd won I'd go and collect it and Mr. Fautleigh would pay out. Some days I'd take near £500 to the office, other days I'd bring about that back.



Mr. Fautleigh was not a betting man, but he tended to identify himself with whatever customer he was talking to. He knew a great deal about many different things and whatever the chap buying wanted to talk about, Mr. Fautleigh could keep his end of the conversation going. Towards the end of this particular week Mr. Fautleigh was talking like a bookmaker's clerk and his wallet was bulging. When they had a good win the gamblers were generous and Mr. Fautleigh always split the tips with Marie and me. 70 percent to him and 20 percent to Marie and 10 percent to me.

After we had closed the bar on Thursday evening Mr. Fautleigh said, "Come up to my room, Edward; I have a couple of bottles of beer that need sinking and I have something to discuss with you, lad."

When we got up to Mr. Fautleigh's room, he gave me a bottle of beer and a glass and gave me the armchair. He sat on the bed with his own bottle.

"Edward, I have a proposition to put to you. I must warn you

that it is not exactly honest; a pity, that," he mused, "so many of my best ideas are not exactly honest; but this one has the advantage that it looks as though it might work."

"What is it?"

"You have no objection to something a little dishonest?"

"Not if it works!"

"Good! Let me put you in the picture then. Over the last few days you have carried to the local bookie the sum of twelve hundred pounds."

"I never realized it was that much!"

"It mounts up, lad. You have brought back a total of eight hundred and thirty seven pounds."

"I never realized they'd lost that much!"

"Three hundred and sixty-three pounds is the bookie's profit: about ninety a day. Now, I don't see why all that money should go to the bookies."

"It already has!"

"Yes, but I propose to see that tomorrow things will be rather different. I shall take those bets myself and the profit will be mine."

I thought for a moment, and then an obvious flaw showed itself. "What if tomorrow is one of the days on which the bookies lose? You might have to pay out an awful lot!"

Mr. Fautleigh, his moustache working with joy, leaned forward. "Exactly. Now this is where my cunning shows itself. The idea of bookmaking is to establish your betting book so that you make a small profit at least on every race. Now, some of these punters have come to trust my judgment and so I shall be able to 'advise' them. You see, I shall know all the results before the races begin." He sat back with a satisfied smile.

I began to laugh. "That's ridiculous, Mr. Fautleigh. If you knew the results before the races you could make a fortune by betting them yourself."

"Ah! I don't mean that I know the results before the race begin. I couldn't, Edward, could I?" He raised his eyes to the ceiling, and muttered, "I must remember he's willing." Then he turned to me. "Look Edward, none of the racing crowd wear watches when they swim. We go by the clock on the mobile bar."

I nodded. I knew that clock, a big one—electric.

"Now, if that clock were a quarter of an hour slow then they would be betting on the two-thirty race at two forty-five, when it was all over!"

"I see! So you could find out what had won before they bet,

and if anyone wants to bet on the winning horse you don't take that bet! But wouldn't they smell a rat?"

Mr. Fautleigh raised his eyes again and sighed. "If I was as greedy as that they would soon become suspicious. No, Edward. I shall calculate in my mind how much I am up or down on each race. If too much money seems to be coming on the horse which I know will win, then I must try a spot of gentle suggestion. I shall advise the horse which I happen to know will finish second. That way I shall retain my reputation for picking good ones! By not being greedy, and, indeed, by suggesting the actual winner if nobody looks like backing it, I shall make a steady profit on each race. I intend to aim at the sum of two hundred and fifty pounds: of which I propose to give you no less than fifty pounds for your help."

"Fifty sounds very useful! But what do I have to do?"

"There are only two things which I need of you, Edward, and you must follow my instructions to the letter."

"I will, Mr. Fautleigh, I will."

Mr. Fautleigh smiled. "I know you will, lad. I always said you were a willing boy."

"What do I have to do?"

"First I have to change the electric clock and I must do this before they come out of lunch. Now, Marie will be there then."

"Marie? Is she in on this?"

"No, lad. Far too many good plans have come unstuck over a blonde. We are keeping her out of it. But she is a clock-watcher, Edward, and for the success of our plan it is necessary to give her something else to think about."

"What, Mr. Fautleigh."

"Well, Edward. I suggest that about two o'clock you seize her in your arms and kiss her."

"Mr. Fautleigh! She'd scream! Call Mr. Branksome! Slap my face!"

"She wouldn't, lad, actually. I was thinking of doing this part myself while you fixed the clock but from glances I have seen her give in your direction, I think it would come better from you. She is very attractive; it should be no hardship to kiss her."

"Oh, no, Mr. Fautleigh, none at all."

"Why haven't you ever made any approach before? I'm sure she'd meet you more than half-way."

"I remember you telling me never to go out with anyone working in the same place as yourself. You said it led to strained relations

if things got broken off."

Mr. Fautleigh blushed, "Oh, yes, so I did. Well, in this case I think we can stretch a point. It's in a good cause."

"Right Mr. Fautleigh. I—er—kiss Marie and keep her engaged while you change the clock. What's the other thing?"

"Now, Edward. Listen carefully, Edward. Each race result will have to be got. You will be in the main bar all afternoon polishing glasses. Now if you leave the middle french window open I can see the bar from the swimming pool. As soon as each race is run you will 'phone the betting office to find what has won. Then you must look up the horse's race card number in the paper. All right so far? You know what the race card number means?"

"Yes, I get you." After a week of those punter customers I knew more complicated things than that.

"Put a glass on the bar for each number. If number seven wins put seven glasses on the bar. Simple, and foolproof."

"Mr. Fautleigh," I said, "wouldn't it be an idea if pint pots counted as tens? Then if some horse numbered thirty-three, say, won, I need only put three pint pots, and three glasses? I mean, you might have trouble counting all thirty-three."

"A good idea, lad. A good point. I tell you what! I shall give you seventy-five pounds if all goes well."

"Won't the bookies get suspicious if you phone to get the winners when I've already done it?"

"That's a point. You'll have to write down the first, second, and third and when I come to pretend to phone the bookies you can give me the full list. Then I can go back and square up."

"It's a wonderful plan, Mr. Fautleigh."

He preened himself. "I flatter myself that it covers every emergency. If all goes well, Edward, we shall be much richer this time tomorrow night! I tell you what—I shall split the profits with you. Two-thirds to me and one third to you. How's that?"

"Very generous, Mr. Fautleigh."

He waved this aside. "Say no more, Edward; let this be a team effort. Let all go well and we shall, to use their own words, 'make a bomb!'"

We drank to that and I went to bed. Next morning I still could see no flaw in the plan. Mr. Fautleigh showed me the shelf over the bar where I was to put the glasses and gave me the phone number of the bookies. I made sure I had a copy of a paper with all the horses' numbers. Then there was nothing to do but wait. At last the gong went and everyone went in to lunch. The wine

waiter came out with orders for trays of drinks and we put them up. Then the orders tailed off. The guests were at the dessert stage. My time had come. Time, 2.0. Mr. Fautleigh was hovering behind a wing of the bar. He had said that he was going to see the chef and had gone to the swing door by the side of the bar. We had heard the swing doors go and Marie assumed that he had gone out. I knew he hadn't. The mobile bar was halfway down the lounge. Near the french windows leading on to the swimming pool. The clock was on it. Mr. Fautleigh would be eyeing it and waiting for me to make the move. I nerved myself.

"Marie," I said, putting down a glass I had been shakily polishing.

"Yes, Edward?" She turned to me. She was looking stunning. She is not too tall—slim, fair-haired and blue eyed. Her hair was in a pony tail and her eyes are huge. She was wearing a short black skirt and a white blouse off the shoulders and she looked at me with those eyes and said again, "Yes, Edward?" and I said again, "Oh, Marie!" and she came a pace nearer and said, "What is it?" and she was within arm's reach so I put my arms round her and kissed her.

I missed her mouth, actually, and kissed her cheek. But she said, "Oh, Edward," and she kissed me. We held that kiss and when we came up for air I could see over her shoulder Mr. Fautleigh tiptoeing down the lounge. Marie said, "Oh, Edward, I've wanted this so long," and I kissed her again. By the time I looked up Mr. Fautleigh had gone and the clock was at 1.55.

"Oh Edward, why have you never done this before?" sighed Marie, lying back in my arms.

"Never had the courage. I wanted to, lots of times," said I, kissing her again. Now the ice was broken I found it easy to carry on.

"Oh, Edward." She relaxed again and the kissing continued. Then she looked at her watch and said, "Look at the time; I must fly. I'm going out with my mum this afternoon."

"Sure it's your mum?" I said, jealously.

She smiled radiantly "As if I'd go out with anybody but you, now, Edward. I'll see you as soon as I can. Kiss me goodbye." So I did. I was getting good at kissing Marie. When I had done her eyes were all misty and she went out of the bar in a hazy cloud . . . notice the clock! I don't think she'd have noticed if Mr. Branksome had been standing on his head in the middle of the floor. I felt much the same way. I never knew anyone's lips could

be so soft, I never . . .

"Edward. What is the matter with the lad? Come on. Three times I've called you!"

"Sorry, Mr. Fautleigh."

"Righto so far, help me move the bar by the pool. Mr. Corris and Mr. Pellew want a drink." He turned to the two men in bathing trunks standing by the french window. "Coming now, sirs; the lad is slow, but he's willing. Come on, Edward!"

We moved the bar. As we did so I heard one of the men say, "Ten past two, plenty of time to make our selection for the first." Then I went back to the bar.

I got the glasses ready on the draining board and spread the paper out on the bar. There was only one meeting that day so there was no chance of error. At 2.35 by my watch and 2.20 by Mr. Fautleigh's clock I 'phoned the betting office.

"Lusty Lad won at nine to two; second, Jonathan Hooker, four to one; third, Eyes Down, eleven to eight, favourite. Thanks."

Lusty Lad was No. 12 so I put a pint pot on the bar shelf and a couple of half pint tankards with it. Then I polished other glasses and waited. At 2.55 Greenwich and 2.40 his time, Mr. Fautleigh popped in and picked up the phone. He pretended to talk into the 'phone but actually had his fingers on the cross-bar.

"Lusty Lad won, eh, Edward?"

"Yes. You got the message all right?"

"Foolproof. What price?"

I showed him the paper I'd written the result on. "Nine to two," he said. "The paper S.P. forecast said three to one! We made twenty-five pounds on that. We're in, Edward. Full steam ahead."



We were, and we did. £50 we made on the second, £75 total. £103 on the third, £178 total. We had a set-back on the fourth where a punter insisted on putting £20 on a horse Mr. Fautleigh knew had won at 8/1. Poor Mr. Fautleigh, the sweat was pouring off him by now; our total profit went down to £160 but we had a turn up in the fifth race. It was a small field, only five runners, and virtually a two horse race. None of the punters clicked and Mr. Fautleigh told me gleefully as he pretended to 'phone, "Edward, boy, it's working beyond our wildest dreams, we're about three hundred up!"

Then came the last race. Mr. Fautleigh's clock showed ten to five, nine five past. I phoned up and took the result down. "First, Crybaby at thirty-three to one. Second, Force Majeure at twenty-five to one, Third, Believe Me at three to one. Thank you." I turned and looked in the paper. Crybaby was number 21. Two pints and a half. I must—"Edward," said a voice from the other end of the bar. Marie had come in through the reception. Her hair was swinging loosely around her sun-tanned shoulders; she had changed into a blue dress with a flared skirt and was wearing white high-heeled shoes. She held out her arms to me and I just had time to put the glasses on the shelf before we held each other tight and our lips met. It was after the second kiss that I saw the glasses over her shoulder. Two halves and a pint! Oh, no! I let her go and exchanged one of the halves for a pint. I hoped I was in time.

"What are you doing?" asked Marie.

"Polishing glasses," I said.

"Let me help."

"No need, I've almost finished."

"Good. Then we can go for a walk before you have to open at six. We've such a lot to talk about."

"Yes," I said, turning to kiss her again. I lifted a tress of hair and kissed her behind her ear.

"Don't do that here," she said. "You'll make me drop this glass." I froze; then looked at the shelf, one of the pint glasses was missing. I hastily put another one up.

"Only those to do," said Marie and reached up.

"Leave those," I said, grabbing her arm. She was caught off balance and one of her high heels slipped. As she fell I managed to get an arm round her and break her fall, as we hit the floor together.

There was a crash, a bang, and a rattle. As the noise died away, I said, "Are you all right, love?"

"Yes, I think so," she said, in a shaken voice. I started to get up, but she pulled me back. "Don't get up. Kiss me." After a moment, "You called me 'love'."

"I know; that's how I feel."

"That's how I feel too," she said. So I kissed her again.

"Edward," said Mr. Fautleigh. "If I may disturb you?"

I looked up at the shelf. Only one pint pot was left. The others must have been knocked off when Marie and I fell and shook the bar. "Oh, lor," I said.



"Exactly. First of all you said number twelve, then number twenty-one, then number eleven, and finally number ten. Either a pile of stewards objections or a quadruple dead heat. What did win?"

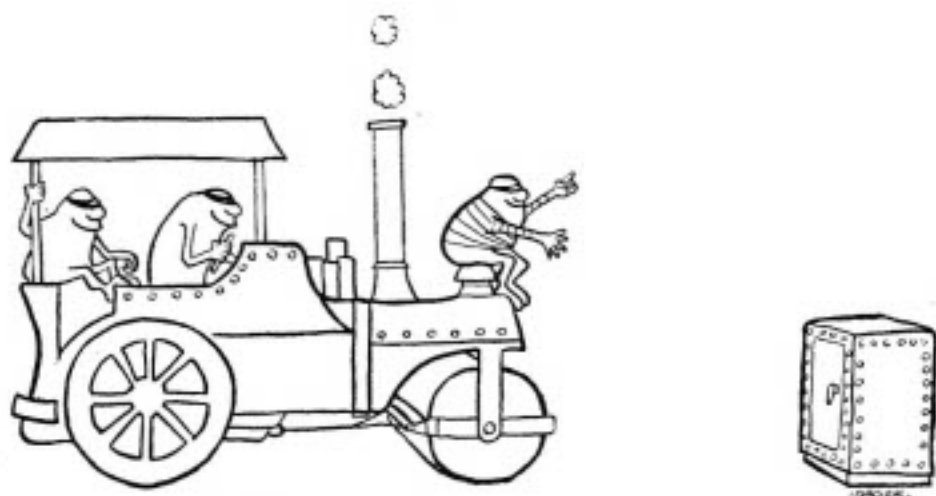
"Crybaby, at thirty-three to one," I said. Mr. Fautleigh looked as though he were about to burst into tears.

"Mr. Corris put ten pound on that one. I helped persuade him; you were being no assistance and I thought that Crybaby was a safe loser. Wiped out all our profits! We shall be about fifteen shillings up on the afternoon." He looked down at me, and at Marie in the crook of my arm trying to tidy her hair. "I always said you were slow but willing. I know now I was wrong on one and right on the other. You're not slow at all! And you're too damned willing."

It was days before he would speak to me, but we patched it up and became friends again. In fact he was the best man at our wedding. In the taxi going off on our honeymoon Marie said, "It was nice of Mr. Fautleigh to give us that lovely present. A smashing electric clock. But why did he put a five shilling postal order in with it?"

I laughed. "Commission!" I said, and was going to tell her the whole story but she said "Oh, Edward," in that swooning voice again and I kissed her. So I never got round to telling her, and on second thoughts I think that was the narrowest escape I had in the whole business.

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# The Chocolate Murder Case

**ROGER GARNETT**

*The unexpected reactions of the young in love contain both motive and reason for the events in this case, one of the most unusual in our series, now entering into its third year*

**T**HERE IS ONE factor which should be grasped at the beginning of the Norwegian 'Chocolate Murder Case'. It will seem there is a certain amount of casual interchange, of movement back and forth, between Norway, Denmark and Sweden by police officers and others as if there were no frontier lines. In a sense this is so. The three kingdoms are separate and self-contained; they are also interdependent.

The proper opening of the case occurred early in March, 1949, in Lund, a town of some 30,000 people in southern Sweden. Two Norwegians in their late twenties were in Lund at this time, students of medicine at the University. This pair, Odvar Eiken and Anders Muren, had been friends for years and had fought with the Norwegian Air Force when it had been stationed in Britain during the German occupation of their native land.

Though the friendship between Eiken and Muren went back to their schooldays, Eiken had never visited his friend's home in Vraadal, in southern Norway, until the previous summer. Eiken had met Muren's sister, Randi, when there had been instant mutual attraction between them. Randi Muren, blonde, attractive and just 23 years old, accepted Eiken's proposal of marriage at Christmas. It was decided that the engagement should be officially announced at Easter. And while her brother and her

fiancé were in Lund, studying for their medical degrees, Randi Muren was attending the Teachers' Training College at Kristiansand on the southern Norwegian sea-coast, waiting for their return in the Easter holidays.

In Lund in early March the two friends were staying at lodgings kept by a family named Svendson. It was here that Eiken received two anonymous letters. One of them described Randi Muren as unworthy of his devotion; the second was much the same in tone, but contained in it was a cutting from the *Stavanger Aftenblad* newspaper, which announced an engagement between Randi Muren and Carstein Brekke, both pupils at the Teachers' College.

Close on the tail of the second anonymous letter came a parcel for Eiken. It was correctly addressed to him and the sender's name was Kari Straume; her address was so badly written that it was indecipherable. Posted on 27 February, from Oslo, the parcel contained an old cigar box enclosing a small bottle of a popular liqueur. There was a note, supposedly from Randi, asking Eiken to drink the liqueur all by himself.

