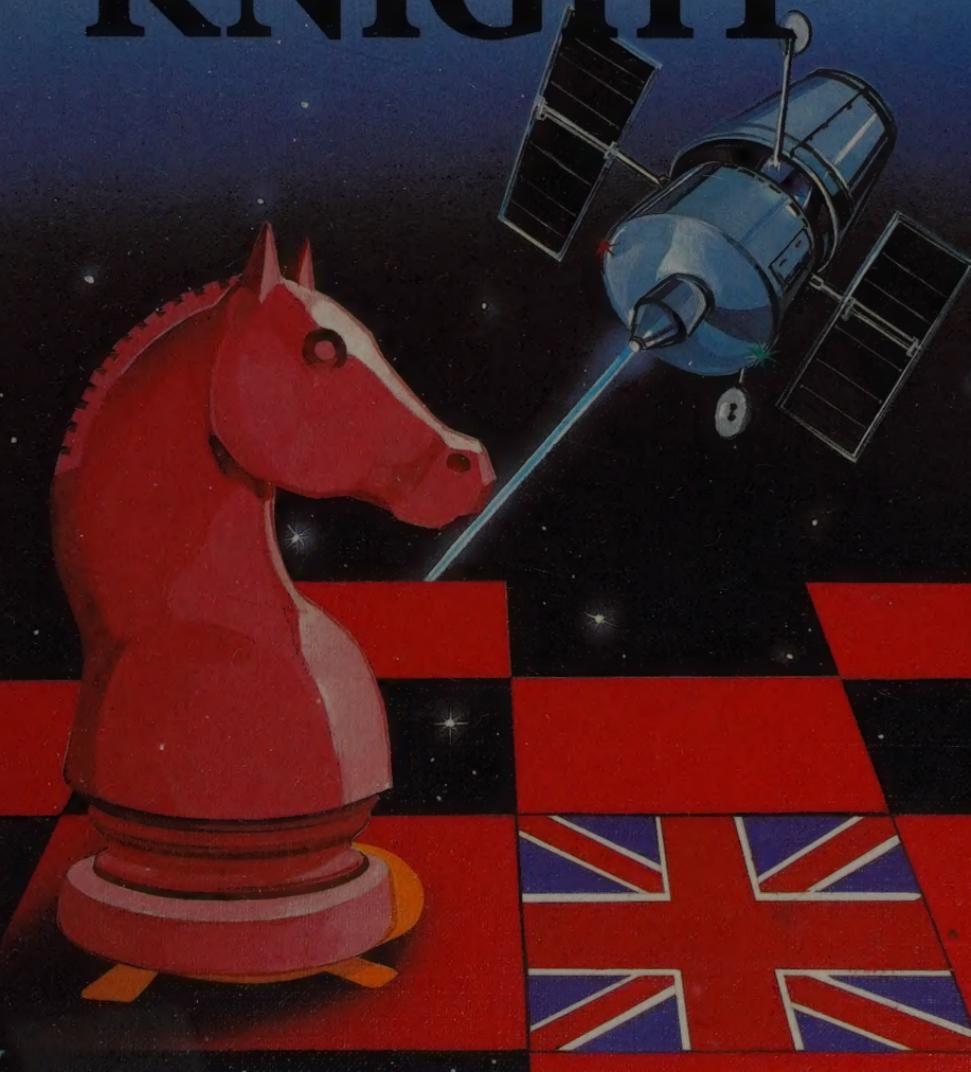


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*Geoffrey Moxon*  
**THE RED KNIGHT.**







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## THE RED KNIGHT

Guy Trent's visit to Moscow on a trade mission seems an unlikely start to a struggle between the KGB and British Intelligence pitted against each other over the Star Wars project. When he finds himself a pawn on the chessboard of international espionage with his family in constant danger, he becomes embroiled in the moves and counter-moves which may mean life or death for Western scientists led by his father, Sir Redvers Trent.

*Books by Geoffrey Moxon  
in the Ulverscroft Large Print Series:*

**SPYCRACKER  
THE RED KNIGHT**

GEOFFREY MOXON

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# THE RED KNIGHT

*Complete and Unabridged*

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# Part One

## The Opening Gambit



**G**UY TRENT felt jaded and heavy-eyed as he sat down heavily on the bed of his Moscow hotel room. Although by now he ought to have become used to the interminable dinners and receptions for his trade delegation, it had become more and more difficult to last the pace. Tonight it had been even worse because he had been alone. All the others had taken the morning flight for London, their missions having been completed with varying degrees of success, and he had expected to be with them. Even now, however, he could still hear Gregor's voice after the farewell dinner the previous night.

“We are very sorry, Mr. Trent,” he had wheezed, breathing noisily, as he struggled with his heavy accented English, “but we still do not like your price. We need more time, one more day perhaps.”

“But we are all going tomorrow,” Guy had replied, “our flight is in the morning.”

Gregor had waved aside his protests.

“Tomorrow, the day after, what does it matter? We shall arrange a seat for you for the day after. Tomorrow we can talk again. Maybe you can move that price a little, eh?”

“But—” Guy had started to reply.

“So sorry,” Gregor had breathed, this time putting his arm round Guy’s shoulder, “but you can see how it is. What a pity we cannot sign the contract as it is.”

Guy had fought hard to stifle his mounting irritation. They had been through all this over and over again and at last he had thought that everything had been agreed. All that had been needed had been the final signature. And now here they were, apparently still at odds over the price, despite all the assurances, not to mention all the innumerable toasts in vodka. Damn the man!

More arguments and discussions had followed until late into the night, but to no avail. He had come all this way, he had reflected bitterly, and if one more day and yet more talks might button up the contract, then so be it. The others would have to go and he would have to take the

plane on the following morning. There was no other way.

Now, twenty-four hours later, Guy felt that after all it had been worthwhile. Gregor had tried it on about the price, but, having found that Guy was adamant, he had accepted it with as much heartiness as he could muster. Guy had given him a sweetener on one or two delivery dates and now the final wording was being prepared for signature before he went to bed. True to form, however, Gregor had not finished for the night. It appeared that there were some friends of his who were having a party in their apartment.

“It will be good there, very very good,” he insisted, as Guy tried to excuse himself.

“But it is late and we are both tired,” he protested.

Gregor threw back his head and laughed.

“Tired? No, no, you cannot be tired, you are a young man,” he cried in mock reproof. To press home his point, he stabbed Guy in the chest with a spatulate forefinger.

“Come, I shall meet you in the hotel lobby in an hour and then we shall have

one final little party, just my friends and you and me."

Guy looked at his watch. It was now nearly time to go down to the lobby. The thought of another dose of Gregor and yet more vodka was almost more than he could endure. Still, he must make one last effort to please his host. He was fit enough and it would perhaps only be for an hour or two, or was that too much to hope?

Guy's thoughts drifted to his little cottage in Surrey and to his son Simon, no doubt asleep in his dormitory at school. Guy had only just had his thirtieth birthday, but already so much seemed to have happened in his life. He had married Joyce when they were both barely twenty and Simon had been born a year later. The world had seemed full of bright promise, with early promotion in the engineering firm for which he worked. Joyce had heard of a little cottage tucked away in the countryside near Dorking and they had been blissfully happy there, while Simon grew from a baby into a bouncing little boy and then an eager energetic schoolboy.

It had been when Joyce was on her way to fetch Simon home from school that

tragedy had struck. A lorry had skidded and careered across the road into Joyce's Mini and crushed it into a tangled heap of metal. Joyce had had no chance. She died instantly. In that one dreadful moment the world had changed to a dark and sombre chamber from which there was no escape. Guy was inconsolable, while Simon floundered desperately in a sea of tears. They had tried so hard to comfort each other. At first it had seemed useless, but at last month by month the pain had eased. It was now nearly three years since Joyce had died. Simon was now a weekly boarder and with the resilience of a child had put the tragedy behind him. He and Guy had grown even closer together, so that the resurgence of Simon's spirits somehow communicated itself to Guy who at last felt that he was living again. Moreover the demands of his work left him little time to be lonely. It was at night that he still found it all so empty.

Guy stood up and passed his hand across his brow, as if to smooth away his headache. With a final look at his watch he glanced round his room and opened the door. A few steps along the deserted

corridor took him to the lift. In the lobby Gregor sat sprawling in an armchair, until the arrival of his guest made him hoist himself to his feet. Guy forced himself to smile.

Guy had long ago come to the conclusion that one party was much like another. The apartment, where Gregor took him, proved to be hot and airless, smoke-filled and noisy. After Guy was introduced to two of Gregor's friends, it was not long before the door was flung open to admit several girls, obviously specially imported for the party. The girl whom Gregor foisted onto Guy spoke no English but, arming herself with a bottle of champagne, kept clumsily filling both Guy's glass and her own. Each time she held the bottle high in the air and laughed noisily. Her name was Nerina. Her black hair and vermillion lipstick struck a sensual accord with the black and red dress which clung provocatively to her body. Her perfume was sweet and strong. Aroused and spurred on by the champagne, Guy soon started to shed his inhibitions. To hell with everybody, it had been a long time since he had . . . His thoughts were,

however, interrupted by a perspiring Gregor, who was now proudly showing off his English to his friends, with frequent use of Guy's name. By now "Mr. Trent" had disappeared, having been replaced by "my good British friend Guy". As the champagne continued to flow and the laughter grew noisier, Guy caught sight of one of Gregor's friends unbuttoning a girl's blouse. Someone blew a thick cloud of stinking cigarette smoke in his face. As he recoiled, Nerina stroked his cheek and twisted his hair in her fingers. When Guy smiled at her, she slid on to his knee. She inclined her head to kiss him.

"Ah, Guy, my good friend," roared Gregor, looming over him, "you like Nerina, Nerina likes you. Russian girls are the best."

Gregor slapped his thigh and gave his girl more champagne. Another wave of his hand signalled the arrival of yet another bottle. He seized Guy's glass and refilled it with a flourish.

"To Britain and the Queen of Britain," he shouted, draining his own glass.

Guy drained his glass with equal abandon, before Gregor snatched it from

him to refill it and thrust it back into his hand.

“To the Soviet Union,” shouted Guy, with a grand gesture towards a picture of Lenin on the wall.

With everyone shouting and drinking and holding up their glasses, Guy raised his glass yet again.

“To Anglo-Soviet—” he started.

The room started to spin.

“To Anglo-So—” he repeated.

The floor and ceiling rushed to meet each other. Guy pitched forward across a table amid a crash of broken glass. A girl screamed.

As Guy struggled in vain to open his eyes, he became vaguely aware of daylight and of voices around him. He sank into further oblivion. Again the voices seemed to press on him from all sides. He felt that he was lying on something soft, perhaps his bed. Was he in bed? The noise and the light disturbed him again. Where was he? A hand shook him roughly by the shoulder. He struggled to open his eyes. Again the hand shook him. His eyelids felt like

manhole covers. Helplessly he drifted away again into darkness.

“Mr. Trent, Mr. Trent;” a man’s voice kept repeating his name. “Mr. Trent, wake up.”

Who was shouting at him from a million miles away? Why couldn’t he be left alone to sleep, to sleep, to. . . ?

“Mr. Trent, wake up.”

There was a babble of voices, strange voices, foreign voices, of course Russian voices! He was in Moscow. That was it! Moscow, with the Russians. Moscow! Again someone shook him by the shoulder.

Very slowly Guy started to open his eyes. Daylight flooded in upon him. A man stood over him, a man he had never seen before. Behind him was another man with yet a third. What was happening? He was in bed. It was his own bed. This was his hotel room. What about the party? Where was Gregor? Was it morning? It must be morning.

“Mr. Trent, are you awake?” The first man leaned over Guy as he spoke.

“What is it? What has happened?” moaned Guy.

“Get up, Mr. Trent,” ordered the man, who then turned to his companions to speak to them in a quick burst of Russian.

“Who are you?” mumbled Guy; “and what are you all doing in my room?”

“Now stop this, Mr. Trent,” said the man roughly; “do not try to pretend.”

“What do you mean, pretend?” asked Guy in bewilderment; “I don’t understand.”

“I’m sure you do,” replied the man; “there is no need for argument.”

As he paused, Guy propped himself up on his elbow.

“Come with me for a moment,” continued the man, “come with me, into the bathroom. Come with me, I say.”

Guy felt totally bemused. His head throbbed, whilst his eyes seemed to be on fire. Slowly, at the second attempt, he managed to hoist himself to his feet. He had been lying on his bed fully dressed. As he took the first faltering steps towards the bathroom, he caught sight of something red out of the corner of his eye. He turned his head and let out an exclamation of surprise. On the chair was the black and

red dress which Nerina had been wearing the night before!

“But—?” Guy had no chance to ask the question in his mind before the Russian cut him short.

“Come with me,” he said roughly, grasping Guy’s elbow.

Guy could only allow himself to be propelled towards the bathroom. He tried to steady himself in the doorway, before going in. The next moment was to embed itself in his mind forever. The bath was nearly full of water and, lying in it, face down, was a girl. She was naked, her black hair floating on the surface. Guy gasped in horror and started to move forward.

“No,” rasped the man, “that is far enough. Back to the bedroom.”

The Russian hustled Guy out of the bathroom and back to his bedroom. Dazed and bewildered, Guy found it impossible to comprehend. He was in a sea of confusion. What in God’s name was going on? He looked across the room at the girl’s dress. Her red shoes were there as well. It must be Nerina. The girl in the bath must be Nerina.

“What is all this? What has happened?

How—?” The questions flowed from his lips, one after another, before dying.

“That is for you to tell us,” said the Russian; “why have you done this? Why have you killed this girl?”

“But I haven’t. I know nothing about it. I don’t even know how she got here. For that matter, I don’t even know how I got here myself.”

Guy’s voice rose in agitation. The shock of seeing the girl’s body was bringing him abruptly to his senses, but he could make nothing of his situation.

“Mr. Trent, do not make things worse by lying to us,” rasped the man.

“I’m not lying.”

“You are lying to us, Mr. Trent.”

“I’m not. I’m not lying,” repeated Guy.

“Then how is it that when the chamber-maid could get no answer and entered your locked room this morning, she found you asleep and the girl dead in the bath? I must ask you again, why did you kill her?”

“But I didn’t,” protested Guy; “I passed out in some apartment last night and that’s all I remember. I don’t even know how I got back here.”

The Russian turned and conferred with

his companions. At length he turned again to Guy.

“We are wasting our time, talking here. We are taking you to headquarters, where our chief will question you. We shall have your things packed and brought to you.”

“But I tell you I know nothing about this,” protested Guy, shouting in desperation.

“Now then, Mr. Trent, don’t give us any trouble. Just come with us and you can say it all later.”

“But—”

Guy had no chance to say more, before he was bundled unceremoniously out of the room. A maid in the corridor stared in curiosity at the little party approaching the lift. Down in the lobby one or two people muttered to each other, while the desk clerk stopped what he was doing to watch the miniature procession make its way to the front entrance.

Guy was put between two of the men in the back of a car. He looked at his watch and realised that his plane would be just leaving now. He wanted to pinch himself to assure himself that all this was true, that it was really happening. Yes, it was

happening all right, but how in heaven's name had it come about? How did that girl come to be dead in his bath? Question followed question through his mind without a single one of them getting an answer. It was all mad, that's what it was, mad!

If Guy thought he was going to be brought immediately in front of some investigating officer, he was mistaken. He was brought in the side entrance of a large grey building and put in a small bare room by himself. A young uniformed Russian stood just inside the door. At first Guy said nothing, but as time passed and nothing happened, he spoke to the young man. It was soon apparent, however, that he spoke no English and understood nothing that Guy said to him. Guy gave up the attempt. He must wait, that was all, and wait he did. Nearly three hours passed before the door opened to admit the man who had been in his bedroom.

"We are taking you to headquarters," he said, "you will be questioned there."

Guy stiffened. Headquarters? He thought he was already there. This had gone far enough. He was not going to be

pushed around any longer as the victim in some sort of charade. These men must be KGB who were trying to set him up for some reason. It was time to put a stop to it.

“I’m not going,” he snapped, “I want to see someone from the British Embassy. I’m not going, I tell you.”

Guy raised his voice, but his protest went unheeded.

The KGB man shrugged his shoulders. As he turned to leave the room, he nodded to the young man who had been guarding Guy. A second guard joined him to act as an escort. Guy continued to protest but his words fell on deaf uncomprehending ears. He was hustled from the room and then from the building into a closed van which bore him away at speed through the streets. When the van came to a stop and the doors opened again, Guy found himself in a courtyard surrounded by high grey walls. They seemed oppressive and menacing as they loomed over him, but there was no time to see more as the guards pushed him through a doorway into a gloomy interior. He was handed over to another man in uniform, who propelled

him by the elbow along dimly-lit corridors until at length he was led through an open door into a small square room. Before he could even look about him, the door closed with a metallic bang behind him. He was alone. The room was a bare prison cell, with a bed taking up the far wall. There was a small square table with a wooden chair. Apart from a locker, that was all. A tiny barred window high up in the wall admitted a meagre amount of light.

Clenching his fists, Guy strove to fight off frustration and despair. He wasn't going to submit to this. Somehow or other he must contrive a meeting with someone from the Embassy so that he could get out of this place. His mind was still reeling from what had happened. He must have passed out when he was drinking the night before, but why? Obviously he had had a few drinks but not enough to put him away. And yet suddenly without a moment's warning, he had passed out. Someone must have slipped him a Mickey Finn. And then, what had happened after that? Obviously someone had taken him back to his hotel and dumped him on his bed. But the girl, what about her? How

had she met her death? Why had someone killed her in his room or in his bathroom? It didn't make sense. What about Gregor? What had happened to him? It was a first-class set up, but what on earth for? Was it all connected with the delay in his contract and had the delay been deliberate, contrived with the intention of setting him up?

A thousand and one questions passed through Guy's mind. His head was still splitting with the hangover from the night before. They must have put a real knockout in his champagne. It kept hammering away in his head so painfully that he put his knuckles to his temples to try to get some relief.

Although Guy had resigned himself to another long wait, it was not in fact more than an hour before his cell door opened and he was taken to be questioned. His interrogator proved to be a short thickset man in his forties. He had close-cropped black hair and rather a heavy dark jowl. His dark eyes, nestling under thick bushy eyebrows, presided over a flat pudgy nose. Whilst no one would have thought him handsome, nevertheless he gave the

impression of keen intelligence. There was a certain shrewd gleam in his eyes which seemed to light up his face.

“Sit down, Mr. Trent. I am Colonel Krovotny. I regret that we have had to keep you waiting,” he said in good, rather precise, English.

Guy took the proffered chair. He felt a certain sense of relief, since his instinct told him that at least he could establish some sort of communication with the man on the other side of the desk.

“Smoke?” asked the Russian, offering Guy a cigarette.

“No, thanks. I don’t,” replied Guy.

“Now then, Mr. Trent, suppose you tell me all about it?”

The Colonel sat back and put his fingertips together in front of his mouth.

“First I want to see someone from our Embassy,” said Guy; “I’ve been trying to make that clear, but nobody wants to listen.”

“Yes, of course, but there will be plenty of time for that. Let us first clear the air,” countered the Colonel urbanely.

“I’m more than willing to do that, but

first I want one of our Embassy people present," insisted Guy.

"I am sorry, but I do not seem to make myself clear," said the Colonel; "I want first to hear from you about the events of the night."

"Of course," replied Guy, "but, as I have said, when our man is here."

Krovotny frowned. He picked up a pencil lying on his desk and tapped his nose with it.

"Mr. Trent," he said, "I am a patient man and I have plenty of time, but I do not think we are likely to make much progress like this. It is quite simple, I want to hear your account of the matter, but if you do not want to tell me, then I shall ask the guard to return you to your room, and bring you to me again tomorrow."

Guy thought grimly for a moment of his cell being described as a room, but did not want to give up so easily.

"You have no right to keep me without access to the Embassy, Colonel. I must insist that you make the necessary arrangements."

A bleak smile flitted across Krovotny's face.

“So you insist, do you, Mr. Trent? You insist,” he repeated. “May I remind you that you and a murdered woman have been found together in your locked bedroom? And you insist.”

Guy tried to continue the argument, but to no avail. He could see that he was starting to irritate the Colonel and that would serve no useful purpose. He came to a sudden decision to tell his story. Although it went against his natural instincts, the bare recital of the night’s events could do him no harm as far as he could see. A night in the cells was hardly something to look forward to. He had nothing to hide.

“Very well, Colonel, if you refuse my request, I must accept it. In any case there is no reason why you should not hear exactly what happened.”

Guy went on to tell Krovotny of the visit to the apartment with Gregor, the introduction to his friends and the arrival of Nerina and the other girls. The flow of champagne was not forgotten, so that Guy thought he had covered everything until the moment of the toasts.

“Then everything suddenly started to

spin round and I must have passed out. I don't remember anything more. I still can't understand it. I can take a few drinks without any problem. All I can think is that someone must have put something in my drink."

"But why should anyone want to do that?" put in the Colonel.

"God knows," replied Guy, "for a joke, I suppose. Some joke."

"Hardly likely is it, Mr. Trent?" observed the Colonel drily.

"Well, anyway, that's what happened. After that I knew nothing until your men woke me up in my room this morning."

"And what about the girl?" asked the Russian.

"How should I know? She was sitting on my knee in the apartment until I stood up for the toasts and I haven't the faintest idea how she got into my bathroom or how she was killed."

"No idea? Are you quite sure, Mr. Trent?"

"Of course. I've just told you, haven't I? Anyway you don't have to rely on me. Ask Gregor—Mr. Rakovsky, I mean. He

will tell you. He was there with me in the apartment. Ask him.”

“I have, Mr. Trent, I have,” said the Colonel softly.

“Well then?”

“He has a somewhat different account to give.”

“What do you mean?” asked Guy in sudden alarm.

“He tells me,” said Krovotny slowly, “that although you drank heavily, you were perfectly all right during the whole time he was with you. He tells me that you started to make advances to the girl and, because she could not understand English, you asked him to persuade the girl to accompany you back to your hotel room. He says he did this and the three of you came back to the hotel where he said ‘Good-bye’ and went home. He told you he would see you early in the morning to sign the business contract with you. When he arrived the next morning, the desk clerk could not get an answer from you on your telephone, so Comrade Rakovsky went to your room and knocked repeatedly on your door. Still there was no answer, so he decided to come back in an hour. In

the meantime, the chambermaid went into your room on her passkey and discovered, well you know what she discovered."

Guy sat open-mouthed as he listened to the Colonel's recital. What on earth was Gregor talking about? It was a complete pack of lies.

"Rakovsky's lying," Guy almost spat out the words.

"Why should he be lying?" asked the Colonel.

"Heaven knows, but he is. I never asked him to arrange anything with the girl. I'd passed out, hadn't I. It's all rubbish as well, about coming back to the hotel, the three of us I mean."

"Is it, Mr. Trent?"

"Of course it is."

"The hotel porter would not agree with you, Mr. Trent."

"The porter? What are you getting at?" demanded Guy.

"The night duty porter at the hotel says that he remembers your coming in at about 3 a.m. with the girl and Comrade Rakovsky. You had a short conversation in the lobby before Comrade Rakovsky left. Then you asked for your key and went

into the lift with the girl. You had your arm round her waist and you were laughing together.

“It’s a fix. It’s a set-up,” cried Guy angrily; “I’m being set up. It’s obvious. Somebody wants to set me up.”

“Come now, Mr. Trent,” said the Colonel, tapping his desk with his pencil, “don’t you think you are being rather ridiculous? First of all you say Comrade Rakovsky is lying, and now the hotel porter. The plain fact is that, because of the drink, you don’t remember what did happen last night. I suppose that for some reason you did not get what you wanted from that wretched girl and you killed her.”

“Absolute rubbish. It’s a complete set-up. First someone doctored my drink and then the whole thing was arranged.”

“Even to the point of taking the girl’s clothes off before drowning her in the bath,” added Krovotny with heavy sarcasm; “really, Mr. Trent, do not push me too far.”

“Oh, go to hell,” exploded Guy, losing his temper.

The Colonel sat back in his chair. He paused before he spoke again.

“Don’t you think,” he said, “that it would be better if you admitted that you had too much to drink and that in your room your feelings got the better of you and without realising what you were doing, you killed the girl. I daresay we could arrange something. A girl like that is not worth our fighting over with a British visitor. Perhaps we could smooth things over one way or another.”

“I keep trying to tell you,” said Guy, recovering himself a little; “I didn’t kill the girl. I didn’t kill her.”

“Yes, Mr. Trent, I know that’s what you’re saying, but what I am saying is that you don’t remember killing her—rather a different matter. After all, if you passed out as you say you did, you may have partially recovered and done all sorts of things you cannot now remember.”

“Now will you let me see someone from the Embassy?” demanded Guy.

“No, Mr. Trent,” replied the Colonel, “I think it would be better if you had time to reflect on your foolishness. We’ll put you in a more comfortable room and you

can have the night to think it over. We can talk again tomorrow."

Despite his protests Guy was led away. He was taken to a slightly larger room than the cell in which he had waited earlier. Although far from comfortable, it was at least reasonably light and airy. The walls did not exude the same dank and melancholy atmosphere as the little cell. Guy had more than enough time during the next twenty-four hours to consider his plight. He realised only too well how serious it was. According to Krovotny there was ample evidence upon which to charge him with murder. But why had Gregor and the hotel porter lied to trap him like this? It seemed to be some sort of absurd conspiracy. At the same time Guy could not escape occasional moments of self-doubt. Could it be possible that they were telling the truth and that he had indeed taken the girl back to the hotel? He could not imagine himself doing it but people did sometimes have a complete mental blackout after a drinking bout. It was not impossible that he had come round after passing out and taken part in the events that followed. No, he couldn't have. It was

ridiculous, more than ridiculous; there had to be another explanation. If that were so, then the only other explanation there could be was that he had been doped and then the girl had been murdered and dumped in his bath so that it would look like a sex crime. But why? Was it simply that Krovotny wanted to lock him away, or was he going to be yet another international hostage to be exchanged for some Russian now in gaol in England? Was he going to be made makeweight for some future exchange on Berlin's Glienicker Bridge? The more Guy tried to unravel the mystery, the more he drifted towards this as the only explanation. One thing, however, was clear enough: he was not being allowed access to the Embassy staff or any help from outside.

As Guy lay in bed that night, he thought of home. By now he should have been back in his Surrey cottage. Spring had come and the leaves were starting to appear on the trees, like a delicate green haze. The daffodils were in bloom by his front gate while the tulip buds were just starting to show some colour. There were some in the bed at the side of his house in front of

some silver birches. He could remember Simon helping him to put them in. Simon, yes, he would be coming home for the weekend as usual. He would be going to fetch him from school. Or would he? Unless he could sort things out here, he would still be in Moscow. Somehow or other he had to extricate himself from all this, but how? That was the question.

The next morning brought no relief to Guy's troubled mind. It did, however, bring a further thought. Could it be that all this was anything to do with his father? Sir Redvers Trent was not only a very wealthy man, but also one of Britain's top scientists, now engaged in space research. Guy was not close to his father, in fact rather the reverse. They had never got on well together and rarely saw each other, so that now it seemed to him only a remote chance that his present predicament could have anything to do with his father's work. Nevertheless, it was a possibility and worth keeping in mind. A hostage exchange, however, seemed altogether more likely and he started wondering how long it would take to work out all the details. He just hoped that Krovotny

would prove to be more sympathetic on their second meeting this morning.

There was, however, no second meeting between them that morning, or indeed at all that day. Guy was taken before another KGB officer, a younger man than Krovotny and obviously a subordinate. He had none of Krovotny's polish and kept barking at Guy. He asked him whether he had anything to add to his previous day's statement and whether he now admitted killing the girl. When Guy told him he had nothing to add and wished to see someone from the Embassy and Colonel Krovotny himself, the officer brusquely informed him that the Colonel was not able to waste further time on him until he co-operated. This annoyed Guy whose protests, however, merely resulted in an immediate return to his room.

The same thing with minor variations happened on the next day and the day after that. By this time Guy felt certain that the Embassy people must know that he was still in Moscow and be making enquiries about him. This gave him hope but not much else. How was it all going

to end? This could continue for day after day.

On the fifth day, however, Guy was taken once more before Krovotny. When he entered the room, the Colonel was looking pensive.

“Well my young friend,” he began, “I hope we are beginning to see the error of our ways. Perhaps we can now move forward a little—just a little, eh?”

A faint humourless smile flitted across Krovotny’s face.

Guy was not amused.

“What the hell is all this about?” he exploded; “why are you keeping me like this day after day?”

“Come, come,” replied the Colonel smoothly, “you seem to have forgotten the little matter of the beautiful Nerina.”

“Yes, yes, we’ve been through all that,” said Guy irritably, “but the question is why? Why are you doing this, what’s the deal?”

“The deal?” The Colonel raised his bushy eyebrows in mock surprise; “what do you mean, the deal?”

“You know damn well what I mean. You and your friends have set me up and

there's a reason for it, there must be. I wasn't born yesterday. So let's have it. What's the deal?"

"We simply want you to admit your guilt about the girl's death and then we can see what can be arranged," replied Krovotny.

"Oh yes, all very fine," snapped Guy; "and when I've done that and put a rope round my neck so to speak, you'll lock me away until you can exchange me for one of your spies locked up at home, I suppose."

"Dear me, Mr. Trent, where do you get these strange ideas from? If I did not know better, I should think that we had left some of your more fanciful Western paperbacks in your room for you to read."

"Now look, Colonel," said Guy, trying hard to control himself, "let me make it absolutely clear. I am not going to sign any confession, today or any other day, for something I haven't done and would not do in a thousand years. You can keep me here as long as you like, but I won't do it and that is final, final, final."

Guy raised his hand and stabbed the air vigorously with his forefinger to round off his point.

Krovotny rose from his desk and paced across the room, as if he was deep in thought. Finally he turned and faced Guy.

“There is just one possibility,” he said, “just one possible solution.”

“Well?” asked Guy.

“At present we are at an impasse, because you will not help me in the way I ask. Let us leave that for the moment and see if there is another way in which you can help me.”

“Help you? How can I possibly help you?” asked Guy, “I’m not in a position to help you.”

“Oh, but you are,” replied the Colonel.

“I—” Guy started in bewilderment.

Krovotny interrupted him, as he resumed his seat at his desk.

“You are, Mr. Trent. You are your father’s son.”

So that was it! It was his father’s work after all. All this was because he was his father’s son. His anger overflowed.

“If you think for one moment that I’m going to do anything to betray my father and also my country, you’re wasting your time,” he shouted. “You’ve got hold of the wrong monkey.”

“Have I?” asked the Colonel, “have I really?”

“Of course. I’ve just said so.”

“Please do not be so hasty, Mr. Trent, you should hear me out.”

“Well go on then, if you must,” said Guy, “but it won’t do you any good.”

“But it might do you some good, Mr. Trent, and after all it is you who is in most need of help.”

“I’m not passing on any secrets, even if I knew any, which I don’t.”

“I do not have such a thing in mind, Mr. Trent.”

“Then what do you have in mind?” asked Guy suspiciously.

“If you will just allow me to tell you,” said Krovotny patiently.

He lit a cigarette and offered one to Guy, who refused.

“All I am going to ask is this,” he went on; “in exchange for your freedom, which is mine to give or withhold as I choose, I want you to let us know from time to time any information you have about your father’s movements and activities, that’s all—nothing about the details of his work,

which I should not expect you to know anyway.”

“Not a chance,” said Guy curtly.

“It is not much to ask, Mr. Trent. Such a small thing, so trivial.”

“If it is so trivial, then why bother, why go to all these lengths to set me up?” asked Guy angrily.

“It is just a small item in our efforts to promote peace.”

“Peace my foot,” said Guy derisively, “anyway it’s not on.”

Krovotny closed his eyes, as if weary of Guy’s attitude. After a moment he opened them again and looked keenly at Guy.

“How is your young son Simon?” he asked suddenly.

Guy was taken aback. The last thing he had expected was the mention of Simon’s name.

“How do you know I have a son?” he countered, as if playing for time.

“You might be surprised at how much I know about you, Mr. Trent,” said the KGB man. “How is he?”

“Simon? He’s fine.”

“I am so glad,” said the Colonel urbanely, “so very glad. I do hope that he

may enjoy the happiness which we should all like our children to enjoy."

"What are you getting at?" asked Guy, half in anger, half in fear.

"Getting at? Really, Mr. Trent, that is not a very agreeable way of putting it," replied Krovotny, "but it would be terrible for the poor boy, if having lost his mother, he were also to lose his father."

Guy jumped from his seat.

"Do not lose your temper, Mr. Trent, that will help nobody, least of all you and your son," Krovotny waved at him to sit down again; "I'm going to send you back to your room again now, so that you may have plenty of time to think about it. Remember the choice, a little harmless information on the one hand, or a child's future on the other. I'm sure you will come to a sensible decision, Mr. Trent. The British usually do. It is a pity the Americans are not more like you."

He added the last sentence almost as an afterthought to himself.

Guy had no chance to say more. A guard took him back to his room, where he sat on his bed for a long time staring at nothing. What a mess! What was he going

to do? It could well be that if he stuck to his guns and refused any co-operation, Krovotny would accept that he was gaining nothing by keeping him and would let him go. On the other hand he would hardly have gone to these lengths to give up now. His use of Simon's vulnerability showed him to be without scruples and indeed Guy would not have expected him to have any. It was naturally out of the question to start supplying the Russians with information about his father, but clearly there was nothing to stop him promising the earth here in Moscow to get his freedom and then to thumb his nose at them once he was safely back in England with Simon. He had to answer trickery with trickery. The more he thought about it, the more he was inclined to this solution. Why should all the double-dealing be only on one side? He would pretend to play along reluctantly with the KGB man, but once he was at home, he could tell him to go to the devil by ignoring the whole thing. It would of course spell the end of his visits to the Eastern bloc on business, but there were

plenty of able people in the firm who could take his place.

Accordingly this was the line that Guy took with Krovotny the next day. He could think of no other. When eventually he had finished assuring the Colonel of his acceptance of the deal, he felt he had made a good enough job of it. His reluctance was obvious enough, really quite convincing, he thought.

“What was it your William Shakespeare had to say? Let me think a moment,” mused Krovotny softly, when Guy had finished.

“Shakespeare? What do you mean?” asked Guy blankly.

“‘The lady doth protest too much, methinks’. Wasn’t that it, the Queen said in Hamlet?” queried the Colonel. “I do hope, my young friend, that you do not propose to cheat on our bargain. That would be very unwise.”

“Cheat?” repeated Guy parrotwise.

“Yes, that is what I said,” went on Krovotny; “It would be very foolish of you to think that once you are at home, you can forget our little arrangement.”

“Why should you think that?” asked Guy, beginning to feel transparent.

“Because, to use your own expression, I was not born yesterday, Mr. Trent. At first sight nothing would be easier, would it, than to obtain your freedom by promises broken later?”

“I have told you that I shall do my best. I cannot do more,” said Guy.

“And it had better be your best, Mr. Trent,” said the Colonel with menace in his voice, “because if, and I say if, you fail to deliver, then there could be very unfortunate consequences.”

“Such as?” queried Guy. “I am not afraid of your threats, even though there is no reason for them.”

“You may not be afraid for yourself, Mr. Trent, but I am sure you would not like anything to happen to your son.”

Guy’s knuckles went white as he gripped the arms of the chair on which he was sitting. A surge of anger overtook him.

“Leave Simon out of this,” he exploded; “I tell you—”

The KGB man cut swiftly into Guy’s savage reaction.

“No, you leave him out of it, Mr. Trent. You leave him out of it. It is in your own hands. As long as you play your part, nothing will happen to the boy. But if you do not, then we shall reach him wherever you may try to hide him. Make no mistake about that.”

For the first time in the many hours of their conversations, Krovotny raised his voice and as he finished, he slammed his pencil down on his desk. Guy shivered inside. For a moment his stomach seemed to turn over. He fought to recover himself.

“I don’t accept threats and what’s more, threats about my son disgust me. You disgust me, you and your whole apparatus. The deal’s off,” he cried.

“Oh no, it isn’t my friend,” said the Colonel swiftly; “the deal has been done, settled.”

He waved the palm of his hand sideways, as if wiping a slate clean.

“It’s settled,” he repeated. “There is no going back. Tomorrow you will fly back to England.”

“You can’t,” Guy started to say, but Krovotny had already summoned the guard. A rough hand on his shoulder cut

short his sentence. Guy tried for a moment to wrench himself free, but as he did so, Krovotny rose from his chair and disappeared through another door at the back of the room. The palaver was finished.

# Part Two

## The White Moves



**G**UY spent most of the flight from Moscow trying to sort out his jumbled thoughts. What was he going to say to his boss and his colleagues? And the big question, what was he going to do about Krovotny's so-called deal? Should he go to the authorities in London and tell them all about it? Would this put Simon in danger? Should he just go along with it and pass harmless scraps of information? Would it stop at that or would one thing lead to another? And anyway, how would he do it? As he had no instructions, presumably someone would get in touch with him. An endless tide of questions flowed through Guy's mind without any of them receiving an answer. Suddenly he felt a tap on his shoulder.

“Mr. Trent?”

Guy looked up to see one of the stewardesses standing beside him.

“Yes?”

“I have been asked to give you this,” she said.

She handed Guy a large bulky envelope which bore his name.

Opening it quickly, he was amazed to discover the re-worded contract which had been the start of all his troubles. Pinned to it was a note which read simply:

“Regret much the delay. Gregor.”

Guy thumbed through the pages. Each one was signed and there was a final signature at the end. It was strange, but until he was actually on the plane, he had hardly given a thought to the fact that, after all the turmoil, he had left Moscow with nothing to show for his visit, as far as his firm was concerned. And now here was the contract, the one he had tried so hard to persuade Gregor Rakovsky to sign. But what about his own signature? He hadn't signed anything. He pursed his lips in a faint smile. Krovotny or Rakovsky or any of them were hardly likely to worry about technicalities like that. By now someone had no doubt forged his signature from the hotel register. Anyway he would have

something to put on his chief's desk after all. What would the reaction be, however, to his return being nearly a week overdue?

Guy felt an enormous sense of relief as he stepped on to home soil at Heathrow. At last he was free, free physically. Freedom suddenly took on a new significance for him, as something to be prized, not taken for granted.

Having decided to take a taxi into London to his office he once more allowed his thoughts to crowd in upon him, so that he hardly noticed the journey. Eventually the taxi-driver started to thread his way through the busy London streets. As the heavy traffic slowed his progress he suddenly darted down a side street. Guy wondered idly whether some diversion was necessary or whether it was a short cut. Two more quick turns followed, one immediately after the other so that Guy was just about to ask the driver what he was doing, when the cab stopped by the kerb. A small man in an old raincoat stepped from a shop doorway, opened the nearside door of the cab and climbed in.

“What the—?” began Guy.

The man plumped himself down beside

Guy, while the taxi-driver drew quickly away from the kerb and resumed his journey.

“Just a minute, Mr. Trent,” said the small man; “All right, Albert?” he asked the driver.

“Yes,” replied the driver, “they followed me all the way from Heathrow but I gave them the slip all right just now. Did them on a traffic light in the end.”

“Do you mind telling me who you are and what all this is about?” demanded Guy; “how do you know my name?”

“All in good time,” replied the small man. “Drop us here by the park, Albert,” he went on, “Mr. Trent and I will take a stroll.”

The taxi came to a halt by the park gates. The small man opened the door and alighted. Guy stayed where he was.

“I’m not taking a stroll anywhere,” he said.

“Don’t worry,” said the small man, “I shall not keep you long, and Albert here will take you on to your office.”

“I’m going there now,” replied Guy stubbornly, “and if this man won’t take me, I’ll get another cab.”

“Yes, yes,” said the small man soothingly, “do please forgive this intrusion on your time, but it really is in your own interests, you know. We must try to straighten out this Moscow affair, mustn’t we?”

Guy stared hard at him in surprise. Who was this man who not only knew his name but also about Moscow? He hesitated no longer. He had to find out.

Guy alighted from the taxi, to find that the small man barely came up to his shoulder, as they stood for a moment together on the pavement.

