

Ian Fleming The Spy Who Loved Me James Bond #10 TO MY READERS: I found what

follows lying on my desk one morning. As you will see, it appears to be the

first-person story of a young woman, evidently beautiful and not unskilled in

the arts of love. According to her story, she appears to have been involved,

both perilously and romantically, with the same James Bond whose secret-service

exploits I myself have written from time to time. With the manuscript was a note

signed "Vivienne Michel," assuring me that what she had written was purest truth

and from the depths of her heart. I was much interested in this view of James

Bond, through the wrong end of the telescope, so to speak, and, after obtaining

clearance for certain minor infringements of the Official Secrets Act, I have

much pleasure in sponsoring its publication. IAN FLEMING Part One: Me One:

Scaredy Cat I WAS running away. I was running away from England, from my

childhood, from the winter, from a sequence of untidy, unattractive love-affairs,

from the few sticks of furniture and jumble of overworn clothes that my London

life had collected around me; and I was running away from drabness, fustiness,

snobbery, the claustrophobia of close horizons, and from my inability, although

I am quite an attractive rat, to make headway in the rat-race. In fact I was

running away from almost everything except the law. And I had run a very long

way indeed—almost, exaggerating a bit, halfway round the world. In fact I had

come all the way from London to The Dreamy Pines Motor Court, which is ten miles

west of Lake George, the famous American tourist resort in the Adirondacks—that

vast expanse of mountains, lakes, and pine forests which forms most of the

northern territory of New York State. I had started on September the first, and

it was now Friday the thirteenth of October. When I had left, the grimy little

row of domesticated maples in my square had been green, or as green as any tree

can be in London in August. Now, in the billion-strong army of pine trees that

marched away northward toward the Canadian border, the real, wild maples flamed

here and there like shrapnel-bursts. And I felt that I, or at any rate my skin,

had changed just as much—from the grimy sallowness that had been the badge of my

London life to the snap and color and sparkle of living out of doors and going

to bed early and all those other dear dull things that had been part of my life

in Quebec before it was decided that I must go to England and learn to be a

"lady." Very unfashionable, of course, this cherry-ripe, strength-through-joy

complexion, and I had even stopped using lipstick and nail polish, but to me it

had been like sloughing off a borrowed skin and getting back into my own, and I

was childishly happy and pleased with myself whenever I looked in the mirror

(that's another thing—I'll never say "looking-glass" again; I just don't have to

any more) and found myself not wanting to paint a different face over my own.

I'm not being smug about this. I was just running away from the person I'd been

for the past five years. I wasn't particularly pleased with the person I was now,

but I had hated and despised the other one, and I was glad to be rid of her face.

Station WOKO (they might have dreamed up a grander call-sign!) in Albany, the

capital of New York State and about fifty miles due south of where I was,

announced that it was six o'clock. The weather report that followed included a

storm warning with gale-force winds. The storm was moving down from the north

and would hit Albany around eight p.m. That meant that I would be having a noisy

night. I didn't mind. Storms don't frighten me, and although the nearest living

soul, as far as I knew, was ten miles away up the not very good secondary road

to Lake George, the thought of the pines that would soon be thrashing outside,

the thunder and lightning and rain, made me already feel snug and warm and

protected in anticipation. And alone! But above all alone!

"Loneliness becomes a

lover, solitude a darling sin." Where had I read that? Who had written it? It

was so exactly the way I felt, the way that, as a child, I had always felt until

I had forced myself to "get into the swim," "be one of the crowd"—a good sort, on the ball, hep. And what a hash I had made of "togetherness"! I shrugged the

memory of failure away. Everyone doesn't have to live in a heap. Painters,

writers, musicians are lonely people. So are statesmen and admirals and generals.

But then, I added to be fair, so are criminals and lunatics. Let's just say, not

to be too flattering, that true Individuals are lonely. It's not a virtue—the

reverse, if anything. One ought to share and communicate if one is to be a

useful member of the tribe. The fact that I was so much happier when I was alone

was surely the sign of a faulty, a neurotic character. I had said this so often

to myself in the past five years that now, that evening, I just shrugged my

shoulders and, hugging my solitude to me, walked across the big lobby to the

door and went out to have a last look at the evening. I hate pine trees. They

are dark and stand very still and you can't shelter under them or climb them.

They are very dirty, with a most un-treelike black dirt, and if you get this

dirt mixed with their resin they make you really filthy. I find their jagged

shapes vaguely inimical, and the way they mass so closely together gives me the

impression of an army of spears barring my passage. The only good thing about

them is their smell, and, when I can get hold of it, I use pine-needle essence

in my bath. Here, in the Adirondacks, the endless vista of pine trees was

positively sickening. They clothe every square yard of earth in the valleys and

climb up to the top of every mountain so that the impression is of a spiky

carpet spread to the horizon—an endless vista of rather stupid-looking green

pyramids waiting to be cut down for matches and coat-hangers and copies of the

New York Times. Five acres or so of these stupid trees had been cleared to build

the motel, which is all that this place really was. "Motel" isn't a good word

any longer. It has become smart to use "Motor Court" or "Ranch Cabins" ever since motels became associated with prostitution, gangsters, and murders, for

all of which their anonymity and lack of supervision is a convenience. The site,

touristwise, in the lingo of the trade, was a good one. There was this wandering

secondary road through the forest, which was a pleasant alternative route

between Lake George and Glen Falls to the south, and halfway along it was a

small lake, cutely called Dreamy Waters, that was a traditional

favorite with

picnickers. It was on the southern shore of this lake that the motel had been

built, its reception lobby facing the road, with, behind this main building, the

rooms fanning out in a semicircle. There were forty rooms with kitchen, shower,

and lavatory, and they all had some kind of view of the lake behind them. The

whole construction and design was the latest thing—glazed pitch-pine frontages

and pretty timber roofs all over knobbls, air-conditioning, television in every

cabin, children's playground, swimming pool, golf range out over the lake with

floating balls (fifty balls, one dollar)—all the gimmicks. Food? Cafeteria in

the lobby, and grocery and liquor deliveries twice a day from Lake George. All

this for ten dollars single and sixteen double. No wonder that, with around two

hundred thousand dollars' capital outlay and a season lasting only from July the

first to the beginning of October, or, so far as the NO VACANCY sign



was

concerned, from July fourteenth to Labor Day, the owners were finding the going

hard. Or so those dreadful Phanceys had told me when they'd taken me on as

receptionist for only thirty dollars a week plus keep. Thank heavens they were

out of my hair! Song in my heart? There had been the whole heavenly choir at six

o'clock that morning when their shiny station-wagon had disappeared down the

road on their way to Glens Falls and then to Troy where the monsters came from.

Mr. Phancey had made a last grab at me, and I hadn't been quick enough. His free

hand had run like a fast lizard over my body before I had crunched my heel into

his instep. He had let go then. When his contorted face had cleared, he said

softly, "All right, sex-box. Just see that you mind camp good until the boss

comes to take over the keys tomorrow noon. Happy dreams tonight." Then he had

grinned a grin I hadn't understood, and had gone over to the station-wagon,

where his wife had been watching from the driver's seat. "Come on, Jed," she had

said sharply. "You can work off those urges on West Street tonight." She put the

car in gear and called over to me sweetly, " 'By now, cutie-pie. Write us every

day." Then she had wiped the crooked smile off her face and I caught a last

glimpse of her withered hatchet profile as the car turned out onto the road.

Phew! What a couple! Right out of a book—and what a book! Dear Diary! Well,

people couldn't come much Worse, and now they'd gone. From now on, on my travels,

the human race must improve! I had been standing there, looking down the way the

Phanceys had gone, remembering them. Now I turned and looked to the north to see

after the weather. It had been a beautiful day, Swiss clear and hot for the

middle of October, but now high fretful clouds, black with jagged pink hair from

the setting sun, were piling down the sky. Fast little winds were zigzagging

among the forest tops and every now and then they hit the single yellow light

above the deserted gas station down the road at the tail of the lake and set it

swaying. When a longer gust reached me, cold and buffeting, it brought with it

the whisper of a metallic squeak from the dancing light, and the first time this

happened I shivered deliciously at the little ghostly noise. On the lake shore,

beyond the last of the cabins, small waves were lapping fast against the stones,

and the gunmetal surface of the lake was fretted with sudden cat's-paws that

sometimes showed a fleck of white. But, in between the angry gusts, the air was

still, and the sentinel trees across the road and behind the motel seemed to be

pressing silently closer to huddle round the campfire of the brightly lit

building at my back. I suddenly wanted to go to the john, and I smiled to myself.

It was the piercing tickle that comes to children during hide-and-seek-in-the-dark and Sardines, when, in your cupboard under the stairs, you heard the soft creak of a floorboard, the approaching whisper of the searchers. Then you

clutched yourself in thrilling anguish and squeezed your legs together and

waited for the ecstasy of discovery, the crack of light from the opening door

and then—the supreme moment—your urgent "Ssh! Come in with me!" the softly

closing door and the giggling warm body pressed tight against your own. Standing

there, a "big girl" now, I remembered it all and recognized the sensual itch

brought on by a fleeting apprehension—the shiver down the spine, the intuitive

gooseflesh that come from the primitive fear-signals of animal ancestors. I was

amused and I hugged the moment to me. Soon the thunderheads would burst and I

would step back from the howl and chaos of the storm into my well-lighted

comfortable cave, make myself a drink, listen to the radio, and feel safe and

cosseted. It was getting dark. Tonight there would be no evening chorus from the

birds. They had long ago read the signs and disappeared into their own shelters

in the forest, as had the animals—the squirrels and the chipmunks and the deer.

In all this huge wild area there was now only me out in the open. I took a last

few deep breaths of the soft, moist air. The humidity had strengthened the scent

of pine and moss, and now there was also a strong underlying armpit smell of

earth. It was almost as if the forest was sweating with the same pleasurable

excitement I was feeling. Somewhere, from quite close, a nervous owl asked

loudly "Who?" and then was silent. I took a few steps away from the lighted

doorway and stood in the middle of the dusty road, looking north. A strong gust

of wind hit me and blew back my hair. Lightning threw a quick blue-white hand

across the horizon. Seconds later thunder growled softly like a wakening guard

dog, and then the big wind came and the tops of the trees began to dance and

thrash and the yellow light over the gas station jiggled and blinked down the

road as if to warn me. It was warning me. Suddenly the dancing light was blurred

with rain, its luminosity fogged by an advancing gray sheet of water. The first

heavy drops hit me, and I turned and ran. I banged the door behind me, locked it,

and put up the chain. I was only just in time. Then the avalanche crashed down

and settled into a steady roar of water whose patterns of sound varied from a

heavy drumming on the slanting timbers of the roof to a higher, more precise

slashing at the windows. In a moment these sounds were joined by the busy

violence of the overflow drainpipes. And the noisy background pattern of the

storm was set. I was still standing there, cozily listening, when the thunder

that had been creeping quietly up behind my back sprang its ambush. Suddenly

lightning blazed in the room, and at the same instant there came a blockbusting

crash that shook the building and made the air twang like piano wire. It was

just one single colossal explosion that might have been a huge bomb falling only

yards away. There was a sharp tinkle as a piece of glass fell out of one of the

windows onto the floor, and then the noise of water pattering in onto the

linoleum. I didn't move. I couldn't. I stood and cringed, my hands over my ears.

I hadn't meant it to be like this! The silence, that had been deafening,

resolved itself back into the roar of the rain, the roar that had been so

comforting but that now said, "You hadn't thought it could be so bad. You had

never seen a storm in these mountains. Pretty flimsy this little shelter of

yours, really. How'd you like to have the lights put out as a start? Then the

crash of a thunderbolt through that matchwood ceiling of yours? Then, just to

finish you off, lightning to set fire to the place—perhaps electrocute you? Or

shall we just frighten you so much that you dash out in the rain and try and

make those ten miles to Lake George. Like to be alone, do you? Well, just try

this for size!" Again the room turned blue-white, again, just overhead, there

came the ear-splitting crack of the explosion, but this time the crack widened

and racketed to and fro in a furious cannonade that set the cups and glasses

rattling behind the bar and made the woodwork creak with the pressure of the

sound-waves. My legs felt weak, and I faltered to the nearest chair and sat down,

my head in my hands. How could I have been so foolish, so—so impudent? If only

someone would come, someone to stay with me, someone to tell me that this was

only a storm! But it wasn't! It was catastrophe, the end of the world! And all

aimed at me! Now! It would be coming again! Any minute now! I must do something,



get help! But the Phanceys had paid off the telephone company, and the service

had been disconnected. There was only one hope! I got up and ran to the door,

reaching up for the big switch that controlled the VACANCY/NO VACANCY sign in

red neon above the threshold. If I put it to VACANCY, there might be someone

driving down the road. Someone who would be glad of shelter. But, as I pulled

the switch, the lightning that had been watching me crackled viciously in the

room, and, as the thunder crashed, I was seized by a giant hand and hurled to

the floor. Two: Dear Dead Days WHEN I came to, I at once knew where I was and

what had happened and I cringed closer to the floor, waiting to be hit again. I

stayed like that for about ten minutes, listening to the roar of the rain,

wondering if the electric shock had done me permanent damage, burned me, inside

perhaps, making me unable to have babies, or turned my hair white. Perhaps all

my hair had been burned off! I moved a hand to it. It felt all right, though

there was a bump at the back of my head. Gingerly I moved. Nothing was broken.

There was no harm. And then the big General Electric icebox in the corner burst

into life and began its cheerful domestic throbbing, and I realized that the

world was still going on and that the thunder had gone away, and I got rather

weakly to my feet and looked about me, expecting I don't know what scene of

chaos and destruction. But there it all was, just as I had "left" it—the

important-looking reception desk, the wire rack of paperbacks and magazines, the

long counter of the cafeteria, the dozen neat tables with rainbow-hued plastic

tops and uncomfortable little metal chairs, the big ice-water container and the

gleaming coffee percolator—everything in its place, just as ordinary as could be.

There was only the hole in the window and a spreading pool of water on the floor

as evidence of the holocaust through which this room and I had just passed.

Holocaust? What was I talking about? The only holocaust had been in my head!

There was a storm. There had been thunder and lightning. I had been terrified,

like a child, by the big bangs. Like an idiot I had taken hold of the electric

switch—not even waiting for the pause between lightning flashes, but choosing

just the moment when another flash was due. It had knocked me out. I had been

punished with a bump on the head. Served me right, stupid, ignorant scaredy cat!

But wait a minute! Perhaps my hair had turned white! I walked, rather fast,

across the room, picked up my bag from the desk, and went behind the bar of the

cafeteria and bent down and looked into the long piece of mirror below the

shelves. I looked first inquiringly into my eyes. They gazed back at me, blue,

clear, but wide with surmise. The lashes were there and the eyebrows, brown, an

expanse of inquiring forehead and then, yes, the sharp, brown peak and the

tumble of perfectly ordinary very dark brown hair curving away to right and left

in two big waves. So! I took out my comb and ran it brusquely, angrily through

my hair, put the comb back in my bag, and snapped the clasp. My watch said it

was nearly seven o'clock. I switched on the radio, and while I listened to WOKO

frightening its audience about the storm—power lines down, the Hudson River

rising dangerously at Glens Falls, a fallen elm blocking Route 9 at Saratoga

Springs, flood warning at Mechanicville—I strapped a bit of cardboard over the

broken windowpane with Scotch tape and got a cloth and bucket and mopped up the

pool of water on the floor. Then I ran across the short covered way to the

cabins out back and went into mine, Number 9 on the right-hand side toward the

lake, and took off my clothes and had a cold shower. My white Terylene shirt was

smudged from the fall, and I washed it and hung it up to dry. I had already

forgotten my chastisement by the storm and the fact that I had behaved like a

silly goose, and my heart was singing again with the prospect of my solitary

evening and of being on my way the next day. On an impulse, I put on the best I

had in my tiny wardrobe—my black velvet treader pants with the rather indecent

gold zip down the seat, itself most unchastely tight, and, not bothering with a

bra, my golden thread Camelot sweater with the wide floppy turtleneck. I admired

myself in the mirror, decided to pull my sleeves up above the elbows, slipped my

feet into my gold Ferragamo sandals, and did the quick dash back to the lobby.

There was just one good drink left in the quart of Virginia Gentleman bourbon

that had already lasted me two weeks, and I filled one of the best cut-glass

tumblers with ice cubes and poured the bourbon over them, shaking the bottle to

get out the last drop. Then I pulled the most comfortable armchair over from the

reception side of the room to stand beside the radio, turned the radio up, lit a

Parliament from the last five in my box, took a stiff pull at my drink, and

curled myself into the armchair. The commercial, all about cats and how they

loved Pussyfoot Prime Liver Meal, lilted on against the steady roar of the rain,

whose tone only altered when a particularly heavy gust of wind hurled the water

like grapeshot at the windows and softly shook the building. Inside, it was just

as I had visualized—weatherproof, cozy, and gay and glittering with lights and

chromium. WOKO announced forty minutes of "Music to Kiss By" and suddenly there

were the Ink Spots singing "Someone's Rockin' My Dream Boat," and I was back on

the River Thames and it was five summers ago and we were drifting down past

Kings Eyot in a punt and there was Windsor Castle in the distance and Derek was

padding while I worked the portable. We only had ten records, but whenever it

came to be the turn of the Ink Spots' L.P. and the record got to "Dream Boat,"

Derek would always plead, "Play it again, Viv," and I would have to go down on

my knees and find the place with the needle. So now my eyes filled with tears—

not because of Derek, but because of the sweet pain of boy and girl and sunshine

and first love with its tunes and snapshots and letters "Sealed With A Loving

Kiss." They were tears of sentiment for lost childhood, and of self-pity for the

pain that had been its winding sheet, and I let two tears roll down my cheeks

before I brushed them away and decided to have a short orgy of remembering. My

name is Vivienne Michel and, at the time I was sitting in the Dreamy Pines motel

and remembering, I was twenty-three. I am five feet six, and I always thought I

had a good figure until the English girls at Astor House told me my behind stuck

out too much and that I must wear a tighter bra. My eyes, as I have said, are

blue and my hair a dark brown with a natural wave, and my ambition is one day to

give it a lion's streak to make me look older and more dashing. I like my rather

high cheekbones, although these same girls said they made me look "foreign," but

my nose is too small, and my mouth too big so that it often looks sexy when I

don't want it to. I have a sanguine temperament which I like to think is

romantically tinged with melancholy, but I am wayward and independent to an

extent that worried the sisters at the convent and exasperated Miss Threadgold

at Astor House. ("Women should be willows, Vivienne. It is for men to be oak and

ash.") I am French-Canadian. I was born just outside Quebec at a little place

called Sainte Famille on the north coast of the Ile d'Orleans, a long island

that lies like a huge sunken ship in the middle of the Saint Lawrence River



where it approaches the Quebec Straits. I grew up in and beside this great river,

with the result that my main hobbies are swimming and fishing and camping and

other outdoor things. I can't remember much about my parents—except that I loved

my father and got on badly with my mother—because when I was eight they were

both killed in a wartime air crash coming in to land at Montreal on their way to

a wedding. The courts made me a ward of my widowed aunt, Florence Toussaint, and

she moved into our little house and brought me up. We got on all right, and

today I almost love her, but she was a Protestant, while I had been brought up

as a Catholic, and I became the victim of the religious tug of war that has

always been the bane of priest-ridden Quebec, so nearly exactly divided between

the faiths. The Catholics won the battle over my spiritual well-being, and I was

educated in the Ursuline Convent until I was fifteen. The sisters were strict

and the accent was very much on piety, with the result that I learned a great

deal of religious history and rather obscure dogma which I would gladly have

exchanged for subjects that would have fitted me to be something other than a

nurse or a nun, and, when in the end the atmosphere became so stifling to my

spirit that I begged to be taken away, my aunt gladly rescued me from "the

Papists" and it was decided that, at the age of sixteen, I should go to England

and be "finished." This caused something of a local hullabaloo. Not only are the

Ursulines the center of Catholic tradition in Quebec—the Convent proudly owns

the skull of Mont-calm; for two centuries there have never been less than nine

sisters kneeling at prayer, night and day, before the chapel altar—but my family

had belonged to the very innermost citadel of French-Canadianism, and that their

daughter should flout both treasured folkways at one blow was a nine days'

wonder—and scandal. The true sons and daughters of Quebec form a society, almost

a secret society, that must be as powerful as the Calvinist clique of Geneva,

and the initiates refer to themselves proudly, male or female, as "Canadiennes."

Lower, much lower, down the scale come the "Canadiens"—Protestant Canadians.