He did not suspect either the note or the parcel at the time, but shared the liqueur with Muren. Soon afterwards they both felt slightly sick, thinking nothing of it, it would seem that they paid little attention to the note Randi Muren presumably had written in the greater interest of the mysterious Kari Straume. Eiken had never heard of her and Muren was perfectly sure his sister knew nobody of that name. In any case, why had she not sent the parcel from Kristiansand herself instead of by way of Kari Straume in Oslo.

On Friday, 11 March, about a week after the event of the liqueur, another parcel arrived for Odvar Eiken. This time it contained an old box in which were four matchboxes, each containing chocolate. The whole was well wrapped in back copies of Norway's leading newspaper, *Aftenposten*, and the postmark this time was Kristiansand. There was a scrap of paper inside saying 'With love from Randi'. The margins of the newspapers, which Eiken did not notice carefully at the time, bore scribblings in pencil and the name of Flemming.

He put the parcel aside for the moment, and did not think of it again until Sunday. After lunch Eiken gave Anders Muren some of the chocolate, then shared the rest with Marianne Svendson, his landlady's eight-year-old daughter, and ate some of it himself.

Marianne Svendson shared her chocolate with a small friend, Barbro Jakobson. Later that evening little Marianne Svendson

was taken ill; within minutes Barbro Jakobson was similarly affected, to be followed by Odvar Eiken and Anders Muren.

The four of them were rushed to the emergency ward of the hospital connected with the medical school, where the cramps, nausea and agonising pain told a clear story, pinpointed by the vomiting and tenesmus.

The doctor on emergency duty called for help and made a snap decision based on the obvious nature of the symptoms. Stomach washes were given, together with applied heat and hot coffee. It was fast and highly efficient work, particularly so for a hospital confronted with four poisonings late on a Sunday night.

A quick analysis of the vomit confirmed medical suspicions. All the four had been poisoned with arsenic, and the skill with which it was combated deserved better results than the death of Marianne Svendson, but she had eaten a quantity of the chocolate and had eaten it earlier than the others. She could not fight off the dose she had received . . . it became a case of murder.

As the law so required, the hospital had already notified police headquarters of the poisonings. Lund promptly applied to the county town, Malmö, for help and Superintendent Alf Eliasson arrived to deal with the investigation.

Odvar Eiken and Anders Muren were recovering, and, more fortunate than her friend, so was little Barbro Jakobson. Eliasson was able to interview the men in the morning and heard the story. Eiken, his suspicions sharpened by the ordeal he had gone through, no longer considered the events of the past week or two as unimportant jealousies on somebody's part. He told Eliasson about the liqueur, the anonymous letters and the chocolate.



Eliasson had a number of details to work on. There was the presumed sender of the liqueur, Kari Straume, the anonymous letters and the chocolates, with the newspaper wrapping bearing pencillings.

Enquiries made cautiously by Eliasson disclosed the fact that Randi Muren had also been a target for the queer campaign. She had received an anonymous letter from Oslo written by a Swedish lady, Signe Lundgren. This accused Odvar Eiken of being the father of the writer's illegitimate child. It was noticed that this anonymous letter, from, as it claimed, a Swedish lady, was written in excellent Norwegian—idiomatic as only a native could have

achieved it.

Further enquiries uncovered the fact that Flemming Rosbörg, a young Dane, had worked for twelve months as an apprentice at the Bredablikk Hotel in Vraadal, the home town of Randi and Anders Muren's parents. It was discovered that Rosbörg had been immensely attracted by Randi Muren, and that he became deeply unhappy when he found she did not return his regard. Rosbörg had now returned to Copenhagen, his home, and his address was unknown. The matter was passed for the attention of the Director of Police of the Copenhagen City force.

Superintendent Eliasson called on his colleagues in Norway and Denmark for the help he required, and the investigation moved fast. First discovery was the Swedish lady, Signe Lundgren. She was interviewed by the police but here came a block to progress. Not only had she never heard of Randi Muren or Odvar Eiken but she was easily able to prove it. Some person had obtained her name from somewhere, a street or telephone directory, or in some casual way, and had used it as the signature on the letter to Randi Muren, accusing her fiancé. The second bar to progress came when Kari Straume was found, whose name had been on the package of liqueur sent to Eiken as from Randi. The story was repeated. The lady was absolutely innocent and, like Signe Lundgren, knew nothing of any of the young people involved in the poison plot.

The final blow to Eliasson's attempts to solve the mystery, which was now becoming of wide public interest, was in following the trail of the engagement notice in the *Stavanger Aftenblad*: which mentioned both Randi Muren and another pupil at the Teachers' College. This young man, Brekke, had already voiced his annoyance at the notice and, when the police began making enquiries, had obtained the original advertisement from the newspaper in Stavanger. He produced it for the inspection of the Kristiansand police, asking them to testify that he had never written the original engagement notice, this being for the reassurance of Muren. Young Brekke also mentioned to his fellow students that he was going to put the whole matter in the hands of the police. He did not do it, though at the time this small pointer was not noticed.

It had become clear that somebody was at work who was cunning and careful. The unknown pursuing the vendetta against Randi Muren and Odvar Eiken was somebody of a disposition to whom nothing mattered so long as the plan, whatever it might be, was achieved. 'There was something very feminine about the way

the liqueur and chocolate had been sent, about the anonymous letters and the engagement notice in the newspaper,' wrote Fritjof Knudsen, a leading Oslo newspaperman. 'But if one supposed the motive as slighted love, then logically Odvar Eiken should not have been the target, and, if so, why had the unknown tried to kill him?'

It was decided that the unknown was a man, a strong and masculine man—imaginative and perhaps temperamental. Further analysis from the material available suggested that this unknown was a sufferer from some sort of an inferiority complex, otherwise he would not have tried to remove his rival but would have wooed Randi Muren, despite Odvar Eiken's existence.

But what had been a promising lead suddenly came to a complete dead end when Flemming Rosbörg, on whom public suspicions were quite freely fastened, was able to satisfy the Copenhagen City Police in every way. He was absolutely innocent of anything to do with the case.



The old and safe principle of elimination was used by the police, and used carefully, even to the extent of travelling again over well-explored ground. There were seven people under review. The Danish hotel apprentice, Rosbörg, even though his local police had ruled him free of all suspicion, was newly studied. The investigating team thought that perhaps somebody might have aided him to send the parcels to Odvar Eiken, this line of reasoning bringing two young men to police notice, one man in Vraadal who had been making telephone calls to Rosbörg in Copenhagen to tell him about the case and its progress, and the other who was a salesman with a car known to make frequent trips to Vraadal.

Four days after the death of Marianne Svendsen, with public interest at its height, a young man went to the Kristiansand police station of his own accord. This was on 18 March when Carstein Brekke, whose name had been used in the false engagement notice published in the *Stavanger Aftenblad*, told the interested Scandinavian team some most unusual facts.

Somebody had tried to kill him with poisoned chocolate, Brekke informed them. It happened during the previous week when he had received a small parcel from Oslo. The sender, on the wrapping was S. Kihle, Ullernverien. This was a complete mystery, Brekke said, for he knew nobody of this name. The parcel made

him uneasy—it was so unusual that he did not think it wise to eat the chocolate.

But, like most deferred pleasures, the sight of the chocolate about the place tempted him, and he took a chance in trying two pieces. They tasted normal enough, Brekke said—nevertheless, he felt unwell very soon afterwards and had to stay in bed for three days. Then he added a useful clue.

In handling the chocolate he had upset it on the tablecloth and, perhaps without noticing it, had put something on top of one of the pieces so that the cloth was marked. Because he could not remove the mark and did not want his landlady to see the results of his carelessness, he had, the day before he made this call to the police station, posted the cloth to his mother in Stavanger so that it could be washed and ironed.

The police were taking no chances of missing anything. A Kristiansand police officer was rushed by 'plane to Stavanger, to Mrs. Brekke's home and, so fast was his journey, he was at the house just one hour after Carstein Brekke's parcel was in his mother's hands. Arsenic was found in the traces of chocolate on the tablecloth; arsenic of the same nature as that sent to Odvar Eiken.

Brekke suddenly came to the forefront. The police wanted to know why they had learned nothing from him before this: why, Eliasson's team demanded, had he been so long in giving information

Then something incredible emerged. Carstein Brekke had written to his mother, as was only natural, to tell her about his three days of sickness. He told her what the pain was like and how he felt, then, probably as a casual addition, he suggested in his letter that the chocolate certainly had something to do with the false engagement notice in his home-town newspaper, the *Stavanger Aftenblad*, which he had proved to Randi Muren as nothing to do with him. But Mrs. Brekke received this letter on 14 March, it being posted and dated in Kristiansand on 11 March. This letter had been sent *two days before* Marianne Svendsen died, and, by melancholy coincidence, Mrs. Brekke received it on the same day as the details of the little girl's murder first appeared in the Norwegian press.

Brekke had been a victim of an attempted murder plot himself, as he explained, and, obviously, he was to be regarded as one with Odvar Eiken, the intended victim, and Marianne Svendsen, the actual victim. The police, however, wanted to know why he had

tried to get the cloth washed by his mother. He should have handed it over to them without hesitation. Could it be that he had not intended to mention the mysterious parcel at all.

From there the examining team got down to it. Brekke had to visit the Kristiansand police headquarters where he was questioned for five hours. Brekke said he had not really paid much attention to the parcel when it came. He thought somebody was playing a joke of some sort, particularly as he had never heard of the sender, S. Kihle. This was until he had tried the chocolate, which made him ill, and the remarks of his fellow students when they read about the murder of Marianne Svendson in Lund—then he decided to visit the police.

The examiners accepted this, but naturally wanted to know just what had made him connect the poisoned chocolate sent to him with the false engagement notice in the *Stavanger Aftenblad*. Then the suggestion was made to Brekke that perhaps he had caused the advertisement to be inserted either to gratify his own wishes to be in Eiken's shoes, or as a sort of boastful effort to impress people.

Carstein Brekke answered quietly and as straightly as the question was put to him: there was the statement from the police, he said, which showed he had *not* written the engagement notice, and his name was spelt *Carsten* in that notice, the penultimate letter not being there. Hesitantly, then with ready frankness he admitted being deeply attached to Randi Muren; she was the first girl for whom he had ever possessed any sincere feelings at all; he thought he was really in love with her. After that he was allowed to go home, quite unaware that on the police notes were facts showing he had *not* stayed in bed, as he had mentioned in his letter to his mother. More than that he had not been taken ill when he ate the chocolate, as he claimed, and on that same evening he had spent some hours at a theatre. Finally, 'S. Kihle'. This person did not exist, though there had been a family of the name living in the town of Ullern two years previously—no members of that family had sent parcels to Kristiansand and none of them had ever heard of Brekke.

Though she had already gone through a form of routine questioning, to clarify the many initial points in the case, Randi Muren was summoned again to Kristiansand police headquarters to qualify some of the new knowledge that had turned up. An attractive girl in her early twenties, she was friendly and exceedingly frank with the examiners. What they wanted was clarifying



detail about the new major factor in the case, Carstein Brekke.

She had never taken him seriously. When she first went with him, in a purely friendly capacity, she was not engaged to Eiken and her contacts with him were always on that basis. He was no more to her, and no less, than several other young men she knew.

At the beginning of the case the girl had no reason to suspect Brekke and no reason to mention his name to the police. No normal-minded girl, confronted with a situation of this nature, would for one moment point a finger of suspicion to her ordinary friends. But when she told the story of her association with Brekke, and his fondness for her, the police read between the lines sufficiently to see possible reasons why Brekke might be the mind behind the trouble. They were also shrewd enough to see that, if their pointers were correct, the most innocent person in the case was Randi Muren.

At this all important discussion with the police officers on her visit to headquarters, Randi Muren explained that her first meeting with Brekke had been in the previous October. It was an association that began at a students' discussion, and, the next day, she went on a short outing with him to a country spot during which he behaved with impeccable good manners.

Parties of various sorts followed, mostly student affairs at the Teachers' College, and then they began going to other social functions in the town.

Brekke was an excellent companion, well read, travelled, and highly intelligent. She enjoyed his company but when he mentioned that he found himself growing really fond of her, Randi Muren told him it was unwise. Another one of her boy friends, Odvar Eiken, had been going out with her a lot as well, and she was unofficially engaged to him. This she explained to Brekke and did it tactfully and sensibly, so sensibly, in fact, that he took in excellent part her suggestion that he should find himself a girl of his own. Randi Muren even tried to help him in this by introducing him to several of her own girl friends, and, in particular, to a pretty cousin.

He was later told bluntly that the engagement would be officially announced at Easter. This time he took the news gloomily, asking if she would hold the announcement until summer when he had left the Teacher's College. He did not want his fellow students laughing at him, for, it appeared, his feelings for Randi Muren were well known.

With the story finished, she went on to give the police some useful information. She had been told, for what the fact was

worth, that Carstein Brekke had visited Oslo on the actual day when the liqueur from 'Kari Straume' had been posted to Odvar Eiken in Lund. Again, the parcel from 'S. Kihle' to Brekke had also been posted in Oslo when he was in that city.

Superintendent Eliasson took a chance and showed the young woman the miscellanea he had picked up in connection with the case.

The cigar box seemed to fascinate her. After receiving permission to examine it, she went over it carefully without being aware of its importance. Then she electrified the officers. She knew she recognised the box by many little signs. It had belonged to Carstein Brekke. He had given it to her, filled with small cakes, and had taken it back again when it was empty.

This was the first solid proof involving Carstein Brekke. It was decided the evidence was strong enough. Brekke was arrested, and, at the same time, one of the investigating officers turned up with a notebook he had found in some rubbish at the Teachers' College. It bore Brekke's name in the cover and, among the scribbles inside, were a number of imitations of Randi Muren's signature, and copies of her handwriting.

Carstein Brekke was very much in command of himself. During his prolonged examination he talked endlessly. Each fact thrown at him he dealt with by discussing all round it with adroit slickness. But five hours steady interrogation beat him, and he admitted the concrete fact on which the case rested—yes, he said, I sent the poisoned chocolates.

When asked to make a statement, he insisted he was not having any help from the police. The statement was going to be in an intellectual form, written in his own hand. And, watched by a group of officers, he wrote lengthily and with great ceremony.



When the case was heard in October, 1949, at the Kristiansand Assizes, Brekke followed the almost inevitable course by promptly denying the whole of his 'intellectual confession' made to the police. He also demanded trial behind locked doors on score that he could not talk freely about his relationship with Randi Muren in front of the public, a request which set off tongues and divided the followers of the case into two camps, for and against the girl.

He insisted that the confession had been written under pressure, that the Kristiansand police chief had threatened him with trouble

if he did not tell the truth. He had no intention of telling the police he wanted to harm Odvar Eiken, but he had been tired by the five hours' cross examination; he had signed the statement to get some peace. 'I did not intend to kill Eiken,' he said. 'I only wanted him to share my own discomforts which I had experienced in eating the poisoned chocolate. And by pretending that the liqueur and the chocolate were sent by Randi Muren, I hoped Eiken would get so angry with her that he would break their engagement.'

The presiding magistrate pointed out that the cigar box had contained a slip of paper signed with Randi Muren's name, asking: 'Do not show it to Anders'. This indicated Brekke did not want anyone hurt save Odvar Eiken and 'the consequences had to be', said the court, 'that Eiken should eat the four pieces of chocolate all by himself, is that not so?'

'I did not give it much thought, but I must admit that the magistrate's reasoning is correct,' Brekke answered.

He could not answer the court's suggestion that the four pieces of chocolate would harm, perhaps kill, Eiken since he had used 'eight times as much powder' as was used in the chocolate he sent to himself.

Answering a question that asked if he would have accepted his dismissal had Randi Muren given it to him, Brekke insisted that he would have done but that she gave continuous proofs of her interest in him. Defence picked this up by saying; 'Do you, then, have in mind certain experiences with her to which you earlier referred and which you did not want to be publicly known?' Brekke agreed.

The Chief of Police, one of the witnesses, denied that any pressure had been brought on Brekke to make him confess. He paid the accused a handsome compliment by saying, 'I soon discovered I had a very intelligent young man in front of me . . . he did not confess anything until the evidence was put in front of him. . . .' Another police officer said that Brekke had discussed with him how many years he would get for the crime, and, in telling the prisoner that it might turn out better than he thought, the police officer added, 'I thought myself at the time that Brekke would only be charged with manslaughter.'

The highlight of the hearing was Randi Muren's evidence, but it was strangely free of the sensations which some newspapers had eagerly anticipated. There was nothing she had to say not already known, though she admitted that perhaps Brekke had reason to

believe her feelings for him were warmer than they really were. When she was asked: 'Could you not have refused him in a more plain and definite way,' she admitted that perhaps she could.

Professor Langfeldt, a psychiatrist, explained that typical of Brekke's condition at the time—what psychiatrists would nominate as dual personality—was the elimination of his moral, ethical, and general intelligence, which meant he concentrated, instead, on pursuing his aims in wrongdoing. Later on he would be bewildered by it all; it would not be possible for him to understand that it concerned himself—the explanations the accused had given to the police, the experts and now the court strengthened this theory.

Expert opinion was to the effect that Brekke fell deeply in love with Randi Muren when he met her, this being his first love affair. Previously he had expended his energies on the various interests which absorbed him—the Scout movement, the Y.M.C.A., and other busy affairs occupying the time of a robust and fit young man. Randi Muren was the only woman who had made any impression on him (he had never before been attracted to anyone and he was entirely free of physical association with any woman). Randi Muren had regarded the friendship as no more than that, spiced—harmlessly enough—with a little flirting. But his feelings were turbulent and, his physical nature being roused, his emotions were violent and perhaps partially uncontrolled. Professor Langfeldt elaborated the position as psychiatrists saw it, delving into Brekke's mentality, using terms like 'sexual paranoia' and 'mental conflict.' He had, Langfeldt continued, tried to overcome the conflict by interesting himself in the cousin to whom Randi Muren had introduced him, this being unsuccessful and again he turned his emotions towards Randi Muren. The conflict, seemingly, solved itself in the split mind that was, we must assume, Nature's way of enabling this tangled young man to protect his mind from his purely physical feelings. Another psychiatrist in court, Dr. Per Ancherson, supported these views.