“Let us walk into the park and take one of those park benches over there,” said the small man, waving his hand towards several empty seats.

As they sat down, Guy’s patience reached breaking point.

“Will you please, please tell me what the hell is going on?” he exploded. “Who are you?”

“Let me introduce myself,” began the small man; “they call me Mr. Sim. I earn my daily keep working for a rather obscure department of British Intelligence and at the moment I am looking after the little

matter surrounding your experiences in Moscow."

"Do you mean that you know about that?" asked Guy in surprise.

"Quite so," replied Mr. Sim, "that is why I arranged it so that you got into Albert's cab at Heathrow. Albert is one of my men and I wanted him to bring you to me for this little chat where we would not be disturbed. As no doubt you realise from my conversation with Albert, our Russian friends had a tail on you from Heathrow and it would have been a pity to have had too many prying eyes."

By now Guy's anger was beginning to subside. Surprise and curiosity took its place. He looked at Mr. Sim. Although he was so small, probably not much more than an inch or two over five feet in height, he nevertheless had a definite presence. Guy could feel his personality. He was middle-aged, probably about fifty years old, his fair hair was a little thin and had receded leaving a rather pronounced forehead. He wore gold-rimmed spectacles low down on his nose, and over the top of them, Guy could see a pair of shrewd light-blue eyes. His cheeks were rosy, his

jaw strong and determined. There was a little line curving downwards from each end of his mouth which gave him a somewhat lugubrious air. However, as he gave a little smile at the thought of the prying eyes he had diverted, the downward curves round his mouth went into reverse. This man could charm the birds of the trees, if he chose, thought Guy, but probably he didn't choose very often.

“How do you come to know about the Moscow affair?” asked Guy.

“It is my business to know about such things,” replied Mr. Sim.

“How much do you know?”

“Look, Mr. Trent, would you mind very much if we leave that until another time? I realise that you must be very curious, but you and I will have a long chat very soon when we can go a lot further than we can today. However, the reason I arranged this little meeting so soon is that I want you to do two things. The first is that I want you to stay nothing to anybody about what happened to you in Moscow.”

“Not even to my boss and the people in the firm?”

“Not even to them. As far as they are concerned, it simply took you several more days to deal with the business. Did you get anywhere with that, by the way?”

“Yes, strangely enough, I did. It was most peculiar. When I was on the plane—”

Mr. Sim interrupted him.

“Leave it for the moment,” he said, “I just wanted to know if you got a contract. If you did, that’s so much the better. Simply tell them at work that it took you a long time but you made it in the end.”

“What about my family?”

“The same. Tell them nothing.”

“But—” began Guy.

“Bear with me,” said Mr. Sim; “now, the second thing I want you to do. I want you to do exactly as they told you to do in Moscow.”

“But they want me to give them information.”

“Just so,” went on Mr. Sim; “then give it to them. It will be harmless enough.”

“The strange thing is that they never told me how to go about it,” said Guy.

“Don’t bother your head about that. They will contact you, never fear. They

will have a controller for you. He will contact you before very long and, when he does, do as he says.”

“That doesn’t seem right, especially coming from you,” replied Guy.

“Probably we shall have our talk first anyway,” said Mr. Sim; “don’t forget that the Russians’ national game is chess and chess players do not hurry. They think out every move very carefully and I daresay they will not be very quick to make the next move. They will be watching, though, and that’s why you must keep quiet about your troubles in Moscow.”

“How soon shall we meet again?”

“Soon,” replied Mr. Sim, rising from the bench; “I have one or two things to attend to first, but it will not be long. You will do as I ask?”

“Very well,” said Guy, “but don’t keep me in suspense long. I want to get all this sorted out. I’m an angry man after the party games in Moscow and I don’t like the feeling.”

“Understood,” replied Mr. Sim, “I’ll be in touch. Albert’s still there, waiting for you.”

Mr. Sim pointed to the park gates,

before turning and hurrying away in the opposite direction.

Guy kept his promise. He said nothing to anyone about the girl Nerina or about Krovotny and the KGB. As was to be expected, they were pleased at work about the contract. His boss, Basil Twyford, waxed enthusiastic.

“Damn good effort,” he said; “a real breakthrough, this. Could lead to a lot more. Well done, Guy.”

Guy muttered that he was glad he’d had the chance.

“We were getting a bit worried about you, though. I mean, dammit all, a day or so extra is one thing, but a week! That’s getting beyond the call of duty. What on earth did you do all the time? All caviare and vodka, I suppose.”

Guy got through it somehow. Some of his explanations seemed a little unconvincing, he reflected, but old Twyford was not really listening to them. It was the contract he was interested in, that was the important thing.

Guy telephoned Simon’s headmaster. Yes, Simon was all right. He had been disappointed that his Dad had not come to

fetch him at the weekend, but the boys had gone on a country trek and he had enjoyed it with the others. He was looking forward to next weekend. Guy managed to have a few words with Simon as well and it was obvious that last weekend was now ancient history.

“I scored two goals yesterday, Daddy,” he said excitedly, “the second one was a real cracker too. Boxall tried to tackle me but I got past him.”

Guy heard nothing from the Russians and had it not been for Mr. Sim’s warning that they would not be in a hurry, Guy would have started to wonder whether he would in fact hear from them. However, it was only two days before he heard again from Mr. Sim. Albert was waiting for him as he left the office.

“The guy’nor wants to see you, squire,” he said; “he says I’m to pick you up here tomorrow, same time as now. OK?”

Guy nodded and Albert disappeared into the crowd. Tomorrow, Guy mused. He was glad. He could try to sort himself out before the weekend. He had already spent all his time at home in a fruitless attempt

to look ahead and puzzle out what was likely to happen.

Albert duly collected him the next evening, again in a cab.

“Same cab, different plates,” he called back over his shoulder as he drove off, as if in answer to Guy’s unspoken thoughts. He started to drive through a maze of side streets.

“Just making sure of giving old Ivan the slip,” he said, “just in case he’s keeping his tabs on you.”

At length Albert drew up in a quiet mews, where he escorted Guy through a narrow doorway and upstairs to a flat where Mr. Sim was waiting.

“Go and make us something to eat in the kitchen, Albert,” he said; “it will keep you out of mischief while we talk. Go easy on the garlic, I can’t stand too much of the stuff. I don’t know why you’re so heavy-handed with it.”

“OK, guv,” replied Albert perkily, “no sooner said than done.”

“Great chap, Albert,” said Mr. Sim, as Albert headed for the kitchen. “The department wanted him to call me ‘Sir’ but he forgets all the time. Why bother

anyway, we understand one another. Remember, you can always trust Albert. He's as good as gold, bless his Cockney heart."

Guy and Mr. Sim sat opposite each other in dark red leather armchairs. Mr. Sim lit his pipe and settled back comfortably.

"Now let's begin," he said; "I take it that you have not heard anything from our Communist friends?"

"No, not a thing."

"And you have been able to keep your little secret?"

"Yes, of course."

"Good. That's a good start. Now first of all," began Mr. Sim, "I'd better confess something right away. I knew you were going to Moscow and that something was likely to happen to you."

"You knew?" echoed Guy in total surprise.

"Yes. I didn't know of course what exactly would happen and I still don't know until you tell me but I had a fair idea."

Guy could not contain his indignation.

"You mean you knew I was heading for

trouble and you just let me go? You have to be joking. I might still be there, for that matter. I was right up to my neck in it. I must say that just takes my breath away. That was a really big deal for me, wasn't it?"

"Don't get excited, Mr. Trent," said Mr. Sim quietly; "I know it sounds callous but I had very good reason and of course I knew you'd come back, as you'll see in a minute. First of all, though, tell me exactly what happened. As much detail as you can please, it all helps."

Although unable to hide his annoyance, Guy managed nevertheless to embark on his story. He recounted first the delay over the contract, then the visit with Gregor to the apartment followed by the scene in his bedroom the next morning with the discovery of Nerina's body in the bathroom.

"Ha, the bath trick," grunted Mr. Sim.  
"Bath trick?"

"Yes, I suppose they hauled you back pretty swiftly from the bathroom, once you had seen the girl lying there naked in the water?"

“As a matter of fact, they did,” said Guy; “what of it?”

“Ten to one the girl was not dead at all,” replied Mr. Sim; “she was probably KGB and planted on you at the apartment. Then after you were slipped a Mickey Finin, it was all staged. In the morning she takes her clothes off and spreads them all over your bedroom and then lies down naked in a bathful of water ready for her colleagues to bring you in to view the corpse. She turns face down so that when you come in, it looks as if she is cold mutton. You are given no chance to have a proper look and so naturally you believe she is dead. An old trick, but none the less effective for that.”

Guy swallowed hard. He could hardly believe he was hearing right.

“You mean she was—you mean—” he choked on his words.

“There’s no need to feel foolish. There was no way you could know, except by looking more closely, and of course they made very sure that there was no chance of that.”

Mr. Sim poured a drink for Guy and one for himself.

“It was a means of getting a hold over you for what was to follow,” he explained, “all part of the pressure technique. Pray continue.”

Guy then started to go over all the events of the subsequent days with as much detail as he could remember. Mr. Sim sipped his whisky from time to time, as he listened. When Guy mentioned Krovotny’s name, Mr. Sim uttered an exclamation.

“You know him?” asked Guy.

“I know of him,” replied Mr. Sim. “We call him the Red Knight—the chess analogy again.”

“Why the Red Knight?” asked Guy.

“Because his moves are as devious as those of the knight on the chessboard,” replied Mr. Sim, “there is nothing straightforward about him. He’s as artful as a wagonload of monkeys.”

“He speaks first-rate English,” said Guy; “and what’s more he has hardly any accent.”

“So I believe,” said Mr. Sim; “we think he spent several years in this country when he was young. Anyway, tell me more.”

Guy continued his story through to the

eventual delivery to him on the aircraft of the signed contract.

“Was that a sweetener for me after all?” asked Guy.

“Hardly. Krovotny was looking to the future. If everything went according to plan, he would have a ready-made avenue of communication with you. All he would have to do would be to arrange a further approach by Gregor to your firm for more business discussions and you would have been sent over to Moscow again—that is, if you were prepared to go, and by that time your position would have been so compromised that you would have had little choice.”

Guy sipped his gin and tonic. His story had taken some time to tell and now at last hoped that he was about to have some explanation of what it was all about.

“Now it’s your turn,” he said, leaning back in his chair.

“Yes, indeed,” said Mr. Sim. “I’ll try to be as brief as possible, although that won’t be altogether easy.”

He sat back and placed his fingertips together in front of his chest.

“Let me start by asking you just one

more question,” he said; “have you heard of Spetsnaz?”

“Spetsnaz? The word seems to ring a bell. I’ve got a feeling I have heard about it somewhere. Remind me.”

“The Spetsnaz forces,” went on Mr. Sim, “are the Russian special forces group. They are trained in various places in the Soviet Union, in the Urals and elsewhere and many of its members consist of foreign nationals they have recruited, the object being to use them eventually in their country of origin. Moreover, although they have extensive military training, this is by no means all. They also go in for psychological warfare in a big way. Incidentally, it is in that connection that you have probably heard of them. Greenham Common.”

“Greenham Common?”

“Yes. Don’t you remember? You probably read about it at the time, or saw a piece about it on the TV News. It was alleged that the Russians had sent a number of Spetsnaz women to infiltrate the women protesters outside the Greenham Common Cruise missile base. The idea was to work on the hearts and minds of the women there, all the more

effective of course if the Spetsnaz women are themselves British or at least West European.”

“So?” queried Guy; “what is that all to do with me?”

“Well,” replied Mr. Sim, “it’s to do with you in this way: the Spetsnaz forces are now being increasingly used to counter what the Russians see as the main threat from the West, that is the Strategic Defence Initiative, popularly known as Star Wars, and one of the sectors in which they are operating is in the scientific sector. That, Mr. Trent, is how we arrive at the work being done by your father, and that brings us to you.”

“My father?” asked Guy; “is my father working on the Star Wars thing? I thought that that was virtually an all-American affair?”

“Mostly, but not exclusively,” replied Mr. Sim; “people are generally under the impression that it’s purely American, but some of our top scientists, including your father, are very much concerned, as in fact are other leading scientists in Western Europe. They have made such advances that it is now Government policy for

Europe to get its act together and thus come to exert much greater influence on the Americans than hitherto. Individually we as nations may not count for much, but collectively we could count for quite a lot. That is why we have now to reckon with Spetsnaz."

"What are they trying to do?"

"What they are trying to do is to pick off or neutralise the most important European scientists before they can pool their knowledge and start working together effectively. This pooling process is to start in earnest at a scientific Conference to be held at the end of the summer at a place called Merano in Italy in the South Tyrol. So the critical period is from now until that Conference."

"Is my father going to that Conference?" asked Guy.

"Most certainly," replied the little man; "he is one of the key figures, and that makes him the No. 1 target for Spetsnaz in this country."

"You don't mean that they are out to harm him or even kill him?" asked Guy incredulously.

"Is that so absurd?" countered Mr. Sim;

“the world is a hard place these days and for Communists the end justifies the means, particularly when the end is the matter of what they regard as simple national survival. Just think for a minute, the scientific sector is an especially vulnerable one, for the simple reason that the knowledge is concentrated in so few minds. Therefore if the flow of knowledge can be stopped at source, the resulting benefit is enormous.”

“But is there any evidence for all this? I mean what you’ve said is just theory so far,” interrupted Guy; “have you got any hard facts to support it? And anyway, I still don’t understand how I come in and what all this is to do with my treatment in Moscow?”

“One thing at a time,” replied Mr. Sim; “first of all, I can assure you that it is very far from being just theory. Do you remember Dr. Jacob Goetz?”

“Yes, he was a friend of my father’s,” said Guy.

“Just so. In fact for a while they were working together,” continued Mr. Sim; “and you also remember, no doubt, that Dr. Goetz was found drowned in his own

swimming pool one morning. Every morning he went for a swim before breakfast before making a cup of tea and taking it up to his wife in bed. On that particular morning the tea failed to materialise and when the good Mrs. Goetz eventually got up to see what had happened, she found that her husband was dead in their pool. No reason was ever found as to why he should have drowned. Then there was the case of Professor Marcus Blattner who shot himself, having left a note stating that he was being blackmailed. He was also a scientist."

"But that was suicide," protested Guy; "I don't see that that proves anything."

"Psychological warfare," said Mr. Sim, "psychological warfare; don't forget that there are more ways than one of killing a cat. Who was doing the blackmailing? Somebody was putting on the pressure. And then there was Dr. Klaus Rabe of Cologne, what about him?"

"I've never heard of him," said Guy; "who was he?"

"He was one of the top men in West Germany engaged in the same sort of work as your father. He had a third floor apart-

ment in the Algarve where he used to go to relax from time to time. One morning he was found lying on the concrete path beneath his bedroom balcony. Nobody could explain how he came to fall to his death? Need I go on?"

Guy pursed his lips.

"Coincidences do happen," he said.

"Let us not forget the case of Brides-in-the-bath Smith," said Mr. Sim with a hint of a smile, "the famous case when evidence as to a chain of events or a system, was first allowed. His little trick was to drown his wife in the bath, having first insured her life. Then once the coroner at the inquest had found that it was accidental death, Smith collected the insurance money, moved, re-married and repeated the process. He did this several times. Each time the death appeared accidental and even when the police caught up with him, he would have been unlikely to have been convicted on the evidence of one death taken in isolation. However when the Court allowed evidence of the other deaths, he was done for. I am suggesting to you that this chain of deaths affords

ample evidence that I am not just theorising about Spetsnaz.”

Guy leaned back in his chair.

“All right,” he said; “maybe you’ve proved your point. Now you’re obviously worried that it might be my father’s turn next. But I still don’t know how I come in and what this Moscow affair was all about.”

“To put it shortly,” replied Mr. Sim, “I think you are being used by Moscow as a decoy.”

“How come?”

“As I shall explain in a minute, Krovotny obviously knows that I am trying to frustrate his various gambits and, in order to lure me away from the truth, he has staged an elaborate hoax by pointing me in your direction, his reasoning being that if I am concentrating on you, I shall not be looking elsewhere as single-mindedly as I should otherwise be. It’s the chess-playing mentality all over again.”

“I think you had better explain in words of one syllable,” said Guy, with a growing sense of bewilderment.

“I think it may all have started with the

Gordievsky affair," began Mr. Sim; "you will remember that his defection was followed by a number of expulsions from the Russian community in London. Among those who had to go were the men sniffing around your father."

"And so?"

"And so this is where you come in. What we expected was that they would set someone else of theirs on to the same work and we were keeping our eyes open for this. Then, however, we heard of the approach to your firm for some possible business. As a regular matter of routine we always look into every new commercial contact, just in case it has any implications for us, so that naturally we pulled on our thinking cap very firmly when we learned that the son of Sir Redvers Trent was likely to be involved. Sure enough they wanted your people to have someone included in a trade delegation to visit Moscow. Consequently it was no great surprise that that someone was you, since you had already visited a number of other countries for your firm."

"So you knew I was going and you deliberately let me go?"

Guy felt his hackles rising again. All this might be ordinary stuff for Sim and Krovotny and their ilk, but it was emphatically not his affair. He felt a fresh surge of resentment.

“Of course,” replied Mr. Sim calmly.

“Like a damn goat tethered to a post in the jungle clearing,” said Guy bitterly; “all right for some. I can’t say I went a bundle on it.”

“Time is a great healer,” said Mr. Sim blandly. He sipped his whisky to give Guy time to get over his outburst.

“After that,” he continued, “events seem to follow a predictable pattern. The man Gregor used delaying tactics, you were persuaded to stay behind for one day, then came the set-up and the KGB had you firmly in their grasp. Sometimes they use the sex-photo blackmail technique but there are several variations which they employ to ring the changes.”

“What you’re telling me is all very well,” said Guy, “but where does it all lead? Who gets any benefit from it all? What does Krovotny get out of it and what do you get out of letting me go in the first place?”

“All right, take Krovotny first,” replied Mr. Sim; “if, through fear for your boy, you come back and do as he asks, he has recruited another helper, he has added another cog to the wheel. You may think that of little importance, since you are only going to pass on scraps of information of little moment, but of course it wouldn’t stop at that. Once you are firmly hooked, then the pressure increases. They want more and then more and of course by now you can’t turn back because they threaten to expose you as one of their agents. And in fact by then that is exactly what you have become—a Soviet agent. That’s the first point and the most obvious one. Then there’s the other option, the decoy option, let’s consider that.”

“You mean if I come back and don’t do as he said?”

“Exactly. You come back and report it all to the authorities. Now don’t make the mistake of discounting this, because this is almost certainly what Krovotny expects. He has gathered in all the details of your character and background well in advance and therefore he knows that you’re not the type to want to have any truck with him.

So the strong probability is that once you have conquered your fear for Simon, you will come to us and spill the beans."

"So?" queried Guy; "so what then? If that happens, he has done it all for nothing. What would he have gained then?"

Mr. Sim leaned forward in his chair and pointed his forefinger at Guy.

"That, my friend," he said slowly, "that is what I have to find out. That is the puzzle I have to solve."

"Do you think that there really is any puzzle?" asked Guy; "is it so complicated after all?"

"Don't forget what I told you about the Red Knight. Oleg Krovotny is as clever as they come. He is pointing me in your direction and the question is—why?"

At that moment Albert put his head round the kitchen door.

"Ready yet, guy?"

"Not quite, Albert. We shan't be long, though."

"Blimey O'Reilly. You don't 'arf go on, you two."

Mr. Sim opened his mouth, but Albert's

head had disappeared again. Mr. Sim smiled.

“Poor Albert. He does not like to see good food getting spoilt. He fancies his cooking. So do I for that matter, so I must not keep him long. However, we still have a few loose ends to tie up. As I said, why is Krovotny pointing me in your direction?”

“And why is he?”

“The obvious answer,” went on Mr. Sim, “is as I have said. If I am looking at you, I am not looking somewhere else. In other words, if he can lead me to think that you are going to be his source of information about your father, he can have other people beavering away to replace our dear departed friends who had to go back to Moscow. Any such other hidden source of accurate information could be very damaging and dangerous. I suspect that this is now in the hands of the Spetsnaz people who are determined to prevent your father going to that Conference and when they are ready, they will strike.”

“You don’t seem too sure about it all,” commented Guy.

“I’m not,” said Mr. Sim; “it could very

well be the answer, but I'm not entirely happy. Still, that's my problem."

"And the other point, the one you still haven't answered," said Guy; "what did you stand to gain by letting me go to Moscow?"

"Information," replied Mr. Sim, "simply information. If the KGB wanted you over there, then I wanted to know the reason. As it is you've come back with some very helpful information. I'm really quite pleased."

Clinical devil, thought Guy; the human factor was quite irrelevant. It didn't matter in the slightest that he had had nearly a week of hell. He had brought back information, it was as simple as that!

"And now let's eat," said Mr. Sim brightly, rousing himself from his thoughts. "Let's see what Albert's got for us."

Albert did not waste any time. The three of them were soon putting away the supper upon which he had lavished such loving care. Only once was the Moscow affair referred to.

"It strikes me," said Guy, "that I'm just

a pawn in this game of chess you and Krovotny seem to be playing."

"Better than being a queen, guv," said Albert without a flicker of a smile.

Guy grinned broadly. Albert and his food made him feel better.

It was just as they were settling down afterwards to their coffee that the telephone rang.

"Answer it, will you, Albert," said Mr. Sim, "there's a good fellow."

The call was short. Albert turned to Mr. Sim.

"It was Steve," he said; "he seemed quite excited. He says that he's got something at last and he's on his way round."

"Splendid," said the little man, "now perhaps we shall get a real glimmer of daylight. We could certainly do with it."

"Who is Steve?" asked Guy.

"Steve is another of my splendid band of helpers," replied Mr. Sim, "another Albert in fact. I gave him the job of trying to find out how your father's friend, Jacob Goetz, came to meet his end in his swimming pool. That's quite a long time ago and Steve has been at it ever since, without anything much to show for it. Now, at

last, it seems that he's on to something. Good for Steve. Get another cup, Albert, I daresay he won't say 'no' to a cup of coffee."

Guy relaxed in his armchair. The combined effect of the meal and the coffee gave him a feeling of unusual well-being. The little man opposite him said nothing while they waited for Steve to arrive. He seemed lost in his thoughts as the minutes ticked away. At last Guy saw him frown, as he looked at his watch.

"I don't know what's happened, Albert," he said eventually; "nip round and see, will you. He should have been here in three or four minutes and its now over a quarter of an hour. Wait a minute, though, perhaps we'll all go. You have to drop off Mr. Trent anyway and, when I come to think of it, it wouldn't be a bad thing if he met Steve in case they work together later."

It took Albert barely three minutes to drive round to the block of flats where Steve lived. There was no reply to their ringing of the doorbell to his fourth floor flat. Mr. Sim and Albert looked at each other. Mr. Sim frowned.

“I wonder whether we’ve missed him on the way,” said Albert.

“Use your key,” said Mr. Sim abruptly; “let’s go in and wait.”

Albert fiddled for a moment with his bunch of keys before finding the right one and opening the door.

“Steve,” called out Albert, “Steve, mate, are you there?”

There was no answer. Guy and Mr. Sim waited while Albert had a quick look in the rooms of the little flat to make sure that there was no-one there.

“Nothing, guv,” he said on his return; “he must have been on his way to us after all.”

“I’m puzzled,” said Mr. Sim quietly; “I don’t like it. He should have turned up at my place ages ago.”

He paused for a moment, his frown deepening.

“I tell you what,” he went on, “let’s just see if his car is down below in the garage. He may have walked and that might be the reason he had not arrived when we left.”

They took the lift down to the basement, where they emerged into the gloom

of the cavernous garage which served the block. As they threaded their way through the cars, Albert suddenly pointed to their left.

“It’s there,” he said; “that’s Steve’s car. That’s the one, the one over there, the red one.”

When they reached the car which Albert had picked out, the three men stopped abruptly in their tracks, as if wrenched backwards by a hidden hand.

“My God!” gasped Guy.

A man was lolling sideways in the driver’s seat, his body sprawling across on to the seat beside him. He was quite still.

“It’s Steve,” hissed Mr. Sim; “quick, Albert, see if he’s—”

The words died on his lips, as he suddenly caught sight of a pool of blood staining the passenger’s seat.

“He’s been shot, look,” gasped Albert, stabbing the air with his finger at the body.

Guy had already seen the wound in the back of Steve’s neck.

“The bastard must have been waiting for him in the back of the car,” snarled

Mr. Sim; "the poor devil never had a chance."

Guy looked across at Albert. Even in the dim light Guy could see the pallor which had stolen over his face, as he stared down at Steve's body. His lips moved, but no sound escaped them.

Mr. Sim's voice suddenly took on a new tone.

"See to things, Albert, will you," he barked; "get on the phone, over there—ambulance and all that. I'll stay here with Mr. Trent. Get going, there's a good chap."

Albert darted away between the cars, as if plucked by a hidden string. Mr. Sim turned towards Guy.

"It's not only 'poor Steve', it's 'poor Albert' as well," he said; "this will hit him hard. He's worked with Steve for a long time, and to lose him like this—"

His words died away as he swung round and looked down again at Steve's body.

"Poor blighter," he said slowly, almost to himself; "I wonder what he was going to tell me. Whatever it was, we shall never know. Must have been on to something big, something—"

Again his words died away. There was a long pause as he tried to rouse himself. "Sod it," he choked.

During the next few days Guy relived those gruesome moments in the garage over and over again. He could still see Mr. Sim staring down at the body, the trickle of blood, the stain on the car seat, the glazed look on Albert's face. Earlier, when the little man had been telling him about Spetsnaz and trying to guess Krovotny's mind, Guy had felt that it was almost an intellectual exercise, especially after Mr. Sim's comparison to a game of chess. Now it was all different. Now it had bitten into his mind that, whatever comparisons were made, the threat was real and deadly. His father was at risk, the same risk to which Goetz and Blattner and the German must have been exposed. It made him start to look at his Moscow experience in a new light. Whereas previously he had thought only of Simon and himself, he now realised that it was quite impossible to leave it at that. He had to do what he could for his father as well. If Mr. Sim was in charge, then somehow or other he had to school himself to accept that he must do as the

little man dictated, whether he liked it or not. At the same time he must try to make himself more alert, more wary. At all costs Simon must be protected.

As Guy thought yet again of Simon, his mind's eye strayed for the thousandth time back to Steve's body in the car. Simon, Steve, the whole affair was like a black pit and he was falling headlong into it, down and down, down and down.

It was a restless and uneasy week or two for Guy before he heard anything from the KGB. When the contact did come, it was by telephone. A woman's voice told him to pick up a small package from a waste bin in Regent's Park. When he did so, he found that it contained a tape, on which the message, in a woman's voice, was clear and direct. Whenever he had any information, he had to put a short insertion in the Personal column of the Daily Telegraph, to read: "B. Waiting for you. G." He would then receive a telephone call the following day telling him when and where to leave a note with his information. In accordance with the briefing he had been given, Guy made immediate contact with

Mr. Sim, who nodded approvingly after he had listened to the tape.

“Good,” he said, “now we are on the move. I have already spoken to your father and he will let me have scraps of information from time to time to pass on to you. Then you must do as the tape says.”

“But you told me not to speak to my family about all this,” said Guy in surprise; “why make me keep quiet if you make a point of telling my father yourself about it?”

“Just keeping things neat and tidy,” replied Mr. Sim, brushing aside the protest; “it’s all laid on now. From now on you can tell your father all about Moscow, if you want to, and your step-mother as well for that matter. He tells her everything anyway. They won’t shout about it, they know the form. One thing, though, don’t say anything about Steve. Leave that out.”

Guy wondered what his father would make of all this. Whatever it was, it was unlikely that he would tell Guy. It was strange, he reflected, how they had grown apart. Guy did not often think about it but, when he did, he traced it back over

the years to his childhood, to the death of his mother when he was fifteen. She had died from cancer at the age of thirty-eight. Guy had grieved deeply, so that even now the memory of his grief was painful. It had of course helped him later on to understand Simon's heartbreak when Joyce had been killed, for he had been through it all himself, although he had been a few years older than Simon had been at the time. His mother's death had not, however, brought Guy and his father any closer together. Until then his father had left Guy's upbringing mostly to Guy's mother, while he devoted himself to his work. His scientific research was the one dominant factor in his life, so that family considerations were always secondary. Whether or not the nature of his work affected his father's character Guy never knew, but what he did know was that his father seemed to become more and more remote from him. This gulf between them widened further when Guy chose his career in engineering despite his father's wish that he should follow in his footsteps in scientific studies. To him a man's worth was to be measured by his brain. He did

not suffer fools gladly and despised those who frittered away their time in mundane pastimes. He regarded Guy's sporting prowess at school as a complete waste of time and said so. Then, as the link between father and son was becoming more and more tenuous, Guy had received the news of his father's intended remarriage. He could still remember it all. His father had just driven him back to school and was saying goodbye to him when he announced, almost as an afterthought, that he was going to get married again.

“She's a widow,” he had said, “I think you did meet her once at home, last month, I think—Lady Lee-Stafford, remember?” Even now Guy remembered very clearly his first meeting with Bunny Lee-Stafford. His father had brought her to his Devon cottage where Guy had been spending his summer holidays. She was the widow of a colonel who had been killed in a helicopter accident. She had been strikingly beautiful with dark eyes and dark hair. Now, fifteen years later, she was still just as beautiful. There were one or two lines at the corners of her eyes, above the curve of her cheekbones, whilst the

hint of grey hair at her temples now added character to her face. At first Guy had hated her for taking his mother's place, and he had hated his father for replacing his mother. Although he never said anything, the feeling was there. How could his father do it? It was just not possible.

But it had been possible and his father had done it. It had taken Guy a long time to get over it. The gulf between him and his father had grown so that it became unbridgeable. His first reactions to the remarriage had subsided to be replaced by a feeling of resentment, which had continued even to the present day. Sad though it was, he and his father were worlds apart. He could feel no real joy or pride at his father's continuing success in his scientific career which had in due time been recognised by a knighthood. Sir Redvers Trent might be a household name in the world of science but the one success which he had not sought or achieved was a secure place in his son's heart.

Strangely enough, however, Guy had grown to love Bunny Trent. She had had no children of her own, but instinctively she had recognised and understood Guy's

feelings. Gently and gradually she had tried to establish herself in his eyes. She had interested herself in all he did, so that by the time of his marriage to Joyce, she had already achieved a happy rapport with him. Joyce had liked her enormously and it did not surprise Guy that, after Joyce's death, Simon looked increasingly to Bunny, who had by now become the focal point of the family. Redvers Trent himself loved her deeply, a fact which slightly redeemed him in Guy's eyes. It seemed that a heart did after all beat in his father's breast. The pity was that the tide of affection had never flowed in his direction.

As the weeks passed and Spring yielded to Summer, Guy passed on to the KGB several pieces of information, each in the prescribed manner, although at different places. The same woman telephoned him each time after his agony column insertions and each time there was a new dropping point for his envelope. The scraps of information provided by his father, through Mr. Sim, related mostly to his future movements although in one instance he gave the name of someone he was meeting. Guy could not help feeling that

it was all so trivial that it could not possibly be worth all the trouble being taken. At his next meeting with Mr. Sim, he said as much.

Albert had buttonholed him again one day when he was finishing work and had taken him to his boss.

“I really can’t see the point of all this,” said Guy; “what possible advantage can the Russians get out of the titbits I’m giving them.”

“It may appear like that,” replied Mr. Sim, “but even the smallest pieces are necessary when you are putting together something bigger. Anyway it won’t stop at that, of that you can be sure. That’s why I wanted to have a further word with you. My guess is that any time now, our friend Krovotny will start to put pressure on.”

“How do you mean?” asked Guy.

“Well now that he’s got you into a routine, he will start demanding real information. You will remember what I told you before. He must do this sooner or later. Look at it from his point of view, if you haven’t reported your contact with the KGB then he simply has another useful agent, however, unwilling, and if you have

reported it, then his efforts to mislead us would not be convincing if he stops where he is now. So watch out, I'm sure it won't be long before he moves again."

And it was not long. Guy found a small package in his letter box with another tape on it. The same woman's voice told him in flat tones that he was not doing enough, that more was required, both in content and frequency. Guy felt he could detect a note of menace in the voice. Something seemed to send a chill through him. Then right at the end, after repeating her demands, the woman asked:

"And how is your son, Simon? Well, I hope. Let us hope this will continue."

Now there was no mistaking the menace. Guy felt sick.

That night, after work, he thought long and hard. So far he had gone along with Mr. Sim, but where in fact had it got him? Nowhere, simply further into the mire. But if he hadn't, what then? The same, it would have been exactly the same, except that the risk to his father would have been greater. He was just a pawn and once Krovotny had set up his chess board and started his evil game, he was not going to

stop after the first move. Mr. Sim was right about that, that was certain, and, as it was, he did have Mr. Sim to fall back on through having co-operated with him, and perhaps his father would have a better chance. It must now be up to Mr. Sim to come up with something.

Mr. Sim listened carefully to the tape.

“H’m,” he grunted at the end; “a real charmer, isn’t she. I wonder what B. stands for? What’s your reaction now?”

He looked keenly at Guy, who responded swiftly.

“Bitter,” he said sharply. “What do you expect? You’ve got me into all this by deliberately letting me fall into the KGB’s hands in Moscow and now I can’t get free.”

Guy’s voice rose as he spoke. The worry about Simon was preying on his mind. His nerve ends jangled.

“A chance for you to do something for Queen and country,” said Mr. Sim drily. “That was how Steve saw it all.”

“Yes, but not at the expense of Simon’s safety,” retorted Guy.

“Oh, I don’t think he is really in any

danger," said Mr. Sim; "Krovotny is just using him to get to you."

"Well, he's damn well succeeding, that's all," said Guy.

"If I was in your position, I'd feel the same," said Mr. Sim quietly. He paused for a moment, "tell me," he said, "the school holidays are just about to start, aren't they, in a day or two?"

"Yes, that's right."

"And what are you doing with Simon then?" asked Mr. Sim.

"I'm taking him down to Devon. My father has a cottage down there, where we go every summer. Bunny, my stepmother, spends the summer down there, so that Simon stays with her. I go down every weekend and Father goes down there whenever he can spare the time."

"All right then, we can look after Simon down there and make sure nobody gets to him. Albert needs a breath of country air. He can stay with him and I'll send one of our girls as well. We've got one or two excellent ones. Eve Hartmann will do. She and Albert can work as a team. Simon will be quite safe with them. There's room for them, I suppose, in the cottage?"

“Oh yes,” replied Guy, “there’s room for them all right. We call it a cottage, but really it’s quite a sizeable house. But anyway, that’s beside the point. I’m not going on with this. I’m not going to mess about and put Simon at risk. You reminded me of Steve. I don’t need any reminder. The answer to whatever you want is ‘no’.”

“But—” began Mr. Sim.

“No,” said Guy firmly; “the answer is ‘no’.”

“Now hear me out,” said Mr. Sim quietly. He paused a moment. “Remember this. However much you object to being used in the first place, you’re stuck with me now, whether you like it or not.”

Mr. Sim had spent half a lifetime persuading people to do things they didn’t want to do. Although some of those people had been far more difficult and obstinate than Guy, he had usually had his way. This time was no exception. After nearly half an hour Guy finally submitted.

“All right,” he said reluctantly; “it all seems clear enough. Leaving my Father out of it for the moment, if I don’t go on,

Simon is threatened. If I do go on, Simon is still threatened, but at least he has some protection. So thanks to you and your detestable scheming I have to go on, don't I? I have no real choice but it must be clearly understood here and now that Albert and the girl must look after Simon at all times. I'm relying on you."

"Of course," said Mr. Sim; "and thank you. Now we shall take the initiative with Master Krovotny and we shall start when you send your next message to B."

It was a glorious July day, when Guy took Simon down to Nance Bottom. The little village was having its afternoon nap when Bunny greeted them at the cottage.

"I've just put the kettle on," she said brightly; "I thought you must be arriving at any minute."

She kissed them both.

"Look at you, Simon," she said; "you seem to be growing several inches every day! Come and sit by me and tell me how the cricket is going. I bet you've been making a lot of runs this term. You have, haven't you?"

Simon was immediately transported back to the school cricket ground.

“It was great last week, Granny,” he said.

Guy had heard all about last week in the car on the journey to Devon. He moved over to the leaded window and looked out.

Nance Bottom had always captivated him. It stood at a small crossroads known locally as Four Firs at the foot of Woodbury Common, a few miles behind the seaside town of Exmouth. From the window of the cottage he could just see the river Exe as it flowed for its last few miles from Exeter to its estuary. It was glistening in the afternoon sun, with just a suspicion of a heat haze. Nance Bottom itself had remained much the same over the years Guy had known it since his own childhood. The cluster of old houses and cottages on each side of the village street had not been noticeably disturbed by the addition of one or two newer ones. The village post office and general store were still presided over by Mrs. Newton who must have been there for over forty years. Further along the street near the crossroads was the village pub, “The Four Firs” known to everyone as “The Firs”. Frank Thorn and his wife Rose had it now

and were making a good job of it. Rose often protested that she should never have married a Thorne, but they made a successful pair. He was good behind the bar, while her food had rapidly established quite a reputation.

The village was surrounded by gorse and heather. The ground rose gradually behind the houses until it reached the clump of trees on the high ground about half a mile away at the Castle. Woodbury Castle was a large tree-covered mound which had been an old pre-Roman fort dominating the area and commanding a magnificent view on all sides. It was a popular local beauty spot, so that consequently Nance Bottom had more than its share of visitors passing through in the summer. Frank and Rose Thorne had a busy seasonal trade as well as their regulars. Guy often dropped in there for a pint of beer and did so that evening.

“Nice to see you again,” said Frank warmly, shaking him by the hand.

“Nice to be here,” replied Guy; “I came down this afternoon with Simon. Pint, please.”

Frank supplied Guy with all the local

news and soon brought him up to date with all the village happenings.

“Busy as usual, I suppose,” asked Guy.

“Mustn’t grumble,” replied Frank, “we’re doing a fair bit at lunchtime as well as the evening trade. The rooms are full as well. An Amercian has just taken the last one just now. Come to do a bit of birdwatching, he says. Seems a nice enough fellow. I daresay you’ll see him in a minute.”

Guy did not however stay long enough to see the American or any of the regulars either. He had promised Bunny he would not be long and he wanted to help her with one or two things in the cottage garden.

“These weeds really are impossible,” said Bunny with mock severity, as Guy came through the garden gate; “as soon as my back’s turned, a fresh lot comes up.”

Guy and Bunny spent a happy evening together tidying the garden. As the sun sank a little lower in the west, shadows fell from the trees, cutting sharply across the soft light. Simon was watching television which was just audible through the sitting-room window.

“Have you met that fellow Mr. Sim,

Bunny?" asked Guy, pulling up a dandelion.

"Just once," replied Bunny; "he's no fool, is he?"

"Strange man," went on Guy; "he's certainly got a way with him though. Did you know that he's told me that I have to get in deeper with the KGB from now on?"

"Yes, Redvers told me," said Bunny, "he seems to know all about it. He told me when he was down here last weekend. It all seems very peculiar. Apparently Mr. Sim seems to think that Redvers is in some sort of danger from the Russians or something. He has to have someone with him all the time as a guard. Apparently his work is very hush-hush. I can't say I like it."

She sat on a tree stump and turned to face Guy.

"You know, Guy," she said, "I'm getting rather worried about your father. He seems so withdrawn these days. I don't see much of him either, he seems so wrapped up in his work."

"That's nothing new," replied Guy;

“he’s always been like that. He certainly has with me at any rate.”

“I know he has with you. You’ve often mentioned it,” said Bunny, “but not with me. However busy he’s been, he’s always found time for me. And he loves me, I know he does, but—well, I don’t know, he just seems so distant nowadays. Even when we’re together, I just don’t seem able to get near him. Does that sound dreadfully Irish?”

“Of course not,” said Guy; “I know exactly what you mean. He’s there and yet he’s not, so to speak.”

He paused, as he moved the wheelbarrow.