Then "Les Anglais," which embraces all more or less recent immigrants from

Britain, and lastly, "Les Américains," a term of contempt. The Canadiennes pride

themselves on their spoken French, although it is a bastard patois full of twohundred-year-old words which Frenchmen themselves don't understand and is larded with Frenchified English words—rather, I suppose, like the relationship of

Afrikaans to the language of the Dutch. The snobbery and exclusive-ness of this

Quebec clique extend even toward the French who live in France. These motherpeople to the Canadiennes are referred to simply as "Etrangers"! I have told all this at some length to explain that the defection from The Faith of a Michel

from Sainte Famille was almost as heinous a crime as a defection, if that were

possible, from the Mafia in Sicily, and it was made pretty plain to me that, in

leaving the Ursulines and Quebec, I had just about burned my bridges so far as

my spiritual guardians and my home town were concerned. My aunt sensibly poohpoohed my nerves over the social ostracism that followed—most of my friends were forbidden to have anything to do with me—but the fact remains that I arrived in

England loaded with a sense of guilt and "difference" that, added to my

"colonialism," were dreadful psychological burdens with which to face a smart

finishing school for young ladies. Miss Threadgold's Astor House was, like most

of these very English establishments, in the Sunningdale area—a large Victorian

stockbrokery kind of place, whose upper floors had been divided up with

plasterboard to make bedrooms for twenty-five pairs of girls. Being a

"foreigner," I was teamed up with the other foreigner, a dusky Lebanese

millionairess with huge tufts of mouse-colored hair in her armpits, and an equal

passion for chocolate fudge and an Egyptian film star called Ben Said, whose

gleaming photograph—gleaming teeth, mustache, eyes, and hair—was soon to be torn

up and flushed down the lavatory by the three senior girls of Rose Dormitory, of

which we were both members. Actually I was saved by the Lebanese. She was so

dreadful, petulant, smelly, and obsessed with her money that most of the school

took pity on me and went out of their way to be kind. But there were many others

who didn't, and I was made to suffer agonies for my accent, my table manners,

which were considered uncouth, my total lack of savoir-faire, and, in general,

for being a Canadian. I was also, I see now, much too sensitive and quicktempered. I just wouldn't take the bullying and teasing, and when I had

roughed up two or three of my tormentors, others got together with them and set

upon me in bed one night and punched and pinched and soaked me with water until

I burst into tears and promised I wouldn't "fight like an elk" any

more. After

that, I gradually settled down, made an armistice with the place, and morosely

set about learning to be a "lady." It was the holidays that made up for

everything. I made friends with a Scottish girl, Susan Duff, who liked the same

open-air things as I did. She too was an only child, and her parents were glad

to have me to keep her company. So there was Scotland in the summer and skiing

in the winter and spring—all over Europe, in Switzerland, Austria, Italy—and we

stuck to each other through the finishing school and at the end we even "came

out" together, and Aunt Florence produced five hundred pounds as my contribution

to an idiotic joint dance at the Hyde Park Hotel, and I got on the same "list"

and went the rounds of similar idiotic dances at which the young men seemed to

me rude and spotty and totally unmasculine compared with the young Canadians I

had known. (But I may have been wrong because one of the spottiest of them rode

in the Grand National that year and finished the course!) And then I met Derek.

By now I was seventeen and a half, and Susan and I were living in a tiny threeroom fiat in Old Church Street just off the King's Road. It was the end of June, and there wasn't much more of our famous "season" to go and we decided to give a

party for the few people we had met and actually liked. The family across the

landing were going abroad on holiday, and they said we could have their flat in

exchange for keeping an eye on it while they were away. We were both of us just

about broke with "keeping up with the Joneses" at all these balls, and I cabled

Aunt Florence and got a hundred pounds out of her, and Susan scraped up fifty,

and we decided to do it really well. We were going to ask about thirty people

and we guessed that only twenty would come. We bought eighteen bottles of

champagne—pink because it sounded more exciting—a ten-pound tin of caviar, two

rather cheap tins of foie gras that looked all right when it was sliced up, and

lots of garlicky things from Soho. We made a lot of brown bread-and-butter

sandwiches with watercress and smoked salmon, and added some sort of Christmasy

things like Elvas plums and chocolates—a stupid idea: no one ate any of them—and,

by the time we had spread the whole lot out on a door taken off its hinges and

covered with a gleaming tablecloth to make it seem like a buffet, it looked like

a real grown-up feast. The party was a great success, almost too much of a

success. All the thirty came, and some of them brought others, and there was a

real squash with people sitting on the stairs and even one man on the john with

a girl on his lap. The noise and the heat were terrific. Perhaps after all we

weren't such squares as we had thought, or perhaps people really like squares so

long as they are true squares and don't pretend. Anyway, of course the worst



happened and we ran out of drink! I was standing by the table when some wag

drained the last bottle of champagne and shouted in a strangled voice, "Water!

Water! Or we'll never see England again." I got nervous and said stupidly, "Well,

there just isn't any more," when a tall young man standing against the wall said,

"Of course there is. You've forgotten the cellar," and he took me by the elbow

and shoved me out of the room and down the stairs. "Come on," he said firmly.

"Can't spoil a good party. We'll get some more from the pub." Well, we went to

the pub and got two bottles of gin and an armful of bitter lemon, and he

insisted on paying for the gin so I paid for the lemon. He was rather tight in a

pleasant way and explained that he'd been to another party before ours and that

he'd been brought by a young married couple called Norman, who were friends of

Susan's. He said his name was Derek Mallaby, but I didn't pay much attention as

I was so anxious to get the drink back to the party. There were cheers as we

came back up the stairs, but in fact the party had passed its peak and from then

on people drifted away until there was nothing left but the usual hard core of

particular friends, and characters who had nowhere to go for dinner. Then they

too slowly broke up, including the Normans, who looked very nice and told Derek

Mallaby that he would find the key under the mat, and Susan was suggesting that

we go to the Popotte across the way, a place I didn't care for, when Derek

Mallaby came and lifted my hair away from my ear and whispered rather hoarsely

into it would I go slumming with him? So I said yes, largely, I think, because

he was tall and because he had taken charge when I was stuck. So we drifted out

into the hot evening street, leaving the dreadful battlefield of the party

behind, and Susan and her friends wandered off, and we got a taxi in the King's

Road. Derek took me right across London to a spaghetti house called The Bamboo

near the Tottenham Court Road, and we had spaghetti Bolognese and a bottle of

instant Beaujolais, as he called it, that he sent out for. He drank most of the

Beaujolais and told me that he lived not far from Windsor and that he was nearly

eighteen and this was his last term at school and he was in the cricket eleven

and that he had been given twenty-four hours off in London to see lawyers as his

aunt had died and left him some money. His parents had spent the day with him,

and they had gone to see the M.C.C. play Kent at Lords. They had then gone back

to Windsor and left him with the Normans. He was supposed to have gone to a play

and then home to bed, but there had been this other party and then mine, and now

how about going on to the 400? Of course I was thrilled. The 400 is the top

nightclub in London, and I had never graduated higher than the cellar places in

Chelsea. I told him a bit about myself and made Astor House sound funny, and he

was very easy to talk to, and when the bill came he knew exactly how much to tip

and it seemed to me that he was very grownup to be still at school, but then

English public schools are supposed to grow people up very quickly and teach

them how to behave. He held my hand in the taxi, and that seemed to be all right,

and they seemed to know him at the 400 and it was deliciously dark and he

ordered gins and tonics and they put a half-bottle of gin on the table that was

apparently his from the last time he had been there. Maurice Smart's band was as

smooth as cream and when we danced we fitted at once and his jive was just about

the same as mine and I was really having fun. I began to notice the way his dark

hair grew at the temples and that he had good hands and that he smiled not just

at one's face but into one's eyes. We stayed there until four in the morning and

the gin was finished and when we went out on to the pavement I had to hold on to

him. He got a taxi, and it seemed natural when he took me in his arms, and when

he kissed me I kissed back. After I had twice taken his hand off my breast, the

third time it seemed prissy not to leave it there, but when he moved it down and

tried to put it up my skirt, I wouldn't let him, and when he took my hand and

tried to put it on him, I wouldn't do that either, although my whole body was

hot with wanting these things. But then, thank heavens, we were outside the flat

and he got out and took me to the door and we said we would see each other again

and he would write. When we kissed good-by, he put his hand down behind my back

and squeezed my behind hard, and when his taxi disappeared round the corner I

could still feel his hand there and I crept up to bed and looked into the mirror

over the washbasin and my eyes and face were radiant as if they were lit up from

inside and, although probably most of the lighting-up came from the gin, I

thought, Oh, my heavens! I'm in love! Three: Spring's Awakening IT takes a long

time to write these things, but only minutes to remember them, and when I came

out of my daydream in the motel armchair, WOKO was still playing "Music to Kiss

By," and it was someone who may have been Don Shirley improvising through "Ain't

She Sweet." The ice in my drink had dissolved. I got up and put in some more

from the icebox and I went back and curled up in my chair and drank a careful

mouthful of the bourbon to make it last, and lit another cigarette, and at once

I was back again in that endless summer. Derek's last term came to an end, and

we had exchanged four letters each. His first one had begun "Dearest" and ended

with "love and kisses," and I had compromised with "Dear" and "love." His were mostly about how many runs he had made, and mine were about the dances I had

been to and the cinemas and plays I had seen. He was going to

spend the summer

at his home, and he was very excited about a second-hand MG his parents were

going to give him, and would I come out with him in it? Susan was surprised when

I said that I wouldn't be coming up to Scotland and that I wanted to stay on in

the flat, at any rate for the time being. I hadn't told her the truth about

Derek, and because I always got up earlier than she, she didn't know about his

letters. It wasn't like me to be secretive, but I treasured my "love-affair," as

I described it to myself, and it seemed to be so fragile and probably full of

disappointments that I thought even to talk about it might bring it bad luck.

For all I knew, I might be just one in a whole row of Derek's girls. He was so

attractive and grand, at any rate at school, that I imagined a long queue of

"Mayfair" sisters, all in organdy and all with titles, at his beck and call. So

I simply said that I wanted to look around for a job and perhaps I

would come up

later, and in due course Susan went north and a fifth letter came from Derek

saying would I come down next Saturday on the twelve-o'clock from Paddington,

and he would meet me with the car at Windsor station? And so began our regular

and delicious routine. The first day he met me on the platform. We were rather

shy, but he was so excited about his car that he quickly hurried me out to see

it. It was wonderful—black with red leather upholstery and red wire wheels and

all sorts of racing gimmicks like a strap round the hood and an out-size filler

cap on the gas tank, and the badge of the B.R.D.C. We climbed in, and I tied

Derek's colored silk handkerchief round my hair, and the exhaust made a

wonderful sexy noise as we accelerated across the High Street lights and turned

up along the river. That day he took me as far as Bray, to show off the car, and



we tore through the lanes, with Derek doing quite unnecessary racing changes on

the flattest curves. Sitting so near the ground, even at fifty, one felt as if

one was doing at least a hundred, and to begin with I clutched onto the safety

grip on the dashboard and hoped for the best. But Derek was a good driver, and I

soon got confidence in him and controlled my trembles. He took me to a fearfully

smart place, the Hotel de Paris, and we had smoked salmon, which cost extra, and

roast chicken and ice cream, and then he hired an electric canoe from the

boathouse next door, and we chugged sedately upriver and under Maidenhead Bridge

and found a little backwater, just this side of Cookham Lock, where Derek rammed

the canoe far in under the branches. He had brought a portable gramophone with

him, and I scrambled down to his end of the canoe and we sat and later lay side

by side and listened to the records and watched a small bird hopping about in

the network of branches over our heads. It was a beautiful drowsy afternoon, and

we kissed but didn't go any further, and I felt reassured that Derek didn't

after all think I was "easy." Later the midges came and we nearly upset the

canoe trying to get it out of the creek backward, but then we were going fast

downriver with the current and there were a lot of other boats with couples and

families in them, but I was quite certain we looked the gayest and handsomest of

everyone. We drove back and went down to Eton and had scrambled eggs and coffee

in a place called The Thatched House that Derek knew about, and then he

suggested we should go to the cinema. The Royalty Kinema was on Farquhar Street,

one of the small streets leading down from the Castle toward the Ascot road. It

was a meager-looking place, showing two Westerns, a cartoon, and so-called

"News" that consisted of what the Queen had been doing a month ago. I realized

why Derek had chosen it when he paid twelve shillings for a box.  
There was one

on each side of the projection room, about six feet square, dark and  
with two

chairs, and as soon as we went in Derek pulled his chair close to  
me and began

kissing and feeling me. At first I thought, Oh, God is this where he  
brings them?

But after a bit I sort of melted, and then his hands were slowly  
exploring me

and they were gentle and seemed to know, and then they were  
there and I hid my

face against his shoulder and bit my lip with the exquisite tingle, and  
then it

was all over and I was flooded with warmth and tears came by  
themselves out of

my eyes and wet the collar of his shirt. He kissed me gently and  
whispered that

he loved me and that I was the most wonderful girl in the world. But I  
sat up

and away from him and dabbed at my eyes and tried to watch the  
film and

reflected that I had lost my virginity, or some kind of virginity, and  
that now

he would never respect me again. But then the interval came and he bought me ice

cream and put his arm round the back of my chair and whispered that it was being

the most wonderful day of his life and that we must have the same day over and

over again. And I told myself not to be silly. That this was just petting.

Everybody did it, and anyway it had been rather marvelous and it wasn't as if I

would get a baby or anything. Besides, boys wanted to pet and if I didn't do it

with him he would find some other girl who would. So when the lights went out

again and his hands came back it seemed natural that they should go to my

breasts and that excited me, and when he whispered that now I must do it to him

I let him take my hand and put it on him. But I didn't know how, and I was

clumsy and ashamed, and he had to help. But then his breath came panting against

my neck and he said, "Oh, Baby!" in a long-drawn-out kind of sigh, and I felt a

sort of pang of excitement at having given him the same pleasure as he had given

me and, now that we had both done it, it was as if some kind of barrier had

disappeared from between us, and I felt motherly toward him and kissed him and

from that moment on we were somehow different kinds of friends. He drove me back

to catch the last train for London, and we arranged to meet at the same time on

the next Saturday, and he stood and waved for as long as I could see him under

the yellow lights of that darling little station, and so our real love-affair

began. It was always the same, with perhaps different places for luncheon and

high tea, the river, the gramophone, the little box in the cinema, but now there

was added the extra thrill of the physical side and always, in the boat, the car,

the cinema, our hands were on each other's bodies, more lingering, more expert

as the endless summer drew on into September. In my memory of those days the sun

is always shining and the willows dip into water as limpid clear as the sky.

Swans ride in the shadows of the poplars, and swallows dip and skim as the

Thames slips down from Queens Eyot, past Boveney Lock and Coocho Weir, where we

used to bathe, and on down the long stretch through Brocas meadows toward

Windsor Bridge. It surely must have rained, there must have been noisy holidaymakers crowding our river, there must have been clouds in our private skies, but if there were I can't remember them. The weeks slipped by like the river,

sparkling, luminous, full of enchantment. And then came the last Saturday of

September and, though till then we had ignored the fact, a new chapter had to be

opened. Susan was coming back to the flat on Monday, I had the chance of a job,

and Derek was going up to Oxford. We pretended it would all be the same. I would

explain to Susan, and there would be weekends when I could go to Oxford or Derek

come up to London. We didn't discuss our affair. It was obvious that it would go

on. Derek had talked vaguely of my meeting his parents, but he had never pressed

it, and on our Saturdays together there were always so many better things to do.

Perhaps I thought it rather odd that Derek seemed to have no time for me during

the week, but he played a lot of cricket and tennis and had hosts of friends,

all of whom he said were a bore. I didn't want to get mixed up in this side of

his life, at any rate not for the present. I was happy to have him absolutely to

myself for our one day a week. I didn't want to share him with a crowd of other

people who would anyway make me shy. So things were left very much in the air,

and I just didn't look beyond the next Saturday. That day Derek was particularly

affectionate, and in the evening he took me to the Bridge Hotel and we had three

rounds of gins and tonics, though usually we hardly drank at all. And then he

insisted on champagne for dinner, and by the time we got to our little cinema we

were both rather tight. I was glad, because it would make me forget that

tomorrow would mean the turning of a new page and the breaking up of all our

darling routines. But when we got into our little box, Derek was morose. He

didn't take me in his arms as usual but sat a little away from me and smoked and

watched the film. I came close to him and took his hand, but he just sat and

looked straight in front of him. I asked him what was the matter. After a moment

he said obstinately, "I want to sleep with you. Properly, I mean." I was shocked.

It was his rough tone of voice. We had talked about it, of course, but it was

always agreed, more or less, that this would come "later." Now I used the same

old arguments, but I was nervous and upset. Why did he have to spoil our last

evening? He argued back, fiercely. I was being a hard-boiled virgin. It was bad

for him. Anyway, we were lovers, so why not behave like lovers? I said I was



frightened of getting a baby. He said that was easy. There were things he could

wear. But why now? I argued. We couldn't do it here. Oh, yes we could. There was

plenty of room. And he wanted to do it before he went up to Oxford. It would

sort of, sort of marry us. Tremulously I considered this. Perhaps there was

something in it. It would be a kind of seal on our love. But I was frightened.

Hesitantly I said had he got one of these "things"? He said no, but there was an

all-night chemist and he would go and buy one. And he kissed me and got up

eagerly and walked out of the box. I sat and stared dully at the screen. Now I

couldn't refuse him! He would come back, and it would be messy and horrible in

this filthy little box in this filthy little back-street cinema, and it was

going to hurt and he would despise me afterward for giving in. I had an instinct

to get up and run out and down to the station and take the next train back to

London. But that would make him furious. It would hurt his vanity. I wouldn't be

being "a sport," and the rhythm of our friendship, so much based on us both

"having fun," would be wrecked. And, after all, was it fair on him to hold this

back from him? Perhaps it really was bad for him not to be able to do it

properly. And, after all, it had to happen some time. One couldn't choose the

perfect moment for that particular thing. No girl ever seemed to enjoy the first

time. Perhaps it would be better to get it over with. Anything not to make him

angry! Anything better than the danger of wrecking our love! The door opened and

there was a brief shaft of light from the lobby. Then he was beside me,

breathless and excited. "I've got it," he whispered. "It was terribly embarrassing. There was a girl behind the counter. I didn't know what to call it.

I finally said, 'One of those things for not having babies. You know.' She was

cool as a cucumber. She asked me what quality. I said the best, of

course. I

almost thought she was going to ask 'What size?' " He laughed and held me tight.

I giggled feebly back. Better to "be a sport"! Better not to make a drama out of

it! Nowadays nobody did. It would make it all so embarrassing, particularly for

him. His preliminary love-making was so perfunctory it almost made me cry. Then

he pushed his chair to the back of the box and took off his coat and laid it

down on the wooden floor. When he told me to, I lay down on it and he knelt

beside me and pulled off my panties. He said to put my feet up against the front

of the box and I did, and I was so cramped and uncomfortable that I said, "No,

Derek! Please! Not here!" But then he was somehow on top of me in a dreadful

clumsy embrace, and all my instinct was somehow to help him so that at least he

would have pleasure from it and not be angry with me afterward. And then the

world fell in! There was suddenly a great gush of yellow light, and a furious

voice said from above and behind me, "What the hell do you think you're doing in

my cinema? Get up, you filthy little swine." I don't know why I didn't faint.

Derek was standing, his face white as a sheet, clumsily buttoning up his

trousers. I scrambled to my feet, banging against the wall of the box. I stood

there, waiting to be killed, waiting to be shot dead. The black silhouette in

the doorway pointed at my bag on the floor with the white scrap of my pants

beside it. "Pick those up." I bent down quickly as if I had been hit, and

clutched the pants into a ball in my hand to try and hide them. "Now get out!"

He stood there, half blocking the entrance, while we shambled past him, broken

people. The manager banged the door of the box shut and got in front of us,

thinking, I suppose, that we might make a run for it. Two or three people had

seeped out of the back seats into the foyer. (The whole audience must have heard

the manager's voice. Had the seats below us heard the whole thing, the argument,

the pause, then Derek's instructions what to do? I shuddered.) The ticket woman

had come out of her box, and one or two passers-by, who had been examining the

program, gazed in from under the cheap colored lights over the entrance. The

manager was a plump, dark man with a tight suit and a flower in his buttonhole.

His face was red with rage as he looked us up and down. "Filthy little brats!"

He turned on me. "And I've seen you here before. You're nothing better than a

common prostitute. I've a damned good mind to call the police. Indecent exposure.

Disturbing the peace." He ran the heavy words easily off his tongue. He must

have used them often before in his sleazy little house of private darkness.

"Names, please." He took a notebook out of his pocket and licked a stub of

pencil. He was looking at Derek. Derek stammered, "Er, James Grant"—the film had

starred Cary Grant. "Er, 24 Acacia Road, Nettlebed." The manager looked up.

"There aren't any roads in Nettlebed. Only the Henley-Oxford road." Derek said

obstinately. "Yes, there are. At the back," he added weakly. "Sort of lanes."

"And you?" He turned toward me suspiciously. My mouth was dry. I swallowed.

"Miss Thompson, Audrey Thompson. 24"—I realized it was the same number that

Derek had chosen, but I couldn't think of another—"Thomas"— I almost said

Thompson again!—"Road. London." "District?" I didn't know what he meant. I gaped hopelessly at him. "Postal district," he said impatiently. I remembered Chelsea.

"S.W.6," I said weakly. The manager snapped his book shut. "All right. Get out of here, both of you." He pointed out into the street. We edged nervously past

him, and he followed us, still pointing. "And don't ever come back to my

establishment again! I know you both! You ever show up again, I'll have the

police on you!" The small host of sneering, accusing eyes followed us. I took

Derek's arm (why didn't he take mine?) and we went out under the hideous bright

lights and turned by instinct to the right and down the hill so that we could

walk faster. We didn't stop until we got to a side street and we went in there

and slowly started to work our way back to where the MG was parked up the hill

from the cinema. Derek didn't say a word until we were getting close to the car.

Then he said matter-of-factly, "Mustn't let them get the number. I'll go and get

her and pick you up opposite Fullers' on Windsor Hill. 'Bout ten minutes." Then

he freed himself from my arm and went off up the street. I stood and watched him

go, the tall, elegant figure that was once more proud and upright, and then I

turned and went back to where a lane led up parallel with Farquhar Street toward

the Castle. I found that I still had my pants crushed in my hand. I put them in

my bag. The open bag made me think of my appearance. I stopped under a

streetlight and took out my mirror. I looked dreadful. My face was so white it

was almost green, and my eyes belonged to a hunted animal. My hair stuck up at

the back where it had been rumpled by the floor, and my mouth was smeared by

Derek's kisses. I shuddered. "Filthy little swine!" How right! All of me felt

unclean, degraded, sinful. What would happen to us? Would the man check on the

addresses and put the police on us? Someone would certainly remember us from

today or from other Saturdays. Someone would remember the number of Derek's car,

some little boy who collected car numbers. There was always some Nosy Parker at

the scene of a crime. Crime? Yes, of course it was, one of the worst in puritan

England—sex, nakedness, indecent exposure. I imagined what the manager must have

seen when Derek got up from me. Ugh! I shivered with disgust. But now Derek



would be waiting for me. My hands had automatically been tidying my face. I gave

it a last look. It was the best I could do. I hurried on up the street and

turned down Windsor Hill, hugging the wall, expecting people to turn and point.