The court asked a pertinent question of the professor: 'But cannot any change in a person's mind from normal—a sudden flare of jealousy for instance—be considered as that kind of a split mind?' The answer was to the effect that: 'In psychiatry quite large variations are necessary before they can constitute an unsound condition. Neither a sudden flare of emotions or jealousy need be deviations from the normal.'

The jury finally retired and was absent from the court for some two hours. The one woman member, when the jury returned, was

in a distressed state. In Norway the jury, of 10 persons, does not have to reach a unanimous verdict but at least six members must be in accord and while the jury's findings cannot be grounds for an appeal, the sentence of the court can be appealed by prosecution or defence. The jury decision, then, found Carstein Brekke guilty of attempted murder on Odvar Eiken by sending him poisoned chocolate and guilty of the manslaughter of Marianne Svendson. Furthermore, the jury, its majority being eight against two, found the accused guilty of making false accusations against Flemming Rosbörg, but acquitted him of the charge of attempted murder against Odvar Eiken by sending him poisoned liqueur. Brekke was stunned when he heard the words of the jury spokesman.

The court did not take up the demand of the Crown prosecutor who, in his final speech, had demanded life imprisonment. Instead, it gave Brekke 12 years in prison and 10 years loss of rights as a citizen.



But the case was not finished. The grand jury, which has the power in Norway, appealed the sentence, maintaining it was insufficient. Brekke appealed, too, one of his lines of plea being that a newspaper has disinterred information which, he claimed, influenced the court.

While this was pending and being readied for the Supreme Court, excitement was rising in another direction. The psychiatrists came to verbal blows. Professor Bror Kindberg, one of the most famous of Swedish criminologists, more or less began to tear strips off the dual personality argument over Carstein Brekke, and proceeded to rap Professor Langfeldt very sharply indeed.

In the Swedish newspaper *Stockholms Tidningen*, Professor Kindberg dismissed one statement Professor Langfeldt had made on Brekke as 'psychological nonsense', this referring to a remark suggesting that the first kiss had made Brekke a murderer. This might happen in a short story, Kindberg wrote angrily, but he did not expect to find it in a statement by a leading psychiatrist. Had Brekke committed his offences in the identical circumstances in Sweden then Professor Kindberg, had he been consulted, would have recommended Brekke for detention in a lunatic asylum. The fact that Brekke would not understand his responsibility for his actions would, in Sweden, be regarded as strong proof of his extraordinary abnormality and danger to the public.

In Norway a great physician, Johan Scharffenberg, joined in the attack on Professor Langfeldt when he wrote certain qualifying articles in the newspaper *Samtiden*, which defended and widened his theory regarding dual personality. Dr. Scharffenberg pointed out the two sides of the mind belonged to the personality as a whole, otherwise it meant going back to 'obsession' by an 'evil spirit'.

The experts who had already expressed their views on Brekke's psychology in the Court of Assize repeated themselves at the Supreme Court's hearings, this time supported by Dr. Torgeir Kasa, brought in because the Crown wanted Brekke examined by a third psychiatrist.

The Supreme Court decided on 19 May, 1951. Carstein Brekke was unlucky but the prosecuting side was not. The young man learned that the court had lengthened his sentence to 15 years.

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### Some EWMM Contributors . . .

**John Bourne.** Of Scottish birth; lived in the Middle East for a time, then studied medicine in Edinburgh the town where he now lives and practises (under his real name).

**Judy Chard** was born in Gloucestershire. Been a writer for two years; several stories broadcast by B.B.C., and articles published in a number of periodicals. Married; lives in a remote farmhouse in the edge of Dartmoor.

**Bill Knox** was born in Glasgow, 1928. Professional journalist, newspaperman and novelist. Appears on, and does frequent work for, Scottish TV. Has just moved from Ayr to live in Glasgow.

**Walter Reisch** was born in Vienna, lives in Los Angeles. Film script writer, partly responsible for *Congress Dances*, *Ninotchka*, *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, *The Great Waltz*, and many other films, including the classic *Masquerade*.

**Colin Robertson.** Senior press officer for Scotland in World War Two. An active founder-member of the Crime Writers' Association. Born in Hull, lives in Sussex. Latest book is *The Judas Spies*.

**Anthony Ryan** born Lancashire, 1926. Ten years British, Indian, East African armies. London school-teacher. *The Assassins* is his first published story.

**Jeffrey Scott.** Expert writer of science-fiction, now turning as well to crime and espionage stories. Lives in Surrey.

**Peter Wallace.** Born Rhyl; served in the Army, 1953-4. Wrote his first magazine story for *EWMM*, but has written for periodicals. Married, with two children. Lives in Anglesey. No relation to EW.

**Thomasina Weber.** Scottish born, but has made her home in Florida. Specialises in mysteries for grown-ups, but particularly enjoys writing songs and stories for juveniles. Author of a book of songs widely used in USA educational TV.

## BRIEFS

# SCENT of LILAC

JUDY CHARD

*A grim little Grand Guignol  
short-short, with an  
oddly evocative air*

IT MAY SEEM strange that such a sweet perfume as that of the lilac blossom should fill me each succeeding spring with cold horror, and a sickening creeping of the flesh, for it all happened such a long time ago—nearly 30 years this May, in fact.

It was the custom in those days at the end of school term for the long-legged, dowdy girls, who attended boarding schools on the south coast, to be escorted across London by some relative or friend, in the event of their having to catch a homeward bound train at another station.

My escort was always Uncle Robert. He loomed like some nebulous monster at the end of the journey.

I couldn't put my feelings about Uncle Robert into words; to everyone else he seemed a kindly and benign old bachelor. Only I knew instinctively that there was something wrong—something to be feared. He made the ends of my nerves tingle with revulsion.

He was really my great uncle—Gran's brother. He and his other sister Rose, lived in Launceston Gardens, Kensington. Sometimes I spent a few days of my holidays with them, sharing Aunt's bedroom in the prim Victorian house, its front windows looking out over the gardens which gave the Square its name. These were seedy to my country eyes—a few privet bushes, some sooty lilacs, which never struggled into blossom, and straggly grass surrounding a seat whose green paint was chipped and blistered.

Precisely at eight each morning Walker, the maid, would bring Aunt's tea, with a small cup for me on the tray, and a plate of thin bread and butter.

The garden at the back of the house was not much more than a glorified yard, a lawn surrounded by flower beds, flanked by high walls, two gravel paths edged with shining kidney-shaped stones,

and the big lilac tree, whose heavy purple blossom perfumed the May breeze.

At the end of one of these paths was a small brick building, once used for tools and bric-a-brac. Now it housed Uncle Robert's photographic equipment, his dark-room, and a number of felt-covered boards which displayed his collection of photos, taken during his travels all over the world, and, more recently—portraits of young girls.

Each picture, whatever its subject, had one common element—it portrayed perfect, unsullied beauty, captured and frozen forever by the camera.



At some time during my visit I would have to accompany him to this studio, as it was called, to see the latest additions to his collection. In his absence it was forbidden territory. It was curious that this harmless small building should have been the focus of my feelings of fear, and revulsion of Uncle Robert.

With his hand resting on my shoulder, he would take me from study to study, explaining—absorbed—as though it were an audience and not a ten-year-old child he addressed.

He would quote Keats, 'A thing of Beauty is a Joy forever.' "At least it should be," he would add, "providing man does not tamper with it. Here, anyway, it is preserved and held in its perfection, unsullied by age, indulgence, or mood."

This was all rather above my ten-year-old head, but, somehow, I was glad he never wanted to photograph me, thankful my features were too ugly to preserve for immortality.

He would look down at me sadly, "A pity you are so plain, child." He stooped and kissed my cheek, his drooping moustache tickling my mouth, and a choking panic would rise in me. I drew away, pretending to examine some particular photograph, my skin prickling with goose-pimples.

It was on one of these occasions that I noticed Alice.

I gave the girl in the portrait this name because I had recently fallen under the spell of Lewis Carroll's character. I thought the drawings of her quite beautiful, the pale hair held back by a ribbon from the flawless, oval face.

This photograph could have been her. It was larger than usual, and hung alone.

"Who's that?" I asked.



"Oh—just a girl—no one special." He sighed, and added as though to himself, "but to me her face is the personification of beauty and purity."

At that moment Aunt called us for tea, and with relief I burst into the fresh air and tore up the path as though pursued by a demon, drinking in the warm summer scent of the lilac.

At the end of the winter term Uncle Robert saw me across London as usual. We had an hour to spare and went to the Zoo.

It was there I saw Alice.

I tugged his arm and pointed her out.

He pretended not to see her. She turned away when she saw me, but I saw a flicker of recognition in the enormous blue eyes as they rested on Uncle Robert.



Christmas passed, and the spring term. Uncle Robert had gone on one of his photographic tours and Walker, the maid met me, and took me back to Launceston Gardens for lunch before I was put on the train for Kent.

Aunt Rose sat straight as a ramrod in her winged chair. The folded fan of paper and jar of pampas grass were in the grate—sure signs of approaching summer; the french windows were open to the sunlit lawn. She kissed my cheek and dismissed me to the garden until lunch was ready.

The lilac filled the air with such a weight of perfume that it was almost tangible.

On impulse I went to the white painted door of the studio.

I glanced over my shoulder. No one was about. Somehow the place had lost its air of menace with Uncle Robert absent.

I turned the handle and went in.

Here it was peaceful, the hum of traffic remote. A bluebottle buzzed in a cobweb at the window. There was a funny smell—musty and rank—hanging in the air.

The beautiful pictures were in their places, except for the one of Alice.

I began to search the neat piles of paper on the shelves. Negatives, tissue paper, envelopes, mounting squares all tumbled on to the floor.

At the very bottom of the shelf, bent in half so that the beautiful face was distorted, was the photo of Alice.

Someone had put an enormous red cross through it and printed

a four letter word I didn't know across her mouth. Quickly I put everything back as I had found it.

As I rose to go I noticed the door to the dark-room was ajar.

My curiosity aroused, I pushed it open and a shaft of sunlight from the window behind me shone through the dancing motes of dust on a silk stockinged leg and high heeled shoe.

I threw open the door to its full extent.

Alice lay on her back on the floor. A heaving, crawling mass of buzzing flies covered her neck and wide blue eyes, . . . the golden hair was a tangled, bloody mess about her head.

I felt physically sick and the sunlit room rocked and swayed in a giddy circle. I put my hand against the door to steady myself.

At that moment I heard Walker calling me to lunch.

I don't remember getting back to the house. I went to the tiny cloakroom in the hall and was sick. The reek of the dark-room, mingled with the perfume of the lilac, stuck in the back of my throat. I was terrified that the horror of the scene, and the guilt of my invasion of forbidden territory, would show on my face.

I struggled through lunch, pleading a headache. It was with immense relief that I left the house with Walker to catch my train. The fresh air in the spring-warmed streets cleared my head.



When the body was eventually discovered the press went to town on the sordid details of Uncle Robert's crime.

'Alice' was a nursemaid called Edna Harper. Uncle had cut her throat with one of the knives he used for trimming photographs.

No one had seen him take her to the studio, and there seemed no motive for the murder. It wasn't even his baby she was going to have—at least half-a-dozen men came forward and said they had been her lovers.

But his own counsel couldn't get Uncle Robert to say anything in his own defence—all he did was mumble some lines from Keats:

"She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss

"Forever wilt thou love and she be fair . . ."

They put him in a mental home where he died soon after.

But of course I've never been able to explain to anyone why I can't live in a house with lilacs in the garden . . .

# Passport to Murder

COLIN ROBERTSON

FOR THE PAST week Detective-Superintendent Bradley had been free of the problems that occupied him at Scotland Yard. On leave in Switzerland, he had relaxed, his sole cause for concern being his bulging waistline. His weight was creeping up again.

Most of the other day trippers in the tourist coach climbing steadily to the Great St. Bernard carried picnic lunches. Bradley only an apple in the pocket of his sports jacket. With regret but resignation he had decided it must do to sustain his eighteen stone until evening. As the lush valley of the Rhône slipped past he had no presentiment that he was to do without even this snack—or that the elderly Englishwoman sitting opposite him was going to her death.

At the moment she was full of life, her quick bright eyes roving over the Dents du Midi rearing up from the valley, on their right. She was petite with greying hair, and in her dark grey suit reminded him of a lively sparrow. During the trip she had chirped away almost continuously to her young friend, a pretty, hazel-eyed blonde.

Not her daughter, Bradley surmised. There was no facial resemblance, and the girl was tall and less delicately made. She had a rather inhibited manner, saying little. The older woman called her 'Nora,' the girl addressing her more circumspectly 'Mrs. Renton.'

Possibly she was her paid companion, he thought. Mrs. Renton was evidently well to do, for she wore some very good rings and the carton containing her picnic lunch displayed the words 'Hotel des Bains,' one of the most select in Evian.

The coach had now passed St. Maurice, the majestic scenery becoming more wild and wind-ridden as the route took them beyond the Rhône. After Orsières it was a continuous climb past Bourg St. Pierre and, finally, to the St. Bernard pass more than

8,000 feet up.

When they arrived other tourist coaches were already there, and a few private cars, parties being conducted round the ancient monastery, others being taken to see the famous St. Bernard dogs, now no longer needed but a great tourist attraction. The days when many a stranded, exhausted traveller had blessed them were long since past.

Despite the brilliant sunshine it was extremely cold. The snow in the valley had gone, but still gleamed dazzlingly on the rugged shoulders of the Great St. Bernard. Its summit could be reached by a chair-lift snaking its way up the craggy, boulder-strewn slope of the massive col.

Seen from the tourist-sprinkled valley, the final part of the ascent seemed to be precipitous, but this did not deter Mrs. Renton. She had been told by the coach guide that the summit presented a magnificent view of more than a score of glaciers stretching away towards Mont Blanc, and she had no intention of missing it.

"I suppose it *is* quite safe?" Bradley heard the girl, Nora, say. She was eyeing the string of moving chairs with some misgiving.

"Why, of course, dear," was the undaunted reply. "It's been running for years without the slightest mishap. Where are those tickets we bought?"

The girl produced them, handing them to her, but hung back as Mrs. Renton moved towards the attendant.

"Well? What are you waiting for? Come on, Nora."

Still the girl hesitated, gazing up at the more distant part of the chair-lift, evidently far from convinced that it was safe.

"If you don't mind, I'd rather not, Mrs. Renton."

The older woman shrugged, her expression implying that some of the younger generation sadly lacked the adventurous spirit.

"Very well, I'll go by myself. I expect you'll find plenty to see while I'm gone. But don't go into the monastery, Nora. We must see that together."

Clearly she was used to getting her own way.

An attendant assisted her on to one of the continuously moving chairs and, together with others in the coach party, she began to ride up.

That was the last time Bradley saw her alive.

Later, he wished he had gone up himself. Instead, he went along to the kennels nearby where nearly a dozen St. Bernards returned the stares of the tourists with solid dignity, or slept

unconcernedly. Only a puppy there still found this human invasion fascinating, attracting much attention.

Bradley was strolling out into the bright sunshine again when he realised something was wrong. A small crowd had collected at the foot of the chair-lift, two very agitated attendants parrying questions as they pushed their way through. Nobody was ascending on the chair-lift now.

The two men joined another official. There was a brief discussion accompanied by much gesticulation. Then all three hurried away. A few moments later Bradley learned the cause of the disturbance, after approaching a man who had travelled with him in the coach.

"A woman—she's been shot!" he was told.

"Shot?" It was the last thing he had expected to hear. "Where?"

"While she was going up in the chair-lift." The man pointed to the summit of the mountain. "She's still up there. They telephoned down. One of the women in our party, I think—she's dead!"

In response to an urgent call put through to the Canton police headquarters at Sion, an inspector from the *Sûreté* was on his way to take charge, having issued instructions that nobody must be permitted to leave.

Mrs. Renton had been shot through the temple, Bradley learned. The bullet had struck her at an angle, emerging from the crown of her head and clearly indicating that it had been fired from the ground. Evidently the killer had used a silencer, for no sound of a shot had been heard. A woman riding up on the chair-lift immediately behind Mrs. Renton had seen her slump sideways, and thought she must have fainted, the rarified air proving too much for her.

Nobody had seen her murderer, who must have been crouching, well concealed, behind one of the many rocks on the rugged mountainside. Even on the lower slopes there were tendrils of mist, clouds sailing above creating patterns of shadow.

Premeditated murder—and, almost certainly, committed by one of the tourists, Bradley thought, someone who had known that Mrs. Renton would be going up in the chair-lift, and who knew the terrain well.

While waiting for the police the coach guides checked their complement of passengers. Nobody was missing. None of the private cars had driven off before the crime was discovered.

Furthermore, the frontier guards were emphatic that nobody could have slipped through the pass, or otherwise, into Italy, without their knowledge.

So the murderer must have rejoined the throng of tourists, and without a doubt he would have disposed of the gun. He could have hidden it anywhere on the mountainside. And he was not the only tourist who had been out of sight of others. There were quite a few who had wandered off on their own. The process of elimination might prove to be difficult.

Mrs. Renton's young friend, Nora, was inconsolable. Bradley's surmise that she had been a paid companion proved correct, her name Nora Kerley. When the killer had struck, she had been buying some picture postcards in one of the souvenir shops, and on hearing the tragic news had burst into tears, blaming herself bitterly for letting Mrs. Renton go up in the chair-lift.