“He always has been like that with me,” he went on; “now you seem to be getting the same treatment.”

“Perhaps I ought not to have said anything,” said Bunny, tucking away a stray wisp of hair, “but we always confide in each other, don’t we, and I don’t mean to be disloyal.”

“Rubbish,” said Guy, “of course it’s not disloyal.”

It was strange, thought Guy, to hear Bunny talking about their confiding in

each other. It was quite true that he had always confided in her, but the reverse was hardly the case. She had never really said much to him about her feelings, and moreover her earlier life and first marriage were never mentioned. Guy had a feeling that her first marriage had not been happy, although he had no real basis for thinking so.

“I expect that Father’s got some knotty problem he’s trying to solve. You know what these brainy people are. Their minds are miles away half the time. Anyway let’s pack up now and go in and have a drink. We’ve earned it. You have, anyway; you’ve been at it longer than I have.”

As he was gathering up the tools, Guy had a sudden thought.

“Do you know whether Mr. Sim is his real name?” he asked; “I often wonder.”

Bunny laughed.

“So did I,” she said, “so I asked him, straight out.”

“And?”

“You’re not going to believe this,” said Bunny; “it’s not his real name, apparently it is an acronym he made up for himself. It stands for Small Intelligence Man!”

Ridiculous, isn't it? Anyhow it shows he has a wry sense of humour, if nothing else."

Guy burst out laughing.

"And his real name? Do you know that?" he asked.

"No, I don't," replied Bunny; "and he wouldn't tell me either."

Three days later Albert and Eve Hartmann arrived, Albert being the bearer of the next message Guy had to send. Bunny installed them in the cottage and they immediately made themselves part of the household. Simon and Albert hit it off at once with Albert teasing Simon at every opportunity and Simon enjoying it. Guy found that he hardly noticed Albert, the reason being that he found himself immediately attracted to Eve. He didn't really know why this should be, since there was nothing particularly striking in her appearance. Her figure was slim and neat and her features held an unusual animation, while the soft line of her brown hair set off her large brown eyes, seeming to give them extra appeal. Her nose was if anything retroussé and her mouth small and generous, suggesting that a smile was

never far away. Guy liked being with her. Her easy manner seemed to have a soothing effect on him. He felt he had become rather moody since receiving the recent tape from the woman B. Now Eve seemed to reassure him merely with her presence. She did not have to say anything.

Guy took his holiday every year to coincide with Simon's school summer holidays. Thus after three weekends he was soon unpacking again for a stay of three weeks. By now Albert was a regular at the Firs, Simon had started to learn to play golf with Eve, and Bunny had just redecorated Simon's bedroom. As Guy put away his shirts and socks, he could hear Simon laughing downstairs with Eve. Guy looked at Joyce's photograph beside his bed. A strange feeling came over him, a feeling almost of guilt. As he turned away, he tried to convince himself that Joyce would understand.

That evening Moscow seemed a long long way away. He and Eve had a drink at the Firs. He found that she had a liking for draft Guinness. She laughingly insisted that she could feel it tingling through her

string vest. Guy grinned. String vest indeed!

“Have a pint,” he said.

“No, a half will do,” she replied merrily, “the string is not all that strong!”

Albert joined them.

“That Yank is back here again,” he said; “did you meet him when he was here before?”

“No,” said Guy, “but I remember Frank saying he had taken a room here. He was doing some birdwatching or something.”

“Spot on,” said Albert; “at least that’s what he said he was doing. Did a lot of prowling about with his binoculars. Quite a nice bloke, he seemed. I had a pint or two with him from time to time, while you were in the Smoke. Look, there he is now, just buying a packet of fags.”

Guy looked towards the far end of the bar. The man buying cigarettes was about his own age, perhaps a little older, thickset with dark hair cut short. He had a suspicion of a jowl, while his canary coloured tee-shirt struggled a little to encompass his stomach. He could do with a keep fit course, reflected Guy.

“Why don’t you ask him to join us, Albert?” said Guy; “I’d like to know what he thinks of our neck of the woods.”

Albert beckoned to the man who walked over to them with his drink.

“Hallo, there,” said the American to Albert; “here I am again.”

“Amos Todd is the name,” he said to Guy, putting out his hand; “pleased to meet you.”

Guy introduced Eve and himself and the little group fell into easy conversation. The American appeared to have developed a quick liking for the area.

“Had to make a second visit,” he said; “it’s just so peaceful here and just right for studying your birds. I never go out without these.”

He tapped the binocular case at his side.

“It’s your passion, is it?” asked Eve.

“You can say that again,” replied Todd; “in fact it’s not too much to say that I’ve become quite an expert over the years. I know all about our feathered friends, yes, sir.”

He drank thirstily from his tankard.

“I get Frank to serve me in one of these,” he said, tapping it. “I wish he

could get his beer a little colder, though. You British seem to go in for warm beer, in this weather too!"

He mopped his brow, as he spoke.

"Plenty of hawks round here," said Guy; "have you seen any?"

"I'll say. I'll tell you, I really enjoy watching your buzzards hovering over the heather before they drop down on some mouse or something. What are you guys having?"

Amos Todd bought a round of drinks, before continuing his praise of the neighbourhood. Guy began to wish he had not thought of asking Albert to invite him to join them. At last, however, the American rose to his feet.

"Just time for an evening stroll," he said; "sure was nice meeting you."

As he went out into the village street, Albert smiled.

"He does go on a bit," he said; "still he's quite good company, when he stops talking about his birds."

Guy put down his glass.

"That's the funny thing," he said quietly.

Eve looked at him quickly.

“What do you mean?” she asked.

“Whatever else he is, Amos Todd is no expert on birds,” he said; “anyone who knows anything about birds knows that it is not a buzzard which hovers looking for its prey, it’s a kestrel, another sort of hawk. Buzzards soar high in the sky, round and round.”

“Elementary, my dear Watson,” said Eve.

“Exactly,” said Guy; “so the question is —why does our friend pretend to be an expert birdwatcher, when he is not.”

“You mean he’s a phoney,” said Albert, finishing off a packet of crisps; “still that doesn’t matter to us, does it? Perhaps it boosts his ego to tell people he’s an expert.”

“I wonder,” said Guy slowly; “I wonder. Perhaps you’re right. It just intrigues me, that’s all.”

“Leave it out, guv,” said Albert; “all this business with the boss and these messages for old Ivan have given you the willies. There are plenty like our Amos, I can tell you. He just wants to stick his chest out, that’s all.”

"Looks as if his chest has slipped a little," put in Eve with a smile.

The next few days passed all too quickly for Guy. He and Simon went swimming every day with Eve at Budleigh Salterton. Albert sat on the pebbled beach watching them patiently. He did not like the water, and contented himself with eating ice cream. From time to time he picked up flat stones and threw them with a sideways action over the water trying to make them bounce on the surface. Simon tried it too, with his supple arm using his cricket throw. Several times in the afternoons, they drove to the East Devon Golf Club where Guy and Eve played a three-ball with Simon, who was already able to hold his own with Eve with a handicap of two strokes a hole. Albert saw them safely on their way each time before returning to the beach for a little fishing with one of the local men.

Guy had to interrupt this happy interlude to return to his cottage in Surrey long enough to make another insertion in the paper, get his telephone call and make another drop. This time the message duly edited by Mr. Sim was longer than had

been the case previously. Guy kept wondering whether Mr. Sim could keep up a steady flow of plausible information to satisfy the Russians. It worried him so that he found it hard to sleep in the solitude of his cottage. He was glad when he had made the drop and was able to drive back to Nance Bottom, to rejoin Simon and the others.

That weekend Sir Redvers Trent joined his family in Devon. Guy noticed that he seemed very quiet and preoccupied. He spent much of his time working on papers, so that Guy thought it was hardly worthwhile for his father to make the journey to Nance Bottom. When he left again on Sunday evening, Bunny voiced a similar thought.

“Your father seems busier than ever with his wretched papers,” she said to Guy in a rare moment of irritation; “I don’t know why he bothered to come. We hardly saw anything of him. He didn’t like Albert and Eve being here and you know that look of his when he disapproves of something. I do wish he’d think less of his work. It does worry me so when he’s like this.”

Guy nodded in agreement.

"He hardly said two words to me," he said, "and Simon didn't do much better. He tried to tell Father about his golf but Father wasn't interested. You know how he is about sport."

Although Simon was disappointed at his grandfather's lack of interest, he did not let this stop him from urging Guy and Eve to play golf at every opportunity.

Guy thought that they ought to do other things after their morning swim, but he saw that Simon had got a craze for his new sport so that he gave in without protest. Moreover he enjoyed playing himself, especially with Eve. He did not play particularly well and kept losing balls in the gorse and heather, so that each round seemed to take longer than the one before. Simon kept urging them on after each shot, impatient as he was to play the next one.

"That's all square between you and me, Dad," he said on the sixth tee, "and I'm one up on Eve."

The sun beat down on them as they made their way down the sixth fairway. When they played their approach shots to

the green, Guy sliced his over the wire fence to the right, while Eve and Simon pulled theirs to the left by a public footpath.

“Typical,” said Guy in disgust at himself; “I had the simplest of shots, and look at that. You and Simon go on,” he said to Eve, “I’ll just nip over the fence and look for my ball while you play yours.”

Guy climbed over the strands of the wire fence and went in search of his ball among the trees. It must have gone in quite far, probably among some patches of brambles, he thought. When at last he found it in the brambles, it took him some time to pull it out with the head of his club.

“Got it,” he shouted, as he reached the fence to climb back, “any luck of yours?”

There was no answer, as he climbed over the wire. They must still be looking for one of the other balls, he thought. He walked across the green to the far side where the ground sloped away to a clump of trees and the footpath. Puzzled that the other two were not there, he walked further to the footpath but there was still

nobody. Catching sight of the two golf bags lying on the ground, he turned to look to his left up the path. It was empty. He swung round to look down the path in the opposite direction towards a gate about fifty yards away. He could just see something shining on the ground. With mounting apprehension he ran towards it. It was one of Simon's golf clubs. Then out of the corner of his eye he saw something white on the edge of a clump of bushes. As he turned towards it he realised that it was a shoe, Eve's shoe. She was lying face down in the bracken. Quickly he turned her over. Her eyes were closed and there was a gash on the left side of her forehead, from which a trickle of blood ran to her ear and neck. As Guy stooped to see if she was still breathing, she uttered a little moan. Guy looked round for Simon but of him there was no sign. He ran to the gate and then to the country lane outside it. It was empty. Glancing back momentarily at Eve he sprinted to a house nestling behind the trees at the edge of the golf course. Luckily the occupants were at home and able to take over the task of summoning police and ambulance for him while he

raced back to Eve. She was just as he had left her. He felt her pulse. It was there, but weak. Desperately he looked around for Simon. Where was he? Was he also lying somewhere in the bracken, perhaps dead or dying? Frantically he scoured both sides of the footpath but there was no sign of the brambles or bracken having been disturbed. Shafts of sunlight poked through the trees. Somewhere a dog barked. He returned to Eve's side. There was nothing more he could do until the ambulance people arrive. A feeling of despair and desolation gripped him. Was Eve going to die? Where was Simon? Was he alive?

It seemed an age before at last the noise of vehicles signalled the arrival of the police and the ambulance but in reality it could not have been more than five minutes if indeed it was as long. In the meantime Guy had been joined by the occupants of the house and four other golfers who had been playing some distance behind him. They helped him with Eve and started a wider search for Simon. It was to no avail. There was no sign of him then or later when the police

took over. He had vanished without trace. There were tyre marks on the verge of the lane by the footpath gate but these could have been there for some time, since cars were left there frequently by walkers and local residents exercising their dogs. As Eve was taken away in the ambulance, Guy felt he wanted to go with her. Even more, however, he wanted to stay and take part in the search for Simon. Additional police were summoned so that every piece of ground was covered but all their efforts produced nothing.

The next two days were the longest in Guy's life. Albert telephoned Mr. Sim who drove immediately to Devon. Guy raged and stormed at him. Mr. Sim listened quietly and let the volcano erupt. Eve hovered between life and death in the intensive care unit of the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital in Exeter, a police officer at her bedside. There was no news of Simon. The police imposed a total news blackout. They were everywhere, swarming over the area of the golf course, searching, searching, interviewing the local residents, interviewing the golfers, using every means at their disposal to get a lead.

The police helicopter was constantly in the air. An emergency headquarters went into action quickly and efficiently. The only clue which emerged came from a local gardener who had seen a grey car parked on the verge of the lane as he had cycled past on his way home. It had been empty and he had not noticed the make or number or anything about it. Bunny did her best to calm Guy who kept walking in and out of the house, round the garden and back again. His father came down from London but seemed more at a loss than anybody.

“If only I could do something,” Guy kept saying; “I feel so useless. Why can’t I do something?”

“There’s nothing you can do, Guy,” said Bunny; “everything that can be done is being done. Why don’t you go to the hospital and see how Eve is. Maybe there’ll be better news there. She’s been holding her own and they seem to think there’s every chance.”

Guy did not like leaving the cottage in case any news of Simon should arrive. However, he knew that Bunny would reach him at the hospital and so he drove

the few miles to Exeter. Anything was better than doing nothing. On his way he thought anxiously of Eve. He had not realised how much she had begun to mean to him.

When he arrived at the hospital, there was at last some news, good news. Eve had at last shown signs of recovering consciousness. When he reached her bedside, her eyes flickered open for a few moments. Then she lapsed into sleep again. He waited patiently. A few feet away the detective-constable waited patiently. The minutes ticked away. Guy took Eve's hand and held it for a while. Once more her eyes opened and Guy thought he could see a slight movement at the corners of her mouth as if she saw him and was trying to smile. Once more she drifted away.

As he went home, Guy felt a slight lightening of the load which was upon him. His anxiety for Simon was undiminished, but now it did seem as if Eve was on her way to recovery. That at least was something.

It must have been just after eight o'clock that evening when the telephone rang in

the cottage at Nance Bottom. Bunny answered it.

“It’s for you,” she said quickly to Guy.

Guy took the receiver from her. Something seemed to turn over inside him. Instinctively he knew that this was what he had been waiting for.

“Is that you, Mr. Trent?”

Guy knew the voice only too well. It was the woman B. who had spoken to him on the tapes and who had telephoned his instructions on the message drops. She used the same flat voice now.

“Yes,” he said.

“Listen carefully, Mr. Trent,” went on the woman; “You have given us wrong information. We do not like that. We warned you not to do that. It was very foolish of you. I telephone again tomorrow.”

“Simon?” asked Guy quickly; “what about Simon? Is he—?”

“He is well—so far.”

The telephone clicked. Guy slowly put down the receiver.

“Well?” asked Bunny and Mr. Sim together.

“He’s all right so far. They’ve got him. It was that woman.”

Mr. Sim pressed a button by the telephone to replay the conversation. The police had installed the necessary equipment immediately after Simon’s disappearance. They listened in grim silence.

“Can you trace the call?” asked Guy quickly.

“I doubt it,” replied Mr. Sim. “She did not speak for long enough.”

“It was from a coin box anyway,” said Bunny.

“Thank God he’s safe so far,” said Guy; “poor little chap, he must be scared to death. There must be some way of tracing where he is. Surely the police have picked up something by now.”

“We should know if they had,” replied Mr. Sim; “they’re doing everything possible.”

“They must damn well do more,” said Guy desperately.

Mr. Sim leaned back in his chair.

“In a way it’s a good sign—this telephone call, I mean,” he said quietly.

“Good sign? How do you work that out?” asked Guy.

“Well, if Simon is unhurt, then they must mean him no harm. If they had wanted to harm him, they would have done so by now. So if the woman B. is telling the truth, then they must have abducted him for some reason which we shall learn tomorrow, when she rings again.”

“That’s all very well, but we can’t just sit here waiting, just waiting and waiting,” protested Guy.

Bunny put her hand on Guy’s shoulder.

“Everything is being done that can be done,” she said, trying her best to sound reassuring; “Mr. Sim is right, Guy, so far Simon is all right and that’s the main thing. Tomorrow we shall learn more and in the meantime we must all be glad that at last things are on the move. What’s more, Eve is improving, so that the news is not so black as it might be.”

Guy allowed himself to be soothed by Bunny. She could help him now as no one else could.

“Where’s Albert?” he asked abruptly, as if trying to think of something else.

“He’s been out all day doing his own searching around,” said Mr. Sim; “he and

I swopped a few ideas this morning and he is following them up. He is still blaming himself for not staying with you on the golf course.”

“It was my fault as much as his,” said Guy; “I sent him off when we started to play. I just never thought there would be any danger. We were all feeling so relaxed. All this just came out of the blue. I can still hardly believe it has happened.”

It was after ten o’clock when Albert returned. He had no news of Simon, so that his spirits were to some extent lifted by the news of the telephone call by the woman B.

“I’d like to get my hands on that Russian bird,” he said bitterly; “I’d give her what for.”

“Nothing else?” asked Mr. Sim; “nothing else of interest during the day?”

Albert cocked his head on one side, as if he had just remembered something.

“Yes, guv,” he said; “as a matter of fact there is something. The news about Simon put it out of my head. It’s about the American, Amos Todd.”

“The one staying at the Firs?” queried Bunny.

“The very same,” said Albert; “I stopped in there for a pint just now, and it seems that our Amos has done a flit.”

“Disappeared, you mean?” put in Guy.

“That’s right. Apparently his bed was not slept in last night. All his gear is there in his room but no sign of the Yank.”

“So what?” said Guy; “he’s just had a night out, that’s all. What’s so strange about that?”

“That’s what Rose says at the Firs,” said Albert, “still I thought you ought to know, guv.”

He turned towards Mr. Sim, as he spoke. The little man adjusted his spectacles.

“Just so, Albert,” he murmured; “I wonder.”

He stroked his chin, as he spoke.

“Wonder what?” asked Guy.

“About Amos Todd,” he replied, “you see, Albert and I were talking about him this morning. In fact, I asked Albert to find out more about him if he could. I had a feeling that he might know something or that in some way he might lead us to Simon.”

“How could he possibly have anything

to do with Simon?" asked Guy blankly; "it's that woman B. and Krovotny's mob who've got him."

"Exactly," said Mr. Sim; "we know that now, but we didn't know it for certain this morning when Albert and I were talking. Perhaps you should know that Albert had found out something about Amos Todd."

"Whatever's that?" asked Bunny.

"He's been watching this house," said Mr. Sim.

"What?" exclaimed Guy in amazement.

"Yes," said Mr. Sim; "when Albert was taking a short cut the other evening just after Simon's abduction, he took that path just by the quarry over there and who should be up there but our friend Todd. Todd didn't see Albert, so that Albert had plenty of time to see what Todd was doing. He was lying in the bracken watching this end of the village through his binoculars. Sir Redvers was here at the time and Albert could just see him coming out of the house and getting into the car with the driver I've got looking after him. When Todd saw Sir Redvers, he shifted his position slightly in the bracken and seemed to watch more intently through his

binoculars. There was no doubt in your mind, was there, Albert, that he was watching this house?"

"Not a bit, guv," replied Albert; "and when the car moved off, he watched it through his glasses until it turned the corner. When I saw all this, I nipped behind some bushes and took another path so that the Yank wouldn't see me."

"All of which was very interesting, I thought," said Mr. Sim; "so why was our friend Amos Todd watching this house? Who is he and what is he up to?"

"I told you he was no birdwatcher," said Guy triumphantly; "you remember he made that mistake about buzzards and kestrels in the pub the other day."

"So the birdwatching was just an excuse for the binoculars," added Bunny.

"Just so," said Mr. Sim; "and that's why I asked Albert to find out more about Todd. It seemed too much of a coincidence that Simon should be abducted and Todd should be watching this house. There had to be some sort of connection."

"And where is he now?" asked Guy; "it is hardly the time for our spying birdwatcher to be out on the tiles all night with

some girl friend, just at the time everyone is looking for Simon. Another coincidence which is too much to swallow."

"Anyway, they're going to see, down at the Firs, whether he comes back tonight or not," said Albert, "and, if he doesn't, they're going to tell the police."

"I should think the police have got enough on their plate already," said Guy; "I shouldn't think they're going to get over-excited about a stranger disappearing for a couple of days. They probably come across that sort of thing happening all the time. Still, we shall see."

"Yes," said Mr. Sim quietly, "we shall see. But I'll lay you any odds you like that this is no ordinary disappearance."

Guy found it almost impossible to sleep that night. Over and over again he could hear the flat tones of the woman B.'s voice as she uttered her warning to him. Over and over again he cursed himself for allowing Mr. Sim to persuade him to involve himself further in the remorseless game of chess between the little man and Colonel Krovotny. Over and over again he looked down at Eve's face on the hospital pillow.

Guy and Mr. Sim did not stir from the telephone the next day. Outside the heat of the sun was remorseless. Somewhere on the other side of Woodbury Common there was a gorse fire which sent plumes of thick smoke billowing into the air. In the village there was no sign of Amos Todd at the Firs, where Albert had managed to sneak the key of his room to have a good look at his possessions. Whilst they yielded nothing of interest, Albert discovered that the binoculars were missing, so that this seemed to indicate that the American had them with him. He would hardly need them if he had gone off with some woman, thought Albert. Todd's hire car was still at the back of the pub just as it had been since his disappearance, so that, wherever he was, Todd was on foot unless someone else had picked him up. Public transport seemed out of the question since the village was miles off the nearest bus route. As the Thornes had now reported Todd's disappearance to the hard-pressed police, a constable was expected at any time to take down details.

At the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital Eve was showing signs of further improve-

ment. When Bunny went to see her, she found that Eve was able to recognise her in a brief period of consciousness before sleep overtook her again. Since the doctors seemed pleased with her progress, the policeman at her bedside was hoping that it would not now be long before she would be able to tell him something.

It was late afternoon before the telephone rang at the cottage. Guy snatched the receiver and barked at the caller, who proved, however, to be a local newspaper reporter hoping to fill out his story in preparation for the eventual lifting of the news blackout.

Another two hours passed before the woman B. telephoned.

Guy was beginning to feel desperate. He almost shouted his name to the woman. Mr. Sim pressed his button. The call, however, was brief. The woman used the same flat tones.

“Take this as a warning,” she said; “next time, if it should become necessary, he will not return. Look in the lane beyond Hayes Barton.”

“What—” Guy started to ask, but his words were strangled in his throat as he

heard the click of the telephone. That was all. The woman had finished.

“The lane beyond Hayes Barton,” he said excitedly to Mr. Sim; “we’re to look in the lane beyond Hayes Barton. Simon must be there, he must be. Come on.”

As Guy hurried to the door, Mr. Sim managed to restrain him long enough to have a word with the police about the news. In another moment they were in Guy’s car.

“Hayes Barton?” queried Mr. Sim; “I seem to have heard of that name somewhere. Where is it?”

“It’s well-known,” replied Guy; “it’s the birthplace of Sir Walter Raleigh. It’s a thatched house in a lane just outside the village of East Budleigh a few miles from here.”

“Not so fast,” interrupted Mr. Sim, “you’ll never make it if you drive like this in these narrow roads.”

“Hang on,” shouted Guy; “we’ll make it all right, have no fear of that.”

As the car lurched round one corner after another, the two men saw the police helicopter pass overhead. They had wasted

no time, thought Guy, but he would not be far behind them.

Mr. Sim kept pressing his feet involuntarily on the floor of the car as his feet sought brakes which were not there. Once the car flew past a family of astonished holidaymakers who dived into the high hedge which now encompassed the narrow lane leading off the Common and towards Hayes Barton and East Budleigh. Eventually, Guy wrenched the car round yet another corner to bring into view two uniformed policemen who seemed to be kneeling down in the gateway of a field. Guy's car skidded to a halt. Guy himself leapt out while Mr. Sim was still collecting himself. He ran to the gateway where the two police officers were bending over Simon who was lying on the ground, bound and blindfolded. It was clear that they had only just reached him and the blindfold was removed at the moment of Guy's arrival.

"Simon," he gasped, clasping the boy to him. "Simon," he repeated, "it's all right, I'm here."

Mr. Sim could see the tears in the eyes of both father and son, as he watched.

When the cord round the boy's wrists and ankles was undone, the policemen stood back to leave father and son to each other's embrace. Simon kept repeating "Oh, Daddy" over and over again. Guy lifted his son from the ground and held him in his arms. Mr. Sim turned away to talk to the policemen. Their helicopter was in the adjoining field. From the air they had been able to see the boy lying in the gateway so that they had not had to search the area. Hayes Barton itself was not very far along the lane.

Although trembling and shaken, Simon was not hurt. Apparently he had been held in a room with the window boarded up, so that he had no idea of where his captors had taken him. There were two of them he said, a man and a woman, and one of them had blindfolded him before putting him in a car and driving him to the spot where he had been left. The journey must have been several miles as it had lasted quite a few minutes.

Guy took Simon straight back to Nance Bottom. Mr. Sim travelled with them as he felt that there was little to be gained by staying in the Hayes Barton area. The

police would make their enquiries and could be relied upon to discover anyone who might have seen the kidnappers' car. It was a long shot that anyone might remember it or anything about it, but everything had to be tried.

The journey back to Nance Bottom was mercifully not as hectic as the journey in the opposite direction had been. In Guy's absence, Bunny had returned from the hospital. She wept when she saw Simon. Unashamedly she let the tears flows down her cheeks. Mr. Sim thought that she could not have been more affected if the boy had been her own grandson. She wanted to put him to bed but Simon would have none of it. Now that he was safely back with his family he began to recover quickly. Lying on the long settee in the cool low-ceilinged sitting-room he told pieces of his story in fits and starts. First, however, he wanted to know about Eve. Was she all right? He had seen the man strike her as she had tried to protect him. He had seen her fall but the kidnappers had hustled him away before he could see more.

Mr. Sim was surprised at Simon's

composure as he started to tell his story. Although he was so young, he was able to remember much more than Mr. Sim would have expected. Although Guy wanted him to rest and tell them about it another time, Simon nevertheless seemed anxious to relate everything he knew.

It seemed that when he and Eve had been looking for their golf balls by the public footpath, the man and the woman had emerged suddenly from some trees. The man had grabbed Simon and started to carry him down the footpath towards the gate at the bottom. Eve had tried to wrench him free only to be struck down. It had all been over so quickly that there had been no time to shout or do anything. He had been bundled into a grey car, which had been standing in the lane outside the gate. He had been blindfolded at once and the woman had told him that if he gave any trouble they would kill him. The journey had lasted about ten to fifteen minutes. When at length he had been led from the car, he had been taken into a house and then upstairs. The blindfold had not been removed until he was in the room with the window boarded up. There

he had stayed throughout his captivity. The woman had brought him his meals and taken him to the lavatory and brought him back again. The lavatory window had also been boarded up. He could just hear traffic from time to time but apart from that there had been nothing to indicate where the house was. As for the kidnappers, the man was large with fair hair, the woman was a blonde and they were both probably in their thirties or forties, although Simon said he was not very good at ages. They had said very little, but the man seemed to be giving the orders to the woman. Simon had not seen or heard anyone else, but he had heard the telephone ring on two occasions.

“You couldn’t have made a mistake about the man having fair hair?” asked Guy.

“No, Daddy,” replied Simon.

“H’m,” grunted Guy, “that disposes of Todd then. He wasn’t one of them after all.”

“No,” said Mr. Sim, “but then it was never really likely that he was. I can’t help feeling, though, that there must be some connection.”

When at last Bunny was able to persuade Simon to go to bed, sleep overtook him immediately. Downstairs Guy poured out drinks for Bunny, Mr. Sim and himself.

“A double all round,” he said; “we need it, by heavens we do.”

Bunny had hardly finished passing on the news of Eve’s improvement, when Albert returned. Delighted as he was by Simon’s return and the news about Eve, he was anxious to tell Mr. Sim about his own discovery.

“The police have had a lead on Amos Todd,” he said; “it seems that one of the local quarrymen saw him a couple of days ago. That must have been at about the time he disappeared.”

“Where was that?” asked Mr. Sim.

“From what I can gather it was just about the same place where I saw him watching the cottage that time,” said Albert; “but the interesting thing is that this quarryman saw him talking to someone. Unfortunately, the person was hidden behind a tree and the quarryman could not see who it was.”

“And?” said Mr. Sim, impatient to hear more.

“Well not much more, guv, really,” added Albert, “but the man did say that the American was raising his voice, as if he was excited or annoyed.”

“The plot thickens,” said Guy; “I wonder whether he was talking to the kidnappers?”

“Maybe,” said Mr. Sim; “one mustn’t jump to conclusions, but it’s always a possibility.”

“I suppose that now that Simon is back, the police will be able to spend more time looking for Amos Todd,” said Bunny.

“No doubt,” said Mr. Sim.

And so it proved the next day. The police set up a caravan in the Firs’ car park as a temporary headquarters. From there teams of men took on their various assignments. Frank and Rose Thorne said that it was an ill wind that did not blow someone some good. The bar talk was of little else but Simon’s safe return and the big search for the missing American. By now it seemed to be generally accepted that he must have met with an accident of some sort. The favourite theory was that

he had stumbled or fallen and broken a leg somewhere on the Common. There were plenty of places where he could be undiscovered if he had left established footpaths.

Mr. Sim spent a long time talking to the local Detective Chief Inspector, who showed keen interest in Mr. Sim's theory about a connection between the kidnappers and the American.

"Are you suggesting that he was part of the kidnapping team," said the DCI, "and that he has just vanished with them?"

"I'm not saying that," replied Mr. Sim, "I'm just saying that there must be some connection. A kidnapping and a disappearance at the same time in the same village is too much of a coincidence. And then the quarryman's sighting, what about that? Who was Todd talking to up there on the common in the gorse and heather?"

"Well, we've still got everyone we can spare on trying to find the men who took the boy and if we come up with something on that, perhaps we'll end up with the American as well," said the policeman.

"I doubt it," said Mr. Sim, "if they

were working together then they'll have split up by now."

The policeman nodded. He realised only too well how difficult it would be to trace the kidnappers. So far they had not even discovered the hideout where they had kept Simon.

Guy and Albert were having a drink at the Firs at about six o'clock that evening when news came about the American. Mr. Sim had been paying another visit to the police caravan and now he came into the bar. He bought himself a beer and joined Guy and Albert.

"They've found him," he said quietly.

"Where?" asked Albert quickly.

"Is he all right?" asked Guy simultaneously.

Mr. Sim looked solemn as he took a sip of his beer.

"He's dead," he said; "they've found his body in a disused quarry not very far from here. He had fallen into a thick clump of bushes so that no one would have seen him unless they were really searching the area."

"You mean he fell over the edge of the quarry?" asked Guy.

“Fell or was pushed, or perhaps even thrown,” replied Mr. Sim drily.

“Leave it out, guv,” said Albert; “what makes you say he might have been done in? Surely an accident would be much more likely.”

“Instinct,” replied Mr. Sim, “just instinct.”

A slight smile trembled at the corners of his mouth.

“Added to the fact that he had a nasty wound on the back of his head,” he went on.

“Perhaps that was done in the fall?” suggested Guy.

“We shall see,” said Mr. Sim; “the medicos will be having a look at him. I’ll bet you a pint to a double-scotch that he was ‘done in’, as you so nicely put it, Albert.”

“You’re on, guv,” said Albert.

The news spread rapidly in the Firs and in the whole village. The American had been a popular figure in the pub and also a regular customer for odds and ends in the village shop. No information had leaked out about the head wound and the general assumption was that Amos Todd

had fallen to his death while he was out birdwatching.

“I used to tell him to be careful on some of those walks of his,” said Mrs. Newton in the shop, “but he just used to laugh. Nice gentleman he was, we could do with a few more like him.”

Supper at the cottage that evening was an affair of mixed emotions. Simon had been packed off to bed early again but had been nearly back to his old self. The rest of them were quiet and thoughtful, yet in a way relieved that the drama was over. Eve was improving fast and Guy had been able to talk to her for quite a little while. His feelings for her had become deeper during the crisis period in hospital and moreover he felt that she had been through all this suffering because of her courage in trying to save Simon. A bond had grown up between her and the boy and now each of them was lifted by the good news about the other. If all went well, it should not now be too long before Eve could come home to the cottage.

After supper Guy found himself alone in the sitting-room with Mr. Sim.

“It’s time we had a talk, Guy,” said Mr. Sim.

Guy looked across at him expectantly from his chair.

“I know how you feel about me and all my scheming and how you think I’ve put Simon in danger,” said Mr. Sim; “so we might as well have it out.”

“Well, it’s true, isn’t it?” replied Guy; “you have put him in danger. There can be no two ways about it. And you’re quite right, I’m bloody angry about it. You assured me that he would not be in any danger and look what’s happened. Simon could be lying where Amos Todd is now, instead of in his bed upstairs.”

“I know all that,” said Mr. Sim quietly, “but I am not going to apologise. Of course I’m sorry about Simon, but I’ve got a job to do and I shall go on doing it.”

“Nothing can justify risking a little boy’s life,” said Guy bitterly.

“And Eve? What about Eve?” said Mr. Sim; “what about her life? Hasn’t that been put at risk? What about your father? What about Steve and Goetz and Blattner? Do you think I don’t realise what I am doing?”

He rose from his chair and walked to the window.

“Look out there,” he said, his voice rising for the first time; “look out there. Beauty and tranquility, the world as God made it, and we are free to enjoy it.”

He stabbed the air with his finger, as he pointed at the countryside.

“We are free to enjoy it,” he repeated; “don’t you understand what that means? You are free, I am free. And I want Simon to be free to enjoy it, and all the other Simons over the length and breadth of the country. That’s what it’s all about. That’s what my job is about, that’s why I have to gamble with people’s lives and do what I do. And that’s why—that’s why I don’t apologise.”

Guy was startled to see the emotion pouring from the little man. The passion with which he spoke was almost frightening. For a few moments there was silence between the two men.

“Forgive me,” said Mr. Sim, almost in a whisper; “I could do with another drink. It’s been a heavy day.”

Guy poured him out another drink. He put his hand on Mr. Sim’s shoulder.

“I may not agree with a lot of all this,” he said quietly, “but at least I begin to understand. Thank God, anyway, that things have turned out as they have.”

Mr. Sim looked across at him.

“We are not out of the wood yet,” he said solemnly; “there is much you don’t know.”

“I don’t like the sound of that,” replied Guy; “what do you mean by that?”

“Well, in the heat of the battle, so to speak, of the last few days, we are in danger of losing sight of the strategy of the war.”

“I’m sorry,” said Guy; “but you’ve lost me. I don’t follow.”

“I don’t blame you,” said Mr. Sim; “so much has gone on that there has been no time to think of anything else. But now we have time, so let us think. This is how it all is.”

Mr. Sim was once again his usual calm, self-possessed self. His outburst was forgotten. He sat back in his chair and fell into his habit of putting his fingertips together in front of him.

“When I sent Albert with that last message for you to pass on to the woman

B., I had to put some false information in it and that of course is what caused the kidnapping of Simon.”

Guy opened his mouth to speak, but Mr. Sim raised his hand to stop him.

“Before I set you off again,” he said, “let me explain why I did it and why it was necessary.”

“Do I really want to know?” asked Guy; “I’ve finished with all this.”

“Bear with me,” said Mr. Sim; “be patient. You will remember that from the beginning I have thought that Krovotny wanted you as a blind. All the time, as a result of Moscow, we would be pointed in your direction, while the truth was that there was someone else providing him with the information he wanted. That was my thinking. I wasn’t sure about it at first, but I’m sure now at last.”

“How do you reach that conclusion?”

“Don’t you see?” said Mr. Sim; “while there were harmless messages flowing from you there was nothing conclusive, but as soon as I put a false one in, all hell was let loose. So they knew it was false. The problem for Krovotny, however, was that if he was to maintain his ploy of using you

as a decoy from his real informant he had to raise hell when you misinformed him. Only in that way could he hope to persuade us that you were after all important to him, and keep us from looking elsewhere."

"So now you still have to find out the other source of information," said Guy.

"Precisely," said Mr. Sim; "in one sense I have advanced by getting Krovotny to disclose that he knew your information was false, but I still have to find out how he knew it was false. Somewhere or other there is another source for him but where is it? Who is it? I am still just as much in the dark about that as I have been all along."

Guy was starting to show signs of impatience.

"So what now?"

"Well, events are taking charge of us now and there isn't much time left. The Merano Conference is coming up and before that your father wants to take a holiday. He says he's worked himself into the ground and he must have a break."

"As a matter of fact I have noticed that he is very edgy," said Guy; "Bunny and I

were talking about it only a day or two ago.”

“Anyway your father’s idea is to charter a yacht in Venice and to cruise around in the Adriatic for a while and then to go straight from Venice to Merano by car, which is only a few hours. As you can imagine that gives us a few security problems.”

“You mean something might happen to him on holiday.”

“Yes,” went on Mr. Sim, “and that is why we are having to take additional precautions. I’ve been working it all out with your father and, if you’ll play along, we’ll all take a trip with him.”

“All of us?” exclaimed Guy in surprise; “what do you mean, all of us? I can’t go. You seem to forget that my holidays don’t last forever. I’ve got a job to do and I can’t imagine that my people would fancy my swanning around the Adriatic on top of my spell down here.”

“That can be taken care of,” said Mr. Sim; “you can leave that to me. We have all the right friends in all the right high places.”

“And Simon? What about Simon? He

will have to go back to school before very long and I've told you I'm not having him involved any more."

"It will all be before the school term starts and anyway can you think of anywhere safer for him than with all of us on a private yacht, well guarded? Perhaps I should mention that we shall have several of our men amongst the crew. We are not taking any chances. And your father will naturally be taking Bunny, so that will be good for Simon. Eve will have recovered by then and a bit of sea air will be just the thing for her. Even Albert might enjoy the sea for a change."

"You've got it all neatly wrapped up, haven't you?" said Guy.

"As neatly as I can in the circumstances," replied Mr. Sim; "if your father will insist on having a holiday, at the worst possible time, then probably a yacht is the safest place for him."

"What about the *Achille Lauro*?"

"I know," said Mr. Sim. "It shakes you, that sort of hijack, doesn't it? It adds a new dimension to security problems. But our men will be well prepared and nobody,

but nobody, is going to get on or off that yacht without my say so."

Guy looked across at Mr. Sim. All the earlier passion was spent. He was once again the precise calculating machine that he had come to recognise. He had worked out all the pro's and con's and all the perils and pitfalls of the Venice trip. Nothing would be overlooked.

"I am going back to London tomorrow," said Mr. Sim suddenly; "there's nothing more for me to do here. Eve is on the mend and I must get on with things. I'm taking back some mug shots of Amos Todd from the morgue. The police are already trying to find out who he is and I have a few ideas."

"How are you going to fit him into the picture?" asked Guy.

"Heaven knows," replied Mr. Sim; "but he fits in somewhere, that's for sure. First we discover that he's watching this house and then he ends up as cold potatoes. Still, I have hopes, I have hopes. Now what about the trip to Venice, is it on?"

Guy did not need any time to think about it. A luxury cruise on the Adriatic

with Simon safely taken care of and with Eve by his side seemed more than attractive.

“OK,” he said; “I don’t know why I always end up by agreeing with whatever you suggest, but this time you’ve got everything going for you. But, wait a minute, you still haven’t told me when it is, and I don’t suppose Father will bother to say anything until the last minute.”

“A fortnight tomorrow,” replied Mr. Sim; “You’ll all fly out—everything will be arranged for you. Just make sure you have your tooth brush and swimming trunks.”

After Mr. Sim left early next morning, Guy found his attention fully occupied by a revitalised Simon. First he insisted on Guy taking him to the hospital to see Eve, who was now recovering quickly. Conversation flowed rapidly to and fro between them without a pause, so that Guy hardly had time to put in a word. He smiled contentedly. At last his fortunes seemed to be changing.

After the hospital, it was the Maritime Museum at the Quay in Exeter, then after that a quick swim at Exmouth followed by

another swim at Budleigh Salterton. Simon's energy seemed endless. Guy sat on the pebbled beach at Budleigh Salterton while Simon swam. He wanted to think. He toyed idly with a large grey pebble, swopping it from hand to hand, while he kept thinking of Eve. Thank God she was going to be all right. It had been a close call, but she was strong and healthy, so that apparently she would soon be on her feet again. Simon seemed to worship her.