"There she goes!" "That's her!" "Filthy little swine!" Four: "Dear Viv" THAT

summer's night hadn't finished with me. Opposite Fullers' a policeman was

standing by Derek's car, arguing with him. Derek turned and saw me. "Here she is,

officer. I said she wouldn't be a minute. Had to, er, powder her nose. Didn't

you, darling?" More trouble! More lies! I said yes, breathlessly, and climbed

into the seat beside Derek. The policeman grinned slyly at me and said to Derek,

"All right, sir. But another time remember there's no parking on the Hill. Even

for an emergency like that." He fingered his mustache. Derek put the car in gear,

thanked the policeman and gave him the wink of a dirty joke shared, and we were

off at last. Derek said nothing until we had turned right at the lights at the

bottom. I thought he was going to drop me at the station, but he continued on

along the Datchet road. "Phew!" He let the air out of his lungs with relief.

"That was a close shave! Thought we were for it. Nice thing for my parents to

read in the paper tomorrow. And Oxford! I should have had it." "It was ghastly." There was so much feeling in my voice that he looked sideways at me. "Oh, well.

The path of true love and all that." His voice was light and easy. He had

recovered. When would I? "Damned shame, really," he went on casually. "Just when we'd got it all set up." He put enthusiasm into his voice to carry me with him.

"Tell you what. There's an hour before the train. Why don't we walk up along the

river. It's a well-known beat for Windsor couples. Absolutely private. Pity to

waste everything, time and so on, now we've made up our minds." The "so on," I thought, meant "the thing" he had bought. I was aghast. I said urgently, "Oh, but I can't, Derek! I simply can't! You've no idea how awful I feel about what

happened." He looked quickly at me. "What do you mean, awful?"

You feeling ill or

something?" "Oh, it's not that. It's just that, that it was all so horrible. So

shaming." "Oh, that!" his voice was contemptuous. "We got away with it, didn't we? Come on. Be a sport!" That again! But I did want to be comforted, feel his

arms round me, be certain he still loved me, although everything had gone so

wrong for him. But my legs began to tremble at the thought of going through it

all again. I clutched my knees with my hands to control them. I said weakly. "Oh,

well..." "That's my girl!" We went over the bridge, and Derek pulled the car in to the side. He helped me over a stile into a field and put his arm round me and

guided me along the little tow-path past some houseboats moored under the

willows. "Wish we had one of those," he said. "How about breaking into one?"

Lovely double bed. Probably some drink in the cupboards." "Oh, no, Derek! For

heaven's sake! There's been enough trouble." I could imagine the loud voice.

"What's going on in there? Are you the owners of this boat? Come

on out and

let's have a look at you." Derek laughed. "Perhaps you're right. Anyway, the

grass is just as soft. Aren't you excited? You'll see. It's wonderful. Then

we'll really be lovers." "Oh, yes, Derek. But you will be gentle, won't you? I

shan't be any good at it the first time." Derek squeezed me excitedly. "Don't

you worry. I'll show you." I was feeling better, stronger. It was lovely walking

with him in the moonlight. But there was a grove of trees ahead, and I looked at

it fearfully. I knew that would be where it was going to happen. I must, I must

make it easy and good for him! I mustn't be silly! I mustn't cry! The path led

through the grove. Derek looked about him. "In there," he said. "I'll go first. Keep your head down." We crept in among the branches. Sure enough, there was a

little clearing. Other people had been there before. There was a cigarette

packet, a Coca-Cola bottle. The moss and leaves had been beaten down. I had the

feeling that this was a brothel bed where hundreds, perhaps thousands, of lovers

had pressed and struggled. But now there was no turning back. At least it must

be a good place for it, if so many others had used it. Derek was eager,

impatient. He put his coat down for me and at once started, almost feverishly,

his hands devouring me. I tried to melt, but my body was still cramped with

nerves, and my limbs felt like wood. I wished he would say something, something

sweet and loving, but he was intent and purposeful, manhandling me almost

brutally, treating me as if I was a big clumsy doll. "A paper doll, for me to

call my own"—the Ink Spots again! I could hear the deep bass of Hoppy Jones and

the sweet soprano counterpoint of Bill Kenny, so piercingly sweet that it tore

at the heartstrings. And underneath, the deep pulse-beat of Charlie Fuqua's

guitar. The tears squeezed out of my eyes. Oh, God, what was happening to me?

And then the sharp pain and the short scream I quickly stifled, and he was lying

on top of me, his chest heaving and his heart beating heavily against my breast.

I put my arms round him and felt his shirt wet against my hands. We lay like

that for long minutes. I watched the moonlight filtering down through the

branches, and tried to stop my tears. So that was it! The great moment. A moment

I would never have again. So now I was a woman, and the girl was gone! And there

had been no pleasure, only pain like they all said. But there remained something.

This man in my arms. I held him more tightly to me. I was his now, entirely his,

and he was mine. He would look after me. We belonged. Now I would never be alone

again. There were two of us. Derek kissed my wet cheek and scrambled to his feet.

He held out his hands, and I pulled down my skirt and he hauled me up. He looked

into my face, and there was embarrassment in his half-smile. "I hope it didn't

hurt too much." "No. But was it all right for you?" "Oh, yes, rather."  
He bent down and picked up his coat. He looked at his watch. "I say!  
Only a quarter of

an hour for the train! We'd better get moving." We scrambled back  
onto the path

and as we walked along I pulled a comb through my hair and  
brushed at my skirt.

Derek walked silently beside me. His face under the moon was now  
closed, and

when I put my arm through his there was no answering pressure. I  
wished he would

be loving, talk about our next meeting, but I could feel that he was  
suddenly

withdrawn, cold. I hadn't got used to men's faces after they've done  
it. I

blamed myself. It hadn't been good enough. And I had cried. I had  
spoiled it for

him. We came to the car and drove silently to the station. I stopped  
him at the

entrance. Under the yellow light his face was taut and strained and  
his eyes

only half met mine. I said, "Don't come to the train, darling. I can find  
my way.

What about next Saturday? I could come down to Oxford. Or would

you rather wait

until you're settled in?" He said defensively, "Trouble is, Viv, things are

going to be different at Oxford. I'll have to see. Write to you." I tried to

read his face. This was so different from our usual parting. Perhaps he was

tired. God knew I was! I said, "Yes, of course. But write to me quickly, darling.

I'd like to know how you're getting on." I reached up and kissed him on the lips.

His own lips hardly responded. He nodded. "Well, so long, Viv," and with a kind

of twisted smile he turned and went off round the corner to his car. \*  
\* \* It

was two weeks later that I got the letter. I had written twice, but there had

been no answer. In desperation I had even telephoned, but the man at the other

end had gone away and come back and said that Mr. Mallaby wasn't at home. The

letter began, "Dear Viv, This is going to be a difficult letter to write." When

I had got that far I went into my bedroom and locked the door and



sat on my bed

and gathered my courage. The letter went on to say that it had been a wonderful

summer and he would never forget me. But now his life had changed and he would

have a lot of work to do and there wouldn't be much room for "girls." He had

told his parents about me, but they disapproved of our "affair." They said it

wasn't fair to go on with a girl if one wasn't going to marry her. "They are

terribly insular, I'm afraid, and they have ridiculous ideas about 'foreigners,'

although heaven knows I regard you as just like any other English girl and you

know I adore your accent." They were set on his marrying the daughter of some

neighbor in the country. "I've never told you about this, which I'm afraid was

very naughty of me, but as a matter of fact we're sort of semi-engaged. We had

such a marvelous time together and you were such a sport that I didn't want to

spoil it all." He said he hoped very much we would "run into each other" again one day and in the meantime he had asked Fortnum's to send me a dozen bottles of

pink champagne, "the best," to remind me of the first time we had met. "And I do hope this letter won't upset you too much, Viv, as I really think you're the

most wonderful girl, far too good for someone like me. With much love, happy

memories, Derek." Well, it took just ten minutes to break my heart and about

another six months to mend it. Accounts of other people's aches and pains are

uninteresting because they are so similar to everybody else's, so I won't go

into details. I didn't even tell Susan. As I saw it, I'd behaved like a tramp,

from the very first evening, and I'd been treated like a tramp. In this tight

little world of England, I was a Canadian, and therefore a foreigner, an

outsider—fair game. The fact that I hadn't seen it happening to me was more fool

me. Born yesterday! Better get wise, or you'll go on being hurt! But beneath

this open-eyed, chin-up rationalization, the girl in me whimpered and cringed,

and for a time I cried at night and went down on my knees to the Holy Mother I

had forsaken and prayed that She would give Derek back to me. But of course She

wouldn't, and my pride forbade me to plead with him or to follow up my curt

little note of acknowledgment to his letter and the return of the champagne to

Fortnum's. The endless summer had ended. All that was left were some poignant

Ink Spot memories, and the imprint of the nightmare in the cinema in Windsor,

the marks of which I knew I would bear all my life. I was lucky. The job I had

been trying for came up. It was through the usual friend-of-a-friend, and it was

on the Chelsea Clarion, a glorified parish magazine that had gone in for small

ads and had established itself as a kind of marketplace for people looking for

flats and rooms and servants in the southwest part of London. It had added some

editorial pages that dealt only with local problems— the hideous new lamp

standards, infrequent buses on the Number 11 route, the theft of milk bottles—

things that really affected the local housewives, and it ran a whole page of

local gossip, mostly "Chelsea," that "everybody" came to read and that somehow managed to dodge libel actions. It also had a hard-hitting editorial on Empire

Loyalist lines that exactly suited the politics of the neighborhood, and, for

good measure, it was stylishly made up each week (it was a weekly) by a man

called Harling who was quite a dab at getting the most out of the old-fashioned

type faces that were all our steam-age jobbing printers in Pimlico had in stock.

In fact it was quite a good little paper, and the staff liked it so much they

worked for a pittance and even for nothing when the ads didn't materialize in

times like August and over the holidays. I got five pounds a week (we were nonunion: not important enough), plus commission on any ads I could rustle up. So I quietly tucked the fragments of my heart somewhere under my ribs and decided to

get along without one for the future. I would rely on brains and guts and shoelather to show these damned English snobs that if I couldn't get anywhere else with them I could at least make a living out of them. So I went to work by day

and cried by night and I became the most willing horse on the paper. I made tea

for the staff, attended the funerals and got the lists of the mourners right,

wrote spiky paragraphs for the gossip page, ran the competition column, and even

checked the clues of the crossword before it went into type. And, in between, I

hustled round the neighborhood, charming ads out of the most hardbitten shops

and hotels and restaurants and piling up my twenty-per-cents with the tough old

Scotswoman who kept the accounts. Soon I was making good money—twelve to twenty

pounds a week—and the editor thought he would economize by stabilizing me at a

salary of fifteen, so he installed me in a cubbyhole next to him and I became

his editorial assistant, which apparently carried with it the privilege of

sleeping with him. But at the first pinch of my behind I told him that I was

engaged to a man in Canada, and, when I said it, I looked him so furiously in

the eye that he got the message and left me alone. I liked him, and from then on

we got on fine. He was an ex-Beaverbrook reporter called Len Holbrook, who had

come into some money and had decided to go into business for himself. He was a

Welshman and, like all of them, something of an idealist. He had decided that if

he couldn't change the world he would at least make a start on Chelsea, and he

bought the broken-down Clarion and started laying about him. He had a tip-off on

the Council and another in the local Labour Party organization, and he got off

to a flying start when he revealed that a jerry-builder had got the contract for

a new block of Council flats and that he wasn't building to specification—not

putting enough steel in the concrete or something. The Nationals picked up the

story, with tongs because it stank of libel, and, as luck would have it, cracks

began to appear in the uprights, and pictures got taken. There was an inquiry,

the builder lost his contract and his license, and the Clarion put a red Saint

George and Dragon on its masthead. There were other campaigns, like the ones I

mentioned earlier, and suddenly people were reading the little paper and it put

on more pages and soon had a circulation of around forty thousand and the

Nationals were regularly stealing its stories and giving it an occasional plug

in exchange. Well, I settled down in my new job as "Assistant to the Editor,"

and I was given more writing to do and less leg-work, and in due course, after I

had been there for a year, I graduated to a by-line, and "Vivienne Michel"

became a public person and my salary went up to twenty guineas. Len liked the

way I got on with things and wasn't afraid of people, and he taught me a lot

about writing— tricks like hooking the reader with your lead paragraph, using

short sentences, avoiding "okay" English, and, above all, writing about people.

This he had learned from the Express, and he was always drumming it into my head.

For instance, he had a phobia about the 11 and 22 bus services and he was always

chasing them. I began one of my many stories about them, "Conductors on the

Number 11 service complain that they have to work to too tight a schedule in the

rush-hours." Len put his pencil through it. "People, people, people! This is how

it ought to go: 'Frank Donaldson, a wideawake young man of twenty-seven, has a

wife, Gracie, and two children, Bill, six, and Emily, five. And he has a grouse.

"I haven't seen my kids in the evening ever since the summer holidays," he told

me in the neat little parlor of number 36 Bolton Lane. "When I get home they're

always in bed. You see, I'm a conductor, on the 11 route, and we've been running



an hour late regular, ever since the new schedules came in." ' ' " Len stopped.

"See what I mean? There are people driving those buses. They're more interesting

than the buses. Now you go out and find a Frank Donaldson and make that story of

yours come alive." Cheap stuff, I suppose, corny angles, but that's journalism,

and I was in the trade and I did what he told me and my copy began to draw the

letters—from the Donaldsons of the neighborhood and their wives and their mates.

And editors seem to love letters. They make a paper look busy and read. I stayed

with the Clarion another two years, until I was just over twenty-one, and by

then I was getting offers from the Nationals, from the Express and the Mail, and

it seemed to me it was time to get out of S.W.3 and into the world. I was still

living with Susan. She had got a job with the Foreign Office in something called

"Communications," about which she was very secretive, and she had a boy-friend

from the same department, and I knew it wouldn't be long before they got engaged

and she would want the whole flat. My own private life was a vacuum—a business

of drifting friendships and semi-flirtations from which I always recoiled, and I

was in danger of becoming a hard, if successful, little career girl, smoking too

many cigarettes and drinking too many vodkas and tonics and eating alone out of

tins. My gods, or rather goddesses (Katharine Whitehorne and Penelope Gilliatt

were outside my orbit), were Drusilla Beyfus, Veronica Papworth, Jean Campbell,

Shirley Lord, Barbara Griggs, and Anne Sharpley—the top women journalists—and I

only wanted to be as good as any of them and nothing else in the world. And then,

at a press show in aid of a Baroque Festival in Munich, I met Kurt Rainer of the

V.W.Z. Five: A Bird With a Wing Down THE rain was still crashing down, its

violence unchanged. The eight-o'clock news continued its talk of havoc and

disaster—a multiple crash on Route 9, railway tracks flooded at Schenectady,

traffic at a standstill in Troy, heavy rain likely to continue for several hours.

American life is completely dislocated by storms and snow and hurricanes. When

American automobiles can't move, life comes to a halt, and when their famous

schedules can't be met they panic and go into a kind of paroxysm of frustration,

besieging railway stations, jamming the long-distance wires, keeping their

radios permanently switched on for any crumb of comfort. I could imagine the

chaos on the roads and in the cities, and I hugged my cozy solitude to me. My

drink was nearly dead. I kept it just alive with some more ice cubes, lit

another cigarette, and settled down again in my chair while a disk jockey

announced half an hour of Dixieland jazz. Kurt hadn't liked jazz. He thought it

decadent. He also stopped me smoking and drinking and using lipstick, and life

became a serious business of art galleries and concerts and lecture halls. As a

contrast to my meaningless, rather empty life, it was a welcome change and I

dare say the diet of Teutonism appealed to the rather heavy seriousness that

underlies the Canadian character. V.W.Z., the Verband Westdeutscher Zeitungen,

was an independent news agency financed by a cooperative of West German

newspapers rather on the lines of Reuter's. Kurt Rainer was its first

representative in London and when I met him he was on the lookout for an English

Number Two to read the papers and weeklies for items of German interest while he

did the high-level diplomatic stuff and covered outside assignments. He took me

out to dinner that night, to Schmidt's in Charlotte Street, and was rather

charmingly serious about the importance of his job and how much it might mean

for Anglo-German relationships. He was a powerfully built, outdoor type of young

man whose bright fair hair and candid blue eyes made him look younger than his

thirty years. He told me that he came from Augsburg, near Munich, and that he

was an only child of parents who were both doctors and had both been rescued

from a concentration camp by the Americans. They had been informed on and

arrested for listening to the Allied radio and for preventing young Kurt from

joining the Hitler Youth Movement. He had been educated at Munich High School

and at the University, and had then gone into journalism, graduating to Die Welt,

the leading West German newspaper, from which he had been chosen for this London

job because of his good English. He asked me what I did, and the next day I went

round to his two-room office in Chancery Lane and showed him some of my work.

With typical thoroughness he had already checked up on me through friends at the

Press Club, and a week later I found myself installed in the room next to his

with the P.A./Reuter and the Exchange Telegraph tickers chattering beside my

desk. My salary was wonderful—thirty pounds a week— and I soon got to love the

work, particularly operating the Telex with our Zentrale in Hamburg, and the

twice-daily rush to catch the morning and evening deadlines of the German papers.

My lack of German was only a slight handicap, for, apart from Kurt's copy, which

he put over by telephone, all my stuff went over the Telex in English and was

translated at the other end, and the Telex operators in Hamburg had enough

English to chatter with me when I was on the machine. It was rather a mechanical

job, but you had to be quick and accurate and it was fun judging the success or

failure of what I sent by the German cuttings that came in a few days later.

Soon Kurt had enough confidence to leave me alone in charge of the office, and

there were exciting little emergencies I had to handle by myself with the thrill

of knowing that twenty editors in Germany were depending on me to be fast and

right. It all seemed so much more important and responsible than the parochial

trivialities of the Clarion, and I enjoyed the authority of Kurt's directions

and decisions, combined with the constant smell of urgency that goes with news

agency work. In due course Susan got married and I moved out to furnished rooms

in Bloomsbury Square in the same building as Kurt. I had wondered if this was a

good idea, but he was so korrekt and our relationship was so kameradschaftlich—

words which he constantly employed about social situations—that I thought I was

being at least adequately sensible. It was very silly of me. Apart from the fact

that Kurt probably misunderstood my easy acceptance of his suggestion that I

find a place in his building, it now became natural that we should walk home

together from the nearby office. Dinners together became more frequent and,

later, to spare the expense, he would bring his gramophone up to my sitting-room

and I would cook something for both of us. Of course, I saw the danger and I

invented several friends to spend the evening with. But this meant sitting by

myself in some cinema after a lonely meal with all the nuisance of men trying to

pick one up. And Kurt remained so korrekt and our relationship on such a

straightforward and even highminded level that my apprehensions came to seem

idiotic, and more and more I accepted a comradely way of life that seemed not

only totally respectable but also adult in the modern fashion. I was all the

more confident because, after about three months of this peaceful existence,

Kurt, on his return from a visit to Germany, told me that he had become engaged.

She was a childhood friend called Trude and, from all he told me, they were

ideally suited. She was the daughter of a Heidelberg professor of philosophy,



and the placid eyes that stared out of the snapshots he showed me, and the

gleaming braided hair and trim dirndl, were a living advertisement for "Kinder,

Kirche, Küche." Kurt involved me closely in the whole affair, translating

Trade's letters to me, discussing the number of children they would have, and

asking my advice on the decoration of the flat they planned to buy in Hamburg

when he had finished his three years' stint in London and had saved enough money

for marriage. I became a sort of universal aunt to the two of them, and I would

have found the role ridiculous if it hadn't all seemed quite natural and rather

fun—like having two big dolls to play at "weddings" with. Kurt had even planned

their sex life minutely and the details, which he insisted, rather perversely,

on sharing with me, were at first embarrassing and then, because he was so

clinical about the whole subject, highly educative. On the honeymoon in Venice

(all Germans go to Italy for their honeymoons) they would of course do it every

night because, Kurt said, it was most important that "the act" should be

technically perfect and, to achieve this, much practice was necessary. To this

end, they would have a light dinner, because a full stomach was not desirable,

and they would retire not later than eleven o'clock because it was important to

have at least eight hours' sleep "to recharge the batteries." Trade, he said,

was unawakened and inclined to be kühl sexually, while he was of a passionate

temperament. So there would have to be much preliminary sex-play to bring the

curve of her passion up to his. This would need restraint on his part, and in

this matter he would have to be firm with himself, for, as he told me, it was

essential to a happy marriage that the climax should be reached simultaneously

by the partners. Only thus could the thrilling summits of Ekstase become the

equal property of both. After the honeymoon they would sleep together on

Wednesdays and Saturdays. To do it more often would weaken his "batteries" and

might reduce his efficiency at the Büro. All this Kurt illustrated with a wealth

of most explicit scientific words and even with diagrams and drawings done on

the tablecloth with a fork. The lectures, for such they were, convinced me that

Kurt was a lover of quite exceptional finesse, and I admit I was fascinated and

rather envious of the well-regulated and thoroughly hygienic delights that were

being prepared for Trude. There were many nights when I longed for these

experiences to be mine, and for someone to play upon me also like, as Kurt put

it, "a great violinist playing upon his instrument." And it was inevitable, I

suppose, that in my dreams it was Kurt who came to me in that role —so safe, so

gentle, so deeply understanding of a woman's physical needs. The months passed,

and gradually the tone and frequency of Trude's letters began to change. It was

I who noticed it first, but I said nothing. There were more frequent and sharper

complaints about the length of the waiting period, the tender passages became

more perfunctory, and the pleasures of a summer holiday on the Tegernsee, where

Trude had met up with a "happy group," after a first ecstatic description, were,

significantly, I thought, not mentioned again. And then, after three weeks of

silence from Trude, Kurt came up to my rooms one evening, his face pale and wet

with tears. I was lying on the sofa, reading, and he fell on his knees beside me

and buried his head on my breast. It was all over, he said between sobs. She had

met another man, at the Tegernsee of course, a doctor from Munich, a widower. He

had proposed to her and she had accepted. It had been love at first sight. Kurt

must understand that such a thing only happened once in a girl's lifetime. He

must forgive her and forget her. She was not good enough for him.  
(Ah! That

shabby phrase again!) They must remain honorable friends. The  
marriage was to

take place next month. Kurt must try and wish her well. Farewell,  
your abject

Trude. Kurt's arms were round me and he was holding me  
desperately. "Now I have

only you," he said through his sobs. "You must be kind. You must  
give me

comfort." I smoothed his hair as maternally as I could, wondering  
how to escape

from his embrace, yet at the same time being melted by the despair  
of this

strong man and by his dependence on me. I tried to make my voice  
sound matter-of-fact. "Well, if you ask me, it was a lucky escape. Any  
girl as changeable as that would not have made you a good wife.  
There are many other better girls in

Germany. Come on, Kurt," I struggled to sit up. "We'll go out to  
dinner and a

cinema. It will take your mind off things. It's no good crying over spilt  
milk.