"She was one of the kindest, nicest women I've known," she said. "Everybody liked her. I just can't believe this has happened—that anyone should want to kill her."

The official investigation, superintended by Inspector Cuyrol on his arrival was conducted with smooth Swiss efficiency. The lists the coach guides had checked were collected, and passports confiscated. It was during this procedure that Bradley's rank came to light.

"Ah, a colleague, I see!" said Cuyrol. He was a wiry man with an aquiline nose and deep set eyes.

"Central Office, Scotland Yard," Bradley told him.

"You have no official reason for being here, monsieur?"

"No, I'm on leave—just another tourist."

"Is that so?" From the look Cuyrol gave him Bradley had the feeling that he would soon be drawn deeper into this investigation. "I see you travelled in the same coach as this unfortunate lady, and were sitting close to her. Did she perhaps exchange a few words with you?"

"No, she spoke to no-one except her companion. But I noticed nothing unusual about her behaviour. She seemed to be enjoying the trip thoroughly."

"And it would appear she knew no one else in your party." He nodded slowly. "You are of the opinion that her murderer did not travel on the same coach?"

"Yes, I am. Otherwise, I think, she might have recognised him. He must have been pretty sure that nothing would dissuade her from going on the chair-lift, which suggests he knew her well.

According to her companion she was a wealthy woman, and generally liked. So, as I see it, there can be only one motive."

"Money." Cuyrol muttered, nodding again. "The killer benefits financially by her death, though probably only indirectly. Yes, I think so, too. You have come to any other conclusions?"

Bradley shrugged. "None that aren't obvious. Since the murderer is still among us he will have got rid of the gun. And he must have made his plans well beforehand, maybe very soon after Mrs. Renton booked this tour."

That had been three days ago, Miss Kerley had told him.

"As I see it, he was already here when she arrived, because she went to the chair-lift almost at once, and it would take time to reach his hiding place on the mountain without being seen. I can't believe he found that spot, simply by chance, today. He knew exactly where he was going."

"Having explored the ground previously, you mean?"

"Yes. He must have been here before, and as he made his plans so thoroughly I don't think you'll find anything wrong with his passport. Of course, you'll be checking the names on the coach lists with the passports."

A more self-important man than Inspector Cuyrol might have resented this observation. But he smiled slightly. *Monsieur le Superintendent*, he realised, was accustomed to exercising authority.

"That we shall attend to," he said. And partly because his official contingent consisted only of a sergeant and another detective, faced with interrogating more than a hundred tourists: "It is good to find someone of your experience here. If you would care to assist me further on this case I should be most grateful, monsieur."

Yes, it was to be a busman's holiday, Bradley thought.

This conversation took place in a room of the inn across the road from the monastery where the body had been taken. Cuyrol had already inspected it, and Bradley having been recruited to the investigation proceeded, everyone there being asked to account for their movements.

The interrogation produced more than a dozen possible suspects those whose stories could not be corroborated. Most of them were English and there were two Americans, also a Frenchman and an Austrian, all of them men. Everyone of them denied all knowledge of the dead woman. Under cross-examination they stated that they had never heard of her before she was shot.

The particulars they gave of themselves failed to suggest otherwise.

Miss Kerley was ushered in and asked if any of their names were familiar to her. No, they were not, she said. She was then asked if she knew any of them by sight. Sadly, she shook her head.

"Either the killer has slipped our net, or we are dealing with an accomplished liar," Cuyrol remarked heavily when he was alone with Bradley again. He was beginning to think it was going to be a lengthy case. "This man—if it is a man!—is clever. He appears to have covered himself completely. I foresee a great deal of checking elsewhere to be done."

Bradley nodded. "I'm pretty certain he won't be a beneficiary in the woman's will. He's too smart to be caught like that."

Cuyrol's sergeant came in, carrying something wrapped in his handkerchief. While the lengthy interrogation had been going on he had been searching for the murder weapon. It was now late afternoon.

He unwrapped the handkerchief, exhibiting a 9 m.m. Mauser automatic fitted with a silencer.

"*Bonne chance!*" Cuyrol exclaimed, brightening a little. "Where did you find it?"

It had been buried near a boulder about four hundred metres up the mountain, he was told.

"Prints?"

"None that I can detect, monsieur. It seems to have been wiped clean."

"Maybe not the magazine," Cuyrol said. "That is the place to look. Let me see."

A few moments later he shook his head, having used a magnifying glass. Any fingerprints on the magazine's oily surface would have been invisible. With a shrug he placed the gun on one side for more detailed examination at Sion.

"If you manage to trace its owner I shall be surprised," Bradley muttered.

The appearance of the sergeant had interrupted a train of thought, his gaze travelling over the tourists' passports. They were lying on the table being used as a desk, those belonging to the suspects spread out in front of Cuyrol.

The dead woman's passport was also there, and as it caught Bradley's eye again he noticed something that had escaped him before. Something rather odd, he thought. Could it be coinci-



dence? Of no importance? Yes, it could, though he found that hard to believe. Surely it was too *much* of a coincidence?

His brows knitted together he picked up one of the suspects' passports, that belonging to an Englishman, Everard Sawyer, aged 22, staying at a hotel in Vevey.

"Come, my friend, what is on your mind?" Cuyrol had noted his absorbed expression. "You have thought of something?"

"Just a hunch." He paused, drumming his fingers on the table. "This passport . . ."

Cuyrol leaned closer. "You find something wrong with it?"

"No, it isn't that. It's in perfect order, as far as I can see, but—" He was staring down at the dark blue cover. "This man Everard Sawyer—let's have him in again."

"You mean, you think—"

Bradley avoided a direct answer.

"I'd like to have another word with him—and Miss Kerley, too. Both together."

Cuyrol conveyed the instruction to the sergeant with a wave of his hand, eyeing Bradley curiously as the man went out.

"Well?" he said.

Still Bradley was evasive, wondering if he was about to make a fool of himself. He had only one single fact to go on. The rest must be all surmise. Sheer guesswork. For the odd thing he had noticed was not necessarily incriminating.

"If you don't mind, Cuyrol," he said, "I'll explain later. My hunch could be entirely wrong. When I talk to these two don't be surprised at anything I say. If I am wrong my face is going to be very red."

Sawyer, a stocky, ruddy-cheeked young man, and Nora Kerley were brought in. Bradley told them to sit down, drawing up chairs for them himself, and deliberately taking his time about it. Meanwhile, neither of them looked at each other, he noticed. Not once, which seemed unnatural in the circumstances.

When they were seated he planted his massive frame directly in front of them.

Then without any preamble he said: "Do you still deny that you know this man, Miss Kerley?"

Startled by the abrupt question her eyes opened wide.

"Why, why—yes." He waited for her to turn her head towards Sawyer. But she didn't, strengthening his suspicion. "I told you—I've never seen him before."

"But you'll admit that you are a beneficiary in Mrs. Renton's

will?" His tone was coldly aggressive. He spoke as if he knew. No hint that he was guessing. "Be careful how you answer. It can be checked."

Held by his steady gaze she coloured slightly, wetting her lips.

"I don't understand. Does it matter?"

"Answer my question, please."

Her eyes flickered before she said: "If she left me anything she said nothing about it to me."

"I suggest she did, Miss Kerley—that she left you a considerable sum, and that you *did* know about it." Now for the plunge, he thought. Bluff and intuition.

He went on. "I think you know Mr. Sawyer very well indeed—and that he inherits nothing in Mrs. Renton's will, though he is probably a relative. Evidently she knew him for what he is—a scoundrel."

This brought a fierce cry of protest from the man as he sprang to his feet. Bradley didn't even look at him, his unwavering gaze fixed on Nora Kerley.

"He is your lover, isn't he?"

"I'm not standing for this!" Sawyer shouted.

"Then sit down!" Without taking his eyes off the girl Bradley's powerful arm shot out, pushing him back on to the chair. "Now, I repeat—he is your lover. A clandestine affair, wasn't it? Wasn't it, Miss Kerley? It had to be kept from Mrs. Renton."

The colour had gone from her cheeks now, her body tense. Her hesitant denial was unconvincing.

"You hatched this plot between you. Sawyer stayed in Vevey, well out of sight, while you were in Evian with Mrs. Renton. I doubt whether she even knew he was in Switzerland. Then at your suggestion she booked this tour three days ago."

He flashed a glance at the seething young man.

"This isn't the first time he's been here. He had to spy out the ground, to make his preparations. It was all arranged, of course, so that you wouldn't come under suspicion. A wicked murder—and of your benefactor."

Her face seemed to have shrunk, the skin drawn tightly over the bones as she dragged her eyes away from him, looking half-imploringly towards Cuyrol. He made no attempt to intervene, his expression as implacable as Bradley's, giving him full support.

By now Sawyer was on his feet again, demanding to be heard, his stocky figure barely coming up to Bradley's shoulder.

"This is outrageous," he snarled, throwing his arms about. "Sheer supposition—not a shred of proof. You can't do this to us! I didn't kill her. How many more times must I tell you that?"

Bradley turned back to the table, picking up the gun very carefully with his handkerchief.

"Yours, I think, Sawyer."

"I've never seen it before."

"Oh, yes you have! You wiped it clean before you hid it—or thought you had. But you overlooked a fingerprint—on the tip of the butt." Holding the gun by the barrel he pointed to the spot. "Here."

Quickly he added: "At police headquarters your prints will be taken. Then we shall have positive proof. It's no use, Sawyer. This fingerprint is going to convict you."

He spoke with absolute certainty. To the girl it foreshadowed the end. There was no need for him to go on. The weaker link broke.

"Oh, Everard! . . . *Everard!*" she wailed. "I told you it wouldn't work. I knew they'd find something . . .!"

They had been taken away to the police car when Cuyrol turned to Bradley, expressing his appreciation.

"I admired your *tour de force*, my friend," he said presently. "You almost had *me* believing there was a fingerprint."

He paused plucking at his lips.

"But I am still curious. Maybe I am dull. Tell me, what did you find so interesting, so illuminating, about Sawyer's passport?"

Bradley smiled. "It was the number."

"The number?"

"Yes. Several married couples had passports numbered consecutively, you know—they had been applied for at the same time, of course—and I suddenly noticed that Sawyer's bore the next number to Mrs. Renton's.

"Discounting coincidence, it suggested he was related to her. Both passports are fairly old. When they were issued, on the same date, he was only a youth. So possibly she took him on his first trip abroad. That I don't know.

"But it occurred to me that if he *was* a relative, the girl was probably his accomplice. She'd told us she didn't know him, not even his name, and—I thought it was worth putting to the test."

period piece

# THE ADVERSARIES

MICHAIL Y. LERMONTOFF

*Published in a small magazine about 130 years ago, this story by a great Russian poet (who died at 27) is both adroit and a good picture of other times and manners*

TAMAN IS THE MOST wretched of all our maritime towns. I almost died of hunger there, besides being nearly drowned.

I arrived very late at night in a wretched *telega*. The coachman stopped his tired horses close to a stone building, which stands by itself at the entrance to the town. A Black Sea Cossack, who was on guard, heard the bells of my carriage, and cried out, with the sharp accent of a person suddenly waked up, "What goes there?"

Out came the sergeant and corporal. I told them I was an officer, travelling by order of the Crown, and that I wanted a billet somewhere.

The corporal took us into the town. All the houses we tried were already occupied. The weather was cold; I had been three nights without sleep. I was very tired, and our useless enquiries ended by irritating me.

"My friend," I said to the corporal, "take me to some place where I can at least lie down, no matter where it is."

"I know a hut in the neighbourhood," replied the corporal, "where you might sleep; but I am afraid it would scarcely suit your honour."

"Go on," I said, paying no attention to his observation.

After much walking through dirty little streets, we at last reached a sort of cabin on the edge of the sea.

The full moon cast its light on the thatched roof and the white walls of my proposed habitation. In the court, surrounded by a sort of palisade, I saw a hut, older and more broken down than the principal one. From this hut the ground sloped rapidly through the court down towards the sea, and I saw at my feet the foam of the troubled waters. The moon seemed to be contemplating the restless element, which was undergoing her influence. By the rays of the ruler of the night, I could make out, at a considerable distance from the shore, two ships, whose black sails stood out like spiders' webs against the dull tints of the sky. 'This will do,' I said to myself, 'to-morrow morning I shall start for Ghelendchik.'

A Cossack of the line was acting as my servant. I told him to take out my trunk and send away the postillion; after which I called the master of the house. I could get no answer. I knocked, but there was still no reply. I knocked again, and at last a boy of about 14 showed himself.

"Where's the master of the house?"

"There is none," returned the child, in the dialect of Little Russia.

"No master! then where is the mistress?"

"Gone into the village."

"Who will open the door then?" I cried, at the same time kicking at it.

The door opened of itself, and out came a wave of damp steam.

I struck a match, and saw by its light a blind boy, standing motionless before me.

I must here say that I am strongly prejudiced against the blind, the deaf, the lame, the hunch-backed; in short, against the deformed in general. I have remarked that there is always a singular correspondence between the physical formation of a man and his moral nature; as though by the loss of a member the individual lost certain faculties of the soul.

I examined the child's face; but what can one make of a physiognomy without eyes? I looked at him for some time, with a feeling of compassion, when suddenly I saw on his lips a cunning smile, which produced upon me a very disagreeable impression. 'Could this blind boy be not so blind as he appeared?' I said to myself. Answering my own question I said that the boy was evidently

suffering from cataract, and that the appearance of cataract cannot be simulated. Why, moreover, should he affect blindness? Yet in spite of my argument I still remained vaguely suspicious.

"Is the mistress of the cabin your mother?" I said to the boy.

"No."

"Who are you, then?"

"A poor orphan," he replied.

"Has the mistress any children?"

"She has one daughter, who has gone to sea with a Tartar."

"What Tartar?"

"How do I know? A Tartar of the Crimea, a boatman from Kertch."

I went into the hut. Two benches, a table, and a large wardrobe, placed near the stove, composed the whole of the furniture. No holy image against the wall—bad sign!

The sea-breeze came in through the broken panes of the window. I took a wax candle from my portmanteau, and after lighting it prepared to install myself. I placed on one side my sabre and my carbine, laid my pistols on the table, stretched myself out on a bench, and, wrapping myself up in my fur-lined coat, lay down.

My Cossack took possession of the other bench. Ten minutes afterwards he was fast asleep; I, moreover, was still awake, and could not drive from my mind the impression made upon me by the boy.

An hour passed. Through the window fell upon the floor the fantastic light of the moon.

Suddenly a shadow was cast, where before there had been bright light. I got up, and went to the window. A human figure passed once more, and then disappeared—heaven knows where. I could scarcely believe that it had escaped by the slope into the sea; yet there was no other issue.

Throwing on my overcoat, and taking my sabre, I went out of the cabin, and saw the blind boy before me. I concealed myself behind the wall, and he passed on confidently, but with a certain cautiousness. He was carrying something under his arm, and advanced slowly down the slope towards the sea. 'This is the hour,' I said to myself, 'in which speech is restored to the dumb and sight to the blind.'

I followed him at some distance, anxious not to lose sight of him.

During this time the moon became covered with clouds, and a black fog rose over the sea. It was just possible to distinguish in the darkness a lantern on the mast of a ship at anchor, close to the

shore. The waves were rolling in, and threatened, if he continued to advance, to swallow up my blind adventurer. He was now so near the sea, that with another step he would be lost. But this was not the first of his nocturnal expeditions; so at least I concluded from the agility with which he now sprang from rock to rock, while the sea poured in beneath his feet. Suddenly he stopped as though he had heard some noise, sat down upon a rock, and placed his burden by his side. He was now joined by a white figure walking along the shore. I had concealed myself behind one of the rocks, and overheard them.

"The wind," said a woman's voice, "is very violent; Janko will not come."

"Janko," replied the blind boy, "Janko is not afraid of the wind."

"But the clouds get thicker and thicker."

"In the darkness it is easier to escape the coast-guard."

"And what if he gets drowned?"

"You will have no more bright ribbons to wear on Sunday."

As I listened to this colloquy, I remarked that the blind boy, who had spoken to me in the Little Russian dialect, talked quite correctly the true Russian language.

"You see," he continued, clapping his hands, "I was right. Janko fears neither the sea, nor the wind, nor the fog, nor the coast-guard. Listen! It is not the breaking of the waves I hear. No, it is the noise of his oars."

The woman got up, and, with an anxious look, tried to pierce the darkness. "You are wrong," she said, "I hear nothing."

I also tried to see whether there was not some sort of craft in the distance, but could distinguish nothing. A moment later, however, a black speck showed itself among the waves, now rising, now falling. At last I could make out the form of a boat dancing on the waters, and rapidly approaching the shore.



The man who was guiding it must have been a bold sailor to cross on such a night an arm of the sea some 14 miles across, and must have had good reasons for braving so much danger. I watched the frail little craft which was now diving and plunging like a duck through the breakers. It seemed as though she must the next moment be dashed to pieces on the shore, when suddenly the skilful rower turned into a little bay, and there, in compara-

tively calm water, effected a landing.

The man was of middle height, and wore on his head a cap of black sheep-skin. He made a sign with his hand, when the two mysterious persons who had been talking together, joined him. Then the three united their forces to drag from the boat a burden which seemed to be so heavy, that I cannot even now understand how so slight a craft could have supported such a weight. They at last hoisted the cargo on their shoulders, then walked away and soon disappeared.

The best thing for me to do now was to return to my resting-place. But the strange scene I had witnessed had so struck me that I waited impatiently for daybreak.

My Cossack was much surprised when, on waking up, he found me fully dressed. I said nothing to him about my nocturnal excursion. I remained for some little time looking through the window with admiration at the blue sky, studded with little clouds, and the distant shore, the Crimea, stretched along the horizon like a streak of violet, ending in a rock, above which could be seen the tower of a lighthouse. Then I went out, and walked to the fort of Chanagora to ask the commandant when I could go to Ghelendchik.