"Come on, Daddy," shouted Simon from the water; "why don't you come in? It's lovely, even warmer than Exmouth."

"I don't believe you," Guy shouted back; "I'm worn out. I'm staying put."

"You're as bad as Albert," shouted Simon happily, before turning onto his back and swimming away towards a group of boys further along the beach.

The next two weeks were the happiest Guy had known since Joyce's death. The time seemed to fly by at an impossible speed. When Eve came back to the cottage, she was soon quite active again, while Bunny was busy getting ready to shut up the cottage again and preparing for the Venice holiday. Sir Redvers made

a quick visit for one night, just long enough for Guy to see that his need for a holiday seemed greater than ever. Albert and Simon had found a tennis court nearby where they spent hour after hour wearing out each other. Guy and Eve went walking on the Common in the cool of the evenings. They heard no more of Mr. Sim or his machinations, so that Guy had no opportunity to discover whether Mr. Sim had found anything about the American or whether he had been able to trace the hidden source of Krovotny's information. The holiday was suddenly upon them.

The flight from Gatwick to Marco Polo Airport on the edge of Venice was uneventful. Guy and Simon tried to identify places far beneath them. Guy was able to pick up Lake Garda on the starboard side and it was not long after that the plane descended over the maze of waterways and islands adjoining Venice. Guy found the aerial view entrancing and wished he could have had longer to enjoy it. When they touched down and he stepped from the plane he felt the hot air on his cheeks with hardly a breath of wind

disturbing it. He saw Albert mopping his brow.

“Blimey, guv,” he said to Guy, “give me five o’clock in the morning in the old Covent Garden any day.”

Albert having been made responsible for the baggage belonging to the party, soon had it all safely aboard a water taxi waiting at the little jetty outside the airport buildings. They climbed aboard eagerly, glad to be on the move again after the confinement of the aircraft. Simon moved to the front so that he could watch the taxi cleave its path through the water between the poles lining its route. Steadily they made their way towards Venice itself. On their left Murano seemed half enveloped in a heat haze while on their right the causeway was visible. It was not long before the taxi-driver threaded his way into the mouth of one of the Venetian canals leading to the Grand Canal. Not even the most hardened traveller in the group could stifle exclamations of delight from time to time. When they emerged into the broad waters of the Grand Canal, Guy gave himself up to the glory and wonder of all around him. He heard a murmur of surprise from Eve

as the Rialto Bridge came into sight. They seemed to come upon it before she was ready with her camera. Guy looked up at the crowds standing idly on the bridge as the taxi passed under it. They quay on their left where a waterbus had stopped was the centre of a hubbub of bustle and activity, while crowds thronged the little streets and cafés by the Rialto in their eagerness to see it and enjoy it. Guy could see his father further along in the taxi sitting next to Mr. Sim, who looked intently over the top of his spectacles at the succession of palaces on both banks of the canal as they passed them.

“Look, Daddy, what’s that?” cried Simon, pointing ahead of them.

It was the white mass of the Church of Santa Maria della Salute with its glorious golden dome rising into the blue sky and dominating the end of the canal. Like countless thousands before him, Simon, even though a child, felt overwhelmed by it.

The passage through the Grand Canal came to an end all too quickly for Guy and Eve. Their eyes met from time to time but nothing was said. Eve smiled contentedly

as she kept her camera in constant action. Guy looked to his left at the Ducal Palace guarding the entrance to St. Mark's Square. Beyond it the splendour of the Basilica was partially visible. People were everywhere, even in the heat of the day. The water taxi made its way along St. Mark's basin towards the yacht which was its destination.

"There it is," cried Bunny, "the white one next to the blue one."

Guy looked further ahead. Bunny had been quick to spot the yacht. He could see it well enough now, with its name "*Arabella*" freshly painted on it. One or two members of the crew were moving about on its deck. Guy was surprised at its size. It seemed enormous beside the boats moored at either side of it. It must be costing his father a fortune to hire it, he reflected, but he could afford it easily enough with his wealth.

The transfer from the taxi to the *Arabella* was soon accomplished. Simon's excitement was more than he could control, but Guy left it to Bunny to do her best to calm him. It was the first time that any of them had been on a yacht of this

size so that it was hardly surprising that they found it strangely exciting. Guy found himself shaking hands with a large man in a spotless white uniform.

“My name’s Fielding,” said the big man, “Tom Fielding. I am the skipper of the *Arabella*. Welcome aboard.”

Guy felt a strong handshake which somehow gave him an immediate surge of confidence. Tom Fielding was not the sort of man to let anyone down, he thought. He felt happy to be in his hands. Whether Mr. Sims had chosen him he didn’t know, but he could hardly imagine a better man to look after his precious cargo of Sir Redvers and party.

The cabins on board were surprisingly large and in fact Sir Redvers and Bunny had a luxurious suite. Guy’s cabin was next to it, with Simon’s on the other side. Opposite Guy’s cabin was Eve’s, flanked on either side by Albert’s and Mr. Sim’s, so that Mr. Sim had placed himself on the opposite side of Sir Redvers from Guy. The lounge and dining area were more than adequate, but the main feature was the spacious afterdeck where the passen-

gers would obviously be spending their time soaking up the sun.

After their arrival on board, Sir Redvers and Lady Trent decided to rest for an hour or two before dinner. Simon wanted to explore the *Arabella* and was taken in hand by one of the crew members detailed by Tom Fielding. Mr. Sim and Albert were closeted with the skipper on security arrangements, so that Guy was delighted to find himself alone on the afterdeck with Eve. With cool drinks by their side, they soaked up their surroundings.

“This is the life,” said Guy; “you can keep work and the office and everything else. This is just perfect.”

Eve lazed on the cushions of her chair.

“Whoever said that money wasn’t everything must have been off his head,” she laughed, “anyway, even if it isn’t everything, it’s a long way towards it. Does your father have holidays like this every year?”

“No,” said Guy, “he breaks out from time to time, as he can afford to, but most of the time he’s so wrapped up in his work that he doesn’t bother about holidays. He

doesn't seem to notice what goes on in the outer world."

"What about Bunny?" asked Eve; "Doesn't she get fed up with a situation like that? Doesn't she want to enjoy herself a little?"

"I suppose so," said Guy; "she doesn't say anything. Father just parks her down at Nance Bottom each summer and visits her from time to time. She seems happy enough pottering around the garden and looking after Simon in the school holidays. Father seems to dote on her despite the fact that he lives in the clouds."

"I'm glad she's happy," said Eve; "she's a nice woman, so kind and gentle, perhaps even too kind and gentle for her own good."

"Maybe so," replied Guy; "Simon and I have been very lucky to have her. At first I hated the idea of Father re-marrying but when I got to know her, I realised that it was the best thing he ever did."

"Let's go and see St. Mark's Square," said Eve suddenly; "you've been to Venice before, but I haven't and I'd like to see something of it before we start on our cruise. When are we leaving, by the way?"

“Tomorrow evening, I think,” replied Guy; “OK I’m on. We’ve got an hour or two so let’s take off.”

As they stepped ashore, Guy noticed that a crew member was standing by the gangway. He wondered how many members of the crew were Mr. Sim’s men. It was abundantly clear from everything the little man had said that he was not going to take any chances. Guy found it strange that his father was such a precious commodity. However, it must be like that these days, he reflected; scientists must be the élite, particularly as there were so few of them with sufficient knowledge to shape events.

Guy and Eve had several minutes’ walk along the Riva delgi Schiavoni before they reached the Bridge of Sighs and the Ducal Palace. Guy explained to Eve how the bridge had derived its name from bygone days when the prisoners had merely a fleeting glimpse of the lagoon on their way to judgment. Eve shuddered.

“Don’t go on,” she said, “it makes me sad. I can just picture it. Just imagine being locked up in some dungeon in there and never being able to see all this.”

St. Mark's Square was thronged with tourists. They seemed never-ending. Guy and Eve sat drinking coffee outside one of the cafés, listening to the café orchestra and watching the world go by. The pigeons were everywhere, fluttering, always fluttering. Here and there street vendors were peddling their wares, souvenirs, ice-cream, everything that the tourist could want or think he wanted. Parties of three or four dozen hurried across the square, first in one direction and then in another as their guides sought yet another architectural gem to put before them. There was a party of Japanese at the foot of the Campanile and another was emerging from the Basilica. The Japanese seemed to be everywhere.

Guy found that the time passed all too quickly so that he had no time to show Eve any of the little shops and corners leading away from St. Mark's Square. He glanced at his watch and as he did so, the two Moors high in their tower above the square struck the hour on the huge bell. Eve looked up captivated by the sight.

“Look, there they are,” she said,

pointing, "and below there is a golden lion with wings."

"Yes," said Guy, "the winged lion, the emblem of Venice. You only have to stand here in the middle of the square to see the pages of history turned back. Unfortunately, though, we must go. It's time to get back to the *Arabella*."

He turned to move past the Campanile and, as he did so, he stopped dead in his tracks, as if someone had hit him. He gripped Eve by the arm.

"Look," he gasped, "look over there, just underneath the lion!"

Eve followed the line of his pointing finger.

"What—?" she began.

"That man lighting a cigarette, the one with a newspaper under his arm."

"Yes, but who—?" Eve started to ask.

"It's Krovotny, the KGB man. I'd know him anywhere."



# Part Three

## The Red Moves



BY the time that the Aeroflot plane taking Guy back to London was airborne KGB Colonel Oleg Krovotny was already at his desk reviewing his further plans for Operation Icarus. He felt a certain satisfaction at the name he had chosen for the work in hand. Just as Icarus had flown too near the sun which had melted the wax on his wings, now the Western scientists were flying too high with their plans for their Strategic Defence Initiative. Whether they would suffer a fate similar to that of Icarus would depend on the success or failure of the present operation. He turned back the pages of a thick file as he reflected on progress so far.

It had been just after the East-West Summit meeting that he had been chosen by the Politburo to undertake the present campaign. He could still see the tall figure of Igor Pilakin hunched at his desk, as he spoke bitterly of the West.

“They show no signs whatsoever of being reasonable,” he had protested; “and so we have no choice. One way or another we have to stop this Strategic Defence Initiative and you must step up the efforts already being made.”

Krovotny already knew what the European plans were and after that meeting with Pilakin he had thought long and hard about them. The outlook was not good and a fresh approach was necessary. This led him to the eventual conclusion that the best chance of success lay in attacking the scientific area, as it was in this area that the Western European resources were most thinly spread. The information which had come into his First Chief Directorate of the KGB was that the British had decided to boost the European role so as to exert greater influence on the Americans. Apparently there were certain aspects of American policy which disturbed them so that they had decided that if the European scientists could work in closer co-operation they could start to have more influence on the Americans and help to promote the whole SDI effort. It was therefore proposed to hold a Conference of

European Scientists some months ahead to get everything together. Krovotny decided that if he could destroy or damage the prospects for this Conference, then the Western effort would suffer badly. Pilakin wanted results, that was the message and it had to be heeded.

It was in this frame of mind that Krovotny decided to call in Department V. of his Directorate. There were some good men in Department V. one of whom in particular had already attracted his attention. Yuri Semoyan was a rising star in the KGB and he would be just the man for the new Operation Icarus.

Yuri Semoyan was tall and blond. He had impeccable credentials as a KGB officer. His father had been a KGB colonel in the post-Beria era while his mother had been a keen worker for the Party. Yuri had grown up in the Moscow establishment where his thrusting manner and good looks had won him early promotion. His marriage to the daughter of a senior Party member had opened further doors for him so that now he was well placed in the KGB hierarchy. His earlier language training had enabled him to serve successful terms

as an illegal, first in West Germany and later in London. He had shown himself to be quite ruthless in climbing his chosen professional ladder and became an obvious candidate for the sabotage and mayhem of Department V.

Krovotny was looking out of his window across Dzerzinsky Square when Semoyan joined him. He turned and motioned him to a chair. It did not take long to explain the purpose of Operation Icarus to Semoyan, who quickly grasped the implications.

“What have we done so far in the European sector?” he asked.

“Apart from gathering information, our main object has been to undermine morale among the scientists,” replied Krovotny; “we have been concentrating on the angle of classified material.”

“Kindly explain,” said Semoyan.

“Well those scientists who are at present working for commercial companies are hesitant about taking up SDI work because they are afraid that if they do then their work will become classified material and their future work will therefore be prejudiced. So we have been doing our

best to encourage and promote this feeling. Our disinformation people have been spreading various items with quite good results. However, these are not sufficient by themselves and this is why I want to bring in your department."

"What have you in mind?" asked Semoyan.

"What I have in mind is to take out or neutralise—use whatever word you like—some of the key figures in the scientific area, so that not only will the scientific work be disrupted but also the forthcoming Conference will also be disrupted. If you can achieve that, then you will have done well."

Krovotny pushed a file across the desk.

"Take this and study it," he said; "this is all the information our illegals have given us on the various scientists involved in SDI work. When you've mastered it, come and see me again."

Semoyan found that the groundwork which Krovotny's illegals had done in the various countries had been thorough. It was not long before he sought another meeting with the Colonel.

"I've been through all this," he said;

“and I’ve made a list of the key people I think we should work on.”

He handed a slip of paper to Krovotny, who studied it carefully.

“Agreed,” said the Colonel; “these are the most important ones. So now it is going to be your task to neutralise the men on this list—but with one exception.”

Semoyan looked across the desk enquiringly.

“The name at the top of your list, the most important one, the British scientist Trent,” continued Krovotny; “you are to leave him out for the time being until I give you further instructions.”

“But, as you say, he is the most important one on the list,” said Semoyan in surprise; “surely he should be the first for me to work on.”

“I have other plans for him,” replied Krovotny firmly; “so, as I say, leave him out. Sir Redvers Trent is a special case and I shall talk to you about him on some future occasion.”

Semoyan stifled his disappointment. He had learned long ago to discipline himself and not to question his superiors’ decisions.

“Have you formed any ideas on how you will go about it?” asked Krovotny, pointing at the list in front of him.

“Yes, I have,” replied Semoyan; “I think that we should do well to make use of the GRU Spetsnaz forces in this. As you know we already have them in use in Western Europe in our campaign against the Cruise missiles. They have been achieving some success and I think they could do more.”

“I’ll have a word with General Ilyachev,” said Krovotny; “if he’s agreeable we can mount a joint operation and his men can come under your control.”

“I don’t want a whole team,” said Semoyan; “I just want two really good people, a man and a woman. If I can have two, perhaps one British and the other German, both good linguists, then I feel sure I can get good results.”

GRU General Ilyachev had no difficulty in providing the two Spetsnaz operatives for Semoyan. Although not eager for them to be working directly under a KGB controller, nevertheless he could see the need for a close liaison between the KGB and GRU. One of his training camps in

the Urals yielded just the pair that Semoyan would have wished for, a Briton, Craig Enders, and Brigitte Kraus, who was German.

Craig Enders was a former mercenary soldier who had spent several years fighting in different parts of Africa, first in the Congo and later with Frelimo in Mozambique. Killing had become almost second nature to him, so that after returning to Britain he had had no qualms about earning substantial sums as a contract hard man in his native London. Subsequently, he had become a willing recruit for the KGB who had paid him well for a job well done. When he had finally found himself in a Spetsnaz training camp he responded well to the careful and detailed instruction given to him. When his newly-acquired knowledge was added to his years of rough, tough experience, the result was a highly professional soldier equipped with every secret technique and without fear or scruples.

The recruitment by the KGB of Brigitte Kraus had an entirely different origin. As a University student she had become a fanatical communist, so that even before

she had completed her studies, she had become a hardened agitator, not only in West Germany but also in most of the other West European countries. A spell of training in Moscow had been followed by a transfer to the Spetsnaz forces where her skills and techniques received a final polish, which, added to her undoubted sexual attraction had made her even more dangerous.

With Enders and the girl Kraus, Yuri Semoyan had made astonishing progress with the list of names he had discussed with Krovotny. As his first victim he had chosen the German scientist Rabe. Professor Klaus Rabe had quickly succumbed to the charms of Brigitte on one of his periodic visits to the Algarve. With his wife and children safely in Cologne he could hardly believe his good luck in meeting such a delightful and appealing compatriot when she asked if she could borrow his newspaper by the pool. The smile in her eyes and the curves of her body were too much for him. He could not get her to bed quickly enough.

Brigitte found it all absurdly easy. One of the Spetsnaz specialities was a little

ampoule of nerve gas which was ideal for the present purpose. When this gas was inhaled it produced a temporary paralysis but afterwards it left no residual signs which could be detected by medical inspection. When the Professor was safely asleep, she admitted Craig Enders who was waiting in the corridor outside his flat, broke an ampoule of nerve gas under the Professor's nose, then helped Enders to lift their helpless victim out of bed, carry him to the balcony and throw him to his death on the concrete path three floors below.

Semoyan then turned his attention to two British scientists, Dr. Jacob Goetz and Professor Marcus Blattner. He knew that Blattner, a brilliant and sensitive man, had nevertheless been a homosexual from his early days at university. He was therefore a ready target for the Spetsnaz pair. Enders trapped him without any difficulty while the hidden Brigitte took the necessary photographs. Enders started progressive blackmail with the obscene pictures and the continual threat of showing them to Blattner's wife. When the demands became impossible to satisfy, Blattner

obliged the patiently waiting Semoyan by shooting himself.

Dr. Jacob Goetz had no such hidden vices. He was a model of rectitude, highly religious and a regular attender at the synagogue. There was no way of neutralising him other than by elimination. Having satisfied himself as to this, Semoyan decided to use again the nerve gas which had been so successful in the Algarve. Enders found the habits of the Goetz household regular and predictable. It was easy enough to approach the Doctor beside his swimming pool as he was about to take his early morning dip. When one squirt of the nerve gas rendered Goetz helpless, Enders pushed him into the pool and watched him drown before turning on his heel and leaving as silently as he had come.

Semoyan had had one more success in Holland on his list of names before he received a summons from the Centre in Moscow. When he crossed Dzerzinsky Square on his way to Krovotny's office, he wondered uneasily why the Colonel had interrupted his mission when progress had been swifter than expected. Had he

somehow failed in his mission after all? He need not have worried. Krovotny was plainly delighted with his achievements.

“Excellent, excellent,” he kept repeating; “but now to the purpose of our meeting. You may remember that the most important name on your list was a British scientist called Trent, Sir Redvers Trent.”

“Yes,” replied Semoyan, “and you instructed me not to do anything about him. I had to leave him alone.”

“Quite correct,” said Krovotny; “and I also told you that in due course we should talk again about him. Well that time has now come.”

Semoyan waited expectantly for the Colonel to continue.

“You will be interested to know,” Krovotny went on, “that I have his son here in Lubianka at this very moment. His name is Guy Trent, he is employed by an engineering firm in England and I arranged for him to come here on a trade mission.”

Krovotny went on to explain the circumstances of Guy Trent’s detention by the KGB.

“We are now coming to the critical

point. If everything goes as I expect, the young man Trent will agree, as the price of his freedom, to supply me with information from time to time about his father during the coming weeks. There is very little doubt that when he gets back to England, he will tell the British security people all about it, but that is what I am relying on.”

Semoyan tried to hide his bewilderment.

“What do you have in mind?” he asked guardedly.

“While you have been playing your part with your Spetsnaz team with such success, I have had parallel work undertaken in an even more important area of Operation Icarus. This concerns Sir Redvers Trent, and I am pleased to say that it has been even more successful than I had hoped. The result is that, if all goes well, the scientist Trent will defect to us before the European Conference.”

“Defect?” echoed Semoyan; “how on earth have you managed that?”

“That is another story,” replied Krovotny, “but all the indications are that, provided my plans are not disturbed, then this will come about.”

Semoyan felt a moment of resentment at the quick rebuttal of his enquiry. However, his discipline came immediately to his aid, since it had long ago been instilled into him that all KGB work was put into strictly separate compartments on the principle that what one did not know one could not reveal.

“Even though it is rather late in the day,” continued Krovotny, “Trent has come to realise that the Western imperialists are an increasing threat to peace with their Strategic Defence Initiative. The other steps in Operation Icarus, to which I referred, have brought this about and his defection would be a major coup for us and a real body blow to the West. I must therefore ensure at all costs that nothing goes wrong. Trent is a key figure in the Western effort and he is the prize I am after.”

Semoyan saw the gleam in Krovotny’s eyes, as he spoke. The Colonel’s name was almost a legend in the KGB after repeated successes against the West. His uncanny ability to read the minds of his adversaries and to plan accordingly had endowed him with a special reputation.

“And the son, Guy Trent? What about him?” asked Semoyan.

“Ah, yes,” replied Krovotny; “that is where you and your team will come in and the reason why I have recalled you to Moscow. Listen carefully.”

Consumed, as he was, with curiosity, Semoyan did not need this injunction. He could hardly wait for the Colonel to continue.

“Trent is to act as a decoy,” said Krovotny, “what the British call a red herring. I have gathered in enough information about him to tell me that when he returns home he will tell British Intelligence what has happened. I shall be giving you his file to study and you will see that he is a widower with a young son at present at boarding school. Despite threats to his son that I have made, Trent will not be able to bring himself to become an informer for us, so that he will certainly decide to reveal everything. If I am wrong and he does not, he will be useful to us, but if I am right, then his use will be very much greater.”

“In what way?” interrupted Semoyan.

“In this way,” explained Krovotny;

“the British will of course realise that we are not so stupid as to believe that Guy Trent will become a real informer. They will calculate that we have stage-managed his visit to Moscow to set him up in this role, and they will look for the reason behind it. As they know of my work over the years, it will not take them long to reach the conclusion that we want Trent as a decoy. They will figure out that we are directing their attention to Guy Trent because we want to shield someone else who is providing us with information about his father. The result of this will be that they will be searching and searching for such an informant and all the time he does not exist. The last thing they would think of is that the information about Sir Redvers Trent during the coming weeks will be coming from Sir Redvers himself.”

Krovotny leaned back in his chair with a triumphant smile like a conjurer who had just produced the biggest rabbit of all time out of a hat.

“And where do I fit in?” asked the admiring Semoyan.

“In two ways,” replied Krovotny; “first as to the work you have already done and

secondly as to the work you will now be doing. First then let us examine the results you have so far achieved. On the face of it you have neutralised several important scientists and ensured that they never go to Merano in Italy, where this Conference is going to take place, but, more important than that, you have alerted Western Intelligence to the fact that there is a campaign against their scientists and that their safety is at risk. The result of this is that all the remaining key figures are now being guarded. Including among these is of course Sir Redvers Trent. The man in British Intelligence looking after this is a man called Sim. I have come across him before and have great respect for his ability. He is no fool."

As Krovotny paused for breath, Semoyan drew a mental picture of the two adversaries so far apart, each trying to outwit the other.

"The most successful outcome of your work, therefore," went on Krovotny, "is that the man Sim is trying his best to guard Sir Redvers Trent from harm and will therefore be desperately anxious to trace our informant he thinks exists. All

the time, of course, he will simply be preserving Sir Redvers for us until the time comes for his defection, which will come out of the blue. What a shock that will be for him when it comes!"

Oleg Krovotny could not repress a smile. He was like a cat with a bowl of cream.

"And now the second factor," he continued; "we must talk about the work you are going to do. The man Sim will undoubtedly let Guy Trent pretend to obey my instructions. He will want to see what transpires and what clues he can pick up. So therefore I want you to go back to England with your team and organise the drops for Guy Trent's information. You know about that sort of thing. Just string him along with messages from time to time. After a while I would expect the man Sim to get tired of this and he will try something fresh. Look out for this and remember what you will have read in here."

Krovotny tapped the file in front of him.

"Kidnap the boy or something," he said; "just to keep the pressure on and to keep Sim's attention on Guy Trent and the

mythical informant angle. Keep him guessing, anything to keep his attention away from the truth."

"Is that all?" asked Semoyan.

"No, it is not all," replied Krovotny; "the other part of your work will be to act as a link between Sir Redvers Trent and me, to keep me informed of what he is really doing and how matters are progressing. For reasons which I need not go into, the line of communication which I have had up to now will cease. So you must fill the gap."

"If Sir Redvers is being guarded, that will not be easy," commented Semoyan, almost to himself.

"That can be overcome," replied Krovotny, tapping the file again; "you will see in here that he often eats at his London Club. See to it that your man Enders gets a part-time job there, as a waiter or something. Sir Redvers can then keep him posted about events without any problem."

"And the actual defection itself?" asked Semoyan.

"That will not concern you," replied Krotovny; "your task is, as I have said,

to mislead the man Sim and to keep me informed up until the time that Sir Redvers leaves the United Kingdom for the Conference."

Two days after his long meeting with Krovotny, Yuri Semoyan was now sitting in the same London-bound Aeroflot plane as Guy Trent. He could see the back of the Englishman's head several seats in front of him. He was looking forward to the work that Krovotny had given him. He had just been able to spend a little time with his wife which had made him feel better. Several times recently in England he had felt the lure of Brigitte's physical presence, which he had forced himself to resist. Once or twice only his strict KGB training had saved him. Complications of that sort were strictly forbidden and he knew it.

Semoyan decided that it would be useful to tail Guy Trent when he left Heathrow. Probably nothing would come of it, but no doubt the Englishman would be going into London and he wanted to go there himself anyway. When at length, Trent's cab driver expertly lost him in the traffic, he smiled in quiet satisfaction. The Colonel had been right in thinking that Trent and

British Intelligence would get together. It had happened sooner than expected and no doubt the driver had been planted to pick up Trent. If Sim had himself taken the initiative, so much the better. It was a sure sign that he would swallow the bait.

Semoyan's arrangements for re-establishing contact with Craig Enders and Brigitte Kraus worked with their usual smoothness. As always he allowed a few days to elapse in order to make certain that he was not the object of any unwelcome attention. When their meeting did take place, Enders had an unpleasant shock in store.

"I've had a bit of a problem," said Enders; "it was the result of the Goetz affair. I've been getting some unexpected follow-up."

"How? Please explain," asked Semoyan.

"When I took out the scientist Goetz in his swimming pool," said Enders, "I thought I'd done a clean job with no traces. I was surprised to discover the other day, after all this time, that this was not so and I was in fact being tailed by someone. It was a young man with sandy, rather gingery hair. I noticed him twice

hanging about when I went to buy some cigarettes and have a couple of beers."

"So?" queried Semoyan.

"So I decided to find out what it was all about," continued Enders; "as he hadn't noticed that I'd spotted him, I put Brigitte onto it as a tailcheck. When and if the man showed up again, she could tail him in turn."

"That is so," interrupted Brigitte; "and Craig had been quite right. The next time he went out, this other man started to follow him and from then on it was very interesting. When Craig was in a pub, the man took up a position across the road where Craig could not see him when he came out again. Then he started fiddling with a little camera. When Craig eventually came out he took two or three pictures of him. Nothing more happened that day, except of course that I followed the man back to the block of apartments where he lived. I made a few enquiries and discovered that his name was Steve Butler and that he lived alone in a third floor apartment."

"I decided that anyone who was taking such an interest in me had to be taken

seriously," said Enders; "we had to find out, if possible, who he was and what he was up to. It was just as well in view of what happened next."

"Yes," continued Brigitte, "I tailed him again the next day; this time he made no attempt to pick up Craig again, but instead he headed for North London and for the very area where the Goetz home was. There I was able to see him making enquiries in the local pub and shop and showing people a photograph."

"The next step was to deal with his flat," said Enders; "Brigitte did this the next time he tailed me again. I arranged with her that I would draw him away long enough for her to do what was necessary."

"I searched every inch of that apartment," said Brigitte, "but found nothing. It just seemed an ordinary bachelor apartment. Then I bugged the telephone and Craig and I started a listening watch."

"It all came to a head two nights ago," continued Enders; "he telephoned someone, a man, and said that at last he was on to something and that he was coming round to see him. So I had to make a decision quickly. Here was this

man who had been following me and taking my photograph, then flashing it about in the Goetz neighbourhood and now he was presumably about to tell somebody all about it. We still didn't know who he was, but that didn't make it any better."

"So what did you decide?" asked Semoyan patiently.

"I decided I had to take him out," replied Enders; "there was no choice, really. I couldn't have him passing on whatever he had found out. By that time he must have found out where my flat is and maybe a whole lot more. I nipped into the basement garage for the apartments, where this Steve Butler kept his car, while Brigitte waited outside the front entrance in case he left on foot. In fact he came down to his car and when he got in I let him have it in the back of the neck. I used a silencer and there was nobody about to hear it anyway. So that was that."

Semoyan ran his fingers through his blond hair as he listened to the end of the Spetsnaz man's story.

"I don't like it," he said; "the photo-

graphing and all that. I presume that you took care of the photographs?"

"Of course," replied Enders; "he had them on him. I also took the film out of the camera which he had with him, but in fact he hadn't used it yet. The pictures of me were remarkably good, in fact."

"So we have to bear in mind," said Semoyan, "that although you seem to have been successful in plugging the hole, we cannot be quite sure. This man may possibly have left something somewhere. Move to another flat and cover up, just in case. Now let me tell you both about our plans for the future. I have my instructions from the Centre and we must make sure that we carry them out exactly. There must be no more mistakes. I don't know whether you made some mistake over the scientist Goetz or how this man Butler got on to you, but we cannot risk anything from now on."

Semoyan kept his explanation to a minimum. In accordance with the normal well-drilled procedure, he told Enders and Brigitte Kraus only the bare essentials, which they needed to know for their present assignments. Enders saw no diffi-

culty in getting a part-time job at Sir Redvers Trent's club. He had done a waiter's job once before for a few weeks. The matter of the message drops was also soon arranged. Brigitte would make the telephone calls to Guy Trent, while Enders would pay some unemployed youngster to pick up Trent's message in the late afternoon and pass it to him in the rush hour crush of the Underground. With everyone pressed tightly together in the tube train anyone following the youngster from the pick-up would find it impossible to see what was happening.

As the Spring melted into Summer Semoyan followed progress with quiet satisfaction. Enders was proving the perfect link between Sir Redvers Trent and himself. The waiter's job at the scientist's club had been duly secured and, as Krovotny had thought, was proving an ideal channel. As the weeks passed by, Sir Redvers kept Enders supplied with a regular flow of information on his plans and movements. Semoyan had half-hoped that he was passing on pieces of scientific information. He would have liked a bonus to pass on to Moscow. Before long,

however, he realised that this was not how things had been arranged by Krovotny, who had clearly staked everything on the defection which must have been patiently engineered.

In the meantime Brigitte and Enders were collecting every month or so the pieces of information from Guy Trent which Krovotny deemed so necessary to divert attention from the real matter in hand; with the Englishman Sim making no move, everything was proceeding exactly according to the Centre blueprint.

Semoyan would therefore have been more than content to let matters proceed gently along their chosen course, had it not been for some unexpected news which Enders brought him one day.

“Something’s up, Yuri,” he said.

“What is it you mean?” asked the Russian in the rather stilted English he used from time to time.

“As you know, when one’s been around for a few years doing this sort of job one develops eyes in the back of one’s head, a sort of sixth sense, if you follow my meaning.”

“So?”

“So I make it my business that when I pick up these messages in the Underground I just try to spot whether there’s anyone near me that I’ve seen before. It’s almost impossible, but all the same I try to do it.”

“There has been somebody?” asked the Russian, becoming impatient.

“The last time and the time before, on different tube lines mark you, I’ve seen the same man.”

“Then maybe we have a problem,” said Semoyan; “it will need thinking about.”

“There’s more to come,” said Enders; “I didn’t fancy it somehow and so I thought I’d bust it open.”

Somoyan looked uneasy, as he waited for Enders to continue.

“On the last drop this guy was there again. I gave him the slip and switched roles. I was able to follow him without being seen and I had fixed for Brigitte to be around as well. He went into a pub so I waited a few minutes and then I went in after him. He was sitting by himself, at a table drinking a pint. I went over and sat down opposite him.

“You seem very interested in me,” I said; “what’s it all about?”

At first the geyser tried to play innocent and pretend there must be some mistake but he saw I wasn’t having any, so in the end after a long time he seemed to decide to come off his high horse and he said maybe he was interested in me.”

The Russian leaned forward with increasing signs of anxiety.

“What was he like, this man, and what did he want?”

“Well, for starters, he was an American about thirty, rather a fat bloke. He wouldn’t give his name. I asked him why he was watching me.”

“And?”

“He said that I seemed to hang around tube stations a lot. ‘What’s that to do with you?’ I asked him. He then said he was on the lookout for information and he thought I might have been collecting some which would interest him.”

Enders paused to light a cigarette.

“Then it was my turn to play dumb,” he continued, “but the guy kept on about it and said that he would pay well. He said that I knew what he was talking about and

his money talked as loud as anyone else's, maybe even louder."

"Did you tell him anything?" asked Semoyan.

"Of course I didn't," replied Enders; "what do you take me for? To tell you the truth I was amazed that he had spotted what I had been doing. Anyway I told him I should have to have time to think it over. So in the end I arranged to meet him again, tomorrow night in the same pub."

He leaned back in his chair.

"What do you want me to say?" he concluded.

The Russian frowned. This was something outside his previous calculations. He did not relish the thought of some new factor disturbing the plans which Krovotny and he had laid so carefully,

"The problem at the moment is that we do not know who is this man and where he comes into all the picture," he said, struggling a little with his English; "that is what we must first find out."

"You want me to do that first?"

"No. I think it would be best if you pretend to go along with him, just a little. I shall wait outside the meeting place in

order to take his photo. When I pass this on to our people, they will soon tell me if they know him and we can go on from there."

"You think he is CIA?" asked Enders.

"It is very possible," replied Semoyan, "or he could be working for the Englishman Sim, or even somebody else. It is obvious that he has got on to something and we must find out more. You can handle it, ask for more time, anything to give me the time to identify him."

The American was waiting for Enders the following day in the pub. It was early evening when Enders joined him at a table in the corner. The American wasted no time.

"Is the deal on or off?" he asked.

"Just a minute, not so fast," continued Enders; "you want some information from me but I don't know who you are or what you're up to. I don't do business like that."

The American sipped his beer. Putting down the glass, he pointed a forefinger at Enders.

"Now let's get one thing straight," he said slowly and deliberately. "We are

talking about money on the one side and information on the other, nothing else. It doesn't matter two bucks to a cow's ass who I am or anything about me. So are you in business or not?"

"You won't get anywhere by trying to push me," replied Enders stonily, "just calm down, or I walk out."

"OK, OK," said the American, "let's cut out the garbage. You see, I know who you are and I know you're in this for the money."

Enders hesitated for a moment.

"You know who I am?"

"Sure, your name is Enders, Craig Enders, and you sell your services to the highest bidder. You've been doing it for years."

"So?"

"So, I've come to make a bid. It's as simple as that. Tell me what you know and you're on to a thousand bucks."

Enders laughed.

"A thousand dollars? You must be joking."

"Your Russian friend is paying you well, is he?"

"What Russian friend?"

“Yuri Semoyan,” said the American; “I just told you that I know all about you. I wasn’t kidding. I know you’re in with him. I know quite a lot about him too, that’s for sure.”

“Are you CIA?”

The American ignored the question.

“Do we have a deal, or don’t we?” he asked.

“I don’t like your arithmetic,” said Enders; “a thousand dollars is chickenfeed.”

“Make it two thousand, then,” said the American, “and, as you well know, there would be more to come if it turns out worthwhile.”

Enders was silent for a while, looking down at his beer. At length he looked up.

“It’s too risky,” he said; “I don’t like it.”

“Risky? Don’t make me laugh. Since when have you started worrying about risks. Goddam it, you’ve been taking them all your life.”

“I still don’t like it,” said Enders stubbornly; “I want to think about it.”

“What more is there to think about for land sakes?” asked the American, raising

his voice in exasperation. "You've already had time to think about it. It's simple enough, two thousand bucks and you tell me what you know."

"I want to sleep on it," said Enders; "we'll meet again here tomorrow, same time, and I'll give you my answer. Bring the money with you in case it's 'Yes'."

"Now look here," started the Amercian, "I'm not—"

Enders raised his hand quickly to stop him.

"That's it, take it or leave it," he said abruptly; "I'll be here tomorrow."

He rose from his chair and strode quickly to the door and out into the street.

Enders did not take long the next day to tell Semoyan about the American and his proposition.

"So in the end he offered me two thousand dollars," he concluded; "I told him I'd let him know this evening, same time, same place."

The Russian stroked his chin.

"Two thousand dollars," he mused, raising his eyebrows; "that seems a large sum of money, considering that he does not even know what you have to tell him."

If Enders sensed that the Russian was uneasy, he did not show it.

“Who is the geyser anyway?” he asked; “did you get his photo when he left the pub?”

“Oh, yes,” replied Semoyan; “and what is more my people have him well documented, they know all about him.”

“Who is he, then?”

“His name is Amos Todd. He’s a CIA man. My people have come across him several times. He works mostly by himself and has a good record. He is not a fool.”

“More brain than brawn then, it seems.”

“I do not know this word ‘brawn’ but if it means what I think, then I think that is right.”

“He seems to know all about you,” said Enders; “I wonder how much he does know.”

“That is what you must try to find out,” said the Russian. “Try it like this. Tell him about the messages, about picking them up, but no more. He will want to know more, of course, but you can say that that is all you know. You are simply

hired to pass on the messages from Trent to me.”

“Will he fall for that?”

“He will have to, won’t he,” went on the Russian; “but I doubt very much whether it will stop at that. He will probably want you to feed him with future information.”

“You mean, put me on his payroll?”

“Just so,” said Semoyan, “and if he does, play along with it. In that way we have some chance of finding out what he’s trying to do. That is the important thing. One way or another I must not allow him to interfere with my plans.”

“OK,” replied Enders; “that’s settled then. I’ll see how I get on.”

The next meeting with the American went much as Enders wished, the outcome being that he came away two thousand dollars the richer. He had told Todd of the drops by Guy Trent and how he arranged the collections and subsequent transfers. Todd had not been impressed.

“Now tell me something I don’t know,” he snarled with heavy sarcasm; “goddam it, I know most of that already. You’re going to walk off with two grand, man,

now go ahead and earn it. How are, these drops arranged in the first place, for example?"

"Semoyan arranged for some woman in his outfit to tell Trent when and where to make each drop. I don't know who she is, I've never met her. I tell you, I don't know anything except what I'm paid for and I've told you that already."

Amos Todd tried his best to winkle out more information but to no avail. Either Enders really did know nothing more or was too experienced to give anything away. Todd parted with his money with a show of reluctance.

"Now that wraps up today," he said finally, "but how about future business?"

"No dice," said Enders; "it's too risky. If Semoyan knew that I'd told you anything, he or his outfit would have me for breakfast. I've taken too much of a risk as it is."

The American scribbled something on a scrap of paper.

"Here's my number," he said; "if you have anything fresh which is worth anything, call me. You want to remember,

my dollars are a hell of a sight better than the Russky's goddam roubles."

Without another word the American rose abruptly from his chair and left the pub. Enders sat there with a half smile on his face. He moved over to the bar.

"I'll have a Scotch this time," he said to the barman, "make it a large one, it's my birthday."

Semoyan was not overjoyed the following week to hear from Enders that the Trent family was moving to Devon for the summer. Sir Redvers passed on the news to Enders at his club.

"It doesn't mean much," he grunted, as he ate; "they go down there every Summer, only apparently they are taking two of the intelligence people with them this time. They seem to be scared about my grandson. You tell your friend that I don't want him hurt, there's no call for any nastiness, everything will proceed as I have promised. Just leave the boy alone."

Semoyan spent a long time pondering on his next move. Devon was too far away for his liking. He had never been to that part of England and if anything arose down there, he would be operating on strange

territory. Although Sir Redvers was minimising the significance of the move, was it in fact so unimportant? If Sim was planning something, would it not be a wise precaution on his part to get the child out of harm's way? Krovotny had wanted him to increase the pressure on Guy Trent at this point and he had done so. Was the move to Devon being arranged as a result of this to counter the threat to the child? Semoyan felt he must be prepared.