Come on!" I freed myself rather breathlessly and we both got to our  
feet. Kurt

hung his head. "Ah, but you are good to me, Viv. You are a real friend in need—

eine echte Kameradin. And you are right. I must not behave like a weakling. You

will be ashamed of me. And that I could not bear." He gave me a tortured smile

and went to the door and let himself out. Only two weeks later we were lovers.

It was somehow inevitable. I had half known it would be, and I did nothing to

dodge my fate. I was not in love with him, and yet we had grown so close in so

many other ways that the next step of sleeping together was bound, inexorably,

to follow. The details were really quite dull. The occasional friendly kiss on

the cheek, as if to a sister, came by degrees closer to my mouth and one day was

on it. There was a pause in the campaign while I came to take this kind of kiss

for granted, then came the soft assault on my breasts and then on my body, all

so pleasurable, so calm, so lacking in drama, and then, one evening in my

sitting-room, the slow stripping of my body "because I must see how beautiful

you are," the feeble, almost languorous protests, and then the scientific

operation that had been prepared for Trude. And how delicious it was, in the

wonderful privacy of my own room! How safe, how unhurried, how reassuring the

precautions! And how strong and gentle Kurt was, and, of all things to associate

with love-making, how divinely polite! A single flower after each time, the room

tidied after each passionate ecstasy, studious correctness in the office and

before other people, never a rough or even a dirty word—it was like a series of

exquisite operations by a surgeon with the best bedside manners in the world. Of

course, it was all rather impersonal. But I liked that. It was sex without

involvement or danger, a delicious heightening of the day's routine which each

time left me sleek and glowing like a pampered cat. I might have realized, or at

any rate guessed, that, at least among amateur women as opposed to prostitutes,

there is no physical love without emotional involvement—over a long period, that

is. Physical intimacy is halfway to love, and enslavement is much of the other

half. Admittedly my mind and much of my instincts didn't enter into our

relationship. They remained dormant, happily dormant. But my days and my nights

were so full of this man, I was so dependent on him for so much of the twentyfour hours, that it would have been almost inhuman not to have fallen into some sort of love with him. I kept on telling myself that he was humorless,

impersonal, un-fun-loving, wooden, and, finally, most excessively German, but

that didn't alter the fact that I listened for his step on the stairs, worshiped

the warmth and authority of his body, and was happy at all times to cook and

mend and work for him. I admitted to myself that I was becoming a vegetable, a

docile Hausfrau, walking, in my mind, six paces behind him on the street like



some native bearer, but I also had to admit that I was happy, contented, and

carefree, and that I didn't really yearn for any other kind of life. There were

moments when I wanted to break out of the douce, ordered cycle of the days,

shout and sing and generally create hell, but I told myself that these impulses

were basically antisocial, unfeminine, chaotic, and psychologically unbalanced.

Kurt had made me understand these things. For him, symmetry, the even tempo, the

right thing in the right place, the calm voice, the measured opinion, love on

Wednesdays and Saturdays (after a light dinner!) were the way to happiness and

away from what he described as "The Anarchic Syndrome"—i.e., smoking and

drinking, phenobarbital, jazz, promiscuous sleeping-about, fast cars, slimming,

Negroes and their new republics, homosexuality, the abolition of the death

penalty, and a host of other deviations from what he described as

Naturmenschlichkeit, or, in more words but shorter ones, a way of

life more like

the ants and the bees. Well, that was all right with me. I had been brought up

to the simple life and I was very happy to be back in it after my brief taste of

the rackets round of Chelsea pubs and gimcrack journalism, not to mention my

drama-fraught affair with Derek, and I did quietly fall into some sort of love

with Kurt. And then, inevitably, it happened. Soon after we started making

regular love, Kurt had steered me toward a reliable woman doctor who gave me a

homely lecture about contraception and fixed me up. But she warned that even

these precautions could go wrong. And they did. At first, hoping for the best, I

said nothing to Kurt, but then, from many motives—not wanting to carry the

secret alone, the faint hope that he might be pleased and ask me to marry him,

and a genuine fear about my condition—I told him. I had no idea what his

reaction might be, but of course I expected tenderness, sympathy, and at least a

show of love. We were standing by the door of my bedroom, preparatory to saying

good night. I hadn't a stitch of clothes on, while he was fully dressed. When I

had finished telling him, he quietly disengaged my arms from round his neck,

looked my body up and down with what I can only call a mixture of anger and

contempt, and reached for the door handle. Then he looked me coldly in the eyes,

said very softly, "So?" and walked out of the room and shut the door quietly

behind him. . I went and sat down on the edge of my bed and stared at the wall.

What had I done? What had I said wrong? What did Kurt's behavior mean? Then,

weak with foreboding, I got into bed and cried myself to sleep. I was right to

cry. The next morning, when I called for him downstairs for our usual walk to

the office, he had already gone out. When I got to the office, the communicating

door with mine was closed, and when, after a quarter of an hour or so, he opened

the door and said we must have a talk, his face was icily cold. I went into his

office and sat down with the desk between us: an employee being interviewed by

the boss—being sacked, as it turned out. The burden of his speech, delivered in

matter-of-fact, impersonal tones, was this. In a comradely liaison such as we

had enjoyed, and it had indeed been most enjoyable, it was essential that

matters should run smoothly, in an orderly fashion. We had been (yes, "had been")

good friends, but I would agree that there had never been any talk of marriage,

of anything more permanent than a satisfactory understanding between comrades

(that word again!). It had indeed been a most pleasant relationship, but now,

through the fault of one of the partners (me alone, I suppose!), this had

happened, and now a radical solution must be found for a problem that contained

elements of embarrassment and even of danger for our life-paths. Marriage—alas,

for he had an excellent opinion of my qualities and above all of my physical

beauty—was out of the question. Apart from other considerations, he had

inherited strong views about mixed blood (Heil Hitler!) and when he married, it

would be into the Teutonic strain. Accordingly, and with sincere regret, he had

come to certain decisions. The most important was that I must have an immediate

operation. Three months was already a dangerous delay. This would be a simple

matter. I would fly to Zürich and stay at one of the hotels near the

Hauptbahnhof. Any taxi driver would take me there from the airport. I would ask

the concierge for the name of the hotel doctor—there were excellent doctors in

Zürich— and I would consult him. He would understand the situation. All Swiss

doctors did. He would suggest that my blood pressure was too high or too low, or

that my nerves were not in a fit state to support the strain of childbirth. He

would speak to a gynecologist—there were superb gynecologists in Zürich—and I

would visit this man, who would confirm what the doctor had said and sign a

paper to that effect. The gynecologist would make a reservation at a clinic, and

the whole matter would be solved inside a week. There would be complete

discretion. The procedure was perfectly legal in Switzerland, and I would not

even have to show my passport. I could give any name I chose—a married name,

naturally. The cost would, however, be high. Perhaps as much as one hundred, or

even one hundred and fifty pounds. That also he had seen to. He reached into the

drawer of his desk, took out an envelope, and slid it across the table. It would

be reasonable, after nearly two years' excellent service, for me to receive one

month's salary in lieu of notice. That was one hundred and twenty pounds. Out of

his own pocket he had taken the liberty of adding fifty pounds to cover the air

fare, tourist class, and leave something over for emergencies. The whole sum was

in Reichsmarks to avoid any problem over the exchange. Kurt smiled tentatively,

waiting for my thanks and congratulations for his efficiency and generosity. He

must have been put out by the expression of blank horror on my face, because he

hurried on. Above all, I must not worry. These unfortunate things happened in

life. They were painful and untidy. He himself was most distressed that so happy

a relationship, one of the happiest in his experience, should come to an end. As,

alas, it had to. He added finally that he hoped I understood. I nodded and got

to my feet. I picked up the envelope, took one last look at the golden hair, the

mouth I had loved, the strong shoulders, and, feeling the tears coming, I walked

quickly out of the room and shut the door softly behind me. Before I met Kurt, I

had been a bird with a wing down. Now I had been shot in the other.  
Six: Go West,

Young Woman AT the end of August, when all this happened, Zürich  
was as gay as

this sullen city can be. The clear, glacier water of the lake was bright  
with

sailing-boats and water skiers, the public beaches were thronged  
with golden

bathers, and the glum Bahnhofplatz, and the Bahnhofstrasse that is  
the pride of

the town, clattered with ruck-sacked Jugend who had business with  
the mountains.

The healthy, well-ordered carnival atmosphere rasped on my raw  
nerves and filled

my sick heart with mixed anguish. This was the Kurt's-eye view of  
life—

Naturfreude, the simple existence of simple animals. He and I had  
shared such a

life, and on the surface it had been good. But blond hair and clear  
eyes and

sunburn are no thicker than the paint on a woman's face. They are  
just another

kind of gloss. A trite reflection, of course, but I had now been let  
down both



by the worldliness of Derek and by the homespun of Kurt, and I was prepared to

lose confidence in every man. It wasn't that I had expected Kurt to marry me, or

Derek. I had just expected them to be kind and to behave like that idiotic word

"gentlemen"—to be gentle with me, as I, I thought, had been gentle with them.

That, of course, had been the trouble. I had been too gentle, too accommodating.

I had had the desire to please (and to take pleasure, but that had been

secondary), and that had marked me as easy meat, expendable. Well, that was the

end of that! From now on I would take and not give. The world had shown me its

teeth. I would show mine. I had been wet behind the ears. Now I was dry. I stuck

my chin out like a good little Canadian (well, a fairly good little Canadian!),

and, having learned to take it, decided for a change to dish it out. The

business of my abortion, not to mince words, was good training for my new role.

The concierge at my hotel looked at me with the world-weary eyes of all

concierges and said that the hotel doctor was on holiday but that there was

another who was equally proficient. (Did he know? Did he guess?)  
Dr. Süsskind

examined me and asked if I had enough money. When I said I had, he seemed

disappointed. The gynecologist was more explicit. It seemed that he had a chalet.

Hotels in Zürich were so expensive. Would I not care to have a period of rest

before the operation? I looked at him with stony eyes and said that the British

Consul, who was my uncle, had invited me to recuperate with his family and I

would be glad if I could enter the clinic without any delay. It was he who had

recommended Dr. Süsskind. No doubt Herr Doktor Braunschweig knew the Consul? My

hocus-pocus was just good enough. It had been delivered with my new decisive

manner, and the gambit had been thought out beforehand. The bifocals registered

shock. There were coolly fervent explanations and a hasty telephone call to the

clinic. Yes, indeed. Tomorrow afternoon. Just with my overnight things. It was

as mentally distressing but as physically painless as I had expected, and three

days later I was back in my hotel. My mind was made up. I flew back to England,

stayed at the new circular Ariel Hotel near London Airport until I had got rid

of my few small belongings and paid my bills, and then I made an appointment

with the nearest Vespa dealer, in Hammersmith, and went to see him. My plan was

to go off on my own, for at least a year, and see the other half of the world. I

had had London. Life there had hit me with a hard left and right, and I was

groggy on my feet. I decided that I just didn't belong to the place. I didn't

understand Derek's sophisticated world, and I didn't know how to manage the

clinical, cold-eyed, modern "love" that Kurt had offered me. I told myself that

it was because I had too much "heart." Neither of these men had wanted my heart;

they had just wanted my body. The fact that I fell back on this age-old moan of

the discarded woman to explain my failure to hold either of these men, was, I

later decided, a more important clue to my failure than this business of

"heart." The truth of the matter was that I was just too simple to survive in

the big-town jungle. I was easy prey for the predators. I was altogether too

"Canadian" to compete with Europe. So be it! I was simple, so I would go back to

the simple lands. But not to sit and mope and vegetate. I would go there to

explore, to adventure. I would follow the fall right down through America,

working my way as waitress, baby-sitter, receptionist, until I got to Florida,

and there I would get a job on a newspaper and sit in the sunshine until the

spring. And then I would think again. Once I had made up my mind, the details of

my plan absorbed me, driving out my misery, or at least keeping it at bay, and

anesthetizing my sense of sin and shame and failure. I went to the American

Automobile Association in Pall Mall, joined it and got the maps I needed, and

talked to them about transport. The prices of secondhand cars in America were

too high, as were the running costs, and I suddenly fell in love with the idea

of a motor scooter. At first it seemed ridiculous, the idea of taking on the

great transcontinental highways with such a tiny machine, but the thought of

being out in the open air, doing around a hundred miles to the gallon, not

having to worry about garages, traveling light and, let's admit it, being

something of a sensation wherever I went, made up my mind, and the Hammersmith

dealer did the rest. I knew something about machinery—every North American child

is brought up with motor cars—and I weighed up the attractions of the little

125-c.c. model and of the sturdier, faster 150-c.c. Gran Sport. Of course, I

plumped for the sporty one with its marvelous acceleration and a top speed of

nearly sixty. It would only do around eighty miles to the gallon, compared with

the smaller one's hundred, but I told myself that gas was cheap in America and

that I must have the speed or I would take months to get south. The dealer was

enthusiastic. He pointed out that in bad weather, or if I got tired, I could

just put the thing on a train for a stretch. He could get about thirty pounds'

purchase tax off the price of one hundred and ninety pounds by delivering it to

a ship that would get it over to Canada in ten days. That would give me extra

money to spend on spares and deluxe accessories. I didn't need any pressuring.

We did one or two runs up and down the bypass, with the dealer sitting on the

back, and the Vespa went like a bird and was as easy to drive as a

bicycle. So I

signed up for it, bought a leopard-skin cover for the seat and spare wheel,

racy-looking deluxe wheel-trims, a rear mirror, a luggage rack, white saddlebags

that went beautifully with the silver finish of the body, a Perspex sports

windscreen, and a white crash helmet that made me feel like Pat Moss. The dealer

gave me some good ideas about clothes, and I went to a store and bought white

overalls with plenty of zips, some big goggles with soft fur round the edges,

and a rather dashing pair of lined black kid motorcycling gloves. After this I

sat down in my hotel with the maps and planned my route for the first stage down

from Quebec. Then I booked myself on the cheapest Trans-Canada flight to

Montreal, cabled Aunt Florence, and, on a beautiful first-of-September morning,

I was off. It was strange and lovely to be back after nearly six years. My aunt

said she could hardly recognize me, and I was certainly surprised by

Quebec.

When I had left it, the fortress had seemed vast and majestic. Now it seemed

like a large toy edifice out of Disneyland. Where it had been awesome, I found,

irreverently, that it looked made out of papier-mâché. And the giant battles

between the faiths, in which I had once thought myself to be on the point of

being crushed, and the deep schisms between the Canadiennes and the rest, were

now reduced, with my new perspective, to parish-pump squabbling. Half ashamed, I

found myself contemptuous of the screaming provincialism of the town, of the

dowdy peasants who lived in it, and of the all-pervading fog of snobbery and

petit bourgeoisie. No wonder, a child of all this, that I had been ill equipped

for the great world outside! The marvel was that I had survived at all. I was

careful to keep these thoughts from my aunt, though I suspect that she was just



as startled and perhaps shocked by the gloss that my "finishing" in Europe had

achieved. She must have found me very much the town mouse, however gangling and

simple I might feel inside, and she plied me with questions to discover how the

gloss went, how much I had been sullied by the fast life I must have led. She

would have fainted at the truth, and I was careful to say that, while there had

been flirtations, I had returned unharmed and heart-whole from the scarlet

cities across the water. No, there had not even been a temporary engagement. No

lord, not even a commoner, I could truthfully say, had proposed to me, and I had

left no boy-friend behind. I don't think she believed this. She was

complimentary about my looks. I had become "une belle fille." It seemed that I

had developed "beaucoup de tempérament"—a French euphemism for "sex appeal"—or at any rate the appearance of it, and it seemed incredible to her that at

twenty-three there was no man in my life. She was horrified at my plans and

painted a doomful picture of the dangers that awaited me on the road. America

was full of gangsters. I would be knocked down on the highway and "ravagée."

Anyway it was unladylike to travel on a scooter. She hoped that I would be

careful to ride sidesaddle. I explained that my Vespa was a most respectable

machine and, when I went to Montreal and, thrilling with every mile, rode it

back to the house, in my full regalia, she was slightly mollified, while

commenting dubiously that I would "faire sensation." And then, on September the

fifteenth, I drew a thousand dollars in American Express travelers' checks from

my small bank balance, scientifically packed my saddlebags with what I thought

would be a minimum wardrobe, kissed Aunt Florence good-by, and set off down the

Saint Lawrence on Route 2. Route 2 from Quebec southward to Montreal could be

one of the most beautiful roads in the world if it weren't for the clutter of

villas and bathing huts that have mushroomed along it since the war. It follows

the great river exactly, clinging to the north bank, and I knew it well from

bathing picnics as a child. But the Saint Lawrence Seaway had been opened since

then, and the steady stream of big ships with their thudding engines and

haunting sirens and whistles were a new thrill. The Vespa hummed happily along

at about forty. I had decided to stick to an average daily run of between a

hundred and fifty and two hundred miles, or about six hours' actual driving, but

I had no intention of being bound by any schedule. I wanted to see everything.

If there was an intriguing side road, I would go up it, and, if I came to a

beautiful or interesting place, I would stop and look at it. A good invention in

Canada and the northern part of the States is the "picnic area"—clearings carved

out of the forest or beside a lake or river, with plenty of isolated rough-hewn

benches and tables tucked away among the trees for privacy. I proposed to use

these for luncheon every day when it wasn't raining, not buying expensive foods

at stores, but making egg-and-bacon sandwiches on toast before I left each

night's motel. They, with fruit and a Thermos of coffee, would be my midday meal

and I would make up each evening with a good dinner. I budgeted for a daily

expenditure of fifteen dollars. Most motels cost eight dollars single, but there

are state taxes added, so I made it nine plus coffee and a roll for breakfast.

Gas would not be more than a dollar a day, and that left five for luncheon and

dinner, an occasional drink, and the few cigarettes I smoked. I wanted to try

and keep inside this. The Esso map and route I had, and the A.A.A. literature,

listed countless sights to see after I had crossed the border—I would be going

right through the Indian country of Fennimore Cooper, and then across some of

the great battlefields of the American Revolution, for instance—and many of them

cost around a dollar entrance fee. But I thought I would get by, and if on some

days I didn't, I would eat less on others. The Vespa was far more stable than I

had expected and wonderfully easy to run. As I got better at the twist-grip

gears, I began really to drive the little machine instead of just riding on it.