Unfortunately the commandant could give me no positive answer; the only vessels in port were stationary ones, and trading ships which had not yet taken in their cargo. "Perhaps," he said, "in three or four days a mail packet will come in, and then something can be arranged."

I went back in a very bad humour to my lodging. At the door stood the Cossack, who, coming towards me with rather a scared look, said enquiringly:

"Bad news?"

"Yes," I answered. "Heaven knows when we shall get away from here."

At these words the anxiety of the soldier seemed to increase. He came close to me, and murmured, in a low voice:

"This is not a place to stop at. I met just now a Black Sea Cossack of my acquaintance—we were serving in the same detachment last year. When I told him where we had put up: 'Bad place,' he said, 'bad people.' And what do you think of that blind boy? Did any one ever before see a blind person running about from one place to another; going to the bazaar, bringing in bread and water? Here they seem to think nothing of it."

"Has the mistress of the place come in?"



"This morning, while you were out, an old woman came with her daughter."

"What daughter? Her daughter is away."

"I don't know who it is, then. But look, there is the old woman sitting down in the cabin."

I went in. A good fire was shining in the stove, and a breakfast was being prepared, which, for such poor people, seemed to me rather a luxurious one. When I spoke to the old woman, she told me that she was stone deaf.

It was impossible, then, to talk with her. I turned to the blind boy, and, taking him by the ear, said:

"I say, you little wizard, where were you going last night with that parcel under your arm?"

He at once began to cry, and then sobbed out:

"Where was I going last night? I went nowhere. And with a parcel! What parcel?"

The old woman now proved that her ears, when she so desired it, were by no means closed.

"It is not true," she cried. "Why do you tease an unfortunate boy? What do you take him for? What harm has he done you?"

I could stand the noise no longer. So I went out, determined somehow or other to find the solution of this riddle.

Wrapped up in my overcoat, I sat down on a bench before the door. Before me broke the waves of the sea, still agitated by the tempest of the night. Their monotonous noise seemed to resemble the confused murmurs of a town. As I listened I thought of bygone years—of the years I had passed in the north, of our bright, fresh capital; and little by little I became absorbed in my recollections.

About an hour passed, perhaps more. Suddenly the cadences of a singing voice struck my ear. I listened, and heard a strange melody, now slow and sad, now rapid and lively. The sounds seemed to fall from the sky. I looked up, and on the roof of the cabin I saw a young girl, in a straight dress, with dishevelled hair, like a naiad. With one hand placed before her eyes to keep off the rays of the sun, she looked towards the distant horizon and still continued her song.

It seemed to me that this was the woman whose voice I had heard the night before on the seashore. I looked again towards the singer, but she had disappeared. A moment after she passed before me, singing another song and snapping her fingers. She went to the old woman and said something to her. The old

woman seemed annoyed. The young girl burst into a laugh. Then she came close to me, suddenly stopped and looked at me fixedly, as though surprised to see me. Then turning away with an air of indifference, she walked quietly towards the shore.

But her manoeuvres were not yet at an end. All the rest of the day I saw her at short intervals, always singing and dancing. Strange creature! There was nothing in her face to denote insanity. On the contrary, her eyes were intelligent and penetrating. They exercised on me a certain magnetic influence, and seemed to expect a question. But whenever I was on the point of speaking she took to flight with a sly smile on her lips.



I had never seen such a woman before. She could scarcely be called beautiful; but I have my own ideas on the subject of beauty. There was a thoroughbred look about her, and with women as with horses, there is nothing like breed. It can be recognised in the walk and in the shape of the hands and feet. The nose is also an important feature. In Russia regular noses are more rare than little feet. My siren must have been about 18 years of age.

What charmed me in her was the extraordinary suppleness of her figure, the singular movements of her head, and the long, fair hair, hanging down in waves of gold on her neck, and her nose, which was perfectly formed.

In her sidelong glance there was something dark and wild; as there was something fascinating in the pure lines of her nose. The light-hearted singer recalled to me the Mignon of Goethe, that fantastic creation of the German mind. Between these two personages there was indeed a striking resemblance. The same sudden transitions from restless agitation to perfect calm; the same enigmatic words and the same songs.

Towards the evening I stopped my Undine at the door of the hut, and said to her:

"Tell me, my pretty one, what you were doing to-day on the roof?"

"I was seeing in what direction the wind blew."

"How did that concern you?"

"Whence blows the wind, thence comes happiness."

"And your singing was to bring you good fortune?"

"Where singing is heard, there is joy."

"But what should you say if your singing caused unhappiness?"

"If unhappiness arrives it must be borne. And from grief to joy the distance is not great."

"Who taught you these songs?"

"No one; I dream and I sing; those who understand me listen to me, and those who do not listen to me cannot understand me."

"What is your name?"

"Ask those who baptised me."

"And who baptised you?"

"I do not know."

"Ah! you are very mysterious; but I know something about you."

There was no sign of emotion on her face; her lips did not move.

"Last night," I continued, "you were on the seashore." Then I told her the scene I had witnessed. I thought this would have caused her to evince some symptom of anxiety, but it had no such effect.

"You assisted at a curious interview," she said to me with a laugh, "but you do not know much, and what you do know you had better keep under lock and key, as you would keep some precious treasure."

"But if," I continued, with a grave and almost menacing air, "I were to relate what I saw to the commandant?"

At these words she dashed away, singing, and disappeared like a frightened bird. I was wrong in addressing this threat to her. At the moment I did not understand all its gravity.

The night came. I told my Cossack to prepare the tea-urn, lighted a wax candle, and sat down at the table, smoking my long pipe. I was drinking my tea when the door opened, and I heard the rustling of a dress. I rose hastily and recognised my siren.

She sat down silently before me, and fixed me with a look which made me tremble; one of those magical looks which had troubled my life in earlier days. She seemed to expect me to speak to her, but some undefinable emotion deprived me of the faculty of speech. Her countenance was as pale as death. In this paleness I thought I could see the agitation of her heart. Her fingers struck mechanically on the table; her body seemed to shudder; her bosom rose violently and the moment afterwards seemed compressed.

This species of comedy tired me at last, and I was about to bring it to an end, in the most prosaic manner, by offering my fair visitor a cup of tea; then suddenly she rose, and taking my head in her hands, gazed at me with all the appearance of passionate tenderness.

A cloud covered my eyes, and I wished in my turn to kiss her, but she escaped like a snake, murmuring as she did so, "To-night, when everything is quiet, meet me on the shore." Then she disappeared, upsetting as she did so my tea-urn and my solitary light.

"She is the very mischief!" cried my Cossack, who had been looking out for his share of the tea.

"Listen," I said to him. "If you hear a pistol-shot, hurry down as fast as you can to the shore."

He rubbed his eyes, and replied mechanically, "Yes, sir."



I placed my pistol in my belt, and went out. The siren was waiting for me at the top of the path leading down to the sea, lightly clad in a stuff which clung to her waist like a scarf.

"Follow me," she said, taking me by the hand.

We walked down the rocky path in such a manner that I cannot understand how I failed to break my neck. Then we turned sharply to the right, as the blind boy had done the night before. The moon was not yet up. Two little stars, like the fires of light-houses, relieved the darkness. The agitated waves lifted and let fall in regular cadence a solitary boat close to the shore.

"Get in," she said. I hesitated, for I confess that I have not the least taste for sentimental excursions on the sea. But it was impossible to refuse. She leapt into the barque, I followed her, and off we went.

"What does all this mean?" I said, getting angry.

"It means," she replied, making me sit down on a bench, and putting her arms round my waist, "it means that I love you." Her burning cheek was close to mine, and I felt her hot breath on my face. Suddenly I heard something fall into the water. Instinctively my hand went to my belt. The pistol was no longer there!

A horrible suspicion seized me. I looked at her. We were far from the shore and I could not swim. I tried to escape from her embrace, but she clung to me like a cat, and almost succeeded by a sudden jerk in throwing me out of the boat which was already on one side. I contrived, however, to restore the equilibrium; and then began, between my perfidious companion and myself, a desperate struggle, in which I employed all my strength, while feeling that the abominable creature was overcoming me by her agility.

"What do you mean?" I said to her, squeezing her little hands

so tightly that I heard her fingers crack; but whatever pain I may have caused her she did not utter a word. Her nature could not thus be overcome.

"You saw us," she cried at last. "You want to denounce us." Then by a rapid and violent effort she threw me down. Her body and mine were now bending over the side of the frail craft, and her hair was in the water. The moment was a critical one. I got up on my knees, took her with one hand by the hair, with the other by the throat, and when I had at last compelled her to release my clothes, I threw her into the sea.

Twice her head reappeared above the waves. Then I saw her no more.

In the bottom of the boat I found an old oar, with which, after much labour, I succeeded in getting to the shore. As I walked back to the hut by the path leading to the sea, I looked towards the place where the night before the blind boy had been awaiting the arrival of the sailor. The moon at this moment was shining in the sky, and I fancied I could discern on the seashore a white figure. Filled with curiosity, I concealed myself behind a sort of promontory, from which I could remark what was going on around me. What was my surprise, and I almost say my joy, when I saw that the white figure was my naiad? She was wringing the water out of her long hair, and her wet dress clung to her body. A boat, which I could just see in the distance, was coming towards us. Out of it sprang the same boatman whom I had seen the night before, with the same Tartar cap. I now saw that his hair was cut in the Cossack fashion, and that from his girdle hung a large knife.

"Janko," cried the young girl, "all is lost."

Then they began to talk, but in so low a voice that I could not hear them.

"Where is the blind boy?" said Janko at last, raising his voice.

"He will be here soon," was the answer.

At that very moment the blind boy appeared, carrying on his back a packet, which he placed in the barque.

"Listen," said Janko, "keep a good watch here; the things you know are valuable. Tell"—(here a name was uttered which I could not catch) "that I am no longer in his service. Things have taken a bad turn. He will see me no more. The situation is so dangerous that I must get something to do elsewhere. He will not find such another very easily. You may add that, if he had rewarded more liberally the dangerous services rendered to him,

Janko would not have left him in the lurch. If he wants to know where to find me—where the wind howls, where the sea foams, that is where I am at home."

After a moment's silence, Janko went on: "Say she accompanies me. She cannot remain here. Tell the old woman that she has done her time, and that she ought to be satisfied. We shall not see her again."

"And I?" murmured the blind boy.

"I cannot be troubled about you."

The young girl got into the boat, and with her hand made a sign to her companion.

"Here," he said to the blind boy, "that will do to buy a gingerbread."

"Nothing more?" replied the child.

"Yes, take this," and a piece of money fell upon the sands.

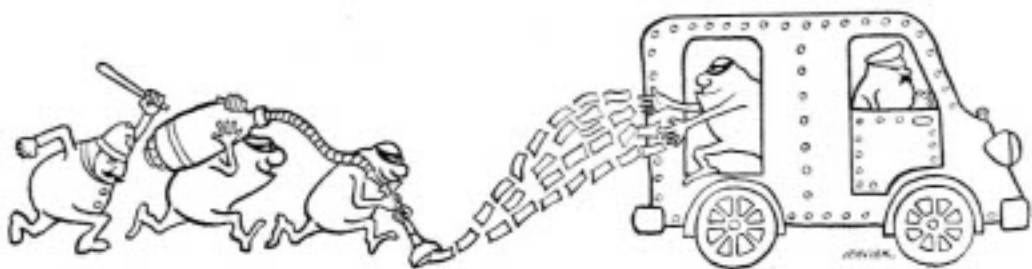
The blind boy did not pick it up.

Janko took his place in the boat. The blind boy remained sitting down on the seashore, and he seemed to be crying. Poor fellow! his grief afflicted me. Why had fate thrown me in the midst of this peaceful circle of smugglers? As a stone troubles the water, I had brought disorder into these lives, and like the stone, moreover, I had very nearly sunk.

When I got back to the cabin, my Cossack was so fast asleep that it would have been cruel to disturb him. I lighted the candle, and saw that my little box containing my valuables, my sabre with silver mountings, my Circassian dagger (given to me by a friend), had all been carried off. I now understood what the packet placed in the boat by the blind boy must have contained.

I woke up my Cossack with a blow, reproached him for his negligence, and fairly lost my temper. But my anger could not make me find what I had lost.

And how could I complain to the authorities? Should not I have been laughed at if I told them that I had been robbed by a blind boy, and almost drowned by a young girl?



# The Eyes of the Mind

JEFFRY SCOTT

*Material clues are invaluable  
but at times they can be  
shadow rather than  
substance*

SO I SAT there, a miserable old toad of a widower, thinking about men and women. And the things they will do for and to and about each other. One tends to produce profound rubbish of this type, during lonely dialogues with a bottle of gin.

My feet were frozen, but the bed next door was chillier yet. Anyway, my stomach was warm from the drink; there seemed little point in stirring. Frankly, I wouldn't have wagered money on whether I was awake at all.

Every half hour a clapped-out old Hunter from the special monitoring flight would set the windows chattering as it swept over the range. And every 20 minutes the perimeter duty Land Rover grumbled past the bungalow.

If the Barleycorn Project did nothing else, it certainly managed to turn night into day.

I snatched the phone in mid-peal.

Cannon sounded surprised; a little peevish. "It's one in the morning."

"I have a clock of my own, Major. What else is new?"

"It's just that I didn't expect you to be awake. Things are happening over here."

"Here being where?"

Cannon took a moment to sort that out. "Security block. Could you come over." It wasn't a question.

"What's up?"

"I can't go into it over the phone. It concerns . . . Purdue."

Surprise, surprise. This was a lovely way to spend an evening.

If one happened to like a crawling spine and a bad taste in the gullet.

Purdue was on the Barleycorn Project team. Not a particularly important member, perhaps. But quite important enough.

"Give me a clue as to what it's all about."

Cannon made one of those wordless noises. "No-can-do," he said rapidly. "But it's important." Then the voice steadied and he drawled: "Be a good chap and get over here ten minutes ago."

A grammar school product, the major. His efforts to overlay the background were comically zealous. I tried to get into the spirit of the thing. "I've arrived."

"Good man." He hung up on me.

Ludd, the R.A.F. Regiment driver, had the staff car's door open before I reached the front gate. "Hop in, sir. Rotten night—black as the inside of a cow's belly, and cold as hell."

"I thought Hades was distinguished by its heat."

Ludd thought it over, driving at great speed down the crown of the runway. "Reckon you got a point there, Mr. Dugdale. Major Cannon's fair doing his nut down at Security," he added with a touch of pleased malice.

Being a policeman, albeit retired, put me a grade above the vile civilians, yet low enough to be nattered with about officers.

He gave me a sideways glance. "The buzz is that one of the tame boffins has gone missing. In Moscow by now, I dare say."

"Belt up, Ludd."

"Okay, sir. But Major Cannon's in a right two-and-eight over it. Forgot to comb his hair." Ludd snorted contempt and pulled up outside the Security block. "Mind how you go, sir. We'll be losing you, next."



Cannon's overlong, blue-black locks stuck out around the edges of his service cap like errant wings, so Ludd had been telling no more than the truth. Dr. Farley, head of the Barleycorn Project, looked more conventional in his green thornproof suit—until you noticed a fringe of blue-and-white pyjama trouser peeping beneath his turn-ups.

Farley spoke first. "This is terrible, Inspector. Purdue appears to have defected."

"That's a big assumption," I soothed him. "I saw Purdue myself at seven o'clock, so he can't have got far."



"You did?" Cannon blinked at me. "What was Purdue doing at seven?"

"Talking to me." I turned to Farley, trying to ease the snub. "How much does Purdue know about the project, Doctor?"

"Very little," he shrugged. "But that's not the point. Barley-corn's the biggest thing since the Manhattan project in the last war. If we turn out to have a leak on this one, too, the Americans will crucify us."

"Seven o'clock, eh?" Cannon was glaring at me. "That still gives Purdue six hours start."

"If he *has* run away," I reminded him. "By the way, how did we know he was missing?"

Cannon smiled thinly. "I got an anonymous phone call, around midnight. The caller said that we ought to investigate the activities of Purdue. That Purdue had been seen leaving messages by a signpost on the heath."

It all had the wrong smell, the wrong feel. "Purdue's been screened," I objected. "Fair enough, he goes for walks on the heath. That doesn't make him another Fuchs."

Farley winced and cleared his throat. "The Inspector's right, Major Cannon. Maybe we're jumping to conclusions. Purdue could be hurt." The thought made him brighten. "Lying on the heath at this moment, perhaps, having turned his ankle."

Cannon forgot himself so far as to sneer. "He went for a stroll in the middle of a blustery autumn night? Oh no, he's made a bolt for . . . for somewhere."

Chewing his lip, he swung to face me. "As OIC Security, I've put in a red alert to Whitehall. The watch will be on at ports and airline offices. Though, if my hunch is right, Purdue will oil out by some back way."

There was real worry in his tone. "By God, Dugdale, heads are going to roll over this. *You* were supposed to be watching him."

"Among about twenty others. Anyway, I *did* watch him. We were quite friendly. If he had plans to defect, they weren't evident this evening."

"Well, he wouldn't advertise the fact." Cannon sneered again, unaware that he had contradicted his earlier hint at negligence on my part.

I wandered over to the window. Ludd had been right—it *was* dark.

"Seems an odd time to go," I mused. "The nearest station is five miles away, and the last trains go at nine p.m. He'd have to

walk there, and to the buses.”

“Unless he had a car waiting—by arrangement.” Cannon was reluctant to lose his pet theory.

“Never. A strange car, late at night, out in this backwater? The locals would notice it. And the Other Lot don’t like being noticed.”

Cannon conceded the point with a grunt. “Where the hell *is* the fellow, then?” He joined me by the window, peering over my shoulder.