“Craig,” he said to Enders; “I have another thing I want you to do. I want you to go down and have a look at this place in Devon where the Trent family have this house and make yourself familiar with the area. Also I want you to hire a house or cottage for the Summer. Find somewhere a few miles away, not too near so that the local people will not be curious. Try to get a house, not a flat, so that if we want to use it, we shall not be overlooked. There must be holiday houses in the countryside down there. Find one of those, somewhere on its own.”

“Are you going down there to stay?” asked Enders.

“No, I am not,” replied the Russian,

“but that is not your affair. I just want you to hire this place for me, so that it is ready, if I need it. That’s all.”

When Enders had left for the Westcountry, Semoyan felt more settled in his mind. He was certain that he had been right to send Enders on his mission. He was English and no one would notice him or recall him if anything arose later. Moreover, he was resourceful and would gather useful information about the district.

It was however, over a week before Enders returned to London and was able to tell Semoyan about Nance Bottom and the surrounding area. It had been impossible to hurry, said Enders. The people down there liked to take their time and he had had to do the same if he was to obtain the best results.

“The house?” asked Semoyan, “did you find a house?”

“Yes,” said Enders; “I got to hear of an old cottage near a village called Newton Poppleford, a few miles away from where the Trents are. The cottage is not overlooked and I got it because it was in bad shape and difficult to let. I took it for two months. Look, here it is on the map.”

The two men pored over the map of the district. Semoyan frowned.

“What difficult names you British have,” he said; “first Nance Bottom and now this Newton Poppleford.”

“You can say that again,” said Enders; “I kept losing my way down there. Give me London any time.”

“You seem to have done well with the house,” said the Russian; “how did you get on in this Nance Bottom place?”

“Very interesting, Yuri, very interesting,” said Enders.

For a moment his cold eyes showed an uncharacteristic gleam.

“Who do you think has been there recently? Our friend Amos Todd.”

Semoyan sat up sharply in surprise.

“Todd?”

“Yes,” said Enders; “he’s been staying in the village pub. He’d gone before I was there, but he’d been there.”

“How did you find that out?” asked Semoyan.

“Well, there are plenty of holiday-makers about down there and so I could go to the village pub without attracting attention. Another thing, there’s a Royal

Marine Camp near there and my old soldiering days were useful when it came to bar talk. So after I had been in the pub once or twice, I mentioned to the landlord that there were plenty of visitors about and he seemed to have more than his share. That got him talking and in the middle of it, he let drop that he'd just had two Australians and also an American staying there. Naturally, when I heard about the American, I pricked up my ears. The landlord said he was a birdwatcher or something, always out walking with his binoculars. Later on, I had a look at the visitor's register and sure enough, there was the name—Amos Todd from some place in the USA I've never heard of."

"When was he there, in the village?" asked Semoyan.

"As far as I could make out, he must have gone there just after I met him up here in London," replied Enders; "he seems to get around."

"He is becoming a nuisance," said the Russian; "if he goes on like this, we shall have to deal with him. What else did you discover?"

"I found out quite a bit about the Trent

family. This Mr. Sim you talk about seems to have things well organised. There is a man called Albert and a woman called Eve, both staying at the Trent's house. One or other of them is with the boy Simon all the time and they are obviously there as minders. Lady Trent is there and spends most of her time in the garden. Guy Trent comes down at weekends and is going to have his holidays down there very shortly. Sir Redvers usually makes weekend visits every Summer and is expected to do so this year. The man Albert comes into the pub most evenings and has got in well with the locals."

"What does the boy do all the time?"

"Some of the time he goes swimming at one of the seaside places a few miles away. Also he is keen on sports and has started to play golf. There is a golf course a few miles away at another place with a funny name, and he goes there quite a lot."

"You British and your sports," grumbled Semoyan; "it is not surprising that you have gone down in the world. You seem to think of nothing but amusing yourselves and you bring up your children

in the same way. I do not know this golf, they tell me it is a stupid game."

"Anyway, that is what the boy does most of the time. The villagers like the family. They've been going there for years and as there are only a few houses and the pub, everybody knows everybody else."

"This is good," said Semoyan at length; "you have done well, Craig. I am well satisfied. You may have to go down there again, but at the moment everything is prepared in case it is necessary."

Semoyan soon had good reason to congratulate himself on the preparations he had made in Devon. True to Krovotny's prediction in Moscow, the next message from Guy Trent marked a departure from the pattern of the previous messages. Planted in the middle of the usual run-of-the-mill data was an item on a forthcoming visit by his father to the United States. As Semoyan well knew from Sir Redvers himself, no such visit was planned. So here was the fresh initiative that Sim was taking to try to unearth something. Semoyan remembered only too well what Krovotny had told him

to do in this event. He had to keep the charade going and step up the action.

“Kidnap the boy or something,” Krovotny had said.

Semoyan wasted no time in laying his plans. Enders would have to return to Devon sooner than expected. He and Brigitte between them could take care of the boy’s abduction. They wouldn’t have to keep him long, just long enough to confuse and worry the British. It would give the man Sim something fresh to puzzle over just at a critical time.

“Tell me exactly what you want done and how long we are to keep the boy,” said Enders.

“Not long,” said Semoyan; “just long enough to put great fear into his father and to cause the maximum disturbance down in this country village. Time is getting short now and we must not relax.”

Semoyan laid his plans carefully and precisely for Brigitte to make the necessary telephone calls to Guy Trent. Two days should be enough for the kidnapping and it would not give the police long enough to trace this isolated house which Enders had hired in the district.

After the departure once more of Enders to the West Country, together with Brigitte, Semoyan had plenty of time to give further thought to Sir Redvers himself. It was now barely three weeks before the scientist was due to leave for Venice. Once Sir Redvers had left the United Kingdom, his, Semoyan's task would be finished. Krovotny himself was going to handle the actual defection. Although here in Britain Semoyan had done weeks of preparatory work to bring about the defection, he was not going to be in at the kill. Furthermore he did not even know how it was all going to be done. Krovotny had stuck rigidly to his established method that each department or cell should be self-contained and know nothing of the next cell. However trusted anyone might be, the possibility of betrayal always existed. What one didn't know, one couldn't tell. Semoyan knew that Krovotny was right, but it was hard to swallow. One day, perhaps, he would do the same.

Venice was going to be the starting point for a private cruise for Sir Redvers and his family as a pre-conference holiday. Obviously this must form an important part of

the defection plan since Krotovny had carefully planned it. Sir Redvers himself had not argued about it. In fact it had seemed rather the reverse.

“I’m tired. I need a holiday anyway,” he had told Enders at his Club; “you can tell your people that I’ll go along with that.”

Semoyan reflected that Sir Redvers Trent must be a strange man. He had not himself ever seen him, since direct contact had been too dangerous. But Enders had reported that he had found the scientist difficult to handle. While they were talking it seemed as if Sir Redvers was thinking of something else. At times he hardly seemed to listen to what Enders was saying. His mind seemed troubled and disturbed. He would agree with something when Enders would have expected him to disagree, yet a few moments later he would argue petulantly over some trivial detail which was hardly worthy of mention. Perhaps all scientists were eccentric, but at all events this one certainly was. Some of the messages, which had reached him through Enders had seemed strange and sometimes irrelevant. He had even be-

gun to wonder how much value the Englishman would be in Moscow when he had finally gone over. On the other hand there could be no denying that the loss of his work to the West would be a major blow to the Americans.

When Enders and Brigitte returned to London after Simon's abduction and release, Semoyan was pleased that it had all gone according to plan.

"What's the news about the girl working for Sim?" asked Semoyan, "the news blackout has only just been lifted."

"I believe she's recovering," replied Enders; "I must have hit her rather hard. That's the trouble with me, I don't know my own strength."

"There was one thing you'll be interested in, Yuri," said Enders; "you remember the American, Amos Todd?"

"Of course."

"Well, he was down there again and apparently he's gone missing."

"I haven't seen anything about that in the papers," said Semoyan.

"Probably too soon, that is if it rates as a news item at all," said Enders; "anyway the local gossip was that all his gear and

his car were still at the local pub but there was no sign of him. I thought you ought to know."

The Russian frowned.

"I wonder what he's up to now," he said; "it is very strange that he and the British do not seem to be working together. What was he looking for down there in Devon and did he find it? Then why should he suddenly disappear? I do not like this. With the British and the man Sim it is different. I am watching all the moves they make and I can keep one step ahead of them with Sir Redvers but the American is an unknown factor. I do not know what he is doing and how much he knows. Even if he knows nothing he may blunder into the middle of my plans. We must try to find out more about him.

With now only two weeks to go before the Trent family's departure for Venice, Semoyan settled down to the final period of watching and waiting. His nerves were not improved by the news, when it came, of Amos Todd's death. He supposed it was possible that this was accidental, but he had learned long ago not to believe in coincidences. It seemed difficult to believe

that just at this crucial time the CIA man should happen to fall into the quarry where it was reported his body had been found. If, however, his death was not accidental, who had been responsible? The British would not have had anything to do with it, so who else could be an interested party? It had been worrying enough trying to work out how the American was involved, but it was ten times more difficult to fit yet another party into the scenario. Extra vigilance would now be more vital than ever.

With the absence of any news about the cause of Todd's death, Semoyan found it hard to endure the last few days before Trent's departure. All seemed well and his report to Krovotny grew a little more confident as the days passed. But Krovotny for his part did not like the news of Todd's death either. Semoyan seemed to have carried out his task perfectly, so that any last minute intervention at this stage would be intolerable. Nothing must now be allowed to go wrong. He himself was going to Venice to carry through his plans. The moment of success was near.

Both the Russians felt an intense relief

when the scientist finally left for Venice. Although it was not to Krovotny's liking that the Englishman Sim and his aides should accompany Sir Redvers, it did not worry the KGB Colonel. It seemed clear that Sim was in complete ignorance of the scientist's intentions and while this was so, he would be powerless to prevent the defection. Everything was now cut and dried.

Krovotny had never been to Venice. Consequently he welcomed the opportunity to spend a few days there in the course of duty. His work did not require all his time, so that he saw no reason why he should not take in a little sightseeing. Having made the necessary check on the whereabouts of the *Arabella*, he assured himself of the safe arrival on board of the British party. Everything was falling neatly into place. That would be enough for today, he would be able to relax for a few hours. The *Arabella* would not be leaving until the following day.

He strolled idly through the narrow streets without any fixed purpose in mind, although he did find it hard to avoid the lure of window-shopping. There seemed to

be so many things in the shops and so many people buying them. Krovotny lost himself several times in the labyrinth of streets and side streets before eventually he found himself back in St. Mark's Square. The clock high above him struck the hour. He paused to light a cigarette. It was time to go and eat.

# Part Four

## The End Play



WHEN Guy reported Krovotny's presence in Venice to Mr. Sim, the little man gave an exclamation of surprise.

"Krovotny?" he repeated; "are you quite sure, really sure?"

"I'd know him anywhere," said Guy emphatically; "true, he was wearing sunglasses and he was some distance away, but I'm absolutely sure. It was Krovotny all right."

"So," said Mr. Sim slowly, "we have not been wasting our time, have we? Looking after your father, that is. If Krovotny is here, then he means business. It's now or never for him, as far as your father is concerned. The Conference is a week off, so that whatever he's got in mind, it must be planned for this week, either on the *Arabella* or on the way to Merano, or possibly in Merano itself, before the Conference gets under way."

“When are you going to tell my father?” asked Guy.

“Let him get over his journey first and have his dinner,” replied Mr. Sim; “by the way, do you know whether Krovotny saw you and Eve?”

“I’ve no way of knowing,” said Guy; “I shouldn’t think so. He certainly didn’t at the time we saw him. But anyway he must know we are all here, mustn’t he?”

“No doubt,” said Mr. Sim; “he’ll know all about the *Arabella* by now and probably when we’re leaving.”

“Are you worried?” asked Guy; “about the *Arabella*, I mean?”

“It’s my job to worry,” replied the little man; “all I can tell you is that I’ve done all I can. Nobody will get on or off the ship without the closest scrutiny and I’ve even got frogmen to check that we don’t get any unwelcome attention underwater. Now, let’s get ready for dinner, I’m starving.”

Dinner that night on board was a delight to Guy, as indeed were all the meals on board that were to follow. Worries about his father and thoughts of Krovotny receded into the back of his mind. Eve’s

presence seemed increasingly to fill his world. Everyone was in good spirits and looking forward to the cruise. Sir Redvers seemed more relaxed after his rest, while Bunny provided a continual flow of light-hearted conversation. Simon was bubbling, Albert was teasing him. Mr. Sim was enjoying his wine and doing his best to forget the dreary problems of the outside world. As the evening wore on this seemed less and less difficult. Not only did Tom Fielding know his job but he saw to it that everyone else on the *Arabella* knew his. Guy decided that if the rest of his stay on board was going to be like this, then he was going to have a holiday he would always remember.

When Mr. Sim joined Sir Redvers for a coffee after dinner, Guy realised he would be telling him about Krovotny's presence in Venice and hoped that he might have a chance to be alone with Eve. However, Albert, now relieved of Simon's chatter by Bunny, who had piloted him off to bed, plumped himself down in a chair beside Guy and Eve.

“The boss owes me a pint,” he announced with a grin.

“What for?” asked Guy.

“You remember,” said Albert; “the Yank, Todd or whatever his name was. The boss said he’d been done in. It was a pint to a double Scotch.”

“Well, wasn’t he?” asked Eve; “have you heard something?”

“No, and Yes,” said Albert confusingly; “No, he wasn’t done in and Yes, I’ve heard something. The boss tells me that the post-mortem results look like an accident. Apparently the wound on Todd’s head was most probably caused by the fall after all.”

“But that’s not conclusive,” argued Eve; “even if nobody struck him a blow on the head, he could still have been pushed or thrown over the edge of the quarry.”

“True,” said Albert; “but that’s not going to stop me claiming my pint off the boss. I’ll probably have it when I get home, as I’m not sure I fancy the stuff they drink out here.”

“What’s this you’re on about, Albert?” Mr. Sim had joined them unnoticed.

“You owe me a pint, guv, because of the Yank, Amos Todd.”

“Not so fast,” said Mr. Sim; “I’m not

ready to pay up so easily. The bet was on whether he was 'done in' to use your own expression. He might have been pushed over the edge."

"That's just what I said," exclaimed Eve; "or he could have been thrown over for that matter."

"Come on, leave it out, Eve," laughed Albert; "whose side are you on anyway?"

"Seriously, though," said Mr. Sim, "I still can't bring myself to believe that Amos Todd's death was an accident, particularly as I have another snippet of information which none of you knows about yet."

Guy waited expectantly. What was coming now? This little man always seemed to have something up his sleeve.

"What's that, guv?" asked Albert, as Mr. Sim paused to help himself to another cup of coffee. "Don't keep us all in suspense."

"You remember I had some mugshots taken of Todd in the morgue?" went on Mr. Sim; "well it wasn't long before I struck oil with them in London. You'll be interested to learn that our birdwatcher friend was a CIA man."

“CIA?” blurted out Guy in surprise; “you can’t be serious.”

“Of course, I’m serious,” continued Mr. Sim, “apparently he was working away on his own on all this and then, abracadabra, he met an untimely end. So do you still think it was an accident?”

Albert looked shaken, as he could see his pint receding into the distance.

“Anyway, I’m not coughing up a double Scotch on that evidence,” he said defiantly.

“How did the CIA come to be involved?” asked Guy, “that’s a bit of a puzzle, isn’t it?”

“Not really,” replied Mr. Sim, “as a matter of fact I’m a bit fed up about it. Apparently the Americans didn’t trust me and my department to do our job properly. The CIA discovered that the Russians were going to put the boot in on the Western scientists and came to warn us about it. We of course already knew and had the thing in hand. Then when Jacob Goetz and Blattner and the German came to a sticky end, the Americans got steamed up about it and came to see us a second time. I thought, however, that I had

convinced them that everything was under control. Obviously I was wrong."

"Do you think that the Russians put old Amos away then?" asked Albert.

"Perhaps he found out something they didn't want him to know?" suggested Guy.

"Perhaps, perhaps," sighed Mr. Sim; "it's all speculation. It could be that he knew too much for his own good, but, if so, what did he know? What was it that was so vital that he paid for it with his life?"

Nobody could answer Mr. Sim's question, least of all the little man himself. Guy could see that he was uneasy, that he hated something which he could not explain to himself.

Guy and Eve walked round the after-deck and spent some time leaning over the rail. The lights of the ships and the quay were shining on the still water. In the distance the lights of San Giorgio twinkled in the night. Guy put his arm round Eve's shoulders and drew her to him. For a few more moments they stood in the soft air of the night before they moved inside. Guy pushed open the door of Eve's cabin.

Slowly they crossed the threshold. Guy kicked the door shut with his heel.

Guy and Eve had time for one more sightseeing excursion on the following day culminating in a stop for drinks at Danieli's before the final return to the ship. Although they found it difficult to concentrate on the serious matters in hand, they kept a lookout for Krovotny. This time, however, there was no sign of him. The day passed so quickly and uneventfully that Guy wondered whether this was the lull before the storm.

It was quite late in the day when the *Arabella* slid from her moorings and made her way across the lagoon and towards the open sea. Guy and Simon stood leaning over the rail and drinking in their last draught of the powerful potion that was Venice. Simon's mind was as busy and active as the waters churned up by the ship's screws, whereas Guy felt a strange peace such as he had not known since Joyce had been with him. He thought of the sweet hours of the previous night. Whilst one part of him cursed Mr. Sim for involving him in his machinations, another part of him blessed the little man for

bringing Eve into his life. Whatever the outcome of the twisted present might be, the future must surely be better than he had ever thought it could be.

Mr. Sim crossed the after-deck to join him.

“Happier now we’re away?” asked Guy.

“I’ll be happier still when we’ve returned and the whole affair is over,” grunted Mr. Sim.

“It’ll give you a chance of getting a good tan,” said Guy with a grin; “you’ll be the envy of everybody when you go home.”

“That is as may be,” replied the little man, “but first things first. Here comes Bunny, I must go and have a word with the Skipper.”

“Can I come too?” asked Simon; “Do you think he would let me watch from the bridge. I want to see how they do it.”

Bunny looked after the two disappearing figures. As she joined Guy, he thought she was looking pale and tired.

“I was just saying to the little man at least he would get a good tan on board the *Arabella*,” he said, “but I think you need it more than he does. Is anything the matter, other than of course the obvious?”

“It’s all getting me down, I’m afraid,” replied Bunny; “the longer it goes on, the worse it seems to get. Your father is like a cat on hot bricks. I don’t know what’s got into him. It must be the result of over-work, I suppose. God know why he has to drive himself like that. He’ll end up by having some sort of nervous breakdown.”

“It’ll all be over soon,” said Guy; “you’ll find this next week will do us all good.”

“I hope so,” said Bunny; “the trouble is that I’m getting edgy too. It communicates itself from Redvers to me and then back again. We start arguing about nothing. It’s such a bore and I don’t know how to cope with it.”

She turned towards Guy and put her hand on his arm.

“Sorry,” she said, “I don’t know why I’m telling you all this. Anyway I’m glad that you have a chance of some happiness at last. I thoroughly approve. She’s a nice girl.”

“Thanks, Bunny,” replied Guy, “and now try to relax and enjoy these next few days. Don’t let Father get you down. It’s just the stress of the moment. Mr. Sim

probably keeps fussing and cossetting him and it's all just at the time he's trying to prepare his mind for the Conference."

Guy was surprised to find that he was trying to excuse his father's behaviour. Hitherto he had never made any effort to identify himself with any problems his father might have. At the same time it was Bunny's plight which deserved his sympathy. The shadows round her eyes seemed to give her beauty a pale fragility which touched his heart. There had been so many occasions over the years when she had helped him and Simon to overcome their problems that now he yearned to be able to do something to help her. And yet in the midst of it all she was still able to think of his happiness with Eve.

The next few days passed with a horrifying rapidity for Guy. The *Arabella* lazed through the water under a cloudless sky, stopping from time to time for a swimming party. Long hours were spent by everyone sunbathing and sipping cool drinks. Eve was quickly regaining her health and strength so that her spell in hospital was almost forgotten. She and Bunny had difficulty in keeping Simon

from getting sunburnt at first but he was soon as brown as a berry. Sir Redvers sat stretched out in his chair with his hat over his eyes, so that it was impossible to tell whether he was awake or asleep. He liked to sit apart in the shade and rarely joined in the conversation of the others. Tom Fielding brought the *Arabella* into little harbours from time to time so that his passengers could stretch their legs. Invariably these visits ashore made Mr. Sim nervous. He saw to it that he and Albert and others of his men were never very far from Sir Redvers. By now Guy was able to identify Mr. Sim's men in the crew.

“Your boss in not taking any chances with my Father, is he?” he commented to Eve.

“No, and he's not likely to,” replied Eve; “he's on the watch all the time. Sometimes I think he's got eyes in the back of his head.”

“Well, he's certainly got plenty of help laid on, that's for sure,” said Guy.

“Your father's starting to look better now, don't you think?” said Eve.

“Perhaps. Bunny says that he's sleeping

better, thanks to his pills. He seems to sleep a lot during the day as well when we're at sea. Probably that's what he needs, plenty of rest and sea air."

Although Guy was sorry when the time came for Tom Fielding to turn the *Arabella* towards the north again, Mr. Sim was glad. These shore excursions on strange territory were bad for his nerves and the sooner they could get back to Venice and head for Merano the better, as far as he was concerned.

"You'll want another holiday after this one, won't you?" he said to the little man with a grin.

Mr. Sim gave a fleeting smile.

"Some of us haven't got the same distraction to take our minds off it as you have," he teased.

"Don't you feel that after all you have probably been worrying about Father for nothing?" asked Guy.

"No, I don't," replied Mr. Sim, "and it's not over yet either. Don't you make that mistake. Plenty of things can happen yet."

"Well, I can't see how. You seem to have got everything pretty well stitched

up. Here we are all safely on board with your boys making up half the crew and ready to repel any hijackers. After we've landed again in Venice I've no doubt you'll make equally secure arrangements."

"Don't underestimate our friend Krovotny," said Mr. Sim grimly; "remember what I told you about the Red Knight. He has yet to make the vital move."

That night the weather changed. Heavy clouds built up in the sky as the passengers were having dinner. The wind freshened so that the water started to heave gently.

"Looks as if we are in for a storm," said Albert; "can't anybody keep this ship still?"

Eve laughed.

"Come on, Albert," she said, "you're not going to tell us that you haven't got your sea legs yet?"

Albert was not amused. He decided to have an early night. As Guy sat on the after-deck for a while with Mr. Sim, they could see lightning playing in the distant sky.

"It looks as if Albert was right," said Mr. Sim; "we are going to have a storm

after all. It looks as if he's done the wisest thing in calling it a day."

Guy did not sleep well that night. He was continually disturbed by flashes of lightning and peals of thunder. As they died away he drifted into an uneasy sleep, only for the storm to return with increased ferocity. It must be going round in a circle, he reflected. The *Arabella* was labouring in the angry water. Another clap of thunder shook him from his sleep. As he turned his head on the pillow, he heard something else. He listened. Voices were coming from somewhere. He listened more intently. Yes, he was right. He could hear voices, raised voices. Suddenly they were drowned by another clap of thunder. As it died away, he listened again. All was quiet. He was puzzled. Had he been dreaming or had he really heard voices? If he had heard voices, then they must have been coming from his father's cabin next door. He and Bunny must have been quarrelling, but why on earth should they be having a row in the middle of the night? It was so unlike them anyway. Despite problems in abundance during these last few weeks with increasing evidence of

strain in his father's demeanour, there had been no apparent discord. Then he recalled Bunny's remarks on the day the *Arabella* had left Venice. Perhaps, unknown to him, the edginess between Bunny and his father had increased. He turned over in bed to shield his eyes from further flashes of lightning through his porthole before sleep beckoned him again and he drifted into oblivion.

A brilliant blue sky greeted Guy when he went on deck the next morning. The storm having long since passed, the sea was calm again. Today was the last full day at sea, since they were due to arrive in Venice late the following day. The conversation at breakfast being monopolised by the storm, Simon said he had not been frightened, Eve said she had been, while Albert amused everyone by maintaining complete ignorance of any storm at all after he had gone to bed.

When Bunny appeared at the table, Guy looked across at her to see if there were any unusual signs of strain, but he could detect nothing. Sir Redvers was having his breakfast in his cabin as usual. Mr. Sim drank his usual cup of black coffee and

said little. Guy fancied that the little man was turning over various contingencies in his mind.

“The air seems fresher this morning,” said Guy; “that’ll suit you, Albert.”

“Too right,” replied Albert, “I can almost smell home from here.”

Sir Redvers emerged from his cabin even later than usual. Apart from a few words of greeting all round, he appeared to Guy to be more taciturn than usual. He slumped in his usual chair and sat gazing at the sea. Guy looked across at Bunny who was gazing abstractedly at a passing fishing boat. Although she had seen her husband’s arrival on deck, she had made no move to join him. Guy switched his gaze back to his father, who seemed completely lost in his thoughts. There must have been a row after all, Guy concluded. Anyway it was no business of his and whatever it was would sort itself out in due time.

Tom Fielding joined the party to give them a few details of time and distance and their present position. His cheery demeanour was unruffled by the storm.

“We get them from time to time,” was all he would say.

Simon went over to his grandfather to try to get him to play a game with him. Guy heard his father mutter something and the boy retreated.

“Grandad’s cross this morning,” Guy heard Simon say to Eve before asking her in turn to play with him.

Guy was determined not to waste the day. There were no more ports of call but the sea was even more inviting than usual so that he enjoyed every minute of his swim with Eve. Bunny seemed to have thrown off her early morning blues and it was quite some time before Tom Fielding set the *Arabella* under way again. Guy lay contentedly in the hot sun on the after-deck while Eve anointed herself with more sun lotion. Tomorrow would see the end of the cruise so that Mr. Sim would then be on the last lap of his journey to deliver Sir Redvers safely to his fellow scientists in Merano. When he cast his mind back to his trip to Moscow, his detention there, all Mr. Sim’s tortuous scheming in England, Simon’s abduction at Nance Bottom and finally to their arrival in

Venice, Guy began to feel it had all been an elaborate charade. It had all been for nothing. Mr. Sim had been playing such a complicated game of chess that he had ended up by playing against himself. And yet—. In the same instant Guy could see Krovotny thumping his desk in Moscow as he threatened him; he could see the blood streaming from the gash on Eve's temple by the golf course; he could see the tears running down Simon's face as he had clasped the boy to him in the lane by Hayes Barton; and finally he could see Krovotny lighting his cigarette under the winged lion in St. Mark's Square. No, it was far from being a charade. But how was it all going to end? Was it all going to be for nothing? Had Mr. Sim's plans and precautions been so effective that he ensured it was going to be for nothing? Guy looked sideways at Eve to remind himself that there were better things to think about than spying and skulduggery.

That evening there was something of a party atmosphere before dinner. Tom Fielding having announced that it would be a special celebration for their last dinner on board, his stewards had the champagne

corks popping to put everyone in the right mood for the grand menu to follow. Guy was pleased to see that at last his father seemed able to join in the fun. Moreover he was making every effort to get over whatever differences he had had with Bunny. Although normally he drank little, Sir Redvers had obviously decided on this occasion to let himself go. Guy looked across to Mr. Sim who was also apparently observing the scientist, and a new side to his character which he had not seen before. For that matter Guy himself had not seen it before, or, if he had, it was so long ago that he could not recall it.

The dinner which followed was every bit as memorable as Tom Fielding had said it would be, Guy concluded. Even Mr. Sim seemed to lose himself in the flow of gastronomic delights. The champagne had been followed by a succession of Italian wines, all of which complimented the respective dishes perfectly. Tom Fielding sat beaming at one end of the table while, at the other, Sir Redvers seemed to be going from strength to strength. The wine had loosened his tongue which was now working so hard that Guy began to wonder

if he could stand the pace. Over the years Guy had never seen his father the worse for drink, so that now he had no idea of his capacity. To his relief his fears proved groundless.

After Simon had been packed off to bed after dinner, the party split into two groups, with Sir Redvers and Bunny being joined by Mr. Sim and Tom Fielding, while Albert sat with Guy and Eve.

“I seem to be spending half my time playing blooming gooseberry,” complained Albert with mock solemnity.

“Never mind, Albert,” said Eve, “you can make yourself useful and pour the coffee.”

Guy looked across at the other group. His father was now tackling a large brandy and his good humour showed no signs of diminishing. Bunny looked subdued, so that Guy wondered whether she was worried that her husband was drinking more than he could handle. Mr. Sim seemed to be his usual quiet equable self.

When at length Albert's sense of delicacy asserted itself, he made some excuse to detach himself from the other two to check on something in his cabin. Although

after that Guy and Eve were too engrossed in each other to notice much, Guy did however noticed that in due time his father and Bunny left to go to their cabin. He fancied that his father had to struggle to walk steadily, although this could have been his imagination.

The moon was nearly full, as Guy and Eve moved over to lean on the rail of the *Arabella*. Its lights danced on the moving black water below and picked out the white wake trailing behind them.

They did not stay long. Guy gently took Eve's arm and they moved inside. As Mr. Sim remained alone on the after-deck he smiled.

In the morning, Mr. Sim was already drinking his second cup of coffee when Guy and Eve sat down for breakfast.

"You're an early bird this morning," said Guy; "I—"

He stopped abruptly. Behind Mr. Sim, Bunny had suddenly appeared, still in her night attire. She was gasping for breath.

"It's Redvers," she cried, "it's Redvers. I can't wake him. I think—I think he's dead."

Guy's chair fell back with a clatter as he

sprang to his feet. Mr. Sim spilt his coffee as he turned suddenly. Quickly he jumped to his feet and made for the scientist's cabin with the others on his heels as he entered. Sir Redvers was lying in bed as if asleep. Mr. Sim bent over him to shake him by the shoulder. There was no response. Guy watched transfixed. His father's head lolled sideways on the pillow as Mr. Sim tried to rouse him. He felt his pulse.

"Nothing," said Mr. Sim, shaking his head.

After a moment's pause to lift Sir Redvers Trent's eyelids, he then tried to discover sign of a heartbeat.

Mr. Sim stood up. His face was grim.

"I'm sorry," he said to Bunny, "it's too late."

Guy went to Bunny's side as she sat on the stool by her dressing table.

"I thought he was still asleep," she said quietly; "I had been up for quite a little while. I thought he must be tired after the late night last night, so I didn't disturb him. He just lay there and I thought he was still sleeping."

She put her head in her hands. Guy put

his hand on her shoulder to comfort her. He could not bring himself to believe what happened. It all seemed so unreal.

“What’s up, guv?”

Albert stood in the doorway.

“Go and fetch Tom Fielding,” replied Mr. Sim; “I’m afraid Sir Redvers has died in the night.”

When Tom Fielding joined them, he persuaded Guy to leave him with Bunny and Mr. Sim and to go to the after-deck. Guy sat there with Eve looking at the flat blue sea, but seeing nothing. Albert took charge of Simon, who seemed to show little reaction to the news of his grandfather’s death. Guy himself felt a strange numbness. He could not understand himself. Here was his father lying dead a few yards away and he felt nothing, a complete void. Gradually a feeling of shame began to creep over him as he realised that he was not grieving as he should have been. It was difficult to accept the legacy of the long years of increasing estrangement between him and his father. Yet he could not grieve over a loss which somehow he did not feel.

As his thoughts turned to Bunny still in

the cabin with the captain and Mr. Sim, he felt a wave of sympathy for her. She must be struggling to overcome the emotions within her, for she and his father had loved each other despite all the distractions which his work had imposed. With her second widowhood suddenly thrust upon her, it must be hard for her to keep self-control.

The morning seemed interminable to Guy. There was no sign of Bunny or Mr. Sim and Tom Fielding. After a while Eve went to her cabin to lie down, while Simon came to the after-deck and went again. A pair of fishing boats passed, heading south.

At length Mr. Sim came to join Guy. His small frame looked lost in the large chair in which he stretched himself. He looked glum.

“After all this,” he sighed, as if he were talking to himself; “after all this.”

He lapsed into silence. Guy reflected, as he had done many times before, that the little man was a strange character. It was obvious that it was not the private grief of the scientist’s widow or Guy’s sense of loss, if any, which dominated his thoughts, but rather the loss of the special charge in

his care. Now at the last minute months of thinking and planning had been set at nought. Every waking hour had been devoted to the safe delivery of the scientist to his fellow-scientists at Merano. Now it was all lost.

Mr. Sim roused himself from his thoughts.

“There’s something you should know, Guy,” he said quietly.

Something in Mr. Sim’s voice aroused a feeling of anxiety in Guy. He had no time to say anything, before the little man continued.

“There was a half empty bottle of pain-killers in your father’s bathroom, beside an empty glass.”

Guy’s head jerked up in startled surprise, “You’re not suggesting—” he began.

“Bunny brought it in from the bathroom,” he interrupted; “apparently your father had been taking distalgesic for persistent bad headaches. But, according to her, the bottle was much emptier than it ought to have been.”

“You mean that my father took more of these pills than he should have done?”

“It looks like it.”

“Oh, no,” said Guy.

A deep frown settled on his brow.

“It must have been all the drink he had last night,” he said, “I suppose that when he was going to bed, he either took the wrong set of pills, thinking he was taking his sleeping pills, or he just made a mistake and took too many painkillers.”

“I’m afraid that it’s not as simple as that, Guy,” said Mr. Sim; “according to Bunny, about half a bottle of distalgesic had disappeared.”

“Half a bottle?” repeated Guy.

“Yes,” said Mr. Sim; “so it hardly looks like a mistake, does it?”

Guy tried to shield his mind from the obvious.

“It must have been,” he said desperately; “somehow it must have been. Didn’t Bunny see anything? What does she say about it?”

“She says that when they were preparing for bed last night, your father was unsteady on his feet and when he went to the bathroom he was making a bit of a clatter, as she calls it, cleaning his teeth, etc. He was taking rather a long time and

she called out and asked him if he was all right. He called back that he was. Then after a minute or two longer, he came out and said a few words, kissed her goodnight and got into bed."

"So she didn't see anything?"

"Nothing, apparently."

"And what about these pills? What does she say about them?"

"She says that for some time now your father had been getting bad headaches and had been taking distalgesic tablets for them. They dissolve in water and when he took them, they seemed to do him some good. But apparently he had had a fresh bottle only recently and therefore there should have been only very few missing from the bottle by now."

"And you say it was half-empty?"

"Exactly."

Guy passed his hand wearily across his brow. He felt weighed down by the thoughts, crowding through his mind.

"I suppose it's just possible that, because of the drink, he didn't realise how many tablets he was putting in the glass," he said at last.

"That's what Bunny said," replied Mr.

Sim; "but I'm afraid I find it hard to accept. If you think back to last night. You wouldn't say you're father was drunk, would you? True, he'd had enough and he was talking a lot, but he was perfectly coherent. You couldn't say he did not know what he was doing."

"That's so," conceded Guy, "but even so—"

The sentence died in his lips. Common-sense told him that it was useless to struggle against the obvious.

"I just can't bring myself to believe—" he went on, but again he could not finish the sentence.

The two men sat in silence, each occupied with a jumble of thoughts. At length, Mr. Sim was the first to speak.

"Why?" he asked, almost to himself; "why should he do it? After all this time, and just at the last moment when all the anxieties and worries are nearly over?"

"It seems impossible," muttered Guy.

"And yet," went on Mr. Sim, "when you think back once again, didn't you notice that yesterday your father behaved a bit oddly?"

Guy thought for a few moments.

“Well, yes,” he conceded; “now you come to mention it, I did think he went a bit funny yesterday.”

“Precisely,” said Mr. Sim, “after weeks and weeks of increasing strain; he suddenly changed yesterday and became all jolly. And last night he really let his hair down, didn’t he?”

“That’s true,” said Guy.

“Could it have been, do you think, suddenly at long last, he saw a way out from all his problems? Could it have been that?” asked the little man.

“Oh, wait a minute,” protested Guy; “that’s pure speculation. Now you’re making out that it was premeditated. There could be some other explanation for his being so cheerful yesterday, probably several.”

“Can you think of one? Because I can’t.”

“I—” Guy started to reply, but suddenly checked himself.

Mr. Sim waited in vain for him to continue.

“Well?” asked Mr. Sim; “what is it? Is there something? You hesitate, as if you

have thought of something but don't want to say."

"It's nothing."

"Are you sure it's nothing?"

Guy hesitated again. He found his instinctive family loyalty hard to conquer. Mr. Sim looked at him shrewdly.

"Tell me, Guy," he said quietly; "tell me. You can trust me, you know that. If it's something I ought to know, then tell me."

At last Guy gave way to the pressure.

"Well, it was only that—" he began, before hesitating again; "I've just remembered something. Probably it's nothing really, but the night before last, when the storm was at its height, I heard something, something from my cabin."

"Go on," encouraged Mr. Sim.

"I wasn't sure at first as I was half asleep. But then the thunder really woke me up and I could hear voices. They were raised voices arguing as if in a quarrel. They were coming from next door, from the next cabin, my father's cabin."

"In the middle of the night?" asked Mr. Sim.

"Exactly," replied Guy; "it took me by

surprise, as they were always so quiet with each other. I had never heard them having any sort of row."

"Then?" asked Mr. Sim.

"Then I drifted off to sleep again," continued Guy, "and that was that. But yesterday morning I did notice that Father and Bunny seemed to be avoiding each other. There seemed to be some sort of barrier, just the sort of situation you might expect if two people had had a row."

"I noticed that they were both very quiet yesterday morning," said Mr. Sim; "that explains it. And then later on in the day they seemed to get over it."

"Yes," agreed Guy, "and so when Father was so bright and jolly last night, I simply took it that he'd got over a rare disagreement with Bunny."

Mr. Sim stroked his chin thoughtfully.

"It could be," he conceded; "it could be, but he certainly drank a great deal more than I have ever seen him drink before, and if your explanation is right, it must have been one hell of a row. Have you ever seen him drink like that?"

"No, I haven't," replied Guy; "quite honestly I was amazed."

“Well, thank you for telling me about it, the row I mean,” said Mr. Sim; “I’m glad you did, but it doesn’t really get us any further in the end, does it?”

“Probably not,” said Guy.

“If your father and Bunny made up their differences, then the row, however serious it was, could not have caused your father to commit suicide. And if they did not make it up together, then why should he be so bright and jolly last night? It doesn’t add up.”

“So you don’t think that was anything to do with it?” asked Guy with a sense of relief.

“It doesn’t look like it,” replied Mr. Sim, “and so we are back to the same old question we started with: why now? Why after all the weeks and months of effort to make sure he appeared at the Conference, why should he do this now?”

“Heaven knows,” replied Guy; “as you know, I could never really get close to my Father anyway, and I would not pretend I could fathom his innermost thoughts. I suppose it all just became too much for him in the end, it is as simple as that.”

It was a sombre party that reached

Venice later that day. Tom Fielding and Mr. Sim quietly took charge of all the arrangements which had to be made with the Italian authorities, so that Bunny was shielded as far as possible from the inevitable formalities. The projected journey to Merano was cancelled, so that it was now a question of getting through all the official red tape in order to hasten the return to England. Guy had thought that he would be sorry to say goodbye to the *Arabella*, but now he was glad. The happy memories of the days and nights he had spent with Eve had been darkened by his father's death, so that his one desire now was to return home.

"I'm sorry it's all finished like this," said Guy to Tom Fielding as they shook hands; "you've done tremendously well. I can't thank you enough."

"Not a bit," replied the big man; "it's all part of the job, but I'm just sorry for all of you, that's all."

To Guy's relief, Mr. Sim's influence ensured that the party was not troubled by the Italian press, which obviously had no inkling of the truth. The papers did carry reports of the death, but there was nothing

to suggest that it was not from natural causes.

Although Guy still had time to show Eve more of Venice before their return home, he found that he could not summon the same enthusiasm as he had felt on their previous visit. The crowds in St. Mark's Square seemed bigger and noisier. He looked across the square to the spot where he had seen Krovotny a few days earlier. If it had truly been the Russian's object to prevent Sir Redvers from attending the Merano Conference then he had succeeded, reflected Guy, or rather the scientist had done his work for him. Mr. Sim must be bitterly disappointed. For him the sense of failure must be crushing.