The acceleration—up to fifty in twenty seconds—was good enough to give the

ordinary American sedan quite a shock, and I soared up hills like a bird with

the exhaust purring sweetly under my tail. Of course I had to put up with a good

deal of wolf-whistling from the young, and grinning and handwaving from the old,

but I'm afraid I rather enjoyed being something of the sensation my aunt had

predicted, and I smiled with varying sweetness at all and sundry. The shoulders

of most North American roads are bad, and I had been afraid that people would

crowd my tiny machine and that I would be in constant trouble with potholes, but

I suppose I looked such a fragile little outfit that other drivers gave me a

wide berth, and I usually had the whole of the inside lane of the highway to

myself. Things went so well that first day that I managed to get through

Montreal before nightfall and twenty miles on down Route 9 that would take me

over the border into New York State the next morning. I put up at a place called

The Southern Trail Motel, where I was treated as if I was Amelia Earhart or Amy

Mollison—a rather pleasurable routine that I became accustomed to—and, after a

square meal in the cafeteria and the shy acceptance of one drink with the

proprietor, I retired to bed feeling excited and happy. It had been a long and

wonderful day. The Vespa was a dream, and my whole plan was working out fine. I

had taken one day to do the first two hundred miles. I took nearly two weeks to

cover the next two hundred and fifty. There was no mystery about it.  
Once over

the American border, I began to wander around the Adirondacks as  
if I was on a

late summer holiday. I won't go into details since this is not a  
travelogue, but

there was hardly an old fort, museum, waterfall, cave, or high  
mountain I didn't

visit—not to mention the dreadful "Storylands," "Adventure Towns,"  
and mock

"Indian Reservations" that got my dollar. I just went on a kind of  
sightseeing

splurge that was part genuine curiosity but mostly wanting to put off  
the day

when I would have to leave these lakes and rivers and forests and  
hurry on south

to the harsh Eldollarado of the superhighways, the hot-dog stands,  
and the

ribboning lights of neon. It was at the end of these two weeks that I  
found

myself at Lake George, the dreadful hub of tourism in the  
Adirondacks that has

somehow managed to turn the history and the forests and the  
wildlife into

honkytonk. Apart from the rather imposing stockade fort and the harmless

steamers that ply up to Fort Ticonderoga and back, the rest is a gimcrack

nightmare of concrete gnomes, Bambi deer and toadstools, shoddy food stalls

selling "Big Chief Hamburgers" and "Minnehaha Candy Floss," and "Attractions" such as "Animal Land" ("Visitors may hold and photograph costumed chimps"),

"Gaslight Village" ("Genuine 1890 gas-lighting), and "Storytown USA" a terrifying babyland nightmare which I need not describe. It was here that I fled

away from the horrible mainstream that Route 9 had become, and took to the dusty

side road through the forest that was to lead me to The Dreamy Pines Motor Court

and to the armchair where i have been sitting remembering just exactly how I

happened to get here. Part Two: Them Seven: "Come into My Parlor..." THE rain

was hammering down just as hard, its steady roar providing a background to the

gurgling torrents from the downspouts at the four corners of the building. I



looked forward to bed. How soundly I would sleep between the sheets in the

spotless little cabin—those percale sheets that featured in the advertisements

for the motel! How luxurious the Elliott Frey beds, Magee custom-designed

carpets, Philco television and air-conditioning, Icemagic ice-makers, Acrilan

blankets and Simmons Vivant furniture. ("Our phenolic laminate tops and drawers

are immune to cigarette burns, alcohol stains")—in fact all these refinements of

modern motel luxury down to Acrylite shower enclosures, Olsonite Pearlescent

toilet seats, and Delsey "bathroom tissue," otherwise toilet paper ("in modern colors to harmonize with contemporary decor") that would be mine, and mine alone,

tonight! Despite all these gracious trimmings, plus a beautiful site, it seemed

that The Dreamy Pines was in a bad way, and, when I had come upon it two weeks

before, there were only two overnights in the whole place and not a single

reservation for the last fortnight of the season. Mrs. Phancey, an

iron-gray

woman with bitter, mistrustful eyes and a grim slit of a mouth, was at the desk

when I came in that evening. She had looked sharply at me, a lone girl, and at

my meager saddlebags, and, when I pushed the Vespa over to Number 9, she

followed me with my card in her hand to check that I had not entered a false

vehicle license. Her husband, Jed, was more genial, but I soon understood why

when the back of his hand brushed against my breast as, later in the cafeteria,

he put the coffee in front of me. Apparently he doubled as handyman and shortorder cook and, while his pale brown eyes moved over me like slugs, he complained whiningly about how much there was to do around the place getting it

ready for closing date and constantly being called away from some job to fry

eggs for parties of transients. It seemed they were the managers for the owner.

He lived in Troy. A Mr. Sanguinetti. "Big shot. Owns plenty property down on

Cohoes Road. Riverfront property. And the Trojan Horse

—roadhouse on Route 9,

outside Albany. Maybe you know the joint?" When I said I didn't, Mr. Phancey

looked sly. "You ever want some fun, you go along to The Horse. Better not go

alone, though. Pretty gal like you could get herself roughed up. After the

fifteenth, when I get away from here, you could give me a call. Phancey's the

name. In the phone book. Be glad to escort you, show you a good time." I thanked

him, but said I was just passing through the district on my way south. Could I

have a couple of fried eggs, sunny-side up, and bacon? But Mr. Phancey wouldn't

leave me alone. While I ate, he came and sat at my little table and told me some

of his dull life-story and, in between episodes, slipped in questions about me

and my plans—what parents I had, didn't I mind being so far from home, did I

have any friends in the States? and so on—innocuous questions, put, it seemed to

me, with normal curiosity. He was after all around forty-five, old

enough to be

my father, and though he was obviously a duty old man, they were a common enough

breed, and anyway Mrs. Phancey was keeping an eye on us from the desk at the

other end of the room. Mr. Phancey finally left me and went over to his wife and,

while I smoked a cigarette and finished my second cup of coffee ("No charge,

miss. Compliments of The Dreamy Pines"), I heard them talking in a low voice

over something that, because of an occasional chuckle, seemed to give them

satisfaction. Finally Mrs. Phancey came over, clucking in a motherly fashion

about my adventurous plans ("My, oh, my! What will you modern girls be doing

next?"), and then she sat down and, looking as winsome as she knew how, said why

didn't I stop over for a few days and have a rest and earn myself a handful of

dollars into the bargain? It seemed their receptionist had walked out twentyfour hours before and, what with the housekeeping and tidying up before they closed the place for the season, they would

have no time to man the desk. Would

I care to take on the job of receptionist for the final two weeks—full board and

thirty dollars a week? Now it happened that I could do very well with those

sixty dollars and some free food and lodging. I had overspent at least fifty

dollars on my tourist spree, and this would just about square my books. I didn't

much care for the Phanceys, but I told myself that they were no worse than the

sort of people I had expected to meet on my travels. Besides, this was the first

job I had been offered and I was rather curious to see how I would make out.

Perhaps, too, they would give me a reference at the end of my time, and this

might help with other motel jobs on my way south. So, after a bit of polite

probing, I said the idea would be fine. The Phanceys seemed very pleased, and

Millicent, as she had now become, showed me the registration system, told me to

watch out for people with little luggage and big station wagons, and

took me on

a quick tour of the establishment. The business about the station wagons opened

my eyes to the seamy side of the motel business. It seemed that there were

people, particularly young couples just married and in process of setting up

house, who would check in at some lonely motel, carrying at least the minimum

"passport" of a single suitcase. This suitcase would in fact contain nothing but

a full set of precision tools, together with false license plates for their

roomy station wagon that would be parked in the carport alongside their cabin

door. After locking themselves in and waiting for the lights to go out in the

office, the couple would set to work on inconspicuous things like loosening the

screws of the bathroom fixtures, testing the anchoring of the TV set, and so on.

Once the management had gone to bed, they would really get down to it, making

neat piles of bedding, towels, and shower curtains, dismantling light-fixtures,

bed-frames, toilet seats, and even the Johns themselves if they had plumbing

knowledge. They worked in darkness of course, with pencil flashlights, and, when

everything was ready, say around two in the morning, they would quietly carry

everything through the door into the carport and pile it into the station wagon.

The last job would be to roll up the carpets and use them, the reverse side up,

as tarpaulins to cover the contents of the station wagon. Then change the plates

and softly away with their new bedroom suite all ready to lay out in their

unfurnished flat many miles away in another state! Two or three hauls like that

would also look after the living room and spare bedroom, and they would be set

up for life. If they had a garden, or a front porch, a few midnight forays

around the rich out-of-town "swimming-pool" residences would take care of the

outdoor furniture, children's heavy playthings, perhaps even the lawnmower and

sprinklers. Mrs. Phancey said that motels had no defense against this sort of

attack. Everything was screwed down that could be screwed down, and marked with

the name of the motel. The only hope was to smell the marauders when they

registered and then either turn them away or sit up all night with a shotgun. In

cities, motels had other problems—prostitutes who set up shop, murderers who

left corpses in the shower, and occasional holdups for the money in the cash

register. But I was not to worry. Just call for Jed if I smelled trouble. He

could act real tough and he had a gun. And, with this cold comfort, I was left

to ponder on the darker side of the motel industry. Of course it all turned out

perfectly all right and the job was no problem. In fact there was so little to

do that I did rather wonder why the Phanceys had bothered to take me on. But



they were lazy, and it wasn't their money they were paying me, and I guessed

that part of the reason was that Jed thought he had found himself an easy lay.

But that also was no problem. I just had to dodge his hands and snub him icily

on an average of once a day and hook a chair under the door-handle when I went

to bed to defeat the pass-key he tried on my second night. We had a few

overnighters in the first week, and I found that I was expected to lend a hand

with the housekeeping, but that too was all right with me, and anyway the

customers slacked off, until, after October tenth there wasn't a single one.

Apparently October fifteenth is a kind of magical date in this particular

holiday world. Everything closes down on that day, except along the major

highways. It is supposed to be the beginning of winter. There is the hunting

season coming up, but the rich hunters have their own hunting clubs and camps in

the mountains, and the poor ones take their cars to one or another of the picnic

areas and climb up into the forests before dawn to get their deer. Anyway,

around October fifteenth the tourists disappear from the scene and there is no

more easy money to be made in the Adirondacks. As closing day came nearer, there

was a good deal of talk on the telephone between the Phanceys and Mr.

Sanguinetti in Troy, and on the eleventh Mrs. Phancey told me casually that she

and Jed would be leaving for Troy on the thirteenth and would I mind staying in

charge that night and handing over the keys to Mr. Sanguinetti, who would be

coming up finally to close the place around noon on the fourteenth? It seemed a

vague sort of arrangement to leave an unknown girl in charge of such a valuable

property, but it was explained that the Phanceys would be taking the cash and

the register and the stock of food and drinks with them, and all I had to do was

switch off the lights and lock up before I went to bed. Mr. Sanguinetti would be

coming up with trucks for the rest of the movables the next morning. Then I

could be on my way. So I said yes, that would be all right, and Mrs. Phancey

beamed and said I was a very good girl, but when I asked if she would give me a

reference, she got cagey and said she would have to leave that to Mr.

Sanguinetti, but she would make a point of telling him how helpful I had been.

So the last day was spent packing things into their station wagon until the

stores and cafeteria were empty of everything except plenty of bacon and eggs

and coffee and bread for me and for the truckers to eat when they came up. That

last day I had expected the Phanceys to be rather nice to me. After all, we had

got on all right together and I had gone out of my way to be helpful about

everything. But, oddly enough, they were just the reverse. Mrs. Phancey ordered

me about as if I was a maid, and Jed became tough and nasty in his leching,

using filthy words even when his wife was in earshot, and quite openly, reaching

for my body whenever he got within range. I couldn't understand the change. It

was as if they had had what they wanted out of me and could now discard me with

contempt—and even, it seemed to me, almost with loathing. I got so furious that

I finally went to Mrs. Phancey and said I was going and could I have my money?

But she just laughed and said, Oh, no. Mr. Sanguinetti would be giving me that.

They couldn't take a chance of the cutlery being short when he came to count it.

After this, and rather than face them at supper, I made myself some jam

sandwiches and went and locked myself in my cabin and prayed for the morning,

when they would be gone. And, as I have said, six o'clock did at last come and I

saw the last of the monsters. And now this was my last night at The Dreamy Pines

and tomorrow I would be off again. It had been a slice of life, not totally

unpleasant in spite of the Phanceys, and I had learned the fringes of a job that

might stand me in good stead. I looked at my watch. It was nine o'clock, and

here was the doomful WOKO from Albany with its storm bulletin. The Adirondacks

would be clear by midnight. So, with any luck, I would have dry roads in the

morning. I went behind the cafeteria bar, turned on the electric cooker, and put

out three eggs and six slices of hickory-smoked bacon. I was hungry. And then

came a loud hammering on the door. Eight: Dynamite from Nightmare-Land MY heart

went to my mouth. Who could it possibly be? And then I remembered. The VACANCY

sign! I had pulled the switch when the lightning struck and I had forgotten to

turn the damned thing off. What an idiot! The banging started up again. Well, I

would just have to face it, apologize, and send the people on to Lake George. I

went nervously across to the door, unlocked it, and held it on the chain. There

was no porch. The neon VACANCY sign made a red halo in the sheet of rain and

glittered redly on the shiny black oilskins and hoods of the two men. Behind

them was a black sedan. The leading man said politely, "Miss Michel?" "Yes,

that's me. But I'm afraid the VACANCY sign's on by mistake. The motel's closed

down." "Sure, sure. We're from Mr. Sanguinetti. From his insurance company. Come

to make a quick inventory before things get taken away tomorrow. Can we come in

out of the rain, miss? Show you our credentials inside. Sure is a terrible

night." I looked doubtfully from one to the other, but I could see little of the

faces under the oilskin hoods. It sounded all right, but I didn't like it. I

said nervously, "But the Phanceys, the managers, they didn't say anything about

you coming." "Well, they should of, miss. I'll havta report that back to Mr.

Sanguinetti." He turned to the man behind him. "That right, Mr. Jones?" The

other man stifled a giggle. Why did he giggle? "Sure, that's right, Mr.

Thomson." He giggled again. "Okay then, miss. Can we come inside, please? It

sure is wetter'n hell out here." "Well, I don't know. I was told not to let

anyone in. But as it's from Mr. Sanguinetti..." I nervously undid the chain and

opened the door. They pushed in, shouldering roughly past me, and stood side by

side, looking the big room over. The man who had been addressed as "Mr. Thomson"

sniffed. Black eyes looked at me out of a cold gray face. "You smoke?" "Yes, a little. Why?" "Reckoned you could have company." He took the door handle from me, slammed the door, locked it, and put up the chain. The two men stripped off

their dripping oilskins and threw them messily down on the floor and, now that I

could see them both, I felt in extreme danger. "Mr. Thomson," obviously the

leader, was tall and thin, almost skeletal, and his skin had this gray, drowned

look as if he always lived indoors. The black eyes were slow-moving, incurious,

and the lips thin and purplish like an unstitched wound. When he spoke there was

a glint of gray silvery metal from his front teeth, and I supposed they had been

cheaply capped with steel, as I had heard was done in Russia and Japan. The ears

lay very flat and close to the bony, rather box-shaped head and the stiff

grayish-black hair was cut so close to the skull that the skin showed whitely

through it. He was wearing a black, sharp-looking single-breasted coat with

shoulders padded square, stovepipe trousers so narrow that the bones of his

knees bulged through the material, and a gray shirt buttoned up to the throat

with no tie. His shoes were pointed in the Italian style and of gray suede. They

and the clothes looked new. He was a frightening lizard of a man, and my skin

crawled with fear of him. Where this man was deadly the other was merely



unpleasant—a short, moon-faced youth with wet, very pale blue eyes and fat wet

lips. His skin was very white and he had that hideous disease of no hair—no

eyebrows and no eyelashes, and none on a head that was as polished as a billiard

ball. I would have felt sorry for him if I hadn't been so frightened,

particularly as he seemed to have a bad cold and began blowing his nose as soon

as he got his oilskins off. Under them he wore a black leather windcheater,

grubby trousers, and those Mexican saddle-leather boots with straps that they

wear in Texas. He looked a young monster, the sort that pulls wings off flies,

and I desperately wished that I had dressed in clothes that didn't make me seem

so terribly naked. Sure enough, he now finished blowing his nose and seemed to

take me in for the first time. He looked me over grinning delightedly. Then he

walked all round me and came back and gave a long, low whistle. "Say, Horror."

He winked at the other man. "This is some bimbo! Git an eyeful of those knockers!

And a rear-end to match! Geez, what a dish!" "Not now, Sluggsy. Later. Git goin'

and look those cabins over. Meantime, the lady's goin' to fix us some chow. How

you want your eggs?" The man called Sluggsy grinned at me. "Scramble em', baby.

And nice and wet. Like mother makes. Otherwise poppa spank. Right across that

sweet little biscuit of yours. Oh boy, oh boy!" He did some little dancing,

boxing steps toward me, and I backed away to the door. I pretended to be even

more frightened than I was, and when he got within range I slapped him as hard

as I could across the face and, before he could recover from his surprise, I had

darted sideways behind a table and picked up one of the little metal chairs and

held it with the feet pointing at him. The thin man gave a short, barking laugh.

"Ixnay, Sluggsy. I said later. Leave the stupid slot be. There's all night for

that. Git goin' like I said." The eyes in the pale moon-face were now red with

excitement. The man rubbed his cheek. The wet lips parted in a slow smile. "You

know what, baby? You just earned yourself one whale of a night. An' it's goin'

to be long and slow an' again and again. Get me?" I looked at them both from

behind the raised chair. Inside I was whimpering. These men were dynamite from

Nightmare-Land. Somehow I kept my voice steady. "Who are you? What's this all

about? Let's see those credentials. The next car that comes by, I'll break a

window and get help. I'm from Canada. You do anything to me and you'll be in bad

trouble tomorrow." Sluggsy laughed. "Tomorrow's tomorrow. What you got to worry

about's tonight, baby." He turned to the thin man. "Mebbe you better wise her up,

Horror. Then mebbe we'll get some cooperation." Horror looked across at me. His

expression was cold, uninterested. "Ya shouldn't of hit Sluggsy, lady. The boy's

tough. He don't like the dames not to go for him. Thinks it may be on account of

his kisser. Been like that since he done a spell in solitary at San Q. Nervous

sickness. What's that the docs call it, Sluggsy?" Sluggsy looked proud. He

brought the Latin words out carefully. "Alopecia totalis. That means no hair,

see? Not a one." He gestured at his body. "Not here, or here, or here. What d'ya

know about that, eh, bimbo?" Horror continued. "So Sluggsy gets mad easy. Thinks

he ain't had a fair deal from society. You had that puss of his, mebbe you'd be

the same. So he's what we call in Troy an enforcer. Guys hire him to make other

guys do what they want, if you get me. He's on Mr. Sanguinetti's roll, and Mr.

Sanguinetti thought he and I better come along and keep an eye on this joint

till the truckers come. Mr. Sanguinetti didn't care for a young lady like you

bein' all alone here at night. So he sent us along for company. Ain't that so,

Sluggsy?" "That's the spiel. Sure is." He giggled. "Just to keep you company, bimbo. Keep the wolves away. With them statistics of yours, there must be times

when you need protection real bad. Right?" I lowered the chair onto the table

top. "Well, what are your names? What about these credentials?" There was a

single tin of Maxwell House coffee on the shelf above the bar counter, all by

itself. Sluggsy suddenly swiveled, and his right hand—I hadn't even seen him

draw a gun—shot flame. There was the crash of gunfire. The tin jumped sideways

and then fell. In midair Sluggsy hit it again and there was a brown explosion of

coffee. Then a deafening silence in which the last empty shell tinkled away on

the floor. Sluggsy turned back to me. His hands were empty. The gun had gone.

His eyes were dreamy with pleasure at his marksmanship. He said softly, "How's

them for credentials, baby?" The small cloud of blue smoke had reached me, and I

smelled the cordite. My legs were trembling. I said, scornfully I hope,

"That's

a lot of wasted coffee. Now, what about your names?" The thin man said, "The

lady's right. You didn't ought to of spilled that java, Sluggsy. But ya see,

lady, that's why they call him Sluggsy, on account he's smart with the hardware.

Sluggsy Morant. Me, I'm Sol Horowitz. They call me 'Horror.' Can't say why. Kin

you, Sluggsy?" Sluggsy giggled. "Mebbe one time you gave some guy a scare,

Horror. Mebbe a whole bunch of guys. Leastwise that's what they tell me." Horror

made no comment. He said quietly, "Okay. Let's go! Sluggsy, see to the cabins

like I said. Lady, you make us some chow. Keep ya nose clean and cooperate and

ya won't get hurt. Okay?" Sluggsy looked me over greedily. He said, "Not much,

that is. Eh, bimbo?" and walked over to the key rack behind the desk and took

down all the keys and let himself out through the back entrance. I put down the

chair and, as coolly as I knew how, but painfully aware of my

toreador pants,

walked across the room and went behind the counter. The man called Horror

sauntered slowly over to the cafeteria table farthest from me. He pulled a chair

away from the table, twisted it in his hand, and pushed it between his legs. He

sat down and leaned his folded arms along the back and rested his chin on them

and watched me with unwavering, indifferent eyes. He said softly, so softly that

I could only just hear him, "I'll take mine scrambled too, lady. Plenty crisp

bacon. Buttered toast Howsabout coffee?" "I'll see what's left." I got down on my hands and knees behind the bar. The tin had four holes right through it.

There was about an inch of coffee left and a whole lot scattered over the floor.

I put the tin aside and scraped what I could from the floor onto a plate, not

caring how much dust went with it. The unspoiled remains of the tin I would keep

for myself. I spent about five minutes down there, taking my time, desperately

trying to think, to plan. These men were gangsters. They worked "for this Mr.

Sanguinetti. That seemed certain because they had got my name from him or from

the Phanceys. The rest of their story was lies. They had been sent up here,

through the storm, for a purpose. What was it? They knew I was a Canadian, a

foreigner, and that I could easily go to the police the next day and get them

into trouble. The man called Sluggsy had been in San Quentin. And the other? Of

course! That was why he looked gray and sort of dead! He had probably just come

out of prison too. He smelled of it, somehow. So I could get them into real

trouble, tell the police that I was a journalist, that I was going to write up

what happened to girls alone in the States. But would I be believed? That

VACANCY sign! I was alone in the place, yet I had left it on. Wasn't that

because I wanted company? Why had I dressed up like that, to kill, if I expected



to be alone? I dodged away from that line of thought. But, to get back. What did

these two men want here? They had an ordinary car. If they had wanted to clean

the place out, they would have brought a truck. Perhaps they really had been

sent up to guard the place, and they just treated me as they did because that

was the way gangsters behaved. But how much worse were they going to get? What

was going to happen to me tonight? I got to my feet and began to busy myself

with the cooking. Better give them what they wanted. There must be no excuse for

them to set on me. Jed's apron was rolled up and thrown into a corner. I picked

it up and put it round my waist. A weapon? There was an ice-pick in the cutlery

drawer and a long, very sharp carving knife. I took the pick and stuck it,

handle first, down the front of my pants under the apron. The knife I hid under

a dishcloth beside the sink. I left the cutlery drawer open and lined up beside

it a row of glasses and cups for throwing. Childish? It was all I had.  
Every now

and then I glanced across the room. Always the thin man's eyes  
were on me, old

in crime and its counter-moves, knowing what was in my mind, what  
defenses I was

preparing. I sensed this, but I went on with my little preparations,  
thinking,

as I Lad at the English school, When they hurt me, and I know  
they're meaning to

hurt me, I must somehow hurt them back. When they get me, rape  
me, kill me, they

mustn't find it easy. Rape? Kill? What did I think was really going to  
happen to

me? I didn't know. I only knew that I was in desperate trouble. The  
men's faces

said so—the indifferent face and the greedy face. They both had it  
in for me.

Why? I didn't know. But I was absolutely certain of it. I had broken  
eight eggs

into a bowl and had whipped them gently with a fork. The huge  
chunk of butter

had melted in the saucepan. Beside it, in the frying pan, the bacon  
was

beginning to sizzle. I poured the eggs into the saucepan and began to stir.