I could smell booze, and sweat. The major was a worried man; and rightly so.

“His wife may know.”

Cannon gave his lower lip a little more punishment. “I spoke to her briefly, when I called to check on this telephone tip. She was pretty distraught when we discovered that Purdue had done a bunk.”

I started for the door. “Then she may have calmed down by now. A man has no secrets from his valet—and precious few from his wife.”

Cannon flushed and stared down at his glossy brown boots. “I . . . I, er, ordered a W.R.A.F. girl over from the Medical Centre, told her to give Mrs. Purdue a sedative and stay the rest of the night with her.”

Great. Typical Cannon stuff; always a sucker for a pretty face.

“We can still give the drum a right going-over.” He stared back, blankly. “Excuse my loutish slang, Major. Make a thorough search of Purdue’s dwelling.” I couldn’t keep the disgust out of my voice.

“Very well,” Cannon snapped. “You may as well go back to bed, Dr. Farley. We’ll take it from here.”

“If I can sleep,” Farley moaned. I grinned at him, couldn’t help it. We all had our problems, it seemed.



The camp had been very big in the military world about the time of Victoria. Then it went to sleep until the 1914-18 fracas, flourished briefly, and was forgotten until some scientist with bad dreams and a good brain came up with the Barleycorn Project.

The camp, with its antique ranges, had the space. Square miles of it. And being out on the moors, miles from the nearest town, it was an ideal site.

Suddenly, homes had to be made for 300 boffins and 250 assorted soldiers and airmen. Not surprisingly, the result was a lunatic's nightmare of gracious living.

Purdue had been given a concrete hutch with a mauve front door and green shutters. Other houses in the same terrace had doors painted red, blue, and yellow, just in case any tenant became confused.

Cannon brushed the mauve woodwork as though the paint was still wet. I pushed past to give it a good hammering.

Soon a sensible-looking little W.R.A.F. corporal was ushering us in. "Mrs. Purdue's sound asleep now, sir," she told Cannon.

He blushed once more and managed a forlorn leer. "Great stuff, my dear. Now sit in a corner and don't touch anything. This gentleman and I have to look around the place."

He jerked a hand at the ceiling. "You take the upstairs rooms, Dugdale. I'll go through his papers."

The bathroom told me little, apart from the fact that Purdue was a mild health fanatic. The medicine cabinet held enough non-prescription tablets to stock a shop.

The spare bedroom had even less to offer.

After checking to see that Purdue wasn't lurking behind the hot-water tank in the airing cupboard on the landing, I went into the other bedroom.

A little lamp with a fussy pink shade glowed softly beside the double bed. Snoring faintly, Mrs. Purdue lolled across it. A waterfall of blonde hair obscured most of her face; spectacular breasts heaved regularly.

I discovered that I was a one-woman man, the day my wife died in a road accident. But one could see that most men would be able to look at her without wincing.

Not a girl to run away from, surely. Though the beautiful ones are often the bitchiest.

I moved to the wardrobe. Her clothes took up most of the hangers, while Purdue's two modest suits, plus a blazer and flannels, squeezed into a corner. That figured—he had been wearing fawn slacks and an anorak earlier, and those were missing.

Shoes squatted neatly on a brass rod at the bottom. Ignoring the woman's lethal range of spike heels, I concentrated on the male footwear.

There was a pair of golf shoes, a pair of black city shoes, and some sandals. All bore smudges of whitewash and green paint,

on toes and sides,

Work with it long enough, and you can pick up an evil aura like a TV set picks up pictures. A fancy word, evil. But that was what I sensed, looking at the white and green marks.

For I had seen whitewash and green paint somewhere else.

I took out a handkerchief, and used it, and put it away, feeling sick. At that moment, Cannon joined me.

"Downstairs rooms are as clean as a baby's bottom. After it's had a bath, of course." He sounded almost cheerful until he met my eyes. "What's the matter?"

"His shoes. There in the wardrobe."

Cannon didn't bend down. He merely stiffened for a heartbeat. "Green paint. I've seen green p—Oh lor'—"

"Exactly. The new fuel tanks by the main runway." I was ahead of him on the stairs. This time we caught Ludd napping.

"Main runway," Cannon yelled. "Step on it, man."

"General speed limit of fifty em-pee-aitch . . . sir." Ludd was sullen.

I gripped Cannon's forearm. "If we're right, there's no particular hurry." He scowled at the back of Ludd's bristly head but said no more.



The fuel tanks were a quarter of a mile from the runway, low mounds of freshly-scarred earth among grass which rippled silver in the headlights.

Ludd, unbidden, pulled a big torch from beneath the dashboard and led us to the first one. "No fuel in any of these yet." He addressed me, turning a shoulder to Cannon.

"Never mind that. Check all the hatches."

Now I could smell the fresh paint, green on the iron lids, surrounded by thick white lines.

Ludd heaved a hatch upwards. The torch's beam showed a spidery ladder vanishing into a cube of blackness. "Nothing there." His voice echoed. And the slammed hatch sounded like a dungeon door.

We shivered to the next hatch, and the next. And then Ludd was gaping, the sword of light was falling on a huddled thing at the foot of a ladder.

Cannon scrambled down. "Don't touch anything." My voice was too high, too sharp. Cannon called for more light, gazed up,

and shook his head.

Back on the surface, he retched several times. "Bloody nasty business. Purdue's hands and feet are tied—loose knots in soft cord. And there's a big bruise on his forehead."

"So?"

Cannon wiped his mouth. "We can't discuss it here." He spat into the night and wiped his mouth again. "Put the hatch back," he ordered Ludd. "Go on, put it back, damn you. The man's dead."

With Ludd sent to guide an ambulance to the tanks, Cannon collapsed into the swivel chair behind his office desk.

"I could do with a drink. What a sordid mess."

"Sordid," I repeated flatly.

"Well, I don't have to draw pictures, do I? From the traces on his shoes, Purdue had been down there before. You must have encountered similar cases—men who get their kicks out of tying themselves up in outlandish places."

Cannon grimaced and hunched forward. "Well . . . Purdue must have been like that. Only tonight, he slipped and fell after tying himself. If the crack on the head didn't finish him, the cold must have. It was like an icebox down there."

I was playing with an ashtray from the desk. It was the base of a shell, neatly sectioned. I regarded Cannon over the rim.

"Why did you have to kill him, Major?"

He lunged forward, and I let him have a pound or more of steel along the side of his head.



Next morning, a colonel from the army's S.I.B. side was congratulating me.

"A nasty affair," he said. "But at least there's no security aspect."

"Unless you count a security man murdering one of the very people he's there to protect."

The old chap gave me an odd look. "Umm . . . well, there is that. I still don't see how you got onto Cannon so quickly."

I felt three times my real age, my eyes were bedded in sand, and my stubble was sharp enough to sandpaper pine planking.

"It wasn't so great, you know. Purdue came to me yesterday with some roundabout talk. It boiled down to the fact that a security man was having an affair with his wife, and that he

intended to report the matter.

"Now, there are only two security men, and I'd never met Mrs. Purdue."

I wondered if the old boy would spot the gaps. He did.

"Yes, that explains your suspicion. But it wasn't proof—nothing like it."

I gave him a little grudging respect. "Suspecting the right man is half the battle, sir. Cannon was clever, but I stayed a move ahead."

"In what way?"

"I was lucky enough to see that he was relying on a two-fold plan. Purdue must have approached him after seeing me, and given the same warning. Cannon panicked and killed him—I'm prepared to accept his version; that he hit Purdue in a rage, out behind the house, and that Purdue fell against a wall.

"Then Cannon thought fast. He took the body to that tank, and arranged things to look like a pervert's accident. Then he returned to Purdue's house with the tale of an anonymous phone call and 'discovered' that Purdue wasn't there.

"Cannon made an excuse to go upstairs—to wash his hands, or whatever—and smeared Purdue's shoes with paint and whitewash.

"Finally he phoned me. If I swallowed the theory that Purdue was on the run, well and good. If I didn't—as it turned out—he could slip into stage two, and let me find the paint clue.

"If the defection story had gone down, he would have recovered the body from the tank the following night, and buried it somewhere. He was one of the few men who could go anywhere on the station, at any time."

The colonel thumped the table. "Yes, I see all that. But how could you be *sure*?"

I yawned and stretched. "Sorry sir, I'm whacked. Oh, yes, the proof.

"Finding that paint was too convenient, somehow, too cut-and-dried. So I wiped all the traces away. When I said 'shoes' to Cannon, he 'saw' what he expected to see, that's all.

"He spoke of clues which no longer existed. And that proved he had created them. If I hadn't tripped him that way, there'd have been another. Once the suspicion was there, Cannon was finished.

"In a way, Purdue avenged himself—hours before he died."

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# The Sad Resurrectionist

John Bourne

*Fact, fiction, and gin can be  
taken separately, or they  
can be fascinatingly  
combined . . .*

IT WAS QUITE a pleasant public house although the Grassmarket is hardly the most salubrious part of Edinburgh. I knew most of the regulars by sight, and this made me feel at home, though I expect they were much the same as the regulars anywhere else. Whisky was far cheaper in '72 and I think (though this may merely be nostalgia) that it tasted better too. At any rate, I was in my favourite pub with my favourite tippie at my elbow and at peace with the world.

The old boy in the corner was holding forth again. When he was sober he was silent. When he was drunk the words seemed to escape at random. He was an odd chap, and I found myself intrigued by him. His age was impossible to judge. He was incredibly shabby and decrepit, but in the interval between the drink that loosened his tongue and the point eight gins later when he became maudlin, he appeared both educated and intelligent.

"I tell you—we'd never have done it if it hadn't been for Munro!"

I decided to join him and find out more about him. I was, after all, a writer, and any 'character' was grist to my mill.

"What Munro?" I asked. "Anyone I know?"

The old man's head jerked round; he seemed to resent my sudden intrusion into his conversation.

"You wouldn't know him. He's been dead for over thirty years."

He sat in complete silence for a full five minutes and the others at the table drank up and left.

"Who was he, then?" I ventured. "The man you were talking about."

"Munro tertius. You'll have heard of him?"

I shook my head.

"Aye, well that's perhaps not surprising. He was professor of anatomy in the university here, and so were his father and grandfather before him. The first two were great men in their way. Munro tertius lived on his name and lectured from his grandfather's notes."

There was another silence.

"What did he make you do?"

"He made us resurrectionists, the old hypocrite. He made us grave-robbers and body snatchers. Knox got caught. Munro was the crafty one."

"Professor Munro employed you to steal bodies?"

"He never mentioned the subject. But he forced us to do it, just the same."

"I don't understand."

The old man's attention was wandering. He wasn't really listening to me or thinking about what he was saying. The barman appeared at my shoulder and I found myself paying for both drinks.



As the old man sipped his gin, he came to life again, and picked up the thread of the conversation.

"It was like this," he said. "There were three lads wanting to be surgeons—William Andrews, Jamie McPherson and me. When we left the Royal High School in eighteen twenty we went to Knox at Surgeon's Hall to enrol in his classes. But they were full. As we had to learn anatomy, that left Munro at the University.

"Munro told us that he would be delighted to take us, but bodies were very scarce and we would have to provide our own material for dissection."

"And he told you to steal a body?"

"Not in so many words. Perhaps he thought we were rich enough to pay someone to do our stealing for us. But, man, don't you see it? He hadn't the guts to get his own bodies like Knox did. So he forced laddies like us into the game. We had to be surgeons—we had decided this years before—and to become surgeons we needed dissection. We were to pay the fees and take the risks



while Munro grew fat, repeating his grandfather's lectures."

The old boy really had it in for Munro tertius, I thought. His speech was already getting a little slurred, but his mind still seemed clear enough.

"Was body-snatching dangerous in those days?" I asked.

"In Edinburgh it was impossible. There were armed guards in the graveyards and the relatives of the corpse kept watch too. Besides, it was too near home.

"It was strange, you know. We never once thought of not stealing a body. All our discussions were about how, where and when. I suppose we felt that a surgeon's was such a noble calling that all steps taken in becoming one were justified. I was seventeen at the time and Jamie and William were only a year older.

"We decided at last it would have to be across the Forth, and it would have to be a lonely old person with no mourners watching at the lych gate."

"So you went over to Fife and helped yourselves to a body, did you?" I asked.

"Man, it wasn't as easy as that. A corpse is no use for dissection unless it is fresh—no use at all. Even in winter, unless the body goes into salt or wine quickly you'll find it has rotted before you have your knife sharpened. You have to find a fresh corpse—and this is no easy thing, sometimes.

"Jamie was the cleverest of the three of us, and a rare one at getting to know folk and hearing the gossip into the bargain. He went over to Aberdour, on yon side of the Forth, and stayed there for a week, spying out the land.

"When he came back he told us that a Martha McPhee was very poorly and expected to die within days. She was a witch, according to the locals. I thought to steal a witch's body would bring ill-luck, but the others laughed at my superstition. They said it would make our task easier, as no one would be watching at her grave in the small hours.

"Besides, Martha McPhee was thin and scraggy, and we'd look long enough before we found a better subject. Our friends who had already started anatomy had told us of the heartbreak that lies in trying to find vessels and nerves in a fat carcass."

I was feeling slightly green about the gills by this time. My imagination was running riot around the twin pictures of my own suave doctor with his smooth bedside manner and of the medical student digging in flesh for the knowledge which lay behind that manner. But curiosity quieted my nausea.

"So you decided to get her?" I questioned, to keep him talking.

"Oh, there was no real argument about it. Jamie went back to Aberdour. When the old woman died, he discovered where she was to be buried, and drew up the plan of campaign for us. We hired a small boat—for the fishing, you know—and crossed the Forth at Queensferry. The last of the ebb tide was to carry us down to Aberdour, and by the time it turned we would be ready to head for Edinburgh again.

"It was no joke crossing the Forth that night, for the wind was high and the water was choppy. Once we were rowing east along the shore with the tide to help us it was easier. It took about three hours to reach Aberdour, but the graveyard wasn't far from the shore and it was such a foul night that we were the only people not in bed.

"Martha McPhee was buried in a shallow grave and her coffin was a cheap thin wood. Three blows with a pickaxe and we had her on the grass beside us. We wrapped her in a blanket and carried her down to the boat. She was so lean that with two carrying her and one keeping watch it took no longer to get back to the boat than it had to make the trip the other way."



The old man emptied his glass. Quick on the uptake, I filled it for him and he continued his tale.

"Once we were out on the water again the clouds and rain blew over and a full moon lit the Forth. We hadn't wanted a moon, but we couldn't choose our time. Jamie pointed out that it was all for the best. We were supposed to be fishing and the improvement in the weather would make our use of the boat more plausible. He even set himself quite seriously to the business of catching something, saying it was always easier to tell a true story than to invent one. Wind and tide were with us by now and William and I hardly had to row at all. I had almost forgotten what we had in the boat with us.

Then the wind whipped the blanket aside. As I bent to cover Martha McPhee again, I noticed that her eyes were open. People say you can't tell colours in moonlight, but I could that night. The old witch had one deep brown eye, red-rimmed and flecked with green. The other was pale—pale blue I expect—and seemed to follow me, to watch me, to curse me.

"I felt real panic, then, and all I could think of was closing

those eyes. But the lids would not shut, no matter how hard I pulled on them.

"Suddenly, they fell shut of their own accord and the jaw dropped open. I was almost berserk with fear. It must have shown in my face, for Jamie suddenly began to laugh. He told me that if I couldn't get used to death I would make a poor surgeon, though he expected that in future I would be more concerned with helping people into their coffins than pulling them out.

"William, I think, found the situation as eerie as I did, but five years of following Jamie's lead had left their mark, and he started laughing too. There was nothing for me to do but join in. The three of us sat laughing and roaring in a boat on the Forth with the silent body of Martha McPhee.

"Then the eyes opened again. The pale one seemed to glare at us, to follow our every movement. The brown one seemed to turn to watch us too, and in these red-rimmed orbs I thought I could read a message of hate.

"Jamie stopped laughing and suddenly there was no sound but the lapping of the waves under the keel of the boat. For a while nothing happened and no one moved.

"Then Martha McPhee's right hand moved slowly to grasp a rowlock and she pulled herself into a sitting position. William screamed. I tried to, but my throat was dry. Jamie jumped backwards and the boat turned over."



"I have no idea how I got ashore," he went on. "I don't think I was right in the head till next day."

"Jamie and William were drowned; their bodies were found quite close to each other near Kirkcaldy two days later. No one ever found the body of Martha McPhee, but then no one was looking for it.

"I told a story about a fishing trip and an accident, which I stuck to. Oddly enough, there was no hue and cry about grave-robbers. Even if there had been, there was nothing to involve me, so I went back to Edinburgh and after a few weeks took up the threads of my life again."

"Did the shock of your friends' deaths make you give up the idea of being a surgeon?"

"It did not," said the old man. "I got a place under Dr. Knox next year and learned my anatomy. Five years later I began cutt-

ing on my own. I could take off a leg as fast as the best of them."

"How do you make out that Munro ruined you, then," I asked. "I can realise how upset you must have been at the death of your friends, but . . ."

"If I had not robbed that grave I would have retired a rich and respected man," he said. "I would not be living in a lodging house and cadging drinks off strangers."

I was embarrassed at his candour, and started looking for something encouraging to say. He carried straight on talking, however.

"I'd been an established surgeon for about four years when I was asked to see an old man in Aberdour with gangrene. I took the leg off at the hip and, though I say it myself, it was as neat a bit of operating as any.

"For years I had looked on the coming to life of Martha McPhee as the product of a boy's imagination and had almost forgotten the episode. But since I was in Aberdour I could not resist making some enquiries.