Autumn seemed slow in arriving at Nance Bottom that year. After the Trent family's return from Venice, Bunny decided to stay in Devon longer than usual. Guy admired her composure which was complete to the point of being unnatural. After the start of the school term, he spent as many weekends as he could with her at the cottage. When Eve's work allowed, she joined them. By now she was already committed to another

assignment by Mr. Sim so that Guy did not see her as often as he would have liked. After the summer visitors had gone leaving the villagers to enjoy the peace and tranquillity of their world, the regulars at the Firs grouped together in their usual corner. Although for a while they talked of little else but the Trent family tragedy, the death of Sir Redvers had not been the cause of much grief in the village due to his having not mixed much with the local people, but nevertheless there was genuine sympathy for Guy and Bunny both of whom had won a place in their hearts.

It was on one of Guy's weekend visits that he and Bunny received an unexpected visitor. They had just put away the tools after a long gardening session when they heard the click of the latch on the garden gate.

“It's Mr. Sim,” cried Bunny in surprise.

Guy moved forward to greet the little man.

“‘Stone me’, that's what Albert would say,” he said with a laugh.

All the bitterness and anger which he had felt at one time towards Mr. Sim had long since melted away, to be replaced by

a warm regard for him. Although Mr. Sim had cold-bloodedly placed Simon in jeopardy with such a frightening outcome, Guy had come to understand and accept the little man's motives and attitude even before the cruise on the *Arabella*. The whole affair must have been a sickening blow to him and his pride.

As Bunny led her visitor indoors, Guy noticed that there was an air of strain about Mr. Sim, who appeared to be ill at ease. His usual charm had been pushed into the background so that Guy felt that the short passage of time since the cruise had turned him into an unfamiliar figure.

“Gin and tonic, is it?” he asked, breaking into Mr. Sim’s rather stilted conversational sorties.

“Splendid,” said Mr. Sim, settling himself into one of the low armchairs, “just right after the motorway.”

“The summer traffic has eased a little by now, hasn’t it,” remarked Bunny.

Guy waited for Mr. Sim to bring an end to the small talk. Their visitor had not arrived unannounced from London without some very good reason, which would surely surface before long.

"Any more news of the Red Knight, as you call him?" he asked.

"Krovotny? Well, yes and no," replied Mr. Sim; "he's never very far from my thoughts and I expect I crop up in his from time to time as well."

"Was the Conference a success without Redvers?" asked Bunny.

"By all accounts it was a bit of a flop," replied Mr. Sim; "it never really got off the ground from what I have heard since."

The lines at the corners of his mouth tightened for a moment as he pursed his lips. He put down his glass.

"As you will have guessed," he said, "I haven't descended on you suddenly like this without good reason. It's you, Bunny, that I've come to see, but I'm glad that you're here too, Guy, as you ought to hear what I have to say."

Guy waited uneasily for him to continue. He did not like the way that the little man kept looking down at his glass instead of looking them in the face. Obviously some aspect of the summer's problems must still be troubling him.

"What is it?" asked Bunny quietly. Mr. Sim settled back in his chair.

“Let me start with the American, Amos Todd,” he began, “you remember that we discovered that he was a member of the CIA?”

“Yes,” said Guy, “I remember.”

“But,” went on Mr. Sim, “we were puzzled about his involvement, weren’t we? In other words, the unanswered question was where exactly he fitted into what was going on. What was he doing down here and how did he come to meet his end?”

Guy saw that the little man was now getting into his stride. The familiar habit of the fingertips placed carefully together was now in evidence.

“Since our return from Venice I have had an opportunity of looking into these and other matters with the result that I now have a few answers,” continued Mr. Sim; “first of all, What was Amos Todd doing here? The answer to that question is in part the one I gave you after we discovered he was CIA. You may remember that I told you then that it appeared that the Americans did not trust me and my department to protect Sir Redvers and his colleagues and the result

was that Amos Todd was on a one-man mission checking up on my work, so to speak."

Mr. Sim paused to take a sip of his drink.

"So we know why Todd was down here," he went on, "but you remember that Albert came back one day and said that Todd was watching this house and that he was watching Sir Redvers drive away after one of his weekend visits. That was where we went wrong, or rather, I went wrong."

"I don't follow," broke in Guy who was beginning to feel impatient at the little man's deliberate style of explanation.

"Stupidly I allowed myself to be misled," continued Mr. Sim; "just because, at the moment Albert saw him, Todd was watching your father and because all my attention was focused on protecting your father, I fell into the trap of assuming that it was your father he was watching. But it wasn't, was it, Bunny?"

The last half of the dozen words shot from his mouth like the tongue of a serpent. Guy looked quickly across at Bunny. Her eyes stared back at Mr. Sim.

She said nothing. Mr. Sim continued, as if he did not expect her to answer his question.

“It wasn’t your husband Todd was watching, was it?” he asked her again; “it was you, wasn’t it?”

The effect of his words were electrifying. The shock seemed to strike at the very pit of Guy’s stomach. What in God’s name was the man driving at? Bunny? What was Bunny to do with all this business about the American? Had Mr. Sim gone mad? He looked across at Bunny who was sitting bolt upright in her chair with her hands gripping its arms. She moistened her lips with her tongue. Her eyes stared straight ahead, as if she was hypnotized. She opened her mouth but no words came.

“It was you, wasn’t it?” repeated Mr. Sim.

He paused for a moment to allow for the full impact of his words.

“You see,” he went on slowly; “although Amos Todd was not much of a birdwatcher, he was a real professional when it came to his work. Moreover, as he was working on his own, he saw to it that,

if anything happened to him, the results of his work were not lost. After his death, therefore, his notes surfaced, as he had intended them to do and I have now been given access to them. They make interesting reading, most of all about you, Bunny.”

Mr. Sim’s shrewd eyes were concentrated on the slim figure opposite him. Bunny looked frail and fragile, like a piece of delicate china. Her face was pale, as she remained silent. Guy found the suspense intolerable.

“For God’s sake, man,” he interrupted, “what on earth are you talking about? You’re talking a load of complete rubbish.”

“Far from it,” replied Mr. Sim; “you see, Amos Todd had in fact done his job more thoroughly than I had done mine, I’m ashamed to say, and he had found out things that I was totally unaware of. Being an American, he was not blinkered by thoughts of birth and privilege, as we are in this country, and as a result he did not fall into the trap of taking anything, or anyone, at face value. I’m sorry to say that while I was questioning and investigating

everything and everyone with any connection with Sir Redvers, I committed the elementary and unpardonable sin of overlooking the one person who was closest of all to him."

Guy looked again at Bunny. Her knuckles were showing white on the arms of her chair. A wave of pity for her swept over him. How could this little man do this to her? He was like a little boy picking the legs off an insect. Guy revolted against the cruelty of the moment.

"Stop it," he cried; "I won't have it. What right have you to come here and bully her like this? It's inhuman."

"You will find that I have every right," replied Mr. Sim; "Let me go on."

Bunny put up her hand.

"Let him," she said to Guy almost in a whisper.

"When your husband married you, Bunny," went on Mr. Sim, "who would have raised an eyebrow? He was going to marry Lady Lee-Stafford, the widow of a British Army Colonel. Who could be more suitable? You had for years been a loyal companion of a rising star in the Army, because of him you were titled, you mixed

in the highest social circles of the Establishment. Shades of Caesar's wife. Everything on the top line. But our American friend, Amos Todd, was not blinded by all this. Like the true professional that he was, he took nothing for granted. So he did a little digging and unearthed quite a few more details about the former Lady Lee-Stafford."

As he paused for a moment, Guy shifted uncomfortably in his chair. It seemed an age before Mr. Sim continued.

"Todd found out, Bunny," he went on, "that your maiden name was Tina Johnson. No name could be more English than Johnson, but Tina had a rather different ring about it. Of course you have always been known as Bunny since childhood. Everyone calls you Bunny and I don't suppose anyone knows your real name. But our friend Todd had not finished digging yet. When he tried to find out details of your early childhood and birth he found himself up against it. So he dug a little further and at last discovered that you had been born just before the War in Czechoslovakia. Your grandfather, on your father's side, had been English,

hence the English name Johnson. When the Germans invaded Czechoslovakia your parents escaped and brought you to this country where you have lived ever since. Your father joined the RAF and flew with the Czechs as a fighter pilot before being killed. Your mother remarried, with an English husband this time, and she and your stepfather brought you up and looked after you until your own marriage. As you were only three years old when you came to this country you do not of course have any trace of a foreign accent with the result that everyone naturally assumes that you are British by birth, particularly, I may say, with a nickname like Bunny."

Guy sat open-mouthed, as he listened to this recital. It sounded impossible. In all the years he had never dreamed that Bunny was not English. He looked across at her again to see her reaction. There was none. She sat motionless save for her hands, which were now clasped in her lap. She continued to stare at Mr. Sim. There was a barely perceptible movement in her throat as she swallowed.

"I don't believe it," cried Guy, unable to contain himself any longer; "it's all a

complete load of rubbish. Todd got hold of the wrong person, he got it all wrong."

"Far from it," replied Mr. Sim, "he was right on the button. But let me go on. When Bunny was a schoolgirl, her mother was for a short time a member of the Communist party, until, that is, the Russian occupation of Czechoslovakia. After that she switched to the Labour party in which she was known to hold left-wing views."

Mr. Sim turned towards Bunny again.

"Although your mother died some years ago," he went on, "the combination of your Eastern European background and your mother's left-wing politics was too much for our friend Amos Todd. He knew what the Russians and their Spetsnaz forces were up to in trying to stop Star Wars progress. He knew that Sir Redvers was their No. 1 target in this country and now he had found out that the person closest to him of all had what he considered as a giant-sized skeleton in her cupboard."

He paused for a moment and sipped his drink.

"And so," he continued, "I arrive back

again at the situation earlier, during the Summer, here in Nance Bottom. Amos Todd was not watching Sir Redvers, he was watching you, Bunny. And then, in due course, a meeting between you took place on the Common. Am I right?"

Guy looked across once more towards Bunny. As Mr. Sim's flow of words came to an end, the time had at last come for her to react. She sat back in her chair and closed her eyes for an instant, as if she was weary of the whole recital. Then she collected herself. She gave a little smile and nodded.

"That is right," she said simply; "he was waiting for me on one of my walks up there, by the quarry."

"The quarry, where he was found?" asked Mr. Sim.

"Yes," replied Bunny; "he stepped out from the trees onto the path I was taking. He just stood there, confronting me. He took me by surprise really, but I just said 'good afternoon' and something about its being a lovely day and waited for him to move to one side, but he didn't. Then he started talking to me about Redvers."

"So it was you Todd was talking to in

the trees when the quarryman spotted him that time?" said Mr. Sim.

"I suppose it must have been," replied Bunny; "I didn't see the quarryman but I was preoccupied by the appearance of this man Amos Todd."

"No doubt," said Mr. Sim; "and now we come to the critical time, don't we. We all know that Amos Todd disappeared on that day and that his death was highly suspicious. May we now have the truth?"

Guy thought he had already had all the shocks he could take, but jerked his head in surprise at the little man's words. Not content with clinically taking Bunny's world to pieces, here he was finally suggesting, of all things, that she was responsible for Todd's death.

Bunny did not, however, hesitate more than a brief moment.

"Why should I not tell you?" she replied.

"Please do," said Mr. Sim, with a hint of sarcasm in the tone of his voice.

"I know what you think," she said quietly; "you think that it is a little late in the day. Why did I not tell you in the summer, when it happened, instead of

having it forced out of me now? All right, you have made your point, but you know little and understand less."

For the first time her emotions took charge and she spat out her final words with a burst of bitterness. It subsided as quickly as it had come.

"You think that I killed Amos Todd, don't you?" she continued; "you don't have to tell me. You have thought all along that he was murdered and now that you know that it was I who was talking to him by the quarry, you have put two and two together and you are waiting for me to tell that the answer is four."

Mr. Sim said nothing. He waited for her to continue.

"You remember it was just after Simon had been kidnapped," she said; "none of us knew which way to turn. I was thinking about Simon on my walk when this man stopped me. At first he started talking about Redvers and what he was doing about his work. I was taken by surprise as he seemed to know such a lot. Eventually I asked him how he came to know all these things, but he wouldn't answer. He just kept on about Redvers and then suddenly

he mentioned Simon and his disappearance."

Guy could hardly wait for Bunny to go on with her story. Every new revelation was more startling than the one before. Had the Amercian been responsible for Simon's abduction after all?

"When he mentioned Simon's disappearance," continued Bunny, "I immediately thought that I was going to learn something, but to my amazement, Todd started suggesting that I had arranged it. I just could not believe I was hearing right."

She paused to push back her hair which had strayed a little over her brow.

"He then went on to suggest that I was working with the Russians and had helped them to kidnap Simon. I became angry and told him to get out of my way and that I was not going to listen to such rubbish."

Her voice rose as she re-lived her encounter with the American.

"He said that I was going to listen and that he hadn't finished yet. He then started talking about Redvers again and about my background and about my being born in Czechoslovakia. He started to raise his voice and wave his arms about. 'You

Commies are all the same,' he snarled at me, 'once a Commie, always a Commie. You're a goddam sleeper, that's what you are. You've been lying low for years, waiting for all this and even getting married to the guy, and now that your Russky friends are getting close to him you're going to make sure nothing is going to stop them.'"

Bunny's voice was charged with emotion. Her eyes gleamed as her words tumbled over one another. Gone was the quiet still figure and, instead, Guy found himself looking at a caged animal, cornered and desperate for escape.

"I couldn't stand there and listen any longer," she went on; "and so I tried to run past him. I half-pushed him out of the way into the heather and started to get away. He then recovered his balance and caught hold of my arm. I turned round and pushed him again, as hard as I could. His foot caught in the heather and he staggered backwards. Although I hadn't realised it, we were standing by the edge of the quarry, as the footpath passes it there. It was all over in a second. He fell backwards over the edge with a sort of

strangled cry. One moment he was there and the next moment he had gone and I was standing there alone. It was terrible."

Bunny passed her hand slowly across her brow as if to wipe away the memories which had come to life again so vividly. The two men said nothing. She sipped her drink before continuing.

"I looked over the edge," she said, "and I could just see his yellow tee shirt in the middle of a clump of bushes. It didn't move. I felt numb and shocked. At first I was going to run back to the village for help, and then I thought I must walk round the edge of the quarry to the lowest part where one can get into it. So I did that and then scrambled along to the point where the clump of bushes was. When at last I got there, I was able to push through the bushes and reach Todd. He was lying in a twisted position with one arm under him. He had a large gash in the back of his head. His eyes were open and staring. I could see he was dead."

As she paused in her narrative, Guy could see that she was trembling. She took a quick sip of her drink and then another.

"It was terrible," she said in a whisper;

“and now every so often it all comes back to me like a nightmare.”

“Oh, Bunny,” Guy began; “I wish I could do something, say something—”

The words died on his lips. He wanted desperately to comfort the fragile figure sitting opposite him, but he could not find the words.

“When I got back to the cottage, I couldn’t say anything,” Bunny continued, “Simon was missing, everyone was upset and I had to think. I went up to my room and tried to think it all out. For all these years I had tried to hide my background because I thought it was better. When I married my first husband I thought it might affect his Army career if it was known that he had a Czechoslovak wife. In those days there was a lot of fuss about such things in some people’s minds. Then I became used to hiding it, so much so that I almost forgot about it. Then when Ernest, my first husband, was killed and later I married Redvers, it seemed all the more sensible to keep quiet about it. His work was in a sensitive area and I didn’t want to cause him any problems. So you can imagine how I felt when I lay on my

bed and thought about Todd and all his investigations into my past."

"And so you decided to keep quiet yet again?" asked Mr. Sim.

"Yes," replied Bunny; "when I had thought it all over, it seemed the obvious thing to do. Todd was dead and nothing that I could do or say was going to help him. As far as I knew, nobody had seen us together and there was nothing to connect me with him, so why shouldn't I just let his absurd allegations die with him. He had put two and two together and made five and that had upset me more than anything. The mere thought that I would have done anything to hurt Simon!"

She broke off and put her head in her hands. Guy roused himself, as if from a dream.

"Do we have to go on with all this?" he cried angrily; "what good is it doing? The man Todd is dead and that's it. It wasn't Bunny's fault that he fell over the edge, so why do we have to make a big deal about it? It's just raking it all up again for nothing."

Mr. Sim ignored Guy's outburst. He looked across at Bunny, who slowly

recovered her poise. She raised her head to return the little man's gaze as if she had felt that he was studying her.

"I think you still have a lot more to tell us, don't you, Bunny?" he said quietly.

"More?" interrupted Guy; "what do you mean, 'more'? What more is there to tell. She's just told you, hasn't she? How can there be more?"

"There is more, isn't there?" persisted the little man.

There was a sudden silence, while Bunny and Mr. Sim sat looking at each other.

"Come on, Bunny, I am waiting," he said.

"Waiting for what?" countered Bunny.

"I am waiting for you to tell me about another death, about what happened on the *Arabella*. Tell me how your husband really died."

"What the hell do you mean?" broke in Guy angrily; "we all know how he died."

"Do we?" asked Mr. Sim, half-turning towards Guy; "do we really?"

He looked across once more at Bunny.

"Do we, Bunny?" repeated the little man.

“Of course,” she replied sharply.

“Not so,” he said; “not so.”

He rose to his feet and stood in front of the open fireplace. He placed his hands behind his back, as if there were a fire to warm them. He looked down at Bunny, who remained silent.

“Redvers did not die by his own hand, did he, Bunny?” he said slowly.

“Yes,” she replied, “you know he did.”

“That is what you would have had us believe,” said Mr. Sim.

“Because it is so.”

Guy sprang to his feet.

“This is intolerable,” he cried. “I won’t sit here and listen to—”

“Please remain silent,” broke in Mr. Sim sharply; “please sit down and leave this to me.”

Taken aback by the little man’s barking command, Guy found himself resuming his seat despite himself.

“I am a patient man, Bunny,” said Mr. Sim, “but I have been patient long enough and you have been pulling the wool over our eyes long enough. Now I ask you again, for the last time, tell me how your husband met his death. If you do not, then

I shall leave and arrange for you to be questioned by others. Now which is it to be?"

Bunny looked at him coolly, apparently undisturbed by the menacing attitude he was now adopting.

"Let us be quite clear about this," she said; "at the time of my husband's death and ever since then it has been accepted that he took his own life. Now you come down here to my house and cross-examine me as if I am guilty of something and you have no basis whatsoever for doing this. Why should I be threatened like this?"

Mr. Sim folded his arms as he met her challenge.

"All very fine," he said with veiled sarcasm, "but although your husband's death looked like suicide at the time, I nevertheless took certain precautions, the results of which were subsequently quite revealing."

"Precautions?" replied Bunny; "what are you talking about, precautions?"

Guy shifted uneasily in his chair. The conversation was starting to get out of hand.

“Wait a minute,” he broke in, “this is becoming absurd.”

“No, it isn’t,” snapped Mr. Sim, “and Bunny knows it isn’t.”

“Very well,” said Bunny defiantly; “if you have some good reason to doubt that Redvers killed himself, tell us what it is. It’s as simple as that. Otherwise kindly stop making these—these unpleasant suggestions.”

Mr. Sim moved across to his chair and sat down again. He took off his spectacles to wipe them. It seemed to Guy an eternity before he finished first one lens and then the other and replaced his spectacles on his nose.

“You tripped up on one thing, Bunny,” he began, “It was just a little thing, but there have been many before you who seemed to have thought of everything but just made one little slip up.”

Guy felt a mounting sense of alarm but the little man gave him no time to intervene.

“If you cast your mind back, Bunny, to that morning on the *Arabella*,” he went on, “you came running to summon us to his cabin. Then when we had examined

Redvers and found him to be dead, you went into the bathroom and after barely a moment you ran back into the bedroom holding up the half-empty bottle of tablets. 'Look at this', you cried, 'look what I've found in the bathroom'. And sure enough, of course, the half-empty bottle of tablets was found to be the villain of the piece."

"So what?" queried Bunny; "we all know that."

"But," went on Mr. Sim; "I have to tell you that I took that bottle away with me afterwards and had it fingerprinted. This proved very revealing."

"I really don't understand what you're getting at," said Guy irritably; "what you seem to be saying is that Bunny's fingerprints were on the bottle. Well of course they were, she had just brought the bottle into the cabin."

"Quite so," said Mr. Sim, turning towards Bunny again, "but when you brought the bottle into the cabin you were holding it up in your right hand. Sure enough your right hand fingerprints were on the bottle, but they were superimposed on another set of fingerprints, from your

left hand. So you had previously handled the bottle with your left hand."

"That means nothing," said Bunny quickly, "I probably picked up the bottle with my left hand and in my hurry to come into the bedroom and show it to you I must have transferred it to my right hand."

"And that is your explanation?"

"Yes, of course."

"Not good enough, I'm afraid, Bunny," said Mr. Sim grimly; "you see, when you brought the bottle into the bedroom from the bathroom to show it to us, it had no cap on it, just as it would have been in fact, if Redvers, after more than a few drinks, had emptied half its contents into a glass to make an end of himself. He would not have taken the trouble to replace the screwcap, would he?"

"No, of course he wouldn't," replied Bunny.

"So naturally," said Mr. Sim, "what you found in the bathroom was the half-empty bottle with no cap on it and that's what you brought in to show us."

"Exactly."

"But, dear lady," said Mr. Sim slowly,

after a short pause, "when I took the bottle to have it fingerprinted, I also took its screwcap. And on it, sure enough were the prints of the thumb and forefinger of your right hand. By pretending to discover the bottle and bringing it to us you cleverly arranged to account for any fingerprints on the bottle itself which any inquisitive policeman might find, but you forgot about that tiny screwcap. That was a fatal mistake, and of course, the right hand prints on the screwcap and the underneath set of left hand prints on the bottle were made when you, not Redvers, opened that bottle the previous night and emptied half its contents into the toothglass to dissolve."

Guy felt a shiver in the pit of his stomach. As the little man finished speaking, there was complete silence. Guy hardly dared to look at Bunny but, when at last he did so, he was surprised that there was little outward sign of any effect on her of Mr. Sim's devastating reconstruction. She moistened her lips with the tip of her tongue, then shrugged her shoulders, before raising her hand in a sudden dismissive gesture.

“Very clever,” she said; “much too clever. A pity really because it would have been better to have left things as they were. But so be it, if you must, you must.”

She turned and reached across to put her hand on Guy’s arm.

“I’m sorry, Guy,” she said quietly; “What I am going to have to say will hurt you, I know. Although you and Redvers were never very close, your memories of him must always be important to you. I had hoped to spare you any pain, but now I cannot.”

She leaned back in her chair wearily.

“It all started the night before the storm,” began Bunny quietly, “that was the night we had the thunderstorm. Redvers and I were in bed and just about to go to sleep, that is, if we could manage to sleep in the middle of the storm. Suddenly he spoke and said he wanted to talk to me. I waited and then he started to tell me how worried he was about his work.”

“In what way?” asked Mr. Sim.

“It was all to do with the Star Wars question,” replied Bunny; “he said that the whole thing was wrong and that the

Americans were handling it in the worst possible way. At first I couldn't understand what he was driving at and so he started to go back to his earlier days as a scientist. He said he had enjoyed his work then and had devoted himself to it heart and soul. But then, as time went on, he found his work getting more and more mixed up with national defence and politics. This had started to worry him as he began to feel that the results of his work were going to be put to the wrong use."

Guy moved forward to the edge of his chair, intrigued by Bunny's sudden disclosures about his father. Whereas he had always felt himself at a distance from his father's thoughts, he now felt on the verge of bewilderment that his father of all people should have had any self-doubts.

"It seemed," she continued, "that during one of his visits to the United States, Redvers had developed a dislike of some of the American politicians he had met. He found that some of them were too aggressive for his tastes and he thought that they had developed an obsession about the Russians. They kept on about this Strategic Defence Initiative and how

they had to press on with it. I asked Redvers whether this was the same as the Star Wars thing I had heard about. He said it was, but he hated the expression 'Star Wars'."

Guy could just imagine his father's dislike of what he would have considered a verbal vulgarity and a lowering of the proper level of his work. For a fleeting moment Guy recalled the times his father had corrected him in his school days for using the latest slang expression.

"Anyway," went on Bunny, "Redvers started to get quite worked up. He said it had all come to the boil with the East-West summit at Geneva. What had upset him about that was that the Americans had made an offer to the Russians to share with them the results of the SDI research programme."

"What was wrong with that?" asked Guy.

"That was what I asked that night," replied Bunny, "and this apparently was the nub of the whole thing as far as Redvers was concerned. He was firmly of the opinion that it was not the results of the research which should be shared, but

the actual research itself. He said that if the Americans were sincere, they should have said to the Russians that all the scientists from both East and West should join together and work together to produce the quickest and most effective results possible. He felt convinced that this was the only way to clear away the distrust and suspicion between nations, and eventually get rid of nuclear weapons.”

Bunny held out her glass to Guy.

“Pour me another drink, Guy dear,” she asked; “I find all this a little bit trying.”

Guy hardly noticed the understatement. He quickly refilled all the glasses.

“It was then,” went on Bunny, “that Redvers delivered his bombshell. He said that he was so upset by the present situation and the American attitude that he was going to defect to the Russians.”

Guy rocked back in his chair as if someone had struck him. He could not bring himself to accept Bunny’s words. He could not absorb them. They rebounded off him like hailstones.

“What did you say?” he stuttered in astonishment.

“I said that he was going to defect,”

replied Bunny. "That was what he told me in the middle of that storm. He said that he was going to defect to the Russians and that it was all arranged and he wanted me to come with him."

Mr. Sim sat motionless, waiting for Bunny to continue.

"Then it was my turn to get upset," said Bunny; "I told him that he must be out of his mind and that he could not possibly do such a thing. Then he said that he had thought it over and over again, but that he was convinced that if he went over to the Russians he could share his knowledge with them and bring about a rapprochement between the two sides. He thought that once he had defected he could act as a bridge between the scientists of East and West. Then he told me that he had already been in touch with the Russians who had been very enthusiastic about the idea, so much so that they had given him every encouragement and had gone on to make all the arrangements for him. I told him that he was ridiculously naive and that naturally the Russians would be only too keen to take advantage of his idealism. We then started to get

cross with each other and it ended up in a blazing row. Strangely enough in all the years we were married we never had a real row until that one."

"I heard you," said Guy; "I couldn't sleep properly because of the storm and I heard the sound of your raised voices through the cabin wall."

"I told Redvers that I shouldn't dream of going to the Russians and that I was not going to let him go either," said Bunny, "but he said that he had made up his mind and that he must do as his conscience dictated. He said that he loved me and wanted me to go with him, but that, if I wouldn't, then he would go on his own. I pleaded with him not to do it but he said that it was too late and all the arrangements were already made for him to go before the Conference took place."

"How was he to manage it when we were all around him?" asked Mr. Sim.

"He said something about a water taxi when we were back in Venice," replied Bunny; "apparently the Russians knew all about our plans and when we were in the canals in Venice on our way back in our water taxi before crossing again to the

mainland, they were going to do it then. I threatened to tell you and have it stopped but he said that if I did, it would bring disgrace on him and Guy and the whole family. He said that he couldn't be guarded indefinitely and that if he didn't go now, he would wait for the first opportunity and go then. Every time I tried some fresh argument, he pushed it on one side. I could do absolutely nothing with him."

"So that was why the atmosphere was a bit strained the next day?" queried Guy.

"Strained? That's putting it mildly," replied Bunny.

"And yet," said Mr. Sim, "later in the day you must have made it up. By evening you and Redvers were on good terms again and in fact he let his hair down during and after dinner, with plenty of drink to boot. How did you come to make it up?"

"During that day," replied Bunny, "I shut myself away in the cabin and just thought and thought. I had to think the whole thing out. It was all too terrible. Oh God, it was terrible."

Guy saw that she was having difficulty in continuing. He tried to murmur a few

words of comfort. She did not seem to hear him.

“Now comes the most difficult part for me to explain,” she continued; “but you’ve got to try to understand. It all goes back again to my birth and nationality. As the American, Amos Todd, had found out, my mother, after the War, was dabbling a bit in Communism and, as a young girl, I was also interested, but then came 1956 and the catastrophe of the Hungarian uprising. Now, although I am a Czech, my home in Czechoslovakia was near Bratislava, not very far from the Hungarian border. Therefore I have many relations on each side of the border through various family marriages. What happened in Hungary in 1956 changed my whole outlook. Apart from the terrible national suffering, my family also suffered. My uncle was killed and two of my cousins were thrown into prison. All of this taught me how precious a thing freedom is and that it must never be taken for granted. It is the sacred duty of everyone to defend it with every means possible. To me life without freedom is intolerable and to submit to it is dishonourable.”

Although Bunny's voice quickened as she spoke, her words were deliberate and emphatic. Guy could picture her lying on her cabin bed, her mind in a torment, torn first one way and then another. Pity for her welled up within him. He looked at Mr. Sim in the hope of seeing some emotional response from him, especially after the little man's own tirade about freedom in this very room in the summer when he had been justifying his own actions to Guy. But now his face betrayed nothing. He was listening and calculating, calculating and listening. Never had he seemed more formidable than at this moment.

“And so you made up your mind to kill him?”

Mr. Sim's measured words broke in on Guy's thoughts like the smashing of a pane of glass. What was the man saying, what. . . ?

“Yes,” said Bunny simply, without protest; “to me, at that time, it seemed the only way. If all the skill and knowledge that Redvers had built up had been made available to the Russians, the damage would have been enormous. What was the

death of one man in comparison, even if that man was my own husband. That was the question I had to ask myself and there was only one answer. The terrible thing was that I loved him, but then you must understand that it was partly because I did love him that I had to do it. I couldn't let him dishonour himself and, worse still, I thought of the agony that he would suffer later on when he became disillusioned. He was bound to discover in due course that he had done it all for nothing."

A tear showed in the corner of her eye. The memory of the decision she had reached that afternoon seemed to linger still. She straightened her shoulders before resuming her story, as if to indicate her determination to press on to its conclusion.

"Having reached that awful decision," she said, "I wanted the last few hours that Redvers and I had together to be as happy as possible. So I sought him out and told him that I had changed my mind and that I would go over to the Russians with him. He was obviously delighted and his whole demeanour changed instantly. The thought of leaving me had been the one thing troubling him, so that now at last he

was happy. He hugged and kissed me in a way he had not done since we were first married. I felt as miserable as I have ever felt. For the rest of that day I had to play a part which I loathed, whilst the knowledge of what I planned to do was almost unbearable. However, my first object was achieved in that Redvers was happy. That evening I encouraged him to drink more wine than was good for him since this was an important part of the plan I had tried to work out. That night was our last night on the *Arabella* and it had to be done then, or it would be too late. You know the rest, or at least you can imagine it."

Bunny sat back wearily as she finished her long recital. Guy could say nothing. The horror and surprise of what he had heard had totally undermined him. Mr. Sim sipped his drink and looked at Bunny over the top of his spectacles.

"How many tablets did you give him?" he asked.

"I don't know exactly," she replied; "a lot anyway, about half the bottle. I knew they were soluble in water, as he often had one at night. So I offered to get one for him when he was getting into bed. As he

was rather the worse for all the drink he had had, he agreed without bothering to think. So, when I was in the bathroom, I emptied half the bottle into his toothglass and let the pills dissolve. I left the bottle open on the shelf by the basin just as he might have done when he had been drinking. By the time I got back to the bedroom he was nearly asleep. I got him to drink the whole lot quickly and put the glass back in the bathroom. It was all quite simple, in fact much too simple, it was so macabre. The only thing was that he knew nothing about it, poor man.”

Guy's mind groped frantically for a life-line. Although he had long ago realised that he was a stranger to his father, he had compensated by drawing closer to his stepmother. Now this grim and tragic recital made him realise that he did not really know her either. How could anyone set about the methodical removal of her own husband as she had done? The very fact that she had been able to do so was deadly proof that she was instigated by a force beyond his poor understanding. The tragedies of European countries bit far more deeply than he had ever for a

moment thought. He saw that Bunny was looking at him.

“You think that I am some sort of monster, don’t you,” she said quietly; “I don’t blame you. This sort of thing is beyond your comprehension.”

Guy swallowed and tried to answer. Hard as he tried, he could find no words. She was saying exactly what was in his mind so that it was impossible to attempt any sort of denial.

“If someone has not suffered a certain sort of deprivation, it is hard, perhaps even impossible, to understand the feelings of someone else who has. So it is with nations. You in this country have not been occupied by an invader and made to do his will. In Czechoslovakia we have suffered twice over. First the Nazis, and then as soon as they have been thrown out, it was the Communists. Ever since 1938 we have been under the heel of one or the other. What benefit did the War bring us? We merely swapped one hated master for another. Now we are forgotten. The status quo is accepted by both East and West as the only practical view to take. But for us it is different. We accept nothing.

Our spirit remains, smouldering, always smouldering, ready to take fire at any reasonable opportunity. So, when you judge me, when you look upon me as the killer of your father, look upon me also as a Czech and one of the very few who has ever had an opportunity to strike a blow for freedom. Although, as a wife, I am ashamed, as a patriot I am proud. I have done what I had to do. Now you must do with me as you will."

Amid the turmoil of his feelings Guy looked across at Mr. Sim expectantly. What was he going to do now? Would he be bringing in the police to arrest Bunny? What further agony would they have to endure?

Mr. Sim seemed to read the unspoken questions in Guy's mind. He rose from his chair.

"I'm going now," he said abruptly; "I have done what I came to do."

"But—" interrupted Guy.

"There will be no arrest," added Mr. Sim; "just think for a minute. If Bunny repeated all that in court, the Soviet propaganda machine would have a field day. They'd be telling the world how one of our

leading scientists had to be killed in order to stop him joining them to try to see justice done over SDI. It would be unthinkable."

When Mr. Sim had gone, the silence in the cottage was unbearable. Guy stared miserably out of the window. Damn that little man! Why had he had to come here and blow his world to pieces? Had they not all been through enough?

Bunny's voice broke into his thoughts.

"I think I'll go up and lie down," she said. "I don't want to see you hating me. Perhaps one day you will understand."

Guy swung round from the window. He looked at the fragile figure before him.

"I don't hate you," he said; "I don't think I could ever do that. As for understanding, that is more difficult. I have a lot to think about, things I've never really had to think about before. Perhaps, as you say, I shall understand one day. In some ways, I understand now. It's just—"

He hesitated momentarily, seeking adequate means of self-expression.

"I know," said Bunny; "good-night."

Guy sat alone for a long time. There

seemed no escape from the desolation which engulfed him.

As Autumn gave way to Winter, Nance Bottom curled up into its usual hibernation. The Trent cottage was shut up, the village street was deserted except for eddies of fallen leaves which bounced along aimlessly. The Thornes had started lighting the fire in the bar at the Firs where the regulars were starting their annual speculation as to the sort of Winter they were going to have. From time to time they still spoke of the "goings-on" back in the Summer. It all seemed a long time ago until they started talking about it. Then it seemed like yesterday.

Guy and Eve were married quietly in the early part of December. They had seen each other as often as possible in London during the preceding months, but now the arrangements had been duly made. The wedding was in the old village church at East Budleigh. Albert gave Eve away on a day of crisp Winter sunshine. Bunny and Simon looked after each other. In the midst of his happiness that day, Guy could not help reflecting from time to time on all that had taken place since he had met Eve.

Bunny had quietly regained her composure since that dramatic visit of Mr. Sim to the cottage. He himself had adjusted to the revelations thrust upon him. He and Bunny had established some sort of understanding between them. Things had not been the same, but neither of them expected them to be. Guy had wondered whether Mr. Sim would come to the wedding. Eve had dearly wanted him to come. Guy felt uneasy at the prospect of another meeting between him and Bunny. In the event the little man did not come. His tact was matched by his generosity in choosing a superb wedding present.

It was decided that Bunny would open up the cottage at Nance Bottom for the couple's return so that they could spend Christmas there. By that time Simon was on a school ski-ing holiday in Switzerland while Bunny would be joining friends in London. Guy looked forward to having Eve to himself in the cottage he loved so much. It seemed to be an essential part of the rebuilding of his life that he should start his life with Eve there, in the village of his childhood, among people who had held his affections for so long.

The flight back from Teneriffe to Exeter was smooth and uneventful, so that both Guy and Eve were in a relaxed mood when they let themselves into the cottage.

“Bunny?” called out Guy; “are you there?”

As he received no answer, Guy ushered Eve into the sitting-room. As they crossed the threshold, they stopped dead. Seated in an armchair by the blazing log fire was Mr. Sim.

“Good Lord!” gasped Guy; “what on earth are you doing here? And where’s Bunny? Isn’t she here?”

Eve wasted no time on words. She was delighted to see the unexpected visitor. Mr. Sim rose with a smile.

“Before I do anything else,” he said; “may I claim a belated kiss from the bride?”

Guy still could not contain his surprise.

“What is all this?” he said; “will somebody tell me what’s going on?”

Mr. Sim apologised.

“I’m sorry,” he said; “I should not have sprung a surprise on you like this, but I did not have much choice really.”

He put his hand in his inside breast pocket and brought out two envelopes.

“One of these was for me,” he said to Guy, “and the other was enclosed in it and is for you. Mine is quite short and I’ll just read it to you as it explains my presence here. I received it in London and it reads as follows:

Dear Mr. Sim,

Could I ask one more thing of you? Could you possibly go down to the cottage at Nance Bottom in time for the return of the newly-weds and let them in? The key is with the Thornes at the Firs. I enclose a letter for Guy. I expect you will know what is in it, but I should like you to be there when Guy reads it.

It is strange that in the past you should have spoken of the Red Knight, because I often think of you as the White Knight. Thank you for these last few weeks.

Bunny.

A puzzled frown settled on Guy’s brow as he took the envelope addressed to him. Hastily he tore it open. Bunny’s neat

handwriting was unmistakable. He stood in front of the log fire as he started to read aloud.

Dearest Guy,

This is the hardest letter I have ever had to write, or shall ever have to write.

By the time you read this, I shall be a long way away, where you once were, in Moscow, where I have to make a brief call before I return to my beloved Czechoslovakia.

What I have to tell you in this letter will inevitably cause you further pain. Please forgive me, however difficult you may find it. If I leave out anything, Mr. Sim will be able to fill in the gaps. That is why I asked him to be at the cottage to give you this.

I am sorry about the Amercian, Amos Todd, who was, after all, the only one to get it right. After the Nazis left my country, I became a passionate believer in Communism as the only creed which could bring salvation to the peoples of the world. My mother and I did what we could in England to help the cause and then, as Todd suspected, I was

recruited as a sleeper. My instructions were to cut myself off immediately from my left-wing connections and to lie low and do nothing until at some future date I was activated. Thus throughout my first marriage I did nothing adverse to my husband's Army career and interests. Whether or not I would have been activated had he lived to attain higher rank with a job in the Ministry of Defence I don't know. In fact it was after I was widowed that my further instructions came. I was to be introduced to your father and to do my best to bring about a marriage between us. His scientific career was already of interest to my superiors and they wanted me to get the perfect ringside seat, so to speak. Once the marriage was firmly established with mutual trust, my duties were to try to undermine your father's will to work on Western defence. This had to be a very gradual process but I became more and more successful as time went.

It was perfectly true, what I told you about your father's view on Star Wars. He did strongly resent the American

attitude at the Summit. As a result I was able to exert much greater influence to the point where eventually I persuaded him that he could actually best serve the cause of peace by defecting and afterwards acting as a bridge between East and West. The idea grew on him and he started to have direct contacts with my superiors, who handled everything with him from then on.

By now you will have grasped that I knew of the proposed action to be taken against you on your Moscow visit. For this I have many regrets as I hated to see you put in fear of your safety and also of Simon's safety. But when one has the sort of job to do that I have had to do, one has to learn to accept the disciplines and to do as one is told for the sake of the cause.