While my hands concentrated, my mind was busy on ways to escape. Everything

depended on whether the man called Sluggsy, when he came back from his

inspection, remembered to lock the back door. If he didn't, I could make a dash

for it. There would be no question of using the Vespa. I hadn't run it for a

week. Priming the carburetor, and the three kicks that might be necessary to

start it from cold, would be too long. I would have to leave my belongings, all

my precious money, and just go like a hare to right or left, get round the end

of the cabins and in among the trees. I reflected that of course I wouldn't run

to the right. The lake behind the cabins would narrow my escape route. I would

run to the left. There, there was nothing but miles of trees. I would be soaked

to the skin within a few yards of the door, and freezing cold for the rest of

the night. My feet, in their stupid little sandals, would be cut to ribbons. I

might easily get lost into the bargain. But those were problems I would have to

cope with. The main thing was to get away from these men. Nothing else mattered.

The eggs were ready and I heaped them out, still very soft, onto a flat dish and

added the bacon round the sides. I put the pile of toast from the Toastmaster on

another plate, together with a slab of butter still in its paper, and put the

whole lot on a tray. I was glad to see that plenty of dust rose to the top when

I poured boiling water over the coffee, and I hoped it would choke them. Then I

carried the tray out from behind the bar and, feeling more respectable in my

apron, took it over to where the thin man was sitting. As I put it down, I heard

the back door open and then slam shut. There had been no click of a lock. I

looked quickly round. Sluggsy's hands were empty. My heart began to beat wildly.

Sluggsy came over to the table. I was taking things off the tray. He looked the

meal over and came swiftly behind me and seized me round the waist, nuzzling his

ghastly face into my neck. "Just like mother made 'em, baby. Howsabout you and

me shacking up together? If you can— like you can cook, you're the gal of my

dreams. What say, bimbo? Is it a deal?" I had my hand on the coffee pot, and he

was just going to get the boiling contents slung over my shoulder. Horror saw my

intention. He said sharply, "Leave her be, Sluggsy. I said later." The words

came out like a whiplash, and at once Sluggsy let me go. The thin man said, "Ya

nearly got ya eyeballs fried. Ya want to watch this dame. Quit foolin' around

and sit down. We're on a job." Sluggsy's face showed bravado, but also obedience.

"Have a heart, pal! I want a piece of this baby. But now!" But he pulled out a

chair and sat down, and I moved quickly away. The big radio and TV was on a

pedestal near the back door. It had been playing softly all this time, although

I had been quite unconscious of it. I went to the machine and fiddled with the

dials, putting the volume up. The two men were talking to each other quietly and

there was the clatter of cutlery. Now or never! I measured my distance to the

door handle and dived to the left. Nine: Then I Began to Scream I HEARD a single

bullet crash into the metal frame of the door, and then, with my hand cushioning

the ice-pick so it didn't stick into me, I was running hell for leather across

the wet grass. Mercifully the rain had let up, but the grass was soaking and

slippery under my hopeless flat soles, and I knew I wasn't making enough speed.

I heard a door crash open behind me, and Sluggsy's voice shouted, "Hold it, or

you're cold turkey!" I began to weave, but then the shots came, carefully,

evenly spaced, and bees whipped past me and slapped into the

grass. Another ten

yards and I would be at the corner of the cabins and out of the light. I dodged

and zigzagged, my skin quivering as it waited for the bullet. A window in the

last cabin tinkled with broken glass, and I was round the corner. As I dived

into the soaking wood I heard a car start up. What was that for? It was terrible

going. The dripping pines were thick together, their branches overlapping, and

they tore at the arms crossed over my face. It was black as pitch and I couldn't

see a yard ahead. And then suddenly I could, and I sobbed as I realized what the

car was for, for now its blazing headlights were holding me from the edge of the

trees. As I tried to dodge the searching eyes, I heard the engine rev to aim the

car and immediately they had me again. There was no room for maneuver and I just

had to make headway in whatever direction the trees allowed me. When would the

shooting start up again? I was a bare thirty yards inside the forest. It

would

be any minute now! My breath was sobbing out of my throat. My clothes had begun

to tear, and I could feel bruises coming on my feet. I knew I couldn't hold out

much longer. I would just have to find the thickest tree and try and lose the

lights for a minute and crawl in under the tree and hide. But why no bullets? I

stumbled away to the right, found brief darkness, and dived to my knees among

the soaking pine needles. There was a tree like any other, its branches sweeping

the ground, and I crawled in under them and up against the trunk and waited for

the rasping of my breath to quieten down. And then I heard one of them coming in

after me, not softly because that was impossible, but steadily, and stopping

every now and then to listen. By now the man, whichever it was, must realize

from the silence that I had gone to ground. If he knew anything about tracking,



he would soon find where the broken branches and scuffed earth stopped. Then it

would only be a question of time. I softly squirmed round to the back of the

tree, away from him, and watched the lights from the car hold steady in the

glistening wet branches above my head. The feet and the snapping twigs were

coming nearer. Now I could hear the heavy breathing. Sluggsy's voice, very near,

said softly, "Come on out, baby. Or poppa spank real hard. Da game of tag is

over. Time to come home to poppa." The small eye of a flashlight began searching

under the trees, carefully, tree by tree. He knew I was only a few yards away.

Then the light stopped and held steady under my tree. Sluggsy said softly,

delightedly, "Hi, baby! Poppa find!" Had he? I lay still, hardly breathing.

There came the roar and flame of a single shot, and the bullet smacked into the

tree-trunk behind my head. "That's just a hastener, baby. Next time it takes

your little footsie off." So that was what showed! I said, weary with  
fright,

"All right. I'll come. But don't shoot!" And I scrambled out on all  
fours,

thinking hysterically, This is a fine way to go to your execution, Viv!  
The man

stood there, his pale head fretted with yellow light and black  
shadows. His gun

was pointed at my stomach. He waved it sideways. "Okay. Get  
ahead of me. An' if

you don't keep moving, you'll get a root in that sweet little keister of  
yours."

I stumbled ignominiously through the trees toward the distant,  
glaring eyes of

the car. Hopelessness had me by the throat, and an ache of self-  
pity. What had I

done to deserve this? Why had God picked on me as a victim for  
these two unknown

men? Now they would be really angry. They would hurt me and later  
almost

certainly kill me. But the police would dig the bullets out of me! What  
evil

crime were they engaged on that made them indifferent to the  
evidence of my dead

body? Whatever the crime was, they must be quite confident that there would be

no evidence. Because there would be no me! They would bury me, drop me in the

lake with a stone round my neck! I came out through the fringe of the trees. The

thin man leaned out of the car and called to Sluggsy, "Okay. Take her back.

Don't treat her rough. That's for me." He put the car into reverse. Sluggsy came

up beside me, and his free hand fondled me lasciviously. I just said, "Don't." I

had no will left to resist. He said softly, "You're in trouble, bimbo. Horror's

a mean guy. He'll hurt you bad. Now you say 'Yes' to me for tonight, and promise

to act sweet, and mebbe I can get the heat taken off. Howsabout it, baby?" I

summoned a last ounce of fight. "I'd rather die than have you touch me." "Okay, sweetheart. So you won't give, so I take for myself. I reckon you've earned

yourself a rough night. Get me?" He pinched me viciously so that I cried out.

Sluggsy laughed delightedly. "That's right. Sing, baby! Might as well

get into

the practice." He pushed me in through the open back door of the lobby block and

shut and locked it behind him. The room looked just the same—the lights blazing,

the radio hammering out some gay dance tune, everything winking and glittering

and polished under the light. I thought of how happy I had been in that room

only a few hours before, of the memories I had had in that armchair, some of

them sweet, some of them sad. How small now my childish troubles seemed! How

ridiculous to talk of broken hearts and lost youth when, just around the corner

of my life, these men were coming at me out of the darkness. The cinema in

Windsor? It was a small act in a play, almost a farce. Zürich? It was paradise.

The true jungle of the world, with its real monsters, only rarely shows itself

in the life of a man, a girl, in the street. But it is always there. You take a

wrong step, play the wrong card in Fate's game, and you are in it

and lost—lost

in a world you had never imagined, against which you have no knowledge and no

weapons. No compass. The man called Horror stood in the middle of the room, idle,

relaxed, his hands at his sides. He watched me with those incurious eyes. Then

he lifted his right hand and crooked a finger. My cold, bruised feet walked

toward him. When I was only a few steps away from him I came out of the trance.

I suddenly remembered, and my hand came up to the soaking waistband of my pants

and I felt the head of the ice-pick under the apron. It was going to be

difficult to get it out, to get at the handle. I stopped in front of him. Still

holding my eyes, his right hand came up like a snake striking and slapped me,

biff-baff, right and left across my face. The tears started from my eyes, but I

remembered, and ducked down as if to escape another blow. At the same time,

concealed in the movement, I got my right hand down inside the band of my pants,

and when I came up I threw myself at him, hitting wildly toward his head. The

pick connected, but it was only a glancing blow, and suddenly my arms were

gripped from behind and I was pulled back. Blood was oozing from a cut above the

temple of the gray face. As I watched, it trickled down toward the chin. But the

face was unmoved. It showed no pain, only a terrifying intensity of purpose, and

there was a fleck of red deep inside the black eyes. The thin man stepped up to

me. My hand opened and the pick fell to the floor with a clang. It was a reflex

action—the child dropping the weapon. I give up! I surrender! Pax! And then

slowly, almost caressingly, he began to hit me, now with his open hand, now with

the fist, choosing his targets with refined, erotic cruelty. At first I twisted

and bent and kicked, and then I began to scream, while the gray face with the

blood-streak and the black holes for eyes watched, and the hands sprang and

sprang. I came to in the shower of my cabin. I was lying naked on the tiles, the

tattered, filthy remains of my pretty clothes beside me. Sluggsy, chewing at a

wooden toothpick, leaned up against the wall with his hand on the cold tap. His

eyes were glistening slits. He turned off the water and I somehow got to my

knees. I knew I was going to be sick. I didn't care. I was a tamed, whimpering

animal ready to die. I retched. Sluggsy laughed. He leaned over and patted my

behind. "Go ahead, baby. First thing after a beat-up, everyone vomits. Then

clean yourself up nice and put on a nice new outfit and come on over. Those eggs

got spoiled with you running off like that. No tricks! Though I guess you ain't

got stomach for any more. I'll be watching the cabin from the back door. Now

don't take on, baby. No blood. Hardly a bruise. Horror's got a nice touch with

the dames. You're sure lucky. He's a hippy guy. If he'd of been real mad, we'd

be digging a hole for you right now. Count your blessings, baby. Be seein' ya."

I heard the door of the cabin bang shut, and then my body took over. It took me

half an hour to get myself into some kind of shape, and again and again I just

wanted to throw myself on my bed and let the tears go on coming until the men

arrived with their guns to finish me off. But the will to live came back into me

with the familiar movements of doing my hair and of getting my body, sore and

aching and weak with the memory of much greater pain, to do what I wanted, and

slowly into the back of my mind there crept the possibility that I might have

been through the worst. If not, why was I still alive? For some reason these men

wanted me there and not out of the way. Sluggsy was so good with his gun that he

could surely have killed me when I made a run for it. His bullets had come close,



but hadn't they been just to frighten, to make me stop? I put on my white

overalls. Heaven knew they were impersonal enough, and I put my money into one

of the pockets—just in case. Just in case of what? There would be no more

escapes. And then, feeling sore and weak as a kitten, I dragged myself over to

the lobby. It was eleven o'clock. The rain was still holding off and a threequarter moon sailed through fast, scudding clouds, making the forest blink intermittently with white light. Sluggsy was framed in the yellow entrance,

leaning against the door, chewing at his toothpick. As I came up, he made way

for me. "That's my baby. Fresh as paint. A little sore here and there, mebbe.

Have to sleep on your back later, huh? But that's just what'll suit us, won't it,

honey?" When I didn't answer, he reached out and caught my arm. "Hey, hey! Where

your manners, bimbo? You like some treatment on the other side, mebbe? That also

can be arranged." He made a threatening gesture with his free hand. "I'm sorry.

I didn't mean anything." "Okay, okay." He let me go. "Now just get on back there and make with the pots and pans. An' don't go getting my gauge up. Or my friend

Horror's. Look what you done to that handsome kisser of his." The thin man was

sitting at his old table. The first-aid box from the reception desk was open in

front of him and he had a big square of adhesive across his right temple. I gave

him a quick frightened glance and went behind the serving counter. Sluggsy went

over to him and sat down, and they began talking together in low voices,

occasionally glancing across at me. Making the eggs and coffee made me feel

hungry. I couldn't understand it. Ever since the two men had got in through that

door, I had been so tense and frightened I couldn't have swallowed even a cup of

coffee. Of course I was empty from being sick, but in a curious and, I felt,

rather shameful way the beating I had been given had in some mysterious fashion

relaxed me. The pain, being so much greater than the tension of

waiting for it,

had unraveled my nerves, and there was a curious center of warmth and peace in

my body. I was frightened still, of course—terrified, but in a docile,

fatalistic way. At the same time my body said it was hungry; it wanted to get

back its strength, it wanted to live. So I made scrambled eggs and coffee and

hot buttered toast for myself as well, and, after I had taken theirs over, I sat

down out of sight of them behind the counter and ate mine and then, almost

calmly, lit a cigarette. I knew the moment I lit it that it was a foolish thing

to do. It called attention to me. Worse, it showed I had recovered, that I was

worth baiting again. But the food and the simple business of eating it—of

putting salt and pepper on the eggs, sugar into the coffee—had been almost

intoxicating. It was part of the old life, a thousand years ago, before the men

came. Each mouthful—the forkful of egg, the bit of bacon, the munch of buttery

toast—was an exquisite thing that occupied all my senses. Now I knew what it

must be like to get some food smuggled into jail, to be a prisoner of war and

get a parcel from home, to find water in the desert, to be given a hot drink

after being rescued from drowning. The simple act of living, how precious it was!

If I got out of this, I would know it forever. I would be grateful for every

breath I breathed, every meal I ate, every night I felt the cool kiss of sheets,

the peace of a bed behind a closed, locked, door. Why had I never known this

before? Why had my parents, my lost religion, never taught it to me? Anyway, I

knew now. I had found it out for myself. Love of life is born of the awareness

of death, of the dread of it. Nothing makes one really grateful for life except

the black wings of danger. These feverish thoughts were born of the intoxication

of the food and of eating it alone behind the barricade of the

counter. For a

few moments I was back in the old life. So, lightheadedly, and to hug the moment

to me, I lit the cigarette. Perhaps a minute later, the mumble of the voices

died. Behind "Tales of the Vienna Woods" coming softly from the radio, I heard a

chair being drawn back. Now I felt panic. I put out the cigarette in the dregs

of my coffee and got up and began briskly turning taps and clattering the dishes

in the metal sink. I didn't look, but I could see Sluggsy coming across the room.

He came up to the counter and leaned on it. I looked up as if surprised. He was

still chewing away at a toothpick, flicking it from side to side of his thicklip, oval mouth. He had a box of Kleenex that he put on the counter. He wrenched out a handful of tissues and blew his nose and dropped the tissues on

the floor. He said in an amiable voice, "Ya gone an' given me a catarrh bimbo.

All that chasing aroun' in the woods. This trouble of mine, this alopecia thing

that kills the hair. You know what that does? That kills the hairs

inside the

nose too. Together with all the rest. An' you know what that does? That makes

your schnozzle dribble bad when you got a cold. You given me a cold, bimbo. That

means a box of wipes every twenty-four hours. More, mebbe. Ya ever think of that?

Ya ever think of people have no hairs in their snouts? Aargh!" The hairless eyes

were suddenly hard with anger. "You gashes are all the same. Just think of

yerselves. To hell with the guys that got troubles! You just go for the goodtimers." I said quietly, under the noise of the radio. "I'm sorry for your troubles. Why aren't you sorry for mine?" I spoke quickly, forcefully. "Why do

you two come here and knock me about? What have I done to you? Why don't you let

me go? If you do, I promise I won't say a word to anyone. I've got a little

money. I could give you some of it. Say two hundred dollars. I can't afford any

more. I've got to get all the way down to Florida on the rest. Please, won't you

let me go?" Sluggsy let out a hoot of laughter. He turned and called

across to

the thin man, "Hey, get out the crying towel, Horror. The slot says she'll hand

over two Cs if we let her scam." The thin man gave a slight shrug of the

shoulders but made no comment. Sluggsy turned back to me. His eyes were hard and

without mercy. He said, "Wise up, bimbo. You're in the act, and you've been

given a star part to play. You ought to be tickled to be of so much interest to

busy, important guys like Horror and me, and to a big wheel like Mr.

Sanguinetti." "What is the act? What do you want me for?" Sluggsy said

indifferently, "You'll be wised up come morning. Meanwhiles, howsabout shuttin'

that dumb little hash-trap of yours? All this yak is bending my ear. I want some

action. That's sweet stuff they're playing. Howsabout you an' me stepping it

together? Put on a little show for Horror. Then we'll be off to the hay and make

with the bodies. C'mon, chick." He held out his arms, clicking his fingers to

the music and doing some fast steps. "I'm sorry. I'm tired." Sluggsy came back

to the counter. He said angrily, "You've got a big keister giving me that crap.

Cheap little hustler! I'll give you something to make you tired." Suddenly there

was an obscene little black leather cosh in his hand. He brought it down with a

dull whack on the counter. It left a deep dent in the formica. He began to move

stealthily round the edge of the counter, humming to himself, his eyes holding

mine. I backed up into the far corner. This was going to be my last gesture.

Somehow I must hurt him back before I went under. My hand felt for the open

cutlery drawer and suddenly I dipped in and flung, all in one motion. His duck

wasn't quick enough, and the silver spray of knives and forks burst round his

head. He put a hand up to his face and backed away, cursing. I hurled some more

and then some more, but they only clattered inoffensively round his



hunched head.

Now the thin man was moving fast across the room. I grabbed the carving knife

and made a dash for Sluggsy, but he saw me coming and dodged behind a table.

Unhurriedly, Horror took off his coat and wrapped it round his left arm; then

they both picked up chairs and, holding the legs out like bulls' horns, they

charged me from both sides. I made one ineffectual slash at an arm, and then the

knife was knocked out of my hand and all I could do was to get back behind the

counter. Still holding the chair, Sluggsy came in after me and, while I stood

facing him, with a plate in each hand, the thin man leaned swiftly across the

counter and got hold of my hair. I hurled the plates sideways, but they only

clattered away across the floor. And then my head was being bent down onto the

counter top and Sluggsy was on me. "Okay, Horror. Let her go. This is for me." I

felt his powerful arms round me, crushing me, and his face was

against mine,

kissing me brutally, while his hand went up to the zip at my neck and tore it

right down to my waist. And then came the sharp sound of the buzzer at the front

door, and everyone froze. Part Three: Him Ten: Whassat? "KERIST, whassat?"

Sluggsy had backed away, and his hand was inside his leather jacket. Horror

recovered himself first. There was a cold snarl on his face. "Git over behind

the door, Sluggsy. Hold your fire until I tell you. You,"—he spat the words at

me—"get yourself into shape. You've got to front for us. If you don't do it good,

you're dead. Understand? You'll be shot. Now get over to that door and find out

who it is. Tell 'em the same story you told us. Get me? And take that silly

expression off your face. No one's going to hurt you if you do what I say. Pull

that zipper up, dammit!" I was struggling with the thing. It was stuck. "Well,

hold the damn thing together across your chest and get moving. I'll be right

behind you. And don't forget, one wrong word and you get blasted through the

back. And the guy, too. Now scam over there." My heart was beating wildly.

Somehow, whatever happened, I was going to save myself! There was now a loud

knocking at the door. I went slowly over, holding the top half of my overalls

together. I knew the first thing I had to do! When I got to the door, Sluggsy

leaned sideways and unlocked it. Now everything depended on the speed of my

hands. I took hold of the door handle with my left hand and, as I turned it, my

right hand let go of the overalls and dived down to the chain and unhooked it.

Somebody cursed softly behind me and I felt the prod of a gun in my back, but

then I had swung the door wide open, crashing Sluggsy against the wall behind it.

I had gambled that, without knowing if it was perhaps the police or a road

patrol, they wouldn't shoot. They hadn't. Now all depended on the solitary man

who stood on the threshold. At first glance I inwardly groaned—God it's another

of them! He stood there so quiet and controlled and somehow with the same

quality of deadliness as the others. And he wore that uniform that the films

make one associate with gangsters—a dark-blue belted raincoat and a soft black

hat pulled rather far down. He was good-looking in a dark, rather cruel way, and

a scar showed whitely down his left cheek. I quickly put my hand up to hide my

nakedness. Then he smiled and suddenly I thought I might be all right. When he

spoke, my heart leaped. He was English! "I'm sorry. I've got a puncture." (An

American would have said "a flat.") "And I saw the VACANCY sign. Can I have a room for the night?" Now he looked at me with curiosity, seeing that something

was wrong. This was going to be tricky! I might easily get us both killed. I

said, "I'm sorry, but the motel's closed. The VACANCY sign was on

by mistake."

While I said this, I crooked the index finger of the hand at my chest, inviting

him in. He looked puzzled. I had to give him a lead. "Is the puncture so bad

that you can't get as far as Lake George?" "Couldn't possibly. I've already come

a mile on the run. The cover'll be gone by now." I imperceptibly jerked my head

backward, bidding him to come in. "Well, the insurance men are here from the

owner. I'll have to ask them. You wait there." Again I beckoned with my finger.

Then I turned and took two steps inside, keeping close to the door so that

neither of them could bang it shut. But they were standing back, hands in their

pockets, looking different kinds of hell at me. The man in the raincoat had

taken my hint, and he was now well inside. When he saw the two men, his face

somehow sharpened, but he said casually, "I expect you heard all that. Any

objection to my spending the night here?" Slugsy said

contemptuously, "Kerist!