"I was astonished to learn that the locals had no suspicions that anyone had made off with Martha's body. Being in a hurry to leave the Fife shore, we had not troubled to fill in the grave. I could not understand how the theft had not been detected.

"I took a stroll round to the cemetery that evening. There was a headstone at the grave, and I wondered who had cared enough for the old virago to erect it. The stonemason had carved the words *Martha McPhee—spinster—died 1820* but some less skilled person had chipped an additional message into the granite which read, *She had the evil eye.*

"It was this second inscription which started my mind racing once more, and instead of going back to Edinburgh like a sensible man I stopped on in Aberdour and crept into the churchyard at one that morning with a pick and shovel.

"I knew her bones were at the bottom of the Forth but I had to see with my own eyes that the grave was empty. I dug feverishly and soon came upon that self-same thin, poorly made coffin I remembered so well. The wood was splintered when our pick axes had struck it years before, but the lid was as neatly in place as it had been before we disturbed it.

"This coffin had been left lying on the grass beside the open grave when we carried off the old witch. Someone must have reburied it.

"Any ordinary person would have informed the authorities that

the grave had been robbed. So the grave had not been filled in by any ordinary mortal. No ordinary mortal had reburied the coffin . . . a witch perhaps . . . Martha McPhee had reburied her own bones.

"I upbraided myself for thinking in this way. I wanted to run but I knew that unless I saw with my own eyes that there were no bones in the coffin I would be hag-ridden with superstitious fear to the end of my days.

"It wasn't easy, but I forced myself to rip the lid off the shabby box.

"A cloud had passed over the moon and I could no longer see what I was doing. I lit a taper from the flint and tinder I carried with me. The taper did not show me any bones. It showed me two malevolent eyes—and the body of Martha McPhee. The body showed no trace of decomposition. The eyes were fixed on mine.

"Then she spoke. I tell you, man, she spoke—'Why will you not let me rest in peace?'

"I am told that I was found sobbing and screaming beside an open grave with a spade in my hands. One of my best friends committed me to a lunatic asylum and there I stayed for twenty years. When they let me out I could not operate and no one was fool enough to let me try."

We didn't speak for a moment or two. There wasn't much I could say.

"How do you spend your time now?" I asked.

The old man gave a sad half-smile and looked at his empty glass.

"Drinking, mostly," he said.

Again I took the hint.

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### SOLUTION TO EWMM CROSSWORD (No. 24)

**ACROSS.** 1, Flying Squad. 9, Toby. 10, We Shall See. 11, Ostlers. 12, Emerald. 14, Distilled. 16, Sifts. 19, Jewel. 20, Impressed. 22, Traitor. 24, Janitor. 27, Fingertips. 28, Apex. 29, Green Archer.

**DOWN.** 2, Loyal. 3, Inwardly. 4, Gasp. 5, Qualms. 6, Allergies. 7, Conspire. 8, Hell. 13, Jemmy. 15, The Ringer. 17, The Joker. 18, Triassic. 21, Hoarse. 23, Raid. 25, Irate. 26, Pisa.

# The ASSASSINS

Anthony Ryan

“WHAT the hell?” David MacDonald exclaimed. “Allow me to introduce myself,” said the taller of the two Africans, drawing out a wicked-looking sporting rifle from the folds of his gown. The other African, short and squat, in dirty khaki shorts and once-white shirt, merely grinned.

“Please,” the tall one continued, “have no fear and stay where you are. I am Major Nzonga, and this is Sergeant Kipole. Tomorrow we shall be Colonel Nzonga and Captain Kipole, but that is by the way.”

David and Janet sat quiet and tense in their chairs as the rifle muzzle swayed gently in the crook of Nzonga’s arm, swinging backwards and forwards, from one to the other of them, as the major talked on in his quiet, cultivated voice.

Outside, the afternoon sun was gradually losing its glare, although it still beat down strongly on the still, red leaves of the poinsettia bushes, and the subtle scent of the frangipane blossom carried faintly to David’s nostrils. The ceiling fan whirred, spreading the hot air in gentle billows of pretended coolness, and outside the bungalow all was still empty and in the void of the African afternoon.

“Now look,” said David, “what’s this all about? And do put that thing down. It might go off.”

“I can assure you, my friends, it will not go off, unless you are very stupid, for approximately one hour. Perhaps I should explain to you, for after all you are my hosts. The purpose of my visit is simple. Assassination.”

“Assassination!”

Janet’s lips paled beneath her tan as she repeated the casually spoken word; David felt a shiver run down his back, a cold and alien shiver in that hot climate, just as the thought of assassination was cold and repugnant to his Scottish ideas of fair play.

“Now see here,” he began again, “why don’t you sit down and

have a drink, and we can talk it over.”

Humour the man, he thought, talk to him, get that rifle pointing another way, send for help, somehow get Janet out of it, do something, do something—*do something!* But what could I do? It was Musa, the steward's, afternoon off—he would be visiting his brother at the other end of the town. He might come back early, but usually he rolled in late, just in time to prepare a hasty dinner. It was an outside chance, not to be relied upon. What other hopes were there?

“A drink?” said the major. “Thank you. I would like a squash, preferably with ice. And one for the sergeant, if you wouldn't mind.”

“I'll get it,” Janet offered. “It's just through in the kitchen.”

She rose gingerly, eyes on the rifle, and David knew what she was thinking. The kitchen door led out to the lawns, and it was only fifty yards to the hedge and the road. He had a sudden vision of her, halfway to the hedge, falling to the ground, her fair hair in the dust and a red stain spreading along the back of her crisp cotton frock.

“No,” he said, “let me do it. I'll get a beer for myself at the same time.”

The major smiled. “No. If madame would be so kind, it is surely the duty of one's hostess to offer the drink.” And then in a crisper voice, “Sergeant, go with her.”

Kipole grinned, took a small revolver from his pocket, and waved Janet towards the kitchen door.

“Janet,” said David, in a warning tone.

“Don't worry, darling. I'm not stupid.”

He sat back, tense and rigid, until Janet returned with a tray of tall glasses, misted with condensation, and set them on the table. Kipole took a glass and carried it across to the major, who leaned negligently against the wall. He sipped noisily at the drink.

“Ah,” he murmured, “how very refreshing! Now perhaps in return I can explain exactly what I want you to do.”

David felt a surge of anger at the cool audacity of this man.

“I'll do nothing for you,” he burst out.

“Precisely,” the major agreed. “That is exactly what I want. You will stay in your chair, enjoying your beer, and madame her squash, and Sergeant Kipole will keep a fatherly eye on you both.”

Kipole grinned again and toyed with his revolver.

“Stay,” he said. “You sit still.”

“What is all this?” David demanded. “What the hell are you

trying to do? Whatever it is, you can't hope to get away with it."

"Please," and the major waved his rifle in a deprecating gesture, "if you would please be calm, I shall tell you. The whole thing is quite simple. In precisely," and he glanced at the watch on his wrist, "fifty-five minutes, the Premier will pass along the road there in his car, on a visit to the Governor. He is always so punctual. As he draws level with this house, a cart will block the road, his car will stop, and . . . pouf!"

David pictured the scene. The Premier, tall, heavily built, majestic in his flowing white robes and tall turban, would be sitting in the back of his open Cadillac, making a perfect target. At a range of 50 yards, Nzonga could hardly miss. And the motorcycle escort, front and rear of the car, would be powerless to intervene.

"And then?"

"And then, my friend, freedom. Freedom from corruption, from nepotism, from all the evils of tribalism. A spiritual regeneration of the whole country."

"And promotion?"

"Of course," the major smiled gently, "but as a reward for services to the motherland. I assure you, there are no personal motives in this. It is a necessary thing that we do."

David could see the point of this. For too long, the evils of which the major spoke had been rampant in the country. Gradual dissatisfaction had been spreading, and had culminated in strikes and demonstrations. He believed Nzonga's statement that there was nothing personal in his actions, but as far as David himself was concerned, there were personal motives. Between him and Nzonga. He refused to accept the situation of being dictated to. Controlling his rising anger, he forced himself to think coolly. What could he do? Violence was apparently impossible, with a rifle and revolver covering them, and there was Janet to think of. Perhaps someone would call, perhaps . . . yes, Richard. But where was his note? What did it say precisely?



"Sergeant," said Nzonga, "the window."

Kipole nodded, glanced around the room, and began to drag the dining table across the floor. He pushed it in front of the open window, pulled up a chair behind it, sat down, and rested his elbows in a firing position.



"You try," he said to Nzonga.

"In a moment. Firstly, let us look around a little. We must cover all possibilities."

The major strolled casually round the room, glancing at the few wooden carvings, the pictures on the walls, until his eye was caught by a small white envelope on a little table in the corner.

"What is this, then?" he enquired. "A little note?"

"That's right. Just something personal, and about my job as well."

"Really? Do you mind if I look?"

"Of course I mind. I told you it's personal," and David began to rise from his chair, his temper getting the better of him.

"Don't," flashed Janet, sudden fear showing as Kipole's revolver lifted towards David.

"Just personal, eh?" mused Nzonga. "Let us see."

16, Lepangu Road

Dear David,

I'll collect you Tuesday at 6.30 p.m. We can discuss contracts over a drink at the Club. Let me know if you can't make it—ring me or drop a note in to fix another time.

Richard Johnson.

"So, and today is Tuesday, eh, my friend? Now we must think."

"He'll be calling here soon," said David. "In about twenty minutes."

"Twenty-four," corrected the major. "if he is as punctual as our friend, the Premier."

David was thinking furiously. If Richard arrived, and was hauled in at gun-point, perhaps between the two of them they could manage something. Nzonga would have to be at the window when the vital time came. Could they rush Kipole between them? It was a chance, but probably worth taking.

Apparently the major's thoughts were running parallel to David's.

"This creates a problem, but not an insuperable one. We must send your regrets. You must have another appointment."

Good, thought David. The telephone. I'll tell Richard I've been 'held up' or pass some ambiguous message. Get a warning through to him.

"Not the telephone," said the major, "that could not effectively be controlled. A note, I think. Now, let me see, Lepangu Road.

That is just around the corner. Now, quickly, Mr. MacDonald. Paper and pen."

"No," said David.

"Yes," said the major, his rifle swinging gently on to Janet.

"You wouldn't dare."

"I regret extremely, my friend, but I would have no alternative. Now, write."

David moved slowly to his writing desk, followed by Kipole's suspicious eyes and his revolver. Picking up a pen and drawing a sheet of paper towards him, David began to write.

Dear Richard,

Sorry I can't make it tonight. Have been Held up by an important engagement. Only one contract is of Prime importance, and we can Route that through the normal channels in a day or two. Come to my House to discuss it when convenient.

David.

He began to fold the note, and reached for an envelope.

"Wait," said the major, flicking his fingers. "Sergeant." Kipole nodded, took the note from David's hand, and passed it across to Nzonga, who glanced at it and smiled.

"Really, Mr. MacDonald, this will not do. Just look at those capital letters. So silly of you. Now let us try again," and his rifle once more swung to cover Janet. "And this time it had better be perfect, or else . . ."

David despaired. He could not play tricks again like that, not with Janet facing the business end of a rifle. Quickly, he wrote,

Can't make it tonight. Will ring you tomorrow.

Regrets, David.

"That's better," said the major. "Now, Sergeant, round the corner with this quickly. Give it to Mr. Johnson, at number sixteen. And get back immediately."

As the sergeant disappeared at a trot through the kitchen door, the major held the rifle casually in one hand, finger still hovering near the trigger, and fished under his robes for a cigarette packet.

"Light?" asked David, reaching for his lighter and beginning to rise. Just one of them now, he thought.

"Sit down," said Nzonga. "I have my own lighter," and extracting a cigarette one-handed, he produced a small gold

lighter, and, without taking his eyes from Janet and David, lit his cigarette.

"There are still another thirty-five minutes," he said. "Let us not be foolish."



They waited. The minutes ticked by slowly. The major lit another cigarette. David stirred restlessly in his chair and glanced at Janet. She was sitting there, eyes frozen on the rifle in Nzonga's hand, face taut and expressionless. As she turned to look at him, he smiled.

"It'll be all right, darling."

She tried to smile back at him.

"I know."

"Be quiet," snapped Nzonga, the casualness now gone from him as he listened to the footsteps approaching the kitchen door. Let it be Musa, David prayed, hoping for an extra distraction, but he knew it was not. It was too early yet for Musa to come back. The door opened and Kipole appeared, panting from his exertions, but grinning cheerfully.

"All right?" asked the major.

Kipole nodded, leaned against the wall, and took out his revolver again.

"Mind if I have a cigarette?" David asked, and when the major bowed his head in assent, turned out the empty packet in front of him.

"There are some more in the drawer," he said. "All right if I get them?"

"Get them, but be careful, my friend. Watch him, Sergeant."

David cautiously got up from his chair and walked across to the sideboard, Kipole close behind him. He knew what he was looking for—the pepper-pot with the loose top. How many times he had cursed himself when the top had come off during a meal and his food had been covered in pepper. What he could do with the pot, he was not precisely sure, but at least it was a weapon of a kind. He opened the drawer, his body between Kipole and the contents. Smoothly, his hand moved to the pepper-pot and was about to lift it when Kipole's revolver stabbed him in the back and a heavy hand pushed him to one side.

"You lie," said the sergeant, his glance taking in the contents of the drawer. "No cigarettes. You sit down."

"They must be in another drawer."

"You sit," repeated Kipole, and shepherded David back to his seat. David grimaced ruefully at Janet.

"Twenty-two more minutes," said Nzonga, and he moved over to the table by the window. He took off his gown, revealing a slim, muscular figure in slacks and vest, and settled down in the chair. Then he got up, placed a cushion for his left elbow to rest on, and took from his pocket a small telescopic sight which he clipped to the top of the rifle barrel.

"Now," he said, aiming carefully through the open window, "we are nearly ready."

At that moment the telephone in the bedroom rang. David glanced at Nzonga, but he shook his head.

"It might be urgent," David suggested, hoping to get to the phone.

"If it is, they will ring again later, my friend. But still, yes, on second thoughts, I should hate to be interrupted by that noisy bell at a very important moment. It must be answered now."

David pushed himself to his feet.

"No," the major said. "Not you. Madame will answer the phone. You will be out. Please," he ordered Janet, "you will answer, at once, and I shall come with you."

David remained in his chair, facing Kipole and the revolver, while Janet walked stiffly across to the bedroom door, followed by Nzonga. As they went through, David caught a glimpse of the telephone on the dressing-table, a table strewn with Janet's things, lipstick, comb, handbag, and then the door closed behind them.

There was a sudden cessation of the telephone bell, a murmur of Janet's voice as she answered, more silence, another murmur, and then a silence again.

The door reopened and they came back, Janet perspiring and pushing back a lock of hair from her forehead, the gold of her wedding ring catching a dull glint from the reflection of the sun as she did so.

"Madame was very wise," Nzonga said. "That was your friend, Mr. Johnson about an important contract which you seem to have overlooked. Madame said you would ring him when you came in."

"That's all?" asked David.

Janet nodded.

David felt deflated. He looked at his watch.

"Fifteen minutes," Nzonga announced. Again he settled down

at the table, aimed the rifle, and adjusted the sights slightly. He worked smoothly and competently, David noted, as he opened the breech, checked the ammunition, pushed home the bolt and clicked on the safety catch. Then he waited.

Outside, time seemed to stand still. Nothing stirred, and as David turned to look out of the window he caught a glimpse of the poinsettias in the garden, and shuddered. Red—blood red. And in the hot, sleepy African afternoon there was no sound, no movement, nothing.

And then they heard the sirens, faintly in the distance, rising and falling, as the police motor-cyclists heralded the approach of the man who was to die.

“Not yet,” Nzonga said. “He is still some minutes away.”

David, looking again through the window, noticed a stir on the road outside. Hope leaped within him, and then subsided when he saw an old cart, piled high with bulging sacks, come to a halt in the dust of the roadside. The four men who had been pushing it waited, gripping its sides, and David realised that this was the other part of the ambush, the road-block to halt the motor-cyclists and the car, and allow Nzonga to carry out his assassination.

The sirens wailed nearer, and David held himself rigid.

Perhaps a mad rush at the vital moment, just enough to distract Nzonga as he was about to fire his carefully-aimed shots. But how would it end? David knew that, even if he succeeded in his distraction, it would make only a second's pause. Kipole's revolver would see to that, and there would still be time for Nzonga to take a steady aim at the still figure in the waiting car.

And what would happen to Janet? Why should he deliberately risk her life as well as his own in a futile effort to try to save the life of a corrupt politician? The Premier as a person meant little or nothing to him, far less than Janet. Then why did he want to take such a risk?

As these thoughts troubled his mind, he realised at once the reason why. It was Nzonga, the man himself, so supercilious and cool. And would Kipole dare to fire? A shot could warn the Premier and perhaps destroy the whole assassination plot.

Anything, thought David, anything to foil the plans of that so superior bastard with the rifle. But Janet? No, he decided regretfully, bottling down the rising pressure of his rage, no, he could not.

The sirens grew louder, and Nzonga at the window turned

round to David and Janet.

"Over there," he snapped, "in the corner and face the wall. Both of you, quickly."

Prodded by the sergeant's revolver, David and Janet moved across the room and stood side by side. David felt a chill in his back. It was bad enough to face the grinning Kipole and the blue-black muzzle of his revolver, but to have the assassins behind him, not knowing what was happening, was worse.

He risked a glance over his shoulder. Kipole stood in the middle of the room, his grin now gone, the revolver held firmly and steadily.

"Face to wall," he grunted. "That better. Now stay so."

The sirens grew to an ear-piercing shriek. David pictured the scene in his mind; they were on the road outside now, only a few seconds away from the ambush cart. He braced himself. Now, he thought, now!