The whole object of arranging your visit to Moscow and the subsequent supply of information about your father was to make absolutely sure that nobody started looking at your father himself and questioning his position. Except for the wretched American, this plan succeeded brilliantly. Mr. Sim knew

that there was something hidden but he never found out the truth until it was too late. I shall leave him to tell you how that came about. Anyway there was no breath of suspicion against either your father or me and therefore every detail could be planned for us to go over to the East before the Conference. As I told you it would all have taken place on our return to Venice.

Unfortunately the whole plan fell apart because of something which was completely unexpected. On the night of the thunderstorm, when we were on the *Arabella*, your father suddenly told me that the thought of defecting had been preying on his mind with increasing strain, so much so that he had finally changed his mind and was not going to do it. I tried to cajole him into going ahead with it as planned but he was adamant. I became angry and so did he and that was the real reason for the row you heard in our cabin. It was not because he said he was going to defect but because he said he was not going to. Here I must tell you that your father never actually realised that I was a

sleeper. He merely thought that I disliked the American viewpoint and that all my actions and persuasions were dictated by the cause of peace. As you would be the first to acknowledge, your father was not very worldly wise. Not many scientists are and who, after all, would ever suspect that his own wife was a sleeper, unless it was pushed under his nose?

Your father and I made it up the next day when I pretended to give in and accept that we should stay in the West. But I already had my instructions that if anything went wrong with the plan I was to see to it somehow that your father never got to that Conference. I decided that the only sure way, however hateful, was to kill him. You know the rest. I am sorry about all the lies I told you about the Hungarian uprising and the blather about freedom. In truth no problems would ever have arisen in my country or in Hungary, had it not been for foolish revisionist thinking which had of course to be stopped.

Now my course is run. I am looking forward to going home. I shall miss you

and Simon terribly but it cannot be avoided. Mr. Sim knew nearly all this when he confronted me in the Autumn, but he knew I could do no more harm and decided to let me go for your sake. He wanted you and Eve to get married and so he has waited till now to give me my marching orders. I believe he thinks that you and Simon have suffered enough and that it will be a lot easier for you both when Eve is there to take my place.

Try to think of something to tell Simon which will not destroy his feelings for me. He is a lovely little boy and I love him. I only wish he were mine. I love you too, Guy. Try not to think too badly of me. Remember that I have been brought up to believe that beliefs are more important than the individual and that the end justifies the means. One day the world will turn altogether to communism and then we can all enjoy real freedom.

With much love,  
Bunny.

Sadly Guy put down the letter. Seeing the

tears in Eve's eyes, he put his arm round her. Mr. Sim sat motionless in his chair. The silence was broken only by the crackling of the burning logs.

"Oh, God," said Guy simply, passing his hand across his brow; "I just don't believe it. I just don't believe it."

He picked up the letter and put it down again.

"It's like a nightmare," he said; "it is a nightmare. Eve, tell me it isn't real, it can't be."

"I'm sorry," she whispered.

"I put the kettle on when I saw your car arrive," said Mr. Sim suddenly; "why don't we all have a cup of tea?"

"A cup of tea, a cup of tea," repeated Guy bitterly; "why don't we all have a cup of tea? How typically British! Stiff upper lip and a cup of tea. Don't you realise that Bunny was the only person I had in the world for years except Simon! She kept me going. I loved her as a son loves his mother. I still do. I can't just start hating her. It's all so bloody impossible."

Eve left them silently to make the tea. While she was in the kitchen, Mr. Sim sat silent and aloof. Guy had to be allowed his

time of grief and it was better for him and for Eve that it should be now. On Eve's return he was already beginning to compose himself.

"When did you find out about all this?" he asked Mr. Sim; "she seems to think in her letter that you had found her out."

"Not until after the cruise on the *Arabella*," replied Mr. Sim; "really it all stemmed from the death of Amos Todd. I should have found out about Bunny's history then, from the reports filed by Todd, but somebody in the CIA had a mistaken sense of duty and failed to make those reports available to me before we left for Venice. Afterwards, when of course it was all too late, sanity prevailed and I did get Todd's reports. So at last I was able to start to put the pieces together and make some sense of it all, particularly, of course, with the help of the fingerprint evidence regarding your father's medicine bottle."

"And then came your visit down here in the Autumn," said Guy.

"Yes," said Mr. Sim, "I already knew of course that your father did not commit suicide, but there were a lot of gaps to be filled in. For a start I did not know exactly

how Todd met his end. It seemed more than likely that Bunny knew something about that, as indeed proved to be the case, but the most interesting and fascinating part was Bunny's brilliant explanation of her part in it and also the reason for your father's death. What was so brilliant about it was that she must have realised that if I knew that Todd was watching her and not your father, then he must have left some record of his suspicions and therefore I must also know that Todd believed she was a sleeper. So she handled it superbly by coming boldly out with Todd's allegations to her that she was a sleeper. In that way she appeared to volunteer the information, as Todd's suspicions, and thus give herself the opportunity of denying them. Then the apparent proof of her denial came when she put on her great act about your father's death. As the great defender of freedom she had to kill your father to prevent him from defecting. What an actress she would have made!"

"I believed every word she said. It was all so utterly convincing," said Guy.

"Indeed it was," went on Mr. Sim, "but

of course she realised that I should find out the truth about her sooner or later. It was only going to be a question of time before our people in Czechoslovakia and Hungary would ferret out the truth about her, once I put them onto it, as I surely must. Sure enough, in the end, they discovered that, far from her family having suffered in the Hungarian uprising, they were all solidly pro-Russian. So Bunny knew her days were numbered. The logical thinking would have been for her to disappear immediately back to her own country rather than run the risk of being pulled in here, but she must have had a real and genuine love for you and Simon to have taken the risk of staying here till the wedding. Full marks to her for that, although Krovotny will no doubt haul her over the coals for it. He must certainly have ordered her to get out while she could. From her letter to me she seems to have had the strange impression that I was being kind to her, and maybe it was this thought that encouraged her to stay. If so, she ought to have known better. I've been champing at the bit waiting for news to confirm that my suspicions were correct,

and then, when at last it came, it was just too late. The bird had flown."

"Didn't you have her under surveillance?" asked Guy.

"Of course I did," replied Mr. Sim, "but not for the first time she was too clever. It was her local knowledge down here that came up trumps this time, and she disappeared from here without anyone realising until it was too late. Taking a personal view I'm not sorry, but from an official standpoint I should have given a lot for a few long talks with her just now, although I doubt whether she knew much beyond the role allotted to her, and punishing her would have got us nowhere."

"Going back to the American, Amos Todd," said Eve, "what about his death? Wouldn't there have been enough evidence to hold Bunny for that? Did she deliberately push him over the edge of the quarry?"

"Maybe she did," replied Mr. Sim; "the hint of an apology in her letter almost suggests she did, but we could never have proved it. As it is, I shall never get that drink off Albert on our little bet. One

thing is clear, though, Todd knew too much for his own good and she could hardly have afforded to let him live. If he did go over the edge accidentally, it was a mighty convenient accident."

"In the end Todd played quite an important part in all this, didn't he," said Guy.

"Yes, he did," replied the little man; "and his reports have helped us to uncover one or two things as well."

As he paused to drink his tea, Mr. Sim felt in his inside pocket.

"Look at this, Eve," he said, producing a small photograph; "do you recognise him?"

Eve took it from him to examine it carefully.

"Yes, I do," she cried excitedly; "it's the man who hit me, the man who took Simon. His hair is shorter in the picture, but I'm quite certain. He looks a bit younger in the picture as well."

"I thought you'd recognise him," said Mr. Sim with grim satisfaction.

"Who is it? Have you caught him?" asked Guy eagerly; "I'd like to get my hands on the bastard."

“So would I,” said Mr. Sim, “but, thanks to the CIA mess up, there’s no chance. He would have been withdrawn from this country as soon as he had done his stuff. His name is Enders, Craig Enders, and it is more than likely that he may have been responsible for a lot of our troubles.”

“How come?” asked Guy.

“Well it seems that Amos Todd came across this character and one of his reports shows that Enders was working with a KGB man called Yuri Semoyan and also a woman. From what Todd found out and what we have since found out, I can tell you that Enders is an Englishman who used to be a mercenary soldier and then turned to a life of crime in London. At that time he got into the rogues gallery at the Yard—hence the photo—but he was never nailed for anything. Then some time ago he disappeared from London. Obviously he has turned up again recently and this time working for the KGB. Probably he has been over in Russia undergoing some training.”

“Is he one of those Spetsnaz people you were telling me about?” asked Guy.

“That’s right,” replied Mr. Sim, “almost certainly they must have recruited him. Given the right training, he would be just the sort of man they could make use of.”

The little man paused for a moment in his recital.

“My people have shown this photo to people living in the area where Jacob Goetz lived,” he went on, “and one of the shopkeepers feels sure he has seen the man somewhere. When you add that to the fact that just before poor Steve Butler telephoned to say that he was on to something, he had also paid a visit to the rogues gallery, you can bet your bottom dollar that he was on to Enders. Sadly for him Enders must have rumbled him and took him out before he could get to us. So it looks as if Enders must have been the hard man the KGB were using. Anyway, as I say, we’re too late. Enders has done a flit and so has the woman. No doubt they’re both safely back in Moscow. The same goes for Yuri Semoyan.”

“Do you know anything of him?” asked Guy.

“Oh yes,” replied Mr. Sim, “we know

him all right. He is a rising star in Department V in the KGB. That's the department dealing with sabotage and some of the more unsavory jobs. He's a clever devil, just the sort we can do without as an adversary. No doubt he was sent here specially with the others by Krovotny to look after the run-up to your father's defection and, as soon as we all left for Venice, they would have been withdrawn. It makes me spit blood when I think about it all."

"You of all people have no reason to reproach yourself," said Guy; "nobody could have tried harder than you."

"It's not a damn bit of use trying hard, if one doesn't succeed," replied Mr. Sim bitterly; "when I look back over the whole thing, I see how Krovotny has had the initiative throughout. His scheme to use you as a decoy was brilliantly successful and had me searching for some informant who didn't exist. All I did was to guard your father for him until he was ready to poach him and, as it turned out, I wasn't even successful in that. Even the wretched Todd did a hell of a sight better than I

did. At least he found out about Bunny. It's time I retired and grew begonias."

Eve moved across to him and kissed him on the cheek.

"You know what Albert would say if he were here," she said; "'leave it out, guv', that's what he'd say."

"Quite right, Eve," replied the little man; "self-pity never gets one anywhere."

"Anyone for another cup of tea?" asked Eve.

"No, thanks," said Mr. Sim, "I must go now and leave you to your log fire. I'm sorry I had to come."

"Of course, you had to," said Guy; "and don't think I don't appreciate it. Thank God that at long last it's all over."

"For you perhaps," replied the little man, "but not for me. The pieces will be re-arranged and the Red Knight and I will soon be at it all over again."

He chuckled for a moment.

"I rather liked that bit of Bunny's about the White Knight," he mused; "I never thought of myself as that. I wonder if Krovotny thinks of me like that as well. It would be rather flattering, if he did."

He turned to Eve and kissed her cheek.

“I shall miss you,” he said, “and so will Albert. Perhaps we shall have to think about recruiting Guy, now that he has seen how we work. A good married couple takes a lot of beating. I must give it some thought.”

He shook hands with Guy as they stood by the heavy oak front door.

“Good-bye,” he said, “and a Merry Christmas to you both. I don’t have to wish you a happy New Year, as I know you’ll have that.”

“Merry Christmas,” called Guy and Eve in unison, as the little man hurried down the garden path.



# Part Five

## Re-match



**I**N the months that followed Bunny's disappearance Guy suffered many hours of bitter conflict within himself. Whilst on the one hand his marriage to Eve brought him happiness such as he had long ago thought was to be denied him, on the other the shock which Bunny's disclosures had given him was proving desperately hard to overcome. The place which she had won in his heart over many years had been so secure and deep-rooted that at times he found it almost impossible to believe what she had done. How could the same gentle loving hand have guided him and Simon over the years and yet dealt out death to his father and perhaps also to the American, Amos Todd?

Little by little Guy struggled through the process of adjustment. Although he did not often mention the subject to Eve, she realised only too well that he was finding it more difficult than he had thought to expunge Bunny from his mind

and memories. At first Simon kept enquiring about her and, although his questions became less frequent as the months passed, each time her name was mentioned brought a dark moment to Guy.

Another Christmas at Nance Bottom eventually came and went. Eve was worried that the happiness of their first wedding anniversary should be clouded by the recollection of Mr. Sim's visit the previous year. It so happened, however, that there was a heavy fall of snow on Christmas Eve and the delight which this brought to Simon seemed to communicate itself to Guy and Eve as well, so that in the midst of Simon's excitement the three of them fortunately found little time for memories.

It was in the following Spring, when Guy and Eve were paying a weekend visit to the cottage at Nance Bottom, that there was an unexpected ring at the doorbell early in the evening. Guy and Eve had been thinking of walking down the street to the Firs for a quiet drink when the interruption came.

“Whoever's that?” asked Eve; “I'm not expecting anyone, are you?”

“No,” replied Guy, moving to the door, “maybe it’s one of the neighbours.”

When Guy opened the door, the last person he expected to see was Mr. Sim. The little man was leaning against the outer arch of the porch and looking back at the garden.

“Hallo, Guy,” he said; “I see your grass is beginning to grow. Spring seems a little early this year.”

“Well of all—” Guy struggled to overcome his surprise.

“Sorry to descend on you like this out of the blue,” interrupted Mr. Sim, as he moved forward into the house; “I’m always turning up without warning, aren’t I? A real bad penny, if ever there was one?”

Eve ran forward in delight and planted a kiss firmly on the little man’s cheek. In her years of working for him she had felt a real affection for him and, although she had said nothing to Guy, she had missed her work from time to time after they were married.

The proposed visit to the Firs being forgotten, Guy lost no time in pouring out drinks to toast their visitor’s health, before

they settled down comfortably in the low-ceilinged sitting-room.

“I can’t get over it,” said Eve for the second or third time; “you really are the limit, just arriving like this without even a phone call. What a lovely surprise, though. How’s Albert?”

“He’s well enough,” replied Mr. Sim; “perky as ever. He’s like a rubber ball, that lad. I don’t know where he gets all his energy from. He sends his love. He knew I was coming.”

He paused for a moment to sip his gin and tonic.

“I suppose I’d better come clean and tell you why I’ve come,” he went on.

“Knowing you, there’s always a reason for everything,” said Guy with a smile; “anyway it’s great seeing you again. I hope that you’re not tied up in anything too grim at the moment. We’re just an old married couple by now, you know.”

“So I see,” replied Mr. Sim, “and a very happy one too, I’ve no doubt. That makes it all the more difficult for me to disturb you, but you know me: if I’ve got a bee in my bonnet, I’ve got to let it out. So here goes.”

As the little man sat back in his chair, Guy repressed a slight smile, as he noticed the old familiar gesture of the fingertips coming together, as if to compose what was to come.

“Do you remember,” began Mr. Sim, “that when we were together before, on that other business, I made a joking remark that perhaps one day you might do a job for me as a pair?”

Guy’s brow puckered, as he tried to stir his memory.

“Yes, I remember,” he said at last; “at least I think I do.”

“Well, now that time has come,” replied Mr. Sim; “there is after all something you can both do for me together.”

“How on earth can that be?” asked Eve, feeling more and more puzzled as the conversation progressed.

“Wait a minute,” broke in Guy quickly, “I’m not sure that I like the sound of this. I had enough of that affair before to last me a lifetime. I don’t want to get mixed up in anything else, and I don’t want Eve going back to that sort of life either.”

“Hold on,” said Eve, “you haven’t

heard what it is yet. Give the boss a chance."

Mr. Sim smiled, as he noticed that she still referred to him as "the boss".

"I quite realise how you feel," he said reassuringly to Guy, "but I should be more than grateful if I could have just a few moments to explain. I'm sorry to be such a nuisance."

The little man's charm came suddenly to the surface, just as if he had pressed a switch within himself.

"I say, this G and T was just what I needed," he said, "any chance of another?"

"Oh, sorry," said Guy quickly, "I must be half asleep, or wrapped up in what you were saying, one or the other. I didn't notice."

He did not take long to re-fill Mr. Sim's glass.

"As I was saying," went on the little man, having gained the breathing space he had wanted, "there is just a little thing you can both help me with. It's not a lot, really, but it happens to be rather important."

"But—" started Guy.

“You can’t stop him now,” interrupted Eve; “it’s just getting interesting. Let the dog see the rabbit.”

Guy gave way reluctantly before his wife’s insistence. He shrugged his shoulders in grudging assent.

“It’s something that only you can do,” said Mr. Sim, leaning forward in his chair; “it’s to do with Bunny.”

“That settles it,” cried Guy, banging down his glass on the low table in front of him; “you needn’t go on. The answer is ‘no’, ‘no’, and definitely and finally ‘no’.”

“But you haven’t heard what it is yet,” protested Eve.

“That subject is closed and not to be re-opened,” said Guy firmly, getting up from his chair. “Now, I’m just going to go to the kitchen to get some more tonic, and, when I come back, we’ll talk about something else.”

He walked quickly from the room. Alone together, Eve and Mr. Sim looked at each other for a moment before Eve broke the silence.

“He can’t get over it,” she said; “about Bunny, I mean. Even after all this time. She was just like a mother to him, more

than a mother in fact. She was his lifeline for such a long time. If you only knew how he's been struggling to forget it all."

"It's important, Eve," replied Mr. Sim quietly; "I shouldn't have come if it wasn't. In fact, to tell you the honest truth, that's the understatement of the year. It's vital that I get Guy's help and yours."

Eve ran her fingers through her hair.

"Give me a minute or two," she said suddenly; "let me go and talk to him out there. Maybe he'll come round. It's hard to tell. It's the shock of the whole thing being raked up all over again. He's so darn sensitive."

She left the room quickly. She found Guy staring moodily out of the kitchen window. She slipped her hand into his.

"Dear Guy," she said softly, "I know how you feel."

"That's just it," he replied bitterly, "you don't know. Nobody does. It's just something inside me that I can't handle."

"Maybe that's because it is inside you, tucked away in there," said Eve; "maybe if it all came out, you would find a way of handling it. But if you keep it bottled up

all the time, there's no chance of getting shot of it."

"That would just make it worse, not better," persisted Guy.

"So perhaps it has to get worse before it can get better," countered Eve.

"Oh, stop talking in riddles," said Guy irritably; "I don't think I can take it."

"Look, Guy," replied Eve quietly, "why don't you just let go? Stop being so darn difficult. We're married, aren't we? So that means that, if we have a problem, we solve it together. All right, we have a problem, Bunny's the problem. Now you've kept that buzzing around inside you long enough and I'm going to put a stop to it, whether you like it or not, but it would be a whole lot better if we did it together."

For a few moments Guy continued to stare out of the window. Then he turned and looked down at Eve's anxious face.

"You're right, dammit," he said; "it's no good my going on like this. Perhaps this is what's needed after all, something fresh from outside, like our visitor in the other room."

"Exactly," said Eve in sudden relief;

“I’m so glad that you can see it that way. Now you’ve got a chance, at last, don’t you see, to lay the ghost. Come on, let’s go back in there and see what’s troubling the great mind.”

“Sure,” replied Guy with a sudden smile; “I’ve been getting it all wrong, that’s plain enough. I needed a damn good kick in the pants. I didn’t expect to get it from you, though.”

“That’s part of a wife’s job occasionally,” said Eve, laughing; “come on now, the boss will think we’ve slipped out of the back door and gone to the pub.”

Mr. Sim was sitting back with his eyes half-closed, when the others rejoined him.

“Sorry,” said Guy; “it was just something that was bugging me. It’s OK now. Fire ahead with whatever you wanted to tell us.”

“That’s good,” said Mr. Sim quietly; “I’m so glad. I hated being a bore. Anyway here goes. It’s a bit of a long story, but I’ll do my best not to make too much of a meal of it.”

He sipped his drink, as he settled himself comfortably.

“You will remember only too well,” he

began, "that, when Bunny left us so suddenly, she thought that, after a brief stop in Moscow to see Krovotny, she would be returning to her beloved Czechoslovakia. Well, things did not turn out like that. She did in fact go to Moscow but, contrary to her expectations, her stay there has not proved to be brief at all. Indeed she is still there."

"How do you know all this?" interrupted Guy.

"He gets to know everything," put in Eve.

"We have our sources, of course," replied Mr. Sim, "but in this case we have a very direct line of information which I shall explain in a minute. Anyway, as I say, Bunny is still in Moscow. After her arrival there she did not find herself in overwhelming favour with Krovotny. In the first place she failed to deliver Sir Redvers as a defector, so that Krovotny was robbed of his great triumph. Admittedly her complete devotion to the cause deprived the West of her husband's most valuable services, but that, to Krovotny, was simply half a loaf being better than no bread. And then, secondly, she flouted

Krovotny's instructions to leave this country when she should have done and ran great risks by staying until your wedding. So, all in all, the Red Knight was not so pleased with her work for him as he might have been."

"Was she in trouble with him?" asked Guy.

"Put it this way," replied Mr. Sim; "she did not get the reward she expected, of returning to the life she looked forward to in Czechoslovakia. While critical of her failures, Krovotny nevertheless recognised her tremendous ability and talents and decided to put them to further use. So he planted her in the diplomatic world in Moscow, where it became her job to latch on to diplomats and officials and to wheedle out of them all the information which any occasional indiscretion might provide. Her good looks and tremendous charm were formidable weapons and she has been using them to do Krovotny's bidding ever since she left here."

Guy and Eve sat quite still, fascinated by the little man's disclosures.

"That brings me," he went on, "to my

present particular source of information. Have you heard of Travers Wilkinson?"

"No," said Guy, "I can't say I have."

"Nor have I," said Eve.

"Travers Wilkinson," continued Mr. Sim, "is an important figure in the British community in Moscow and his official duties give him access to a lot of secret information. Realising this, the KGB put Bunny on to him as one of her targets, and what I have to tell you does in fact come from him. When he was last in London, he made contact with me and we had a long talk. He told me that he had seen Bunny on a number of occasions and found her company increasingly attractive. He is, I should mention, a bachelor and from his point of view there was nothing in the slightest objectionable in his escorting Bunny to various functions and seeing her whenever he wanted to. Of course, when he started telling me about his growing relationship with Bunny, I found it easy to believe that he was attracted by her."

"Any man would be attracted by her," said Guy.

"Indeed," continued Mr. Sim; "then Wilkinson went on to tell me that he found

himself falling in love with Bunny and, if that had been as far as it went, there would have been nothing remarkable. An affair in Moscow with a lovely and charming woman would hardly have been worthy of comment, but then, hey presto! the unexpected happened. According to Wilkinson, Bunny also fell in love with him, so that inevitably they drew closer and closer to one another. It was then that she revealed to him that she was working for the KGB and that she had been specially assigned to him for the purpose of prising from him such secrets as she could. This did not, however, come as any great surprise to Wilkinson, who is no fool and had noticed from the early days of their relationship that she was inclined to be inquisitive. However she had so completely bewitched him, as time went on, that he made up his mind to turn a blind eye to her likely connection with the KGB, while at the same time making sure that he gave nothing away.”

Mr. Sim paused for a moment to sip his gin and tonic.

“So, as I say,” he continued, “it was no great surprise to Wilkinson to hear her

disclosure. What followed, however, came as a total surprise to him. She proceeded forthwith to tell him her complete life story, culminating in her two marriages in England and her final departure from here."

"The whole lot?" queried Guy blankly; "did she tell him the whole lot, including my father's death and her part in it and all her lying and deception?"

"Apparently so," replied Mr. Sim; "when Travers Wilkinson was unburdening himself to me, he told me the whole story from beginning to end. She appears to have kept nothing back from him."

"What on earth possessed her to do that, I wonder?" commented Eve.

"You may well ask," replied Mr. Sim; "and the reason for that seems pretty clear when I go on, because it was after that that she asked Travers Wilkinson to see if he could get her back into this country with him. It was obvious that if he made any approach to us here, he would learn the truth, so she decided, true to form, to make a virtue out of necessity by telling him the truth herself."

“But why on earth should she want to come back here and risk prosecution over the other matter?” queried Guy.

“Two reasons,” answered the little man: “according to Wilkinson, one was that Krovotny’s refusal to let her return to her own country had annoyed her and made her feel thoroughly disillusioned, and the other was quite simply that she was in love with Travers Wilkinson and, as he would have to return here before long, she could not bear the thought of his going without her.”

“But surely she must have realised that there was no chance of your allowing her back to live with this man Wilkinson,” said Eve; “all the probabilities were, or are, that she would do just what she had done before and continue to work here for the KGB—first Lee-Stafford, then Sir Redvers and finally Wilkinson.”

“Precisely,” replied Mr. Sim, “and to overcome that, she told Wilkinson to tell me that she would have quite a bit of useful information to give me, which would make it worth my while to let her come back. So the purpose of Wilkinson’s visit to me was to put Bunny’s proposition

to me. Being off his chump about her, as he is, he begged me to let her come and, not only that, to get her out of the Soviet Union as well. It quite took my breath away. She's not lacking in nerve, our Bunny."

"And your reply?" asked Guy quickly.

"I told Travers Wilkinson that the whole idea was so preposterous that I would have nothing whatsoever to do with it. Such information as she might have for me might be quite useless and already in my possession anyhow. Mind you, if it had been simply a question of her stepping off a plane and being allowed temporary asylum while she told me whatever she might know, that might have been one thing, since I could always have sent her back to the tender mercies of friend Krovotny, but to risk people in trying to get her out was something else altogether."

"How did Wilkinson take it?" asked Guy.

"He was very upset," replied Mr. Sim; "he was taking a big risk with his career, and my refusal meant that he had done it all for nothing and moreover there seemed no happy solution to his desperate love

affair. In a way I felt sorry for him. He's a decent enough man and had got caught up in something he couldn't handle."

"What happened next?" asked Eve eagerly, her interest in the story totally absorbing her.

"Well the next thing was that Wilkinson returned to Moscow and told Bunny the bad news," replied Mr. Sim; "and there the matter rested for a little while. However, as we all know, Bunny is not the sort of person to accept meekly whatever fate dishes out. So she evidently set to work to see how she could solve the problem, and in due course she got word to me through Wilkinson that she thought she could get hold of some top secret plans and, if I could work out some method of getting her out, she would bring them with her."

"So?" asked Guy tersely.

"So naturally I wanted to know more," replied the little man; "for all I knew, we might have the plans already, they might be out of date, they might be anything. Imagine, therefore, my surprise when she sent word that the plans she could get hold of were of the new top secret Soviet plane,

their answer to the American plane Stealth!"

"Stealth?" asked Eve; "isn't that the plane that crashed a little while back in the States and they cordoned off the area to prevent any secret leaking out, the one that's so secret that no-one knows anything about it?"

"That's the one," said Mr. Sim; "and for some time we have been trying to find out what sort of reply the Russians are producing, and now here was Bunny apparently proposing to hand us the answer on a plate—that is, of course, if we are to believe her."

"And do you?" asked Guy.

"I must, mustn't I?" replied Mr. Sim; "I can't afford not to. If she is telling the truth, then this could be of enormous important to us and the Americans. Just think for a moment what it would mean."

"Do we take it from that that you are in business with her?" asked Eve.

"Well, things have progressed quite a bit since then," replied Mr. Sim; "we've checked out a few things and all the indications are that Bunny's offer is genuine. We have found out what the outline of her

scheme is for getting hold of the plans, although not the exact method, which she insists on keeping to herself. Therefore we have now got to the point where we have been able to work out a way of getting her out from under Krovotny's nose and bringing her over here."

He leaned back in his chair, as he neared the end of his story.

"And that is where you come in," he concluded.

Guy gaped open-mouthed for a moment.

"Where we come in?" he repeated parrot-fashion; "what on earth do you mean, 'where we come in'?"

"That is why I have come," answered Mr. Sim; "I want your help."

Eve broke in quickly to calm the situation, as Guy floundered. It would be so easy for him to lose his temper again now.

"How can we help?" she asked quietly; "everything you have told us is far removed from our present lives. Surely there is nothing that we can do?"

"Oh, but there is," replied the little man; "in fact I would go as far as to say that you are the only ones that can help me. You see, Guy is the only person who

really knows Bunny, and you and he as a pair can do exactly the job that is required."

"How do you make that out?" asked Guy suspiciously.

"Before under our plan we take the final step of smuggling Bunny out of the Soviet Union, we must be absolutely sure that it is in fact Bunny we are getting out," replied Mr. Sim; "from all you saw and learned the last time we worked together, you will realise that this might be the most gigantic hoax to drop me right in it. In the first place I am relying on the honesty and bona fides of Travers Wilkinson and, while I am as sure of him as I reasonably can be, it is of course perfectly possible that, besotted as he is by Bunny, he could be betraying us on her instructions. If I thought that that was the case, I should not be here, but it is something which I cannot exclude. Then, secondly, I have to trust that the woman involved is Bunny herself and not some look-alike doing all this on Krovotny's instructions. I have been as careful as I can, but in the end I have to be sure beyond any doubt that the woman whom we try to help to leave

Russia under my plan is Bunny herself and no-one else.”

“And how, may I ask, can I help you to do that?” asked Guy, his suspicions increasing; “surely you are not going to ask me to go to Moscow again, not after last time?”

“No, I am not,” replied Mr. Sim, “but I am going to propose that you and Eve go to the Soviet Union together with another identity.”

“Oh no,” replied Guy immediately, putting his hand up, as if in self-defence; “you are on the wrong track this time. I am not going and I certainly should not dream of letting Eve go.”

“Hold on a minute,” broke in Eve; “don’t I have a say in this? I want to hear more, and, if it is as important as it seems to be, I think we should hear more.”

“That’s all very well, but—” began Guy.

“Come on, Guy, give it a go,” urged Eve; “let the boss get it off his chest. If it turns out that we are the only people that can help to get these plans, then surely we have to do just that.”

“I just can’t see our both risking every-

thing for the sake of Bunny and her boyfriend," retorted Guy.

"But, you goose, it isn't for Bunny, it's to get those plans. Bunny's part in this is purely coincidental. Just because you've got a hang-up about her, you're letting it cloud your judgment. Forget her, for heaven's sake, and just think of what's at stake."

Eve put her hand on Guy's arm to press home her point. He pursed his lips, as he drummed his knuckles on his forehead as if to force himself to think clearly.

"OK," he said at last to Mr. Sim, "I know I'm not making sense. I'm not even making sense to myself. What's the deal?"

Encouraged by Guy's abrupt change of heart, Mr. Sim leaned forward in his chair to outline his plans. He felt in his inside breast pocket and produced a small photograph.

"Does this mean anything to either of you?" he asked.

Guy and Eve examined the photograph. It was of a slender middle-aged woman with dark eyes and dark hair. Guy and Eve looked at each other and shook their heads in perplexity.

“Never seen her, as far as I know,” said Guy.

“Nor have I,” added Eve.

Mr. Sim then produced a second photograph, which he also handed over for examination.

“What about this one?” he asked.

The second photograph was of an older, grey-haired woman with gold-rimmed spectacles, with slight hollows under her cheekbones. Guy leaned forward for a closer look.

“There is something about this one,” he said hesitantly; “I feel I know her and yet I don’t. Have I seen her somewhere, or have I seen her on TV perhaps?”

Eve hesitated even longer, before looking up from the photograph.

“I know what you mean, darling,” she said; “I get the same feeling.”

“Think a bit more,” encouraged Mr. Sim.

Guy looked again. At last he looked up with a strange gleam in his eyes.

“I think I’ve got it,” he said; “this looks something like Bunny, the sort of way she will look in a few years. Is it a photo of

her mother, or an aunt or some relation of hers?"

"No," replied the little man; "these two photos are in fact both of one and the same woman. The first one is of her as she is, and the second one shows her wearing a grey wig and spectacles and wearing certain make-up. She works for me and has come to me from another department. I have chosen her for these photographs, because in her build and physique she resembles Bunny. So from that you can see that with the necessary help of skilfully applied make-up, possibilities begin to emerge. I'm sure that you, Eve, will be the first to appreciate that."

He smiled at his former employee with quiet satisfaction.

"Yes, but why so old?" queried Eve; "why the grey hair and glasses?"

"Precisely," said the little man; "then let's take them off and leave her with just the make-up then."

As he spoke, he felt in his pocket again and produced yet another photograph, which he handed to the young couple.

Guy gave a sharp intake of breath.

“Well I’m damned,” he said in astonishment; “that really could be Bunny, couldn’t it?”

“I’m delighted to hear you say so,” replied Mr. Sim; “just a change of hair style and various make-up touches make her look quite different from the first photograph, the one of her as she really is, and, as you say, she now looks very like Bunny.”

“You clever old thing,” said Eve admiringly, “but where is all this leading us?”

“The woman in the photograph is called Mary Strong, or ‘Aunt Mary’ to you. If my plan is adopted, then she will be your Aunt Mary, Eve,” explained Mr. Sim; “you two will take on new identities as Guy and Eve Gordon and will have passports to match. Then you would all three travel together to the Soviet Union to carry through the removal of Bunny to the West. Shall I explain in detail? Are you with me, Guy? Stop me if I’m wasting my time.”

Mr. Sim spoke the last sentence with a dismissive tone which obviously anticipated a collapse of any earlier resistance.

The hard work which Eve had put in on her husband had clearly borne fruit, for now Guy seemed eager to hear more. He nodded his head.

“Go on,” he said; “you know damn well you’ve got us hooked.”

Mr. Sim allowed himself a fleeting smile.

“Very well,” he said; “this is the plan. It requires the careful synchronising of your movements and also the movements of Bunny and her boyfriend, so that you are all in the city of Leningrad at the same time. Wilkinson will therefore arrange that just before he returns to this country this summer, he will get permission to visit Leningrad for the purpose of seeing all the famous treasures at the Hermitage, and he will take Bunny with him. At the same time you and Mary Strong, or ‘Aunt Mary’ as we shall call her, will take a holiday on a cruise ship up the Baltic which will be visiting Leningrad on the very same day as Bunny will be there. While you are there, Bunny and Aunt Mary will change places so that Bunny will return to the ship with you, and Aunt Mary will return, as Bunny, to Moscow with Travers

Wilkinson. At first sight, of course, the whole idea looks impossible, but, when all the details are worked out and fall into place, it all looks rather different."

"If anyone else but you had suggested it, I should call the whole thing hare-brained," said Guy, "but I know there must be more in it than that."

"Indeed there is," replied Mr. Sim; "the best thing, probably, is to consider the movements of the two women separately. Taking Bunny first, she will shortly before the Leningrad visit have to do her stuff in acquiring the secret plans which she has promised us. I understand that she has worked out a way of getting microfilm of the plans without anyone being aware that this has been done. Don't ask me for the details of how; all I know is that she seems confident of pulling it off. God knows what risk she has to take, but that's her business. Anyway, armed with the microfilm, she will accompany Travers Wilkinson to Leningrad and on that day she will wear a plain white summer dress. Before or after their proposed visit to the Hermitage they will have lunch at the Hotel Slobodskaya, which is a large

modern hotel used by Intourist and which I know will be used by the passengers on your cruise ship for lunch. After lunch, at 2 p.m. exactly, she will visit the ladies' cloakroom where the vital changeover will take place with Aunt Mary, who will also be going there at precisely the same time. Are you with me so far?"

Guy and Eve both nodded.

"For the time being we must now leave Bunny," went on Mr. Sim, "and turn to Aunt Mary, so that we bring her movements up to the same point. She will travel with you on the cruise ship *Mountain Zephyr*, which belongs to the Mountain Line and is British. It is about 8000 tonnes and carries about 250 passengers. At that time it is doing a Baltic cruise, calling at various ports including Leningrad. Its passengers spend a full day there on an arranged excursion which includes a visit to the Hermitage and a city tour. In between the two, the itinerary provides that they will have lunch at this same Hotel Slobodskaya. While there, as I have said, Aunt Mary will visit the cloakroom at 2 o'clock and the changeover with Bunny will take place. Bunny will then

continue the excursion with you, and Aunt Mary will be the loving companion of Travers Wilkinson."

"But they'd never get away with it," protested Guy; "for one thing Bunny would never get through all the officials to get back on the ship."

"Just a minute," continued Mr. Sim; "don't be in such a hurry. The whole key to success, obviously, is to make sure that nobody spots the change of identity of the two women, and this has been carefully worked out. I mentioned that Bunny will be wearing a plain white summer dress. Well, so will Aunt Mary. But, first and foremost, Aunt Mary will have her passport photograph taken with the grey wig and gold-rimmed spectacles and also, and this is important, wearing a surgical collar as if she is a semi-invalid or has suffered some injury. When she goes ashore at Leningrad with you, she will not only have on the grey wig and spectacles and the surgical collar, but she will be walking with difficulty with a stick. So when she passed through the passport control, she will be noticeable as the bent old woman with the surgical collar who walks with a

stick. Later on, when she changes places with Bunny, it is Bunny who will put on the grey wig and gold-rimmed spectacles and also the surgical collar. She will then take the walking stick and act the part that Aunt Mary has been acting. That should be right up her street, when one remembers her superb acting performance in this very room.”

“So Bunny emerges from the hotel cloakroom as the bent old woman with the collar and the stick?” said Eve incredulously.

“Just so,” went on the little man; “and she will then join you for the rest of the excursion. It is of course vital at this point that we are sure that it is in fact Bunny, and that is why you have to be there, Guy, as the only person who could not be fooled by some imposter.”

“Yes, I can see that,” replied Guy, “but what about Bunny getting back through the passport control to return to the ship?”

“That is where the surgical collar and the stick come in,” explained Mr. Sim; “if the same men as in the morning are still on duty, they will remember the old woman and I would lay any odds that they

would never give her more than a passing glance. If there are different men on duty, then the surgical collar on the passport and the grey hair etc. should still do the trick. In either case I cannot see that the slight difference in facial characteristics between Bunny and the made-up Mary Strong will ever be noticed. There is a risk, of course, there is bound to be, but then the whole thing is a risk."

"What about the microfilm?" asked Eve; "suppose that is discovered, as it might well be. What about that?"

"That is the other purpose of the surgical collar," replied Mr. Sim.

He smiled for a moment, as he shifted in his chair.

"I am really rather pleased with the idea of the collar," he went on; "you see, it makes the perfect hiding place for the microfilm. The actual collar which Aunt Mary will wear, when she goes ashore, will not only be able to be removed and put on easily, so that Aunt Mary can pass it on to Bunny but it will have a cavity in it to serve as a hiding place for the microfilm. I ask you, when Bunny comes back through the control point, who is going to

think of taking off an old woman's surgical collar to examine it?"

"Brilliant," said Guy, "that really is something special."

"What about visas and passport control and all the details of that?" asked Eve; "how do you know that we can get visas in the first place, and in false names too?"

"The shipping line will get a block visa for the passengers," replied Mr. Sim; "there will be no problems with that. As for the passport control, you will find that you will give up your passports when you land, and they are given back to you again when you leave."

"I don't like the sound of that much," said Eve.

"Don't worry," said Mr. Sim; "my people will see to it that all three passports are in apple-pie order. If you've all got the nerve to carry it through, I think you have every chance of success."

"And if it comes unstuck?" asked Guy.

"Let's not think about that," replied Mr. Sim with a grim smile; "I should be careful to pay your milk bill before you leave home, though."

"We've forgotten about Aunt Mary and

lover boy Travers Wilkinson," said Eve; "what happens to them?"

"Simple enough," replied Mr. Sim; "just as Bunny takes Aunt Mary's place, so Aunt Mary takes hers. She and Wilkinson return to Moscow at the end of their visit. Without the wig and spectacles, Aunt Mary bears a passing resemblance to Bunny, with the make-up, that is. The photos here prove that. She shouldn't have any problem while she is with Wilkinson."

"And then?" persisted Eve.

"Then Travers Wilkinson makes his intended return to the UK, while the ruse remains undiscovered, and Aunt Mary, well she will disappear."

"What will happen to her?" asked Guy.

"Oh, she will get back here all right, don't worry. We shall see to that. And another thing, this won't be her first visit to Russia; she has been there several times before. In fact she is a distinct acquisition for my department, most efficient."

Guy stretched himself in his chair.

"So that's it then?" he asked; "that's the whole thing, lock stock and barrel?"

"Yes, that's it," replied the little man; "I'm sorry that it has taken so long to

explain. Couldn't be helped. All a bit complicated and yet really it's simple enough. Now the big question is: are you on? Yes or no?"

Guy and Eve looked at each other, each waiting for a sign from the other. It was Guy who broke the silence.

"Too damn right we are," he said, "this is too good to miss. Don't you think so, Eve?"

"Of course I do, darling," she replied immediately, clasping his hand; "and what's more, it's a real chance to make up for all the things that went wrong when your father died. We're not going to let that wretched Krovotny, or whatever his name is, get away with everything, are we?"

Mr. Sim rubbed his hands, as he grinned with undisguised pleasure.

"That's great," he exclaimed; "I don't have to tell you how pleased and delighted I am. I owe the Red Knight a thing or two, and I can't wait to bring this off."

"Do you really think it will work all right?" asked Eve, feeling uncertain for a moment.

"I really don't see why it shouldn't," replied Mr. Sim; "as you can imagine, I

have spent many, many hours thinking out all the snags and pitfalls and, as far as my abilities go, I have covered everything in my mind's eye. There is always the unforeseen, of course, but it is no good being pessimistic on a thing like this, one just has to take every possible care and then get on with it."

"You'll contact us, then, with the dates and when you have a few more details for us?" asked Guy.

"Of course," replied Mr. Sim.

"And shall we have an opportunity of meeting Aunt Mary, or Mary Strong I suppose one should call her for the time being, beforehand and getting to know her a little?" asked Eve.

"Yes, you will," replied the little man; "as a matter of fact I have brought her down with me. She is in the Firs at this moment, probably on her third or fourth gin by now."

"You devil," said Guy with a broad grin; "you knew damn well all the time that you would persuade us to fall in with your infernal schemes. You really are the absolute pits. How we have anything to do with you I really don't know."

Mr. Sim threw back his head and laughed. It was the first time that Guy had seen him abandon his habitual restraint.

“Oh, I’m not so bad really, when you get to know me,” he laughed; “the first ten years are the worst. Ask Albert.”

Guy and Eve were more than pleased with their meeting with Mary Strong that evening. When they found her at the Firs, she had already broken the ice with the Thornes and one or two of the locals. Guy could easily see why Mr. Sim had chosen her as a potential look-alike for Bunny, for he noticed immediately the same slim elegance and upright posture. As they chatted in a corner about the plans for their visit to Leningrad, Guy wondered whether she had ever been married or, indeed, whether she was married at the present time. No mention was made of husband or children, until the subject of Travers Wilkinson arose.

“Perhaps, if he’s dishy, I shall end up by cutting out Bunny,” she joked; “after all I shall have him to myself for a while. If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again.”

Seeing the puzzled look on Guy’s face, she broke into an apology.

“Oh, I’m sorry,” she said, “didn’t the boss tell you? I was married at some time, but he went off with a fashion model. Mind you, I think he was sorry afterwards, as for one thing she couldn’t cook and he had to exist on those wretched convenience foods. I saw him last year and he told me that his digestion had gone up the spout and his temper was even worse. Serves him right, he should have stuck with me. I may be dull, but at least I can cook a decent meal.”

“You’re not dull,” said Guy almost involuntarily.

“He thought I was, anyway,” she retorted; “and now here I am, propping up the department.”

“At the moment you’re propping up the bar,” put in Mr. Sim; “you’d better save yourself for the *Mountain Zephyr*. No doubt there will be plenty of duty free, not to mention one or two handsome ship’s officers.”

“What I need is a nice, cuddly widower with a big heart and a wallet to match,” laughed Mary.

As Spring gave way to Summer during the next few weeks, Guy and Eve kept on

receiving fresh snippets of information from Mr. Sim about their forthcoming mission. Several times Mary Strong came to their cottage in Surrey, so that they began to feel a real bond of friendship between them.

“Mr. Sim keeps telling me that I’ve got to get used to calling you ‘Aunt Mary’,” said Eve; “but I’m finding it terribly difficult. You don’t look like an aunt, and you certainly don’t seem like an aunt.”

“I shall, when you see me with grey hair and glasses,” laughed Mary; “anyway your problems are nothing to mine. I’m having to get used to wearing that damn surgical collar. I hate it and the hot weather makes it even worse. I’ve already had my photo taken in it for my passport, and the whole get-up makes me look about 105. I don’t know how Bunny will manage, when she has to put it on and cart it about for several hours. The boss doesn’t seem to have thought of that.”

“Bunny will manage all right, I’ll bet,” replied Guy; “I’ve never yet known her to make a mess of anything she tackled.”

Guy and Eve received their new passports in the name of Gordon, followed not

long after by the tickets from the Mountain Line offices. Eve bought herself some new clothes, while Guy treated himself to a new camera. All the details gradually fell into place, so that all was eventually ready when Mr. Sim came to say "good-bye".

"You've got nothing to worry about," said the little man breezily; "you're in good hands. Eve will not have forgotten all I taught her, and her Aunt Mary is as artful as they come. She doesn't miss much, I can tell you. I shall be keeping tabs on everything and, if by any chance something does go wrong and you end up smelling of violets, I'll do my best for you, never fear. And, if things go right, you will have done us all a tremendous service. It really is important, you know."

"I believe you," replied Guy; "that's why we're doing it. The only thing I find hard to come to terms with is the thought that I shall come face to face with Bunny. I keep wondering what on earth I shall have to say to her, and I never get any nearer to the answer."

It was a hot and cloudless June day as the *Mountain Zephyr* pulled out of Harwich, bound for her first port of call,

Copenhagen. The sea was flat, hardly disturbed by the light breeze off the shore. Guy and Eve linked arms, as they leaned over the rail.

“I sometimes wonder whether we ought really to be doing this job,” murmured Guy; “it’s Simon I worry about sometimes. After all, what would happen to him, if things went wrong?”

“I know,” replied Eve; “but all the same we both feel that it is something we have to do and, when all is said and done, it will be Mary and Bunny, who will really be at the sharp end. They’re the ones most likely to come unstuck.”

“I suppose so,” agreed Guy; “anyway it’s a bit late to be thinking about all that now. Let’s enjoy it all while we can.”

Guy and Eve had little difficulty in getting used to the ship’s routine. The time seemed to fly by, until they had drinks with Mary before dinner. Eve was very impressed by Mary’s make-up and appearance. The grey wig was a good one, while the make-up emphasised the little hollows below her cheekbones. The gold-rimmed glasses gave her a suggestion of primness, which was increased by the

expert manner in which she took them off and put them on again from time to time.

“You look smashing,” teased Guy; “if I was twenty or thirty years older, you’d have to watch it.”

“If you were twenty or thirty years older, Eve would have to watch it,” retorted Mary; “and what’s more, there are quite a few more like me on this ship, some of them on the look out, no doubt.”

Their table at dinner was one for six passengers. The other three were a Dr. and Mrs. Henderson and their thirteen-year-old daughter, Sylvia. Sylvia Henderson was shy and unsure of herself at first, so that she was glad to be sitting next to Mary, who looked to her to be the sort of person who would be kind to her. Dr. Henderson had a thin, vinegary, face, seemingly incapable of expressing any emotion, while his wife had a tired resigned look about her, as if the countless disturbed nights which her husband had had in his busy practice had left her drained of any energy. She and the doctor said little to each other or to their table companions, so that Guy and Eve could easily relax in each other’s company.

While the cabins on the ship were not as luxurious as those on the *Arabella*, nevertheless they were more than adequate, and Guy and Eve slept soundly, as the ship ploughed its way steadily across the North Sea. The next morning the air on deck seemed like a soft soothing female hand, as it ruffled Guy's hair. He was leaning over the rail, day-dreaming when he had an unpleasant reminder that problems could arise suddenly and at any time.

"I say," said a man's voice, "aren't you Guy Trent? I thought I recognised you, when you came on deck. You remember me, don't you? Parsons, Ron Parsons."

Guy turned quickly towards the voice, feeling as if someone had hit him hard in the stomach. Of course he remembered Ron Parsons. They had met on a business studies course a few years before.

"Parsons?" he repeated, fighting for time.

"Yes, Ron Parsons, you remember me?"

"Oh—er, Parsons did you say?" mumbled Guy.

"Yes, that's right, and you're Guy

Trent, aren't you? Don't you remember, we met on that frightful course?"

Guy was slowly winning the battle to contain the situation.

"Sorry," he said, "there must be some mistake. My name's Gordon, Guy Gordon."

"Gordon? Really? But you can't be. Sorry, I mean, I mean, well you've got a double, that's all I can say. I could have sworn you were Trent."

The man's voice tailed off weakly.

"That's all right," replied Guy, sensing that after a bad beginning he was getting the upper hand; "no harm done. It's easy to make a mistake."

"You're the absolute spitting image," said the man, gathering himself for a fresh onslaught.

"Do excuse me, will you," said Guy; "I promised my wife to meet her in the ship's library. Must have something to read, you know. See you again, no doubt."

Head lowered, Guy blundered towards the stairway leading down to the purser's office and the ship's library. The only thought in his mind was escape.

Eve found it difficult to stop laughing,

when Guy told her of his encounter with the persistent Ron Parsons.

“You don’t seem to have coped too well,” she teased.

“Nor would you have either, if the same thing had happened to you,” countered Guy; “anyway the man was a bit of a bore years ago, as far as I can remember, and he’s still a bore now, unless I’m much mistaken. Just my blooming luck to run slap into somebody I knew.”

“Now come on, Mr. Gordon, stop panicking and help me to choose something to read,” mocked Eve; “I need something which will guarantee peaceful, untroubled, sleep on deck, when I need it.”

When at length they emerged from the library, they saw the dreaded Parsons carefully scrutinising the passenger list on the wall outside the purser’s office.

“That’s him,” whispered Guy, gripping Eve’s arm. “That’s Parsons. Obviously the blighter still does not believe that I’m not Guy Trent.”

“He probably thinks you’re up to a bit of no good,” said Eve.

“Little does he know, does he?” smiled Guy.

The first port of call at Copenhagen gave Guy a chance of taking his mind off the problem of getting used to his new identity. An excursion with Eve round the Christiansborg Palace and the Rosenborg Castle gave him particular pleasure. They stood for some time in front of the enormous painting of King Christian IX and his family in the Palace, while they tried to identify some of the many figures. Later on Guy just had time to take Eve’s photograph beside the Little Mermaid before they returned to the ship. Aunt Mary had accompanied them for part of the day before announcing to several of their fellow-passengers that she was going back to the ship for a rest. Guy was fascinated to observe Mary’s performance as an elderly invalid. The other passengers frequently offered her a helping hand, so that it was obvious that they took her at face value. Guy was impressed and said as much to Eve.

“She’s spent a long time rehearsing for this,” replied Eve; “she’s very professional, is our Mary. Anyway the

boss wouldn't have considered sending her on this trip, if she wasn't."

The weather remained hot and sunny as the *Mountain Zephyr* started to cut its way through the calm waters of the Baltic. Guy caught a glimpse of Bornholm Island in the distance, while an occasional passing ship caught the interest of the passengers from time to time. Guy and Eve were lured into joining in some deck games, while Aunt Mary watched them contentedly from her deck chair. At night the cabaret shows and dance music kept the passengers in a relaxed and happy mood. Guy caught sight of the menacing Ron Parsons looking at him once or twice. As the man was clearly someone who found it difficult to mind his own business, he had to be avoided as far as possible. Leningrad was going to be the next port of call and the last thing that Guy wanted was any complication caused by further questioning.

As the ship turned into the Gulf of Finland, it was noticeable that the number of other vessels passing them increased. Most of those near enough for identification were flying the Russian flag. It was

at this time that Guy felt that there was a certain amount of tension building up among the passengers at the prospect of the excursion ashore at Leningrad. Some of them were becoming apprehensive at the thought that there might be problems with the Russians. Guy smiled grimly to himself. If they only knew what was really at stake in their midst! The faded Mrs. Henderson made a weak joke at the dinner table about the KGB. Nobody laughed, the only reaction being a sour look from the austere doctor. Guy had a few quiet moments alone with Mary.

“How are you feeling?” he asked.

“No problem,” she answered; “I wish, though, I could get used to this collar, I must say. Still I shan’t have it for much longer. I just hope that Bunny can handle all this gear, that’s all. What with the collar and the stick and trying to walk with a stoop, it’s quite a lot to remember, particularly when one bears in mind that she won’t have had the practice I have had.”

“Do you think she will be able to manage it?” asked Guy.

“You should know the answer to that

better than I do," replied Mary; "you know her and I don't. From all I've heard, she's got the brain for it all right. We must just hope that that's enough and that we don't get any slices of bad luck."

"Yes," mused Guy, "that's the damnable thing about the whole enterprise. Even the best prepared plans can go wrong if something totally unexpected happens. We must just hope that it doesn't, that's all."

That night Guy and Eve stayed up dancing later than usual. The northern skies refused to darken and it was late before the sun sank reluctantly below the horizon. For a while a brilliant flame-coloured swathe of light hung on the distant lip of the sea, before it too faded and disappeared. Guy put his arm round Eve's shoulders as they had a last stroll on the deck.

"Come on," he said, "let's try to get some sleep. Tomorrow's the big day. Damn Mr. Sim and all his works."

"Getting nervous?" asked Eve with a little smile.

"No," replied Guy, "I wouldn't call it that. Pumped up, I suppose you could say.

Rather like waiting to go into bat at Lord's. One just wishes one could get on with it."

The next morning Guy awoke early and slipped on deck to find that the *Mountain Zephyr* had entered the Morskoy Canal. For nearly three hours it nosed through the narrow channel. The view on each side of the ship was drab and uninspiring. Port equipment and machinery abounded. Here and there a Russian workman would stop and stare at the British ship passing so close to him. It seemed a long time before at last the ship emerged into the broad waters leading to its eventual berth and, as it did so, Guy felt a thrill in the pit of his stomach at the distant silhouette of the buildings of the great city. A sense of history seemed to invade him, as he stood gazing across the harbour at the far shore. For nine hundred days the brave inhabitants had resisted Hitler's hordes and the threat of starvation. Now what would it have to offer him and Eve on this calm summer day?

After breakfast the passengers started to gather for disembarkation. Guy and Eve stood quietly with Aunt Mary in the little

crowd. She was wearing the plain white summer dress, as instructed by Mr. Sim. Once or twice she fidgeted with her spectacles. When she dropped her stick, an American passenger was quick to pick it up for her. Soon, however, the gangway was clear for them all to go ashore. The coaches would be waiting for them on the far side of immigration not many yards away, although to Guy and Eve they could have been a mile away as they escorted the slow, limping Aunt Mary across the quay towards the row of kiosks through which they had to pass. Several uniformed men in khaki with green hatbands stood watching them. When at last they reached the kiosks, the first shock awaited them. Their passports had all been numbered on an alphabetical basis prior to disembarkation, so that now each window had corresponding blocks of numbers. As a result there was no way that Guy and Eve with the numbers on their passports could pass through the same checkpoint as Aunt Mary. Guy just had time to wonder whether Mr. Sim had overlooked this or simply forgotten to warn them about it, before an official impatiently beckoned to

them to move forward. He and Eve handed their passports through their window, to receive in exchange from the poker-faced official two brown-covered passes. Quickly they moved away to look further along the row of kiosks to see how Aunt Mary was progressing. They saw her limp slowly up to her window, apologising to other passengers for being so slow. She seemed to fumble with her passport before handing it over. The official opened it and thumbed through it deliberately, before finally looking up to check the holder with the photograph. Guy wondered whether it was his imagination that made him think that time stood still for an age before the Russian handed Aunt Mary her pass. She then promptly dropped it, so that another passenger had to pick it up for her, while the uniformed Russian grunted in impatience.

“She’s going to make damn sure they remember her, isn’t she,” whispered Guy to Eve; “all the same I do wish she’d get on with it. The suspense is killing me.”

At last Aunt Mary was able to rejoin the others so that they could complete their journey through the sheds to the coaches

waiting outside. As they did so, Guy opened his brown-covered pass to examine its contents, which proved to be printed instructions in several languages laying down the rules for their entry, including prohibition of unauthorised movements, exclusion from military areas and other such matters. No visitor could plead ignorance with this in his hand, thought Guy, who still had a slight feeling of helplessness at having had to abandon his passport into the hands of the grim-faced officials. He somehow felt cut off without his passport.

“Everything all right, my dears?” crooned Aunt Mary; “now I mustn’t lose that little brown book that nice man gave me, must I?”

Guy smiled involuntarily, Aunt Mary was a cool customer, if ever there was one.

The coach was rather more comfortable than Guy had expected. Eve sat with Aunt Mary, while he sat next to the Henderson girl, who was busy fiddling with her camera.

“My Dad doesn’t like me taking photos,” she announced to Guy; “he says that it’s a waste of money. Anyway I’m

going to take as many as I can, so he can get stuffed. Have a sweet."

"Thanks, Sylvia," replied Guy, obediently taking a sticky fruit drop and at the same time wondering how little most parents knew what their children really thought.

The Russian guide on the coach was a University student, a girl named Tania, who spoke excellent English. The morning was going to be devoted to the Hermitage Museum, while the afternoon would be spent touring the city to view the public buildings. On the way to the Hermitage the coach stopped at the Vasilyevsky Spit, where they alighted for a few minutes to look across the River Neva at the Winter Palace and the adjoining buildings of the Hermitage. The sun glinted on the water and the breadth of the river gave a superb panoramic effect to the far shore. Sylvia Henderson crammed as many photographs as she could into the time available. Everything from the Peter and Paul Fortress round to the Admiralty Tower and St. Isaac's Cathedral seemed to be safely gathered in, as she kept turning and turning again. When they boarded the coach again

to cross the bridge over the Neva on their way to the Hermitage, Guy wondered whether they might come across Bunny with Travers Wilkinson during the morning. When, however, he saw the long queues of people waiting to get into the Hermitage, he realised how remote the chance was.

When the coach stopped on the edge of Palace Square, Guy realised that Aunt Mary's public display of infirmity was going to serve them ill in the long crossing of the Square towards the Hermitage. It took them several minutes to pass the Alexander Column and reach the entrance to the Hermitage beyond the Winter Palace. As they moved slowly across the Square, Guy had time to reflect on the bloody scenes it must have cradled in the days of the people's uprising.

Once in the Hermitage, both Guy and Eve were taken aback by the milling crowds shuffling forward a few paces at a time in their various groups. Guides were holding up newspapers or coloured scarves to try to keep their charges together. It would be a thousand to one chance if they should see Bunny in the throng. As they

moved from room to room, however, Guy and Eve found it impossible to keep their minds entirely on the job in hand. Although the shepherding of Aunt Mary should have concentrated their minds, nevertheless the sheer beauty of the treasures unfolded before them gave wings to their thoughts, which soared on to another plane. Leonardo da Vinci's Madonna with a Flower, Raphael's the Holy Family, El Greco's Apostles Peter and Paul, one followed another with breathtaking effect. Rembrandt and Rubens and, later, Picasso and Matisse all drew murmurs of delight from Tania's eager group. The rooms themselves were expressions of sheer artistry, among them the Pavilion Hall and the Malachite Hall embedding themselves in Guy's memory. All the while he did his best to look among the sea of faces for a glimpse of Bunny, no doubt also in a white dress. At long last the pilgrimage came to end, so that they found themselves once more standing in the hot sunshine. Once again they embarked on the long trek across the Palace Square, this time in the opposite direction towards the group of coaches

they had earlier left. Patiently Guy and Eve walked slowly with Aunt Mary, so that eventually they reached the coach where Tania was standing on the steps.

“What a lovely morning you have given us,” said Aunt Mary to the girl; “such beautiful things must make you feel very proud.”

The girl smiled with pleasure, as she helped Aunt Mary up the steps. The only other person still outside the coach was Sylvia Henderson, who was taking a final photograph of the Alexander Column.

The Hotel Slobodskaya was a huge ultra-modern building with an unexpectedly impressive interior. The dining room was a high-ceilinged, almost cavernous room adjacent to the main hall. The parties from the *Mountain Zephyr* were deposited in turn by the front entrance, where the guides announced that there would be a two-hour break for lunch in order to allow time for shopping in the hotel foyer shops after the meal. As they were shepherded towards the dining room, Guy caught a glimpse of the shops with knots of people already looking for souvenirs. Looking further along, he could

see the signs for the cloakrooms which Mr. Sim had mentioned. The feeling of tension and excitement within him started to mount, so that it was difficult to pay much attention to the food which was being served. Once he began to make a remark about the meal being a good foundation for afterwards, but Aunt Mary silenced him immediately. She pointed to the bowls of flowers on the table between them. Guy upbraided himself inwardly for forgetting the possibility of bugging devices. He offered up thanks that he had not blurted out anything vital.

Lunch was in fact a lively affair. Not only were there glasses of vodka and champagne to cheer the tourists, but the food was good and there were entertainers as well with balalaika music, and also peasant songs from a young girl, who moved sinuously to her own music. It was just after 1.30 p.m. when at last they all rose from the tables and trooped into the foyer. Aunt Mary limped slowly along behind the others, escorted by Eve. The next half-hour seemed the longest that Guy had ever spent. The two o'clock rendezvous seemed an age away. To try to kill the time, he

looked unseeingly at the knick-knacks on sale. The two girls serving behind the most popular counter seemed unable to cope with the rush of customers from the ship. The brightly-coloured dolls and decorated wooden bowls and toys were the most popular items, many more of which could have been sold if the two girls had been more familiar with English money. At long last the moment came when Guy saw Aunt Mary detach herself from the crowd and limp away towards the cloakroom. He looked at the clock on the wall. It was one minute to two. His eyes turned towards the other end of the foyer to see if he could spot another white dress. Apart from a fat woman, he could see nobody wearing one. Just as he began to feel apprehensive that something had gone wrong, he felt a touch on his arm. It was Eve.

“Don’t look so worried,” she murmured; “it’s all right. I’ve seen her go in, several minutes ago.”

“Thank God for that,” he sighed; “all we can do now is wait.”

It must have been fully five minutes before a figure in a white dress emerged from the cloakroom. At first Guy, failing

to adjust his thoughts, believed that it was Bunny, but almost immediately he realised that it was Mary Strong. Her short dark hair and slim upright figure combined to give her just the same graceful elegance that he remembered Bunny had had.

“They’ve even been able to change shoes as well,” whispered Eve; “those heels are much higher than Aunt Mary’s.”

Mary Strong moved quickly to the main entrance without looking right or left. Without hesitating she walked into the bright sunshine and was lost to view. Guy tried to prevent himself from staring at her departing figure.

“Now for Bunny,” he said quietly to Eve.

“I hope she’s not too long,” replied Eve; “it’s getting near time for the coach and some of the passengers are making a move already. I wonder if I ought to go in and see if I can do anything.”

“No, stay where you are,” retorted Guy; “she’ll manage all right. She won’t mess it up. Remember that it’s bound to take a minute or two to get everything right.”

“Come on, you two,” a voice called out;

“you’ll miss the coach. Where’s Aunt Mary?”

It was Sylvia Henderson hurrying towards the main entrance.

“Just coming,” called out Eve.

It was then that Guy saw the figure in white coming out of the cloakroom. Had he not just seen Mary Strong leave the hotel, he could have sworn that he was looking at her now. There she came, limping, slightly bowed, leaning on her stick. She came slowly up to Guy and Eve. Guy caught his breath for a moment. Was it really going to be Bunny, or was it going to be some imposter, with the whole plan shot to pieces for some obscure reason best known to Krovotny’s devious Russian mind? He need not have worried. When she was close enough, Bunny’s eyes gave her away to Guy. He had looked into them so many times over the years, times of sadness, times of joy, times of adversity, times of laughter. Their eyes met now. Bunny’s were bright and steady, Guy’s were clouded with pain. The moment he had feared and dreaded was just as painful as he had sensed it would be.

Bunny's gold-rimmed spectacles seemed to reflect the light from the window.

"Is it time for the coach?" she asked.

Guy was startled to hear the frail, faintly cracked voice. Eve was the first to gather herself.

"Yes, come on, Aunt Mary," she said, "we must hurry, or we shall miss it."

"You go ahead. I can't hurry, my dear, you know I can't," said Bunny, waving her stick towards the door.

The next few moments were just a blurred memory to Guy, until he found himself sitting next to Sylvia in the coach.

"We nearly lost you that time," said Sylvia Henderson; "just think, you might have got stuck in Leningrad and they might not have let you out again."

Guy winced. He tried to listen to Tania, the guide, who was speaking at length in praise of Leningrad University, which they were soon to pass. He looked across to the seat where Eve was sitting with her new Aunt Mary. His gaze came to rest on the surgical collar. By now it should have that microfilm concealed in it. Pray to God that it had! Perhaps it was that which had taken Bunny so long to fix in the hotel

cloakroom. She moved her head uncomfortably to one side, as if the collar was troubling her. The hot rays of the sun were beating into her side of the coach. Meanwhile the guide's voice droned on and on, as she expanded at length on the virtues of Lenin and the triumphs of the Revolution. Dr. Henderson had fallen asleep, while his wife fiddled nervously with the parcel containing the doll which she had bought.

"A fat lot Daddy will see of Leningrad at this rate," snorted Sylvia in disgust, as she looked at her father; "he should have kept off the vodka at lunch. Serves him right."

Tania had now embarked on her piece about the mounted statue of Peter the Great in Decembrists' Square. Guy looked across again at Eve and Bunny. Each was staring straight ahead, wrapped in her thoughts.

During a short stop for photographs at St. Isaac's Cathedral Eve and Bunny remained in the coach but, as Sylvia wanted to take more photographs, Guy took the opportunity of stretching his legs. He stood for a few minutes gazing absently

at the huge golden dome of the magnificent building. How had he come to involve himself in a scheme to bring freedom to the very woman who had murdered his father? He must be mad. And to think of the risks involved, not only for himself but even more so for Eve. And what about Simon back in England and his future? The same doubts which had assailed him at the outset came flooding back again now in even greater measure. As he turned on his heel to board the coach again, he struggled to twist and guide his thoughts back to Mr. Sim and the aircraft plans. Anyway it was too late in the day to have regrets now. Perhaps he was doing the right thing after all. Eve seemed to think so. She was usually right in most things.

Tania had by no means finished yet with her enthusiastic efforts to show her British guests the wonders of Leningrad. The coach driver suffered little interference from the traffic, which seemed light for such a large city. Most of the cars looked old-fashioned and the public transport outdated. The streets, however, were remarkably clean and free from litter, while the public buildings were bright and

fresh in the sunlight. Tania evidently noticed that one or two of her charges had dropped off to sleep in the afternoon heat.

“Now,” she said; “we just see the Field of Mars before we stop so that you can do some more shopping and maybe have something to drink. Now here in the Field of Mars is the Memorial to the Fighters of the Revolution . . .”

As her voice droned on with a further historical recital, Guy’s attention wandered again. Thank God they were getting near the end of the trip! Fascinating though it was, his one desire now was to achieve a safe return to the ship. The whole plan had worked perfectly so far and success seemed so near.

The stop for further shopping promised to be uneventful. Bunny and Eve decided to stay in the coach, obviously with the intention of minimising the risk of any unexpected mishap. Guy strolled around the shopping precinct with the other passengers. Mrs. Henderson added another doll to her purchases, while Sylvia eventually attached herself to Guy on the way back to the coach. Having taken no particular notice as she paused to take yet

another photograph, he suddenly stopped in his tracks in alarm. Two Red Army soldiers were standing by the coach, talking to Tania and the driver. As they saw him approaching with Sylvia, they moved a pace or two towards him. Guy tried to look beyond them into the coach to see if Eve and Bunny were still there. Their seat, however, was on the other side of the vehicle, so that he could see nothing.

“Look, these two soldiers with the red pieces on their hats, I wonder what they want,” prattled Sylvia.

Guy swallowed hard, as Tania moved forward with the men.

“Your little daughter,” said Tania, “she has just taken a photograph of these two soldiers. That is forbidden. You should not have let her do that. No pictures of military personnel.”

Guy gulped with surprise and relief. He had not noticed what Sylvia had been doing with her camera.

“I’m sorry,” he mumbled; “I didn’t see, I—”

He broke off as one of the soldiers

pointed at the camera and spoke sharply to Tania.

“He says that he ought really to take away the camera,” explained the guide, “but this time he will let your daughter keep it. But it must not happen again.”

“I’m not his daughter,” interrupted Sylvia; “my parents are in there, in the coach. Stupid old rules anyway.”

“Come on, Sylvia,” said Guy hastily, “get into the coach. You’ll get us all into trouble in a minute. Now, quickly, do as I say.”

Without waiting for further argument Guy pushed the child up the coach steps and stumbled after her. Looking back, he saw the two Red Army men turn on their heels and move away. As Tania stepped on to the coach, he exchanged glances with Eve, who had watched the whole episode with mounting alarm. Guy shrugged his shoulders and nodded towards Sylvia at his side. Eve nodded back comprehendingly in response.

Mercifully to Guy the journey back to the port area did not take long. The final hurdle to be cleared was now there, in front of him. The passengers trooped from

the coaches to the immigration sheds and prepared to hand in their passes and retrieve their passports. Guy looked across at Bunny, who was making her way slowly and deliberately towards the window which Eve had pointed out to her. He and Eve passed quickly through their own checkpoint, their passports being handed back to them without a word from the uniformed man at the window. Bunny, on the other hand, took a long time to limp across the wide area of the concrete floor of the shed. As Guy and Eve stood watching, a voice broke into his thoughts. Dr. Henderson was standing beside him.

“That’s interesting,” said the doctor.

“What’s interesting?” queried Guy in automatic response.

“Aunt Mary is walking with her stick in her left hand. Up to now she has always had it in her right hand. Her arthritis must be of an itinerant form, not so far well researched by medical science.”

Guy looked quickly at the doctor. His face was expressionless, save for one eyebrow which was slightly raised. Eve looked round hastily to see if the doctor’s words might have been overheard. To her

horror a uniformed Russian was just moving away towards the kiosks. In the same instant Guy also saw him. His stomach seemed to freeze and turn over. Damn these Hendersons, they were dropping them right in it, first the child and now the father! The Russian made his way over to the window where Bunny had to go. She was next in the waiting line. Guy found the suspense unbearable. The Russian spoke a few words to his colleague behind the window and stepped back. Guy waited for an eternity until it was Bunny's turn. Surely the man near him would not have understood enough English anyway to realise what Henderon had been saying! Perhaps in any event he had not been able to hear him as he was walking past him.

The man at the window peered at Bunny. With Mary Strong's passport in his hand he opened it and looked down at the photograph before staring again at the old woman in front of him. He gaped curiously at the surgical collar. Guy caught his breath as there was a moment's hesitation. Then the man handed the passport to Bunny and nodded her through towards the ship, a few yards away across the quay.

Eve quickly left Guy to go to Bunny's side. As the two women moved together slowly towards the gangway, Guy looked back at the kiosk which Bunny had left. The man behind the window was handing to his colleague a sheaf of papers. So that was what the conversation had been about! The alarm about the doctor's remark had been entirely unnecessary.

Guy followed the two women to the gangway where they all handed in their boarding passes. At last he stepped off Russian soil to make his way slowly up the few steps to safety. Behind him Sylvia's piping voice rang out.

"I hadn't got a film in the camera anyway, Daddy. All that fuss for nothing. It's worse than at school."

As he took the last step on to the *Mountain Zephyr*, Guy felt that he could slowly and deliberately strangle the Hendersons, one by one, and drop them in the water.

Immediately they had gained the sanctuary of the ship, Eve took Bunny to Mary Strong's cabin. As they disappeared into the lift, Guy suddenly realised that he and Bunny had not said a single word to each other. After he had dreaded not knowing

what to say to her, he had finished by not saying anything to her at all.

Guy must have been sitting in his cabin for nearly half an hour before Eve joined him.

“Well?” he asked, as she closed the door.

Eve made no reply for a moment. She delved into her handbag and held up a tiny packet.

“There we are,” she said triumphantly; “the microfilm, I’ve been taking it out of the collar. I hope to goodness that it is the right one, the one the boss wants.”

“It had better be,” replied Guy grimly, as he wiped his brow. “I never want to go through anything like that again. How’s Bunny? What did she say?”

“Very little. She asked after Simon. She said very little, really. She’s taken off the wig and the collar and all the make-up, and she’s going to rest in her cabin.”

“When shall we see her?” asked Guy.

“I don’t think you will see her,” replied Eve; “I told her I would come and see how she was getting on and she seemed grateful. I think, however, that she intends to stay in her cabin and have all her meals

brought to her. We shall see. Perhaps she doesn't relish facing up to you any more than you fancy facing up to her. Embarrassment all round."

Guy took her in his arms and kissed her.

"We've done it," he whispered; "we've brought it off. Do you realise? We've brought it off."

"Yes, and in an hour's time we shall be leaving," replied Eve, "and in four hours' time we shall be out in the Gulf of Finland again."

"And tomorrow in Helsinki," added Guy; "come on, let's go and have a drink to celebrate. I didn't dare to have much of that champagne and vodka at lunchtime."

"Dr. Henderson had your share, I should think," laughed Eve.

After their celebration, Guy and Eve stood on deck an hour later to watch the *Mountain Zephyr* slip away from the quay. A few quiet, undemonstrative figures stood on the quay below them. There was no band playing, none of the waving and shouting there had been on the ship's departure from Copenhagen.

"They look rather a sad lot, don't they," said Guy reflectively.

“Perhaps they haven’t got too much to laugh about,” replied Eve; “anyhow, they are probably happy enough in their own way. Everything is ordered and arranged. Perhaps they don’t have all the day-to-day hassle that we have. You never know, do you, unless you live in a place?”

“True enough,” said Guy, as he gave a half-hearted wave to a family at the end of the quay. “Now let’s get ready for some food. I’m hungry.”

Fortified by his dinner and a bottle of wine, Guy felt his worries of the day slipping rapidly away. Even the long passage back through the Morskoy Canal held no anxiety for him, as he had anticipated it might do. True, he would not feel entirely at ease until they were once again in the open waters of the Gulf of Finland, but all his problems seemed to be over now. After dinner he sat quietly with Eve, as they sipped their coffee.

“I hope Mary will be all right,” he said; “we’ve been so excited and busy congratulating ourselves that we’ve forgotten all about her.”

“I haven’t,” replied Eve; “I suppose that’s because I used to be in the

department. I've been thinking about her quite a lot when we were in the coach this afternoon. She really is something else, that woman. The boss has got a good one there."

"She played that part perfectly, didn't she," said Guy, "she really did. So did Bunny for that matter, afterwards. You could hardly tell the difference between them. Mr. Sim was quite right about the surgical collar and all that. It was an absolute stroke of genius, that collar. The Russians never really got past looking at that, did they? There it was in the passport photo and there it was round her neck."

"A pity about the stick being in the wrong hand. I suppose that either Mary forgot to tell Bunny, or Bunny just made a mistake through being new to the part. Just our luck that a doctor should spot it."

"I wonder where Mary is now," said Guy.

"She'll be all right," said Eve; "she'll get back all right."

At last the *Mountain Zephyr* emerged slowly from the Morskoy Canal and set a westerly course along the Gulf of Finland. Tomorrow would see the ship arrive at

Helsinki for the next call on the cruise. Guy and Eve slipped away for as much sleep as they could manage after the turmoil of the day. It seemed in the event that their heads hardly touched the pillows before their cabin steward was bringing their morning tea.

Guy and Eve enjoyed watching the ship's arrival at Helsinki. The morning was as clear and sunny as the others had been, and the mood on board among the passengers was happy and relaxed. Such tension as there had been before and during the Leningrad excursion had disappeared. During the interval between arrival and disembarkation there was plenty to watch from the rail. Suddenly Guy felt a hand on his shoulder. He turned.

“Still with us, then?” enquired a voice. It was Mr. Sim, smiling benignly in the morning sunshine.

“Good heavens,” said Guy, shaken to the soles of his feet.

“Oh now,” cried Eve, “I don’t believe it.”

“You don’t seem very pleased to see me. I must say,” teased the little man;

“what about a kiss for the boss then, Eve?”

“What on earth are you doing here?” asked Guy, still trying to recover from the surprise.

“Just a little collection job,” replied Mr. Sim; “first of all I’ll have the little you-know-what from whichever of you that has it.”

He held out his hand expectantly until Eve produced the microfilm from her bag and gave it to him. He put it in his pocket without a word.

“Don’t say ‘thanks’, will you?” said Guy tersely.

“I don’t have to, do I?” replied the little man; “it’s all in the line of duty.”

“He’s pulling your leg, Guy,” laughed Eve; “of course he’s pleased, aren’t you, boss?”

Mr. Sim’s face broke into a broad grin.

“Of course I am,” he replied, “and of course I thank you. You’ve been tremendous.”

“Mary was the one,” broke in Eve, “she was really great. The perfect aunt.”

“I knew she would be,” said Mr. Sim;

“she’s got great qualities, that woman, and guts to match. And Bunny, how is she?”

“She’s all right,” replied Eve; “she’s in her cabin. I’ve been to see her and she’s had quite a good night after all the excitement yesterday. She did her stuff very well.”

“You must tell me about it one day, when we have time,” said Mr. Sim; “as a matter of fact Bunny is the other part of my collection job. I’m taking her back with me to England. We shall fly back together this morning. I want a yarn or two with her and I want the experts to have what Albert would call ‘a butcher’s’ at that microfilm—a good look at it, that is. I can’t wait to know if it’s the genuine article.”

Mr. Sim and Bunny left the ship a few minutes later for their flight back to London. Guy and Eve missed the ship’s passengers’ excursion round Helsinki and did their own.

“Enjoy the rest of the cruise,” had been Mr. Sim’s last words to them; “give my love to Stockholm tomorrow. I used to know it well some years ago.”

It was some weeks after their own return to England before Guy and Eve saw Mr. Sim again. Once more it was at the cottage in Devon, and once more he arrived unannounced.

“I’ve just dropped in for a free drink on my way down to Cornwall,” he said; “how are you both?”

“You haven’t come here just to enquire after our health,” laughed Guy; “what is it this time, you old rogue?”

“Oh, I just thought you’d like to know that Mary got back all right,” he said brightly.

“And the microfilm, what about the microfilm?” asked Eve impatiently; “we’ve been dying to know all this time, that is if you are allowed to tell us.”

Mr. Sim grinned.

“You can relax,” he said; “let us say that it was everything we hoped for, and more. Great, great work by both of you.”

He clasped both of them by the hand, as he spoke.

“Oh, and one more thing,” he said, almost as an afterthought; “Mr. and Mrs. Travers Wilkinson have just gone to West

Africa. I thought he might like a posting there. I hope it won't be too hot for them there. Such a pity if it is."

## THE END

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*Cyril Abraham*

The Enemy  
*Desmond Bagley*

Flyaway  
*Desmond Bagley*

The Master Idol  
*Anthony Burton*

The Navigators  
*Anthony Burton*

A Place to Stand  
*Anthony Burton*

The Doomsday Carrier  
*Victor Canning*

The Cinder Path  
*Catherine Cookson*

The Girl  
*Catherine Cookson*

The Invisible Cord  
*Catherine Cookson*

Life and Mary Ann  
*Catherine Cookson*

Maggie Rowan  
*Catherine Cookson*

Marriage and Mary Ann  
*Catherine Cookson*

Mary Ann's Angels  
*Catherine Cookson*

All Over the Town  
*R. F. Delderfield*

Jamaica Inn  
*Daphne du Maurier*

My Cousin Rachel  
*Daphne du Maurier*







# **The Red Knight**

**Geoffrey Moxon**

Guy Trent's visit to Moscow on a trade mission seems an unlikely start to a struggle between the KGB and British Intelligence pitted against each other over the Star Wars project. When he finds himself a pawn on the chessboard of international espionage with his family in constant danger, he becomes embroiled in the moves and countermoves which may mean life or death for Western scientists led by his father, Sir Redvers Trent.