A limey! What is this, the United Nations?" The thin man said curtly, "No dice,

friend. You heard the lady. The motel's closed. We'll give you a hand changing

the wheel and you can be on your way." The Englishman said easily, "It's a bit

late at night for that. I'm heading south and I doubt if there's anything on

this road this side of Glens Falls. I think I'd prefer to stay here. After all,

the VACANCY sign's on." "You heard me, mister." Horror's voice was now tough. He turned to Sluggsy. "C'mon. We'll give the guy a hand with his flat." They both

took a step toward the door. But the Englishman, bless him, stood his ground.

"It happens that I have friends at Albany, quite important friends. You wouldn't

want to lose your motel operator's license, would you? The sign said VACANCY and

the place is lit up. I'm tired and I claim a room." He turned to me. "Would that

give you any trouble?" I gushed. "Oh, no! None at all. It won't take me a minute

to get a room ready. I'm sure Mr. Sanguinetti wouldn't want to do anything to

lose his license?" I turned, wide-eyed and innocent, toward the two gangsters.

They looked as if they were just about to pull their guns, but the thin man

moved away, and Sluggsy followed him, and they talked for a moment in whispers.

I took the opportunity to nod urgently and appealingly at the Englishman, and he

gave me another of those reassuring smiles. The thin man turned round. "Okay,

limey. You can have the room. But just don't try and lean on us with that Albany

guff. Mr. Sanguinetti has friends at the capital too. Mebbe you got a point with

that VACANCY sign. But don't push your luck. We're in charge here and what we

says goes. Right?" "That's all right with me. And thanks. I'll get my bag." He moved to go out. I said quickly, "I'll give you a hand." I hurried ahead of him,

tugging furiously at my zip, feeling ashamed of how I must have looked.

Blessedly, it suddenly yielded and I pulled it up to my throat. He

came up with

me. I said urgently, out of the corner of my mouth—I was sure one of them had

come to the door and was watching us—"Thank you! And thank God you came! They

were going to murder me. But for God's sake look out. They're gangsters. I don't

know what they want. It must be something bad. They shot at me when I tried to

escape." We came to the car. It was a dark gray two-seater Thunderbird with a

soft top in cream, a beautiful thing. I said so. He said shortly that it was

hired. He said, "Come round the other side. Just seem to be admiring the car."

He leaned down and opened the low door and rummaged inside. He said, "Are they

both armed?" "Yes." "How many guns each?" "Don't know. The small one's a crack shot. At twenty feet or so. Don't know about the other." He pulled out a small

black suitcase, rested it on the ground, and snapped it open. He took something

from under the clothes and slipped it into an inside pocket. He fiddled with one



side of the case, took some thin black objects out that I took to be cartridge

magazines, and stowed them away. Then he snapped the case shut, said, "Better

have plenty of artillery," banged the door ostentatiously, and stood up. We then

both went to the back of the car and knelt down to examine the flat tire. He

said, "How about the telephone?" "It's cut off." "Give me the cabin next to yours." "Of course." "All right. Let's go. And keep close to me, whatever they do or say." "Yes, and thank you." He got up and smiled. "Wait till we're out of this." We walked back together. Sluggsy, who had been standing in the doorway,

shut the door after us and locked it. As an afterthought, he reached up and

switched off the VACANCY sign. He said, "Here's your key, limey," and threw it

on a table. I picked it up and looked at the number. Forty, the last one along

to the left. I said firmly, "The gentleman's going to have Number 10, next to

mine," and walked over to the desk, forgetting that Sluggsy had all the other

keys. Sluggsy had followed me. He grinned. "No dice, baby. We don't know nuthin'

about this guy. So Horror and me's sleepin' either side of you. Just to see

you're not disturbed. Rest of the keys is put away ready for the move. There's

just this Number 40 and nuthin' else." He turned to the Englishman. "Hey, limey.

What's your name?" "Bond. James Bond." "That's a pretty chump name. From England, huh?" "That's right Where's the registry? I'll spell it out for you." "Wise guy, huh? What's your line of business?" "Police." Sluggsy's mouth opened. He ran his tongue over his lips. He turned and called over to Horror, who was sitting at

his old table, "Hey, Horror. Guess what! This shamus is a limey dick! Whadya

know about that? A gumshoe!" Horror nodded. "Thought I smelled it. Who cares? We

ain't done nuthin' wrong." "Yeh," said Sluggsy eagerly, "that's right too." He turned to this Mr. Bond. "Now don't you go listening to any crap from this

little hustler. We're from the insurance, see. Assessors, sort of. Work for Mr.

Sanguinetti. He's a big wheel in Troy. Owns this outfit. Well, there'd been

complaints from the managers of some cash missing. Other things too. So we come

up to make an investigation, sort of, and when we put the question

to this

little tramp she slams my friend with an ice-pick bang on the think-pot. See for

yourself." He waved in the direction of Horror. "Now how d'ya like that? So we

was just restraining her, sort of, when you comes along." He turned. "Ain't that

right, Horror?" "That's on the level. That's how it was." I said angrily, "You know that's a pack of lies." I walked over to the back door and pointed at the

bent frame and the splash of lead, "How did that bullet hole get there?" Sluggsy

laughed heartily. "Search me, sister." He turned to Horror. "You seen any

bullets flyin' around?" "No, I ain't." Horror's voice was bored. He waved a

languid hand toward the floor round the eating counter. "But I seen plenty

hardware being slung at my pal by the lady." His eyes swiveled slowly to me.

"That right, lady? An' there's a big carving knife down there somewhere. Good

mind to book you for assault, come the morning." "You do that!" I said hotly.

"Just see where it'll get you! You know perfectly well I was trying to defend

myself. And as for that story about the money, that's the first I've heard of it.

And you know it." The Englishman broke in quietly. "Well, it seems I came along

at the right time to keep the peace. Now, where's that registry so that I can

sign it?" Sluggsy said curtly, "Register's with de boss. No purpose in signin'

nuthin'. You ain't payin'. The place is closed. You can have your bed on the

house." "Well, thanks. That's very kind of you." James Bond turned to me. "Any chance of some eggs and bacon and coffee? All this talking's made me hungry. I

can cook it myself if the stuff's there." "Oh, no." I almost ran behind the

counter. "I'd love to do it." "Thank you very much." He turned his back on Sluggsy and sauntered over to the counter and hoisted himself onto a stool,

putting his case on the next one. Out of the corner of my eye I watched Sluggsy

turn on his heel and walk quickly over to the thin man and sit down and begin

talking urgently. James Bond glanced over his shoulder at them and then got down

off his stool and took off his raincoat and hat and put them on top of his case

and climbed back. He silently watched the men in the long mirror at the back of

the counter, while I busied myself with the cooking things and took him in with

quick glances. He was about six feet tall, slim and fit-looking. The eyes in the

lean, slightly tanned face were a very clear gray-blue and as they observed the

men they were cold and watchful. The narrowed watchful eyes gave his good looks

the dangerous, almost cruel quality that had frightened me when I had first set

eyes on him, but now that I knew how he could smile, I thought his face only

exciting, in a way that no man's face had ever excited me before. He wore a

soft-looking white silk shirt with a thin black knitted tie that hung down

loosely without a pin, and his single-breasted suit was made of some dark blue

lightweight material that may have been alpaca. The strong, rather good hands

lay quietly on his crossed arms on the counter, and now he reached down to his

hip pocket and took out a wide, thin gunmetal cigarette case and opened it.

"Have one? Senior Service. I suppose it'll have to be Chesterfields from now

on." His mouth turned slightly down as he smiled. "No, thanks. Not now. After

I've done the cooking." "By the way, what's your name? You're Canadian aren't

you?" "Yes, from Quebec. But I've been in England the last five years or so. I'm

Vivienne Michel. My friends call me Viv." "How in God's name did you manage to

get into this fix? Those are a couple of the toughest hoodlums I've seen in

years. And Troy's a bad town—sort of a gangster suburb to Albany. The thin one's

just finished a long stretch in jail, or I'll eat my hat. The other looks like

the worst kind of psycho. How did it happen?" I told him, in short bursts

between the cooking, and cutting out all but the essentials. He listened quietly

and without comment. Music was still coming from the radio, but the two

gangsters were sitting silently watching us, so I kept my voice low. When I had

finished, I said, "But is it true that you're a policeman?" "Not quite. But I'm in that sort of business." "You mean a detective?" "Well, sort of." "I knew it!" He laughed. "How?" "Oh, I don't know. But you look, kind of—kind of dangerous. And that was a gun you took out of your bag, and ammunition. Are you"—I was

embarrassed, but I needed to know—"are you official? I mean from the

Government?" He smiled reassuringly. "Oh, yes. Don't worry about that. And they

know me in Washington. If we get out of this all right, I'm going to go after

those two." His eyes were cold again. "I'm going to see they get roasted for

what they did to you." "You do believe me?" "Of course. Every word. But what I can't make out is what they're up to. They seem to have acted as if they knew

they were safe to do anything they liked with you. And now they seem quite calm

about me having got into the act. I don't like it. Have they had any

drinks? Do

they smoke?" "No. Neither of them." "I don't like that either. It's only pros that don't." I had finished cooking his supper and I put it up on the counter.

He ate as if he was really hungry. I asked him if it was all right. He said it

was wonderful, and I felt warm inside. What a fantastic bit of luck, this man,

and just this man, coming so magically out of the blue! I felt humble about it.

It was so much a miracle. I swore to myself to say my prayers that night, the

first time for years. I hovered about him slavishly, offering him more coffee,

some jam to finish his toast with. Finally he laughed tenderly at me. "You're

spoilng me. Here, I'm sorry. I forgot all about it. It's time for your

cigarette. You've earned the whole easeful." He lit it with a Ronson, gunmetaled

like his case. My hand touched his, and I felt a small shock pass down my body.

I suddenly found I was trembling. I quickly took the dishes and began washing

them. I said, "I haven't earned anything. It's so wonderful you're



here. It's an

absolute miracle." My voice choked and I felt stupid tears coming. I brushed the

back of my hand across my eyes. He must have seen, but he pretended not to have.

Instead he said cheerfully, "Yes. It was a stroke of luck. At least I hope so.

Can't count the chickens yet. Tell you what. We've got to sit these two hoodlums

out. Wait until they make a move, go to bed or something. Would you like to hear

just how I came to turn up tonight? It'll all be in the papers in a day or two.

The story. Only I won't be mentioned. So you must promise to forget my side of

the thing. It's all nonsense, really. These regulations. But I have to work

under them. All right? It might take your mind off your troubles. They seem to

have been pretty powerful ones." I said gratefully, "Yes, please tell me. And I

promise. Cross my heart." Eleven: Bedtime Story I HOISTED myself up onto the

drainboard of the sink just beside him so that he could talk to me quietly— and

so that I could be near to him. I refused another cigarette, and he lit one and

gazed for a long minute into the mirror, watching the two gangsters. I looked

too. The two men just stared back with a passive, indifferent hostility that

seeped steadily across the room like poison gas. I didn't much like their

indifference and their watchfulness. It seemed so powerful, so implacable, as if

the odds were on their side and they had all the time in the world. But this

James Bond didn't seem worried. He just seemed to be weighing them up, like a

chess player. There was a certitude of power, of superiority, in his eyes that

worried me. He hadn't seen these men in action. He couldn't possibly know what

they were capable of, how at any moment they might just blaze away with their

guns, blowing our heads off like coconuts in a circus sideshow, and then toss

our bodies in the lake with stones to keep them down. But then James Bond began

talking, and I forgot my nightmares and just watched his face and listened. "In

England," he said, "when a man, or occasionally a woman, comes over from the

other side, from the Russian side, with important information, there's a fixed

routine. Take Berlin, for instance, and that's the most usual come-over route.

To begin with they get taken to intelligence headquarters and get treated at

first with extra suspicion. That's to try and take care of double agents—people

who pretend to come over and, once they've been cleared by security, begin

spying on us from inside, so to speak, and pass their stuff back to the Russians.

There are also triple agents—people who do what the doubles have done, but

change their minds and, under our control, pass phony intelligence back to the

Russians. Do you understand? It's nothing but a complicated game, really. But

then so's International politics, diplomacy—all the trappings of nationalism and

the power complex that goes on between countries. Nobody will stop playing the

game. It's like the hunting instinct." "Yes, I see. It all seems idiotic to my

generation. Like playing that old game 'Attaque,' really. We need some more Jack

Kennedys. It's all these old people about. They ought to hand the world over to

younger people who haven't got the idea of war stuck in their subconscious. As

if it were the only solution. Like beating children. It's much the same thing.

It's all out of date—Stone Age stuff." He smiled. "As a matter of fact I agree,

but don't spread your ideas too widely or I'll find myself out of a job. Anyway,

once the come-over has got through the strainer in Berlin, he's flown to England

and the bargain gets made—you tell us all you know about the Russian rocket

sites and in exchange we'll give you a new name, a British passport, and a

hideout where the Russians will never find you. That's what they're most

frightened of, of course, the Russians getting after them and killing them. And,

if they play, they get the choice of Canada, Australia, New Zealand or Africa.

So, when they've told all they know, they get flown out to the country they've

chosen, and there a reception committee run by the local police, a very hushhush affair, of course, takes them over and they're gradually eased into a job and into a community just as if they were a bona fide immigrant. It nearly

always works all right. They get homesick to begin with, and have trouble

settling down, but some member of the reception committee will always be at hand

to give them any help they need." James Bond lit another cigarette. "I'm not

telling you anything the Russians don't know. The only secret side of the

business is the addresses of these people. There's a man I'll call Boris. He's

been settled in Canada, in Toronto. He was a prize—twenty-four-carat. He was a

top naval constructor in Kronstadt—high up in their nuclear submarine team. He

got away to Finland and then to Stockholm. We picked him up and flew him to

England. The Russians don't often say anything about their defectors—just curse

and let them go. If they're important, they round up their families and ship

them off to Siberia—to frighten other waverers. But it was different with Boris.

They sent out a general call to their secret services to eliminate him. As luck

would have it, an organization called SPECTRE somehow listened in." James Bond

took a hard look at the two men on the other side of the room. They hadn't moved.

They sat there and watched and waited. What for? James Bond turned back to me.

"I'm not boring you?" "Oh, no. Of course not. It's thrilling. These SPECTRE

people. Haven't I read about them somewhere? In the papers?" "I expect you have.

Less than a year ago there was this business of the stolen atomic bombs. It was

called Operation Thunderball. Remember?" His eyes went far away. "It was in the

Bahamas." "Oh, yes. Of course I remember. It was in all the papers I could

hardly believe it. It was like something out of a thriller. Why? Were you mixed

up in it?" James Bond smiled. "On the sidelines. But the point is that we never

cleaned up SPECTRE. The top man got away. It was a kind of independent spy

network—The Special Executive for Counterespionage, Terrorism, Revenge, and

Extortion,' they call themselves. Well, they've got going again and, as I say,

they came to hear that the Russians wanted Boris killed and somehow they found

out where he was. Don't ask me how. These people are too damned well informed

for comfort. So they put it to the top K.G.B. man in Paris, the local head of

the Russian Secret Service, that they'd do the job for one hundred thousand

pounds. Presumably Moscow agreed, because the next thing that happened was that

Ottawa—the famous Mounties—got on to us. They have a Special Branch that we work

with pretty closely on this sort of thing, and they reported that there was an

ex-Gestapo man in Toronto, chap called Horst Uhlmann, making contact with the

gangs there, and did we know anything about him? It seemed he wanted some

unspecified foreigner bumped off and was prepared to pay fifty thousand dollars

for the job. Well, two and two got put together, and some bright chap in our

show had a hunch this might be an attempt on Boris by the Russians. So"—James

Bond's mouth curled down—"I was sent out to look into the business." He smiled

at me. "You wouldn't rather switch on the television?" "Oh, no. Go on, please."

"Well, you know they've been having a lot of trouble in Toronto. It's anyway a

tough town, but now gang war has broken out in a big way, and you probably read

that the Mounties even went so far as to call in two top C.I.D. sleuths from



Scotland Yard to help them out. One of these C.I.D chaps had managed to plant a

smart young Canadian in 'the Mechanics,' which is the name of the toughest

Toronto gang, with affiliations over the border with Chicago and Detroit. And it

was this young man who got wind of Uhlmann and what he wanted done. Well, I and

my Mountie pals went to work and, to cut a long story short, we found out that

it was Boris who was the target and that the Mechanics had agreed to do the job

last Thursday—that's just about a week ago. Uhlmann had gone to ground, and we

couldn't get a smell of him. All we could discover from our man with the

Mechanics was that he had agreed to lead the murder squad that was to consist of

three top gunmen from the mob. It was to be a frontal attack on the apartment

where Boris lived. Nothing fancy. They were just going to blast their way

through the front door with sub-machine-guns, shoot him to bits, and get away.

It was to be at night, just before midnight, and the Mechanics would mount a

permanent watch on the apartment house to see that Boris came home from his job

and didn't go out again. "Well, apart from protecting Boris, my main job was to

get this Horst Uhlmann, because by now we were certain as could be that he was a

SPECTRE man, and one of my jobs is to go after these people wherever they show

up. Of course, we couldn't leave Boris in danger, but if we got him away to

safety there would be no attempt on his life and so no Uhlmann. So I had to make

a rather unpleasant suggestion." James Bond smiled grimly. "Unpleasant for me,

that is. From his photographs, I had noticed that there was a superficial

resemblance between Boris and me—about my age, tall, dark, clean-shaven. So I

took a look at him from a ghost car one day—that's an undercover prowler car—and

watched how he walked and what he wore. Then I suggested that we get Boris away

on the day before the murder job, and that I should take his place on the last

walk back to his apartment." I couldn't help saying anxiously, "Oh, but you

shouldn't have taken the risk. Supposing they'd changed the plan. Supposing

they'd decided to do it as you walked down the street, or with a time bomb or

something!" He shrugged. "We thought of all that. It was a calculated risk, and

it's those I'm paid for taking." He smiled. "Anyway, here I am. But it wasn't

nice walking down that street, and I was glad to get inside. The Mounties had

taken over the flat opposite to Boris, and I knew I was all right and simply had

to play the tethered goat while the sportsmen shot the wild game. I could have

stayed out of the flat, hidden somewhere in the building until it was all over,

but I had a hunch that the goat must be a real goat, and I was right, because at

eleven o'clock the telephone rang and a man's voice said. 'Is that Mr. Boris?'

giving his assumed name. I said, 'Yes. Who is dat?' trying to sound foreign, and

the man said, 'Thank you. Telephone Directory here. We're just checking the

subscribers in your district. Night.' I said good night and thanked my stars I

had been there to take the bogus call that was to make sure Boris was at home.

"The last hour was nervous work. There was going to be a lot of gunfire and

probably a lot of death, and no one likes the prospect of those things, even if

they don't expect to be hit. I had a couple of guns, heavy ones that really stop

people, and at ten to twelve I took up my position to the right of the door in

an angle of solid masonry and got ready just in case Uhlmann or one of the

hoodlums managed to bust through the Mounties across the passage. To tell you

the truth, as the minutes went by and I could imagine the killer car coming down

the street and the men piling out and running softly up the stairs, I wished 1

had accepted the Mounties' offer that one of their men should share this vigil,

as they called it, with me. But it would have been a five-hour tête-à-tête and,

apart from not knowing what we would talk about during all that time, I've

always had a preference for operating alone. It's just the way I'm made. Well,

the minutes and the seconds ticked by, and then, bang on time, at five minutes

to midnight, I heard a rush of rubber soles on the stairs and then all hell

broke loose." James Bond paused. He rubbed a hand down over his face. It was a

gesture that was either to clear his mind's eye or to try and wipe some memory

away from it. Then he lit another cigarette and went on. "I heard the lieutenant

in charge of the Mountie party shout, 'It's the law! Get 'em up!' And then there

was a mixture of single shots and bursts from the chopper"— he grinned—"sorry,

sub-machine-gun, and, somebody screamed. Then the lieutenant shouted, 'Get that

man!' and the next moment the lock blew off the door beside me and a man charged

in. He held a smoking machine-gun tight against the hip, which is the way to use

them, and he whirled from right to left in the bed-sitter, looking for Boris. I

knew it was Uhlmann, the ex-Gestapo man. One's had to get to know the smell of a

German, and of a Russian for the matter of that, in my line of work, and I had

him in my sights. I shot at his gun and blasted it out of his hands. But he was

quick. He jumped behind the open door. The door was only a thin bit of wood. I

couldn't take a chance on him having another gun and firing first, so I sprayed

a wide Z of bullets through the wood, bending my knees lower as I did so. Just

as well I did this, because he fired a quick burst that nearly parted my hair

when I was almost on my knees. But two of my bullets had got him, in the left

shoulder and right hip as it turned out, and he crashed down behind

the door and

lay quiet. "The rest of the battle outside had disappeared down the stairs after

the gunmen, but a wounded Mountie suddenly appeared at the entrance to my room

on hands and knees to help me. He said, 'Want a hand, feller?' and Uhlmann fired

through the door at the voice and—and, well, he killed the man. But that gave me

the height of Uhlmann's gun and I fired almost as he did, and then I ran out

into the center of the room to give him some more if need be. But he didn't need

any more. He was still alive, and when the remains of the Mounties came back up

the stairs we took him down and into an ambulance and tried to get him to talk

in hospital. But he wouldn't—a mixture of Gestapo and SPECTRE is a good one—and

he died the next morning." James Bond looked me in the eyes, but his own didn't

see me. He said, "We lost two of our side and another wounded. They lost the

German, and one of theirs, and the other two won't last long. But

the

battlefield was a nasty sight and, well"—his face looked suddenly drawn and

tired—"I've seen enough of this sort of thing. After the various post-mortems

were over I wanted to get away. My headquarters, and the Mounties backed them up,

wanted me to report the whole case to Washington, to our opposite numbers there,

to get their help in cleaning up the American end of the Mechanics gang. The

Mechanics had been given a nasty jolt, and the Mounties Special Branch thought

it would be a good idea to follow up while they were still groggy. I said all

right, but that I would like to drive down and not just dash off in an aeroplane

or train. That was allowed so long as I didn't take more than three days, and I

hired this car and started at dawn this morning. I was going all right, pretty

fast, when I ran into the hell of a storm, the tail of yours I suppose. I got



through it as far as Lake George, and I meant to stay the night there, but it

looked such a hellish place that when I saw a sign up at a side road advertising

this motel I took a chance." He smiled at me, and now he looked quite cheerful

again. "Perhaps something told me you were at the end of the road and that you

were in trouble. Anyway, I had a puncture a mile from here, and here I am." He

smiled again, and reached out and put his hand on mine on the counter. "Funny

the way things work out!" "But you must be absolutely beat, driving all that

way." "I've got something for that. Be a good girl and give me another cup of

coffee." While I busied myself with the percolator, he opened his case and took

out a small bottle of white pills. He took out two and when I gave him the

coffee he swallowed them down. "Benzedrine. That'll keep me awake for tonight.

I'll fit in some sleep tomorrow." His eyes went to the mirror. "Hullo. Here they

come." He gave me a smile of encouragement. "Now just don't worry. Get some

sleep. I'll be around to see there's no trouble." The music on the radio faded,

and musical chimes sounded midnight. Twelve: To Sleep  
—Perchance to Die! WHILE

Sluggsy made for the back door and went out into the night, the thin man came

slowly over to us. He leaned against the edge of the counter. "Okay, folks.

Break it up. It's midnight. We're turning off the electricity. My friend's getting emergency oil-lamps from the storehouse. No sense wasting juice. Mr.

Sanguinetti's orders." The words were friendly and reasonable. Had they decided

to give up their plans, whatever they were, because of this man Bond? I doubted

it. The thoughts that listening to James Bond's story had driven away came

flooding back. I was going to have to sleep with these two men in the adjoining

cabins on both sides of me. I must make my room impregnable. But they had the

passkey! I must get this man Bond to help me. James Bond yawned hugely. "Well,

I'll certainly be glad of some sleep. Came a long way today, and I've got plenty

more to cover tomorrow. And you must be ready for bed, too, with all your

worries." "Come again, mister?" The thin man's eyes had sharpened. "It's a pretty responsible job you've got." "What job's that?" "Oh, being an insurance assessor. On a valuable property like this. Must be worth half a million dollars,

I'd say. By the way, are either of you bonded?" "No, we ain't. Mr. Sanguinetti

don't need to bond no one what works for him." "That's a great compliment to his

staff. Must have good men. Quite right to put a lot of trust in them.

Incidentally, what's the name of his insurance company?" "Metro Accident and

Home." The thin man still leaned, relaxed, against the counter, but the gray

face was now tense. "Why? What's it to you, mister? Suppose you quit with the

double-talk and say what's on your mind." Bond said carelessly, "Miss Michel

here was telling me the motel hadn't been doing so well. I gather the

place

hasn't been accepted for membership in Quality Courts or Holiday Inns or

Congress. Difficult to do much trade without one of those affiliations. And all

this trouble to send up you fellows to count the spoons and turn off the

electric light and so on." James Bond looked sympathetic. "Just crossed my mind

that the business might be on the rocks. Too bad if it is. Nice set-up here, and

a fine site." The red fleck that I had seen once, terribly, before was now in

the thin man's eyes. He said softly, "Just suppose you bag your lip, mister. I

ain't standin' for no more limey cracks, get me? You suggestin' this ain't legit?

Mebbe you think we set one up, huh?" "Now don't burn yourself up, Mr. Horowitz.

No need to sing the weeps." James Bond smiled broadly. "You see, I know the

lingo too." His smile suddenly went. "And I also know where it comes from. Now,

do you get me?" I suppose he meant this was gangster, jailbird

language. The

thin man certainly thought so. He looked startled, but now he had conquered his

anger and he just said, "Okay, wise guy. I've got the photo. You gumshoes are

all the same—looking for dirt where there ain't none. Now, where in hell's that

pal of mine? C'mon. Let's hit the sack." As we filed out through the back door,

the lights went out. James Bond and I stopped, but the thin man went on along

the covered way as if he could see in the dark. Sluggsy appeared round the

corner of the building carrying two oil-lamps. He handed one to each of us. His

naked face, yellow in the light, split into a grin. "Happy dreams, folks!" James

Bond followed me over to my cabin and came inside. He shut the door. "Damned if

I know what they're up to, but the first thing to do is see that you're properly

closed down for the night. Now then, let's see." He prowled round the room,

examining the window fastenings, inspecting the hinges on the door, estimating

the size of the ventilator louvers. He seemed satisfied. He said. "There's only

the door. You say they've got the master key. We'll wedge the door, and when

I've gone, just move the desk over as an extra barricade." He went into the

bathroom, tore off strips of lavatory paper, moistened them, and made them into

firm wedges. He rammed several under the door, turned the handle, and pulled.

They held, but could have been shaken loose by ramming. He took the wedges out

again and gave them to me. Then he put his hand to the belt of his trousers and

took out a short, stumpy revolver. "Ever fired one of these things?" I said I'd

shot at rabbits with a long-barreled .22 target pistol when I was young. "Well,

this is a Smith and Wesson Police Positive. A real stopper. Remember to aim low.

Hold your arm out straight like this." He showed me. "And try to squeeze the

trigger and not snatch at it. But it won't really matter. I'll hear it and I'll

come running. Now remember. You've got absolute protection. The windows are good

solid stuff, and there's no way of getting in between the glass slats, short of

smashing them." He smiled. "Trust these motel designers. They know all there is

to know about break-ins. These hoodlums won't take a shot at you through them in

the dark, but, just in case, leave your bed where it is and make up a camp bed

with some cushions and bedding in that far corner on the floor. Put the gun

under your pillow. Pull the desk in front of the door and balance the television

set on the edge of it so that if anyone barges the door they knock it off.

That'll wake you, and then you just fire a shot through the door, close to the

handle, where the man will be standing, and listen for the squawk. Got it?" I

said yes, as happily as I could, and wished he would stay in the room with me.

But I hadn't the guts to ask him, and anyway he seemed to have his own plans. He

came up to me and kissed me gently on the lips. I was so surprised I just stood

there. He said lightly, "I'm sorry, Viv, but you're a beautiful girl. In those

overalls you're the prettiest garage-hand I've ever seen. Now don't you worry.

Get some sleep. I'll keep an eye on you." I threw my arms round his neck and

kissed him back—hard, on the lips. I said, "You're the most wonderful man I've

ever met in my life. Thank you for being here. And please, James. Be careful!

You haven't seen them like I have. They're really tough. Please don't get hurt."

He kissed me back, but only lightly, and I let go of him. He said, "Don't worry.

I've seen this sort before. Now you do all I told you and get off to sleep.

Night, Viv." And then he had gone. I stood for a moment looking at the closed

door, and then I went and brushed my teeth and got ready for bed. I looked at



myself in the mirror. I looked like hell— washed out, no make-up,  
and deep

circles under my eyes. What a day! And now this! I mustn't lose him!  
I mustn't

let him go! But I knew in my heart that I had to. He would go on  
alone, and I

would have to, too. No woman had ever held this man. None ever  
would. He was a

solitary, a man who walked alone and kept his heart to himself. He  
would hate

involvement. I sighed. All right. I would play it that way. I would let  
him go.

I wouldn't cry when he did. Not even afterward. Wasn't I the girl who  
had

decided to operate without a heart? Silly idiot! Silly, infatuated  
goose! This

was a fine time to maunder like a girl in a women's magazine! I  
shook my head

angrily and went into the bedroom and got on with what I had to do.  
It was still

blowing hard, and the pine trees clashed fiercely outside my back  
window. The

moon, filtering through high scudding clouds, lit up the two high  
squares of

glass at each end of the room and shone eerily through the thin, red-patterned

curtains. When the moon went behind the clouds, the blocks of blood-red

photographer's light went dark and there was only the meager pool of yellow from

the oil-lamp. Without the brightness of electricity, there was a nasty little

movie-set feeling about the oblong room. The corners were dark, and the room

seemed to be waiting for a director to call people out of the shadows and tell

them what to do. I tried not to be nervous. I put my ears to the connecting

walls to right and left, but across the space of the carports I could hear

nothing. Before I had set up my barricade I had softly opened the door and gone

out and looked round. There had been a glimmer of light from Numbers 8 and 10

and from James Bond's Number 40 away down to the left. Everything had been

peaceful, everything quiet. Now I stood in the middle of the room and had a last

look round. I had done everything he had told me to do. I remembered the prayers

I was going to say and I knelt down there and then on the carpet and said them.

I thanked, but I also asked. Then I took two aspirin, turned down the light and

blew across the glass chimney to put it out, and went over to my floor bed in

the corner. After unzipping the front of my overalls and unlacing but not

removing my shoes, I curled myself up in the blankets. I never take aspirins or

any other pills. These, after carefully reading the instructions, I had taken

from the little first-aid kit my practical mind had told me to include in my

scrap of luggage. I was anyway exhausted, beat to the wide, and the pills, to me

as strong as morphia, soon sent me off into a delicious half-sleep in which

there was no danger but only the dark, exciting face and the new-found knowledge

that there really did exist such men. Soppier even than that, I remembered the

first touch of his hand holding the lighter and thought carefully about each

kiss separately, and then, but only after vaguely remembering the gun and

slipping my hand under the pillow to make sure it was there, I went happily to

sleep. The next thing I knew I was wide awake. I lay for a moment remembering

where I was. There was a lull in the wind, and it was very quiet. I found I was

lying on my back. That was what had awakened me! I lay for a moment looking

across the room at the square of red high up on the opposite wall. The moon was

out again. How deathly quiet it was! The silence was warm and embracing after

the hours of storm. I began to feel drowsy and I turned over on my side so that

I lay facing into the room. I closed my eyes. But, as sleep held out her hands

to me again, something nagged at my mind. My eyes, before I had closed them, had

noticed something unusual in the room. Unwillingly, I opened them again. It took

minutes to recognize again what I had seen. The faintest chinks of light were

shining from between the door frames of the clothes cupboard up against the

opposite wall. How stupid! I hadn't closed the doors properly, and the automatic

"courtesy" light inside hadn't switched itself off. Reluctantly I got out of bed.

What a bore! And then, after I had taken only two steps across the room, I

suddenly remembered. But there wouldn't be a light inside the cupboard! The

electricity was switched off! I stood for a moment, my hand up to my mouth, and

then, as I turned to dive for the gun, the doors of the cupboard burst open and

the crouching figure of Sluggsy darted out and, a flashlight in one hand and

something swinging from the other, he was on top of me. I think I gave a shrill

scream, but perhaps it was only within me. The next moment something exploded

against the side of my head and I felt myself crash to the floor. Then all was

darkness. \* \* \* My first sensations on coming round were of terrific heat and of

being dragged along the ground. Then I smelled the burning and saw the flames

and I tried to scream. I realized that nothing was coming out of my mouth but an

animal whimpering, and I began to kick with my feet. But the hands held my

ankles firmly, and then suddenly, with painful bumps that added to the frightful

pain in my head, I found myself being dragged into wet grass and tree branches.

Suddenly my feet were laid down and there was a man on his knees beside me and

his firm hand was over my mouth. A voice close to my ear, James Bond's voice,

whispered urgently, "Don't make a sound! Lie still! It's all right. It's me." I

put a hand out to him and felt his shoulder. It was naked. I pressed it to

reassure him, and the hand came away from my mouth. He whispered, "Wait there!

Don't move! Be back in a second," and he slipped noiselessly away.

Noiselessly?

It wouldn't have mattered how much noise he made. There was a tremendous roar

and crackle of flames behind me, and orange light flickered against the trees. I

got carefully to my knees and painfully turned my head. A great wall of flame

extended down to my right all along the row of cabins. God, what he had saved me

from! I felt my body and put my hands up to my hair. I was untouched. There was

only the throbbing bruise at the back of my head. I found I could stand, and I

got up and tried to think what had happened. But I could remember nothing after

I had got hit. So they must have set fire to the place and James had somehow got

to me in time and pulled me out into the trees at the back! There was a rustle

among the trees, and he was beside me. He was wearing no shirt or coat, but

there was some kind of harness across the sunburned, sweating chest that

glistened in the light of the flames, and a heavy-looking automatic

hung, butt

down, below his left armpit. His eyes were bright with tension and excitement,

and his smoke-streaked face and tousled hair made him look piratical and rather

frightening. He smiled grimly. He nodded in the direction of the flames. "That's

the game. Burn the place down for the insurance. They're just fixing the flames

to reach the lobby building, sprinkling thermite dust along the covered way. I

couldn't care less. If I took them on now, I'd only be saving Mr. Sanguinetti's

property for him. With us as witnesses, he won't even smell the insurance. And

he'll be in jail. So we'll just wait a bit and let him have a total loss on his

books." I suddenly thought of my precious belongings. I said humbly, "Can we

save the Vespa?" "It's all right. You've only lost those glad rags—if you left

them in the bathroom. I got the gun when I got you, and I slung the saddlebags



out. I've just been salvaging the Vespa. It looks in good shape. I've made a

cache of everything in the trees. Those carports will be the last things to go.

They've got masonry on both sides. They've used thermite bombs in each of the

cabins. Better than petrol. Less bulky, and they leave no traces for the

insurance sleuths." "But you might have got burned!" His smile flashed white in the shadows. "That's why I took my coat off. I must look respectable in

Washington." It didn't seem funny to me. "But what about your shirt?" "There was a crash and a great shower of sparks way down the line of cabins. James Bond

said, "There goes my shirt. Roof falling in on top of it." He paused and wiped

his hand down his dirty, sweating face so that the black smudged even worse. "I

had a feeling something like this was going to happen. Perhaps I should have

been more ready for it than I was. I could have gone and changed the wheel on my

car, for instance. If I'd done that we could get out now. We could work our way

round the end of the cabins and make a dash for it. Get to Lake George or Glens

Falls and send the cops along. But I thought that if I fixed the car our friends

would have an excuse to tell me to get moving. I could have refused, of course,

or said that I wouldn't go without you, but I thought that might lead to

shooting. I'd be lucky to beat those two unless I shot first. And with me out of

the picture, you'd have been back where we started. That would have been bad.

You were a major part of their plan." "I felt I was all along. I didn't know why.

I knew the way they were treating me meant that I didn't matter, that I was

expendable. What did they want to use me for?" "You were to have been the cause

of the fire. The evidence for Sanguinetti would have been that the managers,

this Phancey couple, and of course they're in it up to their necks"—I remembered

the way their attitude to me had changed on the last day; the way they too had

treated me with contempt, as rubbish, as something that was to be

thrown away—

"they would say that they had told you to turn off the electricity  
—perfectly

reasonable as the place was closing down—and use an oil-lamp for  
the last night.

The remains of the oil-lamp would have been found. You had gone  
to sleep with

the light on and somehow upset it. The whole place blazed up, and  
that was that.

The buildings had a lot of timber in them, and the wind did the rest.  
My turning

up was a nuisance, but not more than that. My remains would have  
been found too—

or at any rate my car and wrist watch and the metal from my bag. I  
don't know

what they'd have done about my gun and the one under your pillow.  
Those might

have got them into trouble. The police would have checked the car  
with Canada

and then the numbers of the guns with England, and that would  
have identified me.

So why was my other gun under your pillow? That might have made  
the police think.

If we were, well, sort of lovers, why was I sleeping so far away from you?

Perhaps we had both been very proper and slept as far apart as possible and I

had insisted that you have one of my guns to protect a lonely girl in the night.

I don't know how they would have worked it out. But my guess is that our friends,

once I told them I was a policeman, may have thought about guns and other

incriminating hardware that wouldn't be destroyed in the fire and might have

waited a few hours and then gone in and raked about in the ashes to take care of

that sort of trouble. They'd have been careful about their raking, and of their

footprints in the cinders, of course. But then, these people are pros." His

mouth turned down. "By their standards, that is." "But why didn't they kill

you?" "They did, or rather they thought they had. When I left you and went along

to my cabin, I reckoned that if anything was going to happen to you they would

get rid of me first. So I rigged up a dummy in my bed. A good one.  
I've done it

before, and I've got the trick. You mustn't only have something that  
looks like

a body in the bed. You can do that with pillows and towels and  
bedding. You must

also have something that looks like hair on the pillow. I did that with  
handfuls

of pine needles, just enough to make a dark clump on the pillow with  
the sheets

drawn up to it—very artistic. Then I hung my shirt over the back of a  
chair

beside the bed— another useful prop that conveys the idea that the  
man belonging

to the shirt is inside the bed—and I left the oil-lamp burning low,  
close to the

bed to help their marksmanship—if any. I put amateurish wedges  
under the door

and propped a chair-back under the door handle to show a natural  
sense of

precaution. Then I took my bag round to the back and waited in the  
trees." James

Bond gave a sour laugh. "They gave me an hour and then they  
came so softly that

I didn't hear a thing. Then there was the bang of the door being forced and a

series of quick clonks—they were using a silencer—and then the whole interior of

the cabin went bright with the thermite. I thought I had been very clever, but

it turned out I very nearly wasn't clever enough. It took me almost five minutes

to work my way up to your cabin through the trees. I wasn't worried. I thought

it would take them all that to get into your cabin and I was ready to break out

in the open if I heard your gun. But sometime this evening, probably when

Sluggsy was making the cabin inspection you told me about, he had pickaxed a

hole in the wall behind your clothes cupboard, leaving only the plaster-board

lining to be cut through with a sharp knife. He may or may not have put the

stone loosely back. I don't know. Anyway, he didn't need to. There was no

occasion for either of us to go into the carport of Number 8, and no reason to.

If you had been here alone, they would have seen to it that you kept away from

there. Anyway, the first thing I knew was seeing the light of the thermite from

your cabin. Then I ran like hell, dodging across the open backs of the carports

as I heard them coming back down the line, opening the doors of the cabins and

tossing bombs in and then carefully shutting the doors to make it look tidy."

During all this while, James Bond had been glancing from time to time at the

roof of the lobby building that we could just see over the tops of the flaming

cabins. Now he said casually, "They've set it going. I'll have to get after them.

How are you feeling, Viv? Any stuffing left? How's the head?" I said impatiently,

"Oh, I'm all right. But James, do you have to go after them? Let them get away.

What do they matter? You might get hurt." He said firmly, "No, darling. They

almost killed both of us. Any minute now they may come back and find the Vespa

gone. Then we'll have lost the surprise factor. And I can't let them get away

with it. These are killers. They'll be off killing someone else tomorrow." He

smiled cheerfully. "Besides, they ruined my shirt!" "Well, then you must let me help." I put my hand out to him. "And you will take care, won't you? I can't do

without you. I don't want to be alone again." He ignored my hand. He said,

almost coldly, "Now don't hang on my gun arm, there's a good girl. This is

something I've got to do. It's just a job. Now"—he handed me the Smith and

Wesson—"you move quietly up in the trees to the carport of Number 3. That's in

the dark, and the wind's blowing the fire the other way. You can watch from

there without being seen. If I need help, I'll know where to find you, so don't

budge. If I call, come running fast. If anything happens to me, get moving along

the shore of the lake and work your way as far as you can. After this fire,

there'll be plenty of police along tomorrow, and you can smuggle



yourself back

and contact one of them. They'll believe you. If they argue, tell them to ring

up C.I.A. in Washington, the Central Intelligence Agency, and you'll see plenty

of action. Just say who I was. I've got a number in my outfit—sort of recognition number. It's 007. Try not to forget it." Thirteen: The Crash of Guns

"I was." "Say who I was...." Why did he have to say such a thing, put the idea into the mind of God, of Fate, of whoever was controlling tonight? One should

never send out black thoughts. They live on, like sound-waves, and get into the

stream of consciousness in which we all swim. If God, Fate, happened to be

listening in, at that moment, on that particular wavelength, it might be made to

happen. The hint of a death-thought might be misunderstood. It might be read as

a request! So I mustn't think these thoughts either, or I would be adding my

weight to the dark waves of destiny! What nonsense! I had learned this sort of

stuff from Kurt. He had always been full of "cosmic chain reactions,"

"cryptograms of the life-force," and other Germanic magical double-talk that I

had avidly lapped up as if, as he had sometimes hinted, he himself had been the

"Central Dynamic," or at least part of it, who controlled all these things. Of

course James Bond had said that flippantly, in a cross-my-fingers way, like the

skiers I had known in Europe who said "Hals und Beinbruch!" to their friends

before they took off on the slalom or the downhill race. To wish them "Break

your neck and your leg" before the off was to avert accidents, to invoke the

opposite of the evil eye. James Bond was just being "British"—using a throwaway

phrase to buck me up. Well, I wished he hadn't. The crash of guns, gangsters,

attempted murders, were part of his job, his life. They weren't part of mine,

and I blamed him for not being more sensitive, more human. Where was he now?

Working his way through the shadows, using the light of the flames

as cover,

pricking up his senses for danger? And what were the enemy doing? Were they

waiting for him in ambush? Would there suddenly be a roar of gunfire? Then

screams? I got to the carport of Number 3 cabin and, brushing along the roughcast stone wall, felt my way through the darkness. I cautiously inched the last few feet and looked round the corner toward the dancing flames and shadows of

the other cabins and of the lobby block. There was no one to be seen, no

movement except the flames at which the wind tugged intermittently to keep the

blaze alive. Now some of the bordering trees behind the cabins were almost

catching and sparks were blowing from their drying branches away into the

darkness. If it hadn't been for the storm, surely a forest fire would have been

started and then the coshed girl with her broken lamp would indeed have left her

mark on the United States of America! How far would it have gone with the wind

to help it? Ten miles? Twenty? How many trees and birds and

animals would the

little dead girl from Quebec