He hurled himself sideways, his shoulder throwing Janet against the partially open bedroom door, and as he whirled and plunged at Kipole, his mind registered the shots.

And then Kipole was down, before David reached him, gasping, and grinning madly as he stared in astonishment at the spreading bloodstain on the front of his white shirt. Nzonga, gripping his arm tightly where the bullet had gone in, was on his knees gaping foolishly at the kitchen door, where a black belted, blue-shirted European police officer stood, revolver in his hand.

"Richard," David muttered weakly.

"That the lot?" asked Richard.

David nodded, too weak to answer.

"Take it easy," said Richard. "I can look after these two. I came as soon as I could, when I got your message."

"The note? But . . ."

"No, not the note, although I thought the messenger was a little odd. That's why I phoned. It was the phone message really."

"Janet? Oh, my God, it never occurred to me . . ."

"Yes. When she answered and said, 'Janet MacDonald here' I knew something was up, so I grabbed a revolver and came along. Just as well I did. Where is Janet, by the way?"

"In the bedroom. She's all right."

"She won't be unless you get her home quickly," Richard said. "Her husband will be wondering what's happened to her. Now off you go and see to that. I'll deal with these two."

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# The Mystery House in Beverly Hills

WALTER REISCH

THE PRODUCER for whom I have been working on my latest screen-play lives on North Maple Drive in Beverly Hills, California, just the first house down from Sunset Boulevard. Since nobody actually ever has a chance to walk in Beverly Hills because of the enormous distances involved, my producer prefers to have our story conferences while ambling around the block. Maple Drive ordinarily is a rather deserted residential avenue, with charming mansions in all styles—Spanish, Mexican, Georgian, French Provincial. Two or three houses south of my producer's residence there is an English style country house, all painted in white, the lawn in front not the lush green of an English lawn, no fence, and above the narrow front door an odd crest.

There is a stained glass window left of the front door, but that wouldn't have made the house so mysterious to me. What attracted my attention during our peripatetic conferences was the fact that the house had a certain attraction for other people whom I discovered promenading by, which, as I mentioned, is a most unusual happening in our town. Obviously these were foreigners, probably having sauntered over from the nearby Beverly Hills Hotel, where mostly London actors or film directors stay when they come to Hollywood for assignments or roles. Once, to my surprise, I spotted a famous English director, a two-time Academy Award winner, standing in rapt contemplation before the white painted house. As he felt my scrutinising eyes upon him, he made a sharp turn and swung back in the direction to the hotel. Then, one morning early, a few weeks later, I glimpsed leaning against a tree outside that white house a stage actress, a former raving beauty, whose name between the two wars had top billing in many

stage hits that I saw on Shaftesbury Avenue and Haymarket, London. She was still as irresistible as in those happy days, but what made her even more intriguing to me on that morning was that she had a drawing pad in her hands, and there was no doubt that she was making a pencil sketch of that house with the crest above the door.

Then, again, I spotted two long-legged, blonde-maned girls with pink and white complexions and mini-skirts, taking snapshots of the house with the bow window.



One night I saw something happen in front of that house that actually made me go to the Hall of Record to check in their dusty tomes the name of the occupant of the North Maple Drive mansion.

I found a name not belonging to the entertainment business at all. What I had seen that night was an astounding spectacle indeed—a gentleman in an unmistakably London tailored Norfolk jacket, and wearing a gold-rimmed monocle on a silk cord, bareheaded, pipe in mouth. He bent down to the lawn in front of the house and pulled up a handful of grass, soil and all. Next, he took out his wallet and lovingly bestowed the few blades of grass between the pages of his notebook, as a Jane Austen character would preserve a four-leafed clover that her swain might have given her. With every sign of satisfaction, he strolled up towards Sunset Boulevard, lighting his pipe and heading for the Beverly Hills Hotel. He wasn't an actor; I was not familiar with his face; but if Hollywood Central Casting should have to find a type for an English author of mystery novels, he would be first choice.

I had to know what all this was about. This time I checked with the most reliable source in such matters, one of the straw-hatted old ladies by the roadside, all over Los Angeles, who sell maps showing the homes of the movie stars to out-of-town tourists. The one I asked had been a landmark in our town for half-a-century. I didn't need to mention more than the house number of the North Maple Drive dwelling and I had my answer: it was the house in which Edgar Wallace had, in 1931-32, spent the last months of his life, and where on 10 February, 1932, he succumbed to an attack of double pneumonia. Suddenly, everything made sense to me. The people I encountered in front of the house on frequent occasions were simply aficionados of *The Ringer*,



*The Missing Million*, and so forth. They availed themselves of their Hollywood stay to make a pilgrimage to the house, to pay their respects, or to etch into their memory the trees that the Master saw from his study, or touch the knob that he had held in his hands so many years ago. Did they expect to catch sight of the silhouette on the blind—the outline of his profile with the famous long cigarette holder?

The mystery of the white house with the crest above the door was solved for me. It wasn't a mystery at all. It simply was the house in which the Premier of mystery authors had written THE END to the last chapter of that memorable life.

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(see inside back cover)

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# NEW BOOKS

JOHN de SOLA

*fiction*

AFTER MIDNIGHT, Helen Nielsen (*Gollancz*, 18s.)

A young man is murdered after an outsize brawl with his wife, and she is found in the morning asleep, with the murder weapon beside her. Her snobbish father-in-law drives her towards the gas chamber, and even more troubles pile upon her. But one unconvinced lawyer rallies to her side . . . a brilliant tale that holds like a tax assessment.

BANK ROBBERY, Max Ulrich (*Constable*, 18s.)

Winner of the German 1965 'Edgar Wallace Prize', this is a superb (and splendidly translated) thriller. A huge wages snatch is made from a Munich bank, and then it is shown that the robbery detail corresponds exactly with an imaginary robbery devised by three bank employees. I like Inspector Amberg and his Crime Museum. A promising start, this one.

BUNDLE FOR THE TOFF, A; John Creasey (*Hodder & Stoughton*, 16s.)

This is something new—somebody leaves a shawl-wrapped baby on the Toff's doorstep, and then a wild young man later bursts in and accuses the Toff of being its father and of seducing his sister. From then on shenanigans, blackmail, and mayhem. A rattler of a tale with a wholly fresh twist to it.

BY-PASS CONTROL, The; Mickey Spillane (*Arthur Barker*, 18s.)

In this one the baddies are out to destroy the defence system of the United States, the plot secret being embedded in the title of this racing-speed thriller. Tiger Mann rides to the rescue, and though I admit I don't like Spillane, his breathless style leaves the reader gasping.

**CAPER OF THE GOLDEN BULLS**, The; William McGivern) *Collins*, 16s.)

Now that Peter Churchman lives respectably in Spain, no longer the character whose name once haunted international police offices, he is at peace until Francois and Angela Morel turn up, playing on the strength of old obligations to demand an outsize robbery (which, at this novel's end, turns to dust). Set in Spain, beautifully written and one of the best by a master storyteller.

**CONDUCT OF A MEMBER**, Val Gielgud (*Collins*, 16s.)

An unusual setting, the world of West London's clubland. A scandal breaks loose and the highly dignified Fonthill Club is involved; then there is murder . . . and a private eye firm is called in to try and delve to the bottom of some very nasty allegations. A slow, careful and enthralling whodunit which grips by sheer invention and background.

**COUNCIL OF COMFORTERS**, The; W. Murdoch Duncan (*John Long*, 15s.)

The Council appears to comprise a collection of people who desire only to be philanthropic; but reality is very different. And when Superintendent Leslie is confronted with a suicide, which turns out to be murder, in a club

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---

**RUTH RENDELL**

*A New Lease of Death*

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## JOHN LONG

---

for redeeming ex-convicts he is on to a real mystery. Readable and enjoyable.

DOVER AND THE UNKINDEST CUT OF ALL, Joyce Porter  
(Cape, 18s.)

Mrs. Dover, holidaying with her Scotland Yard husband at dreary Wallerton, witnesses a suicide leap. Promptly, Chief Inspector Dover is dragged into the case and probes the festering secret life of Wallerton, to drag out some horrors both grim and funny. A deft, attractive tale with a lot of engaging comic detail.

FACELESS ENEMY, Frances Shelley (Cassell, 21s.)

Once past the slightly obscure opening chapter, you are in an apparently artless crime story which hides some nasty depths and a very good plot indeed. A man stands accused of murder and his wife, with courage and pertinacity, determines to clear him. The Canadian background is something new in whodunits, and the story colourful and dramatic. Recommended.

'Unhackneyed stories by known and less-known writers . . . a splendid Christmas gift volume'  
—Julian Symons, *Sunday Times*.

'Top-class crime anthology . . . a "must" '  
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—*Library World*.

'Each story a model of expertise. As mysteries in miniature they are of a high standard, pungently alive.'  
—*Baptist Times*.

JUST A FEW OF THE COMMENTS ON

## JOHN GREASEY'S MYSTERY BEDSIDE BOOK

Edited by Herbert Harris for the *Crime Writers' Assoc.*

Published by HODDER & STOUGHTON at 18s

**FORGET WHAT YOU SAW**, Jeffrey Ashford (*John Long*, 21s.)

I get the feeling I know 'Jeffery Ashford' and his books under his own, real name, but there I am stuck. This story tells of a young barrister who is involved in blackmail and murder, and danger which spills over to threaten his girl friend and his family. The plot is inventive and the police detail genuine. Excellent reading.

**HOUND'S TOOTH**, Robert McDowell (*Cassell*, 18s.)

Another one with a new background, this time Kentucky. In a backwater town an old woman is battered to death with a stone axe; this leads to detail about a hundred year old feud, which is to be part of the mystery, and gives a picture of 'Hillbilly' country which is far more authentic and reasonable than the comic literature would have us believe. Powerful, and very readable.

**JULIAN SYMONS OMNIBUS**, The (*Collins*, 21s.)

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**FACELESS ENEMY** *by Frances Shelley*

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**The HOUND'S TOOTH** *Robert McDowell*

A murder mystery set in a Kentucky backwoods town which revolves round a century old feud. 18/-

**HOUSE OF CARDS** *by James Ullman*

author of *THE NEON HAYSTACK* winner of the Inner Sanctum Mystery Contest of America. 18/-

**CASSELL**

the publication of *The 31st of February*, *The End of Solomon Grundy*, and *The Progress of a Crime* in a single volume. The old magic is there on reading these again, and though the first story never appealed to me, the second and third are equally high in my estimation. A book to buy and keep because; a slogan might say: 'You can always re-read Julian Symons'.

**LOST WITHOUT TRACE**, Belton Cobb (*W. H. Allen*, 16s.)

Our old friend Cheviot Burmann is back again, but this time the detective superintendent vanishes from sight, following receipt of a telephone message from Scotland Yard. But Detective-Inspector Armitage, who apparently sent the message to Burmann, denies ever having made it . . . This is another with a fresh new plot, and while Burmann fans may despair as they read, they should not lose heart. A good book, suspense-plus.

**MAN IN THE GLASS BOOTH**, The; Robert Shaw (*Chatto & Windus*, 21s.)

I am not wholly sure if this is a thriller, or novel with crime overtones; either way it is an absolutely superb attention-gripper.



*'Constable crime' — four new books published in January and February:*

**THE MAN WITH THE BROWN PAPER  
FACE**  
**IAN HAMILTON**  
21s.

**FOUL PLAY**  
**JEREMY POTTER**  
21s.

**BOUND TO DIE**  
**BILL TURNER**  
21s.

**BANK ROBBERY**  
**MAX ULRICH**  
18s

Briefly, the plot concerns a property tycoon who sees a man seemingly from his past; this, in turn, opens a Pandora's box concerning the tycoon's life and tumbles the willing reader into a veritable chaos of mystery, mayhem, and evil.

**MIND PARASITES, The;** Colin Wilson (*Arthur Barker, 21s.*)

This is another fresh conception, a detective story set in the near future (but not the fanciful world of science fiction). Basically, the plot concerns some sort of parasite which inhabits men's minds, and, like a cancer, lives off their vitality. This discovery is made by a psychologist, who is promptly killed. His colleague is the new investigator but his problem is to solve the mystery without being killed himself. Such bald bones give no clue to the scope and originality of this immensely satisfying story. Highly recommended.

**PALE BETRAYER, The;** Dorothy Salisbury Davis (*Hodder & Stoughton, 18s.*)

This is the sort of book which bears out my contention that a really good crime novel can run circles round a 'straight' novel for ingenuity, depth, and sheer quality of writing. Scholastic life, and police routine, are expertly portrayed in this presentation of a murder and a wrong-doer. The human warmth of the story is remarkable and it is unreservedly recommended.

**WHAT BECAME OF ALEX BRETHERTON,** Peter Harris (*John Long, 21s.*)

A handful of conscientious objectors from World War Two stage an East Anglian get-together. The last one of the gathering does not turn up, and the plot back-tracks to take in another strange disappearance. An ingenious story, freshly conceived and full of excellent touches. The writing is above standard and there is a quality of literary perception I found enjoyable.

**WINGS OF MADNESS,** Judson Phillips (*Gollancz, 18s.*)

A bright, elegant, clever book, less formidable than its title suggests. A teacher heads a column of protest to a freedom shrine in the United States. He is murdered, and the plot moves into the doings of a semi-Fascist private army. There is a vast booming of noisy (wholly bogus) Fascist ideals, a savage portrait of the 'Leader' and some deft detective work. A good book by one of the best American crime writers.

## A SCATTER OF PAPERBACKS

ARISTIDE CASE, The; Storm Jameson (*Pan*, 5s.)

A novel with crime angles, the story of the robbery from Aristide Michal; his wife's curious secret; and the ways of a man seeking revenge. Clever and very readable.

BLAME THE BARON, John Creasey (*Corgi*, 3s. 6d.)

Though it is 16 years old, this one could have been written last week. Opens with a robbery, attempted murder and roars into mayhem and thrills from page one. First class.

FOR KICKS, Dick Francis (*Pan*, 3s. 6d.)

Here is a thriller with a background of racing and those who follow it, with a plot, criminals, colour, and humanity worthy of Edgar Wallace on the king of sports.

HICKORY DICKORY DOCK, Agatha Christie (*Pan*, 3s. 6d.)

Hercule Poirot in a mystery at a student hostel when an inmate is murdered, then the owner, and, finally, another student. Enjoyable; guileful; satisfying.

INTERROGATORS, The; Allan Prior (*Pan*, 5s.)

A fantastic and remarkable tale, of a young girl taken from a hospital, outraged and murdered. A police procedural thriller with heart and insight. Excellent.

LIVE WIRE, Jean Bruce (*Corgi*, 3s. 6d.)

An espionage thriller, opening in Buenos Aires where an agent is murdered and a spy network destroyed for the second time. One of the late M. Bruce's best stories.

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## FAMOUS EDGAR WALLACE FILMS

### THE CLUE OF THE TWISTED CANDLE

(see back cover)

Anglo (1960)

Director: Jack Greenwood

Meredith (Bernard Lee); Lexman/Griswold (David Knight); Karadis (Francis de Wolff); Grace (Colette Wilde); Belinda Holland (Christine Shaw); Anson (Stanley Morgan); Fisher (Richard Caldicott); Sergeant Butterfield (Anthony Laird).

*Photograph shows Bernard Lee.*



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# 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.*

## The British Police

As Barry Clevelan wrote [December] the copper is getting the bad end of the deal, lately. I'm all for giving him a bit of support. And I'd like to see a lot less of 'taking the mickey'. It's an old trick that when a man's doing a good job of work, then slang him in case (I imagine must be the reasoning!) he gets a swollen head. If more people gathered round the police and helped them (if only by keeping their mouths shut!), there would be a lot less crime . . . I'm so sick of the loud-mouthed critics who keep slamming the police. As Mr. Clevelan rightly says, if these critics are so clever, then let them pound the beat for a bit.

And, at the same time, it wouldn't be a bad idea to lay off the Prison Service. As a daily newspaper said recently, there have been fewer prison escapes in 1966 than in 1965—but to hear people you'd think the whole collection of British prisons emptied overnight! (P.S. In spite of my address, I'm English-born).

T. E. ROMILLY.

*Dublin, 2, Eire.*

## Brickbat, and Bouquets

John de Sola . . . you horrible man, you're gunning again for my beloved James Bond! But after all, 'one man's meat' and you're a pretty honest critic compared to some. I must say you do help me to find out all about crime books in double-quick time, so you're forgiven this time.

(MRS.) GRACE F. REEVES.

*Sunbury-on-Thames.*

Thank you, Mr. Editor, a wonderful Christmas Number. The Edgar Wallace story was a gem, and so was *The Reluctant Traitor*, by Dick Sharples. '. . . *China 'Croast the Bay'* honestly had me sitting on the edge of my seat; I'd forgotten written words could thrill like that. Bouquets for Eric Parr, Colin Wilson and Roger Garnett . . . they all wrote winners.

JOHN M. CAMPBELL.

*Glasgow, W.2.*

'... *China 'Cross the Bay*' in the Christmas Number was a grand thriller, and I enjoyed reading that story by Agatha Christie again; I had forgotten how good it is. Peter Wallace (no relation, I see) is a nice writer. His *Fast Money* was a real change. And the dear old 'Period Piece' goes on forever and is forever welcome. You are to be congratulated.

(MISS) M. MONDEL.

Redcar, Yorks.

'Maciek' is a treasure. I much enjoyed his page in the Christmas Number and the little drawings you publish. By the way, I think the little cover drawings you publish are very clever.

(MISS) F. M. E. WATTS.

Harlow, Essex.

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## *E W M M*

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March issue includes

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Edgar Wallace and  
*Warm and Dry*

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Rafael Sabatini

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T. C. H. Jacobs

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Max Mundy

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Pete Fry

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*Racing Competition Result*

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plus many new top-level short stories, and features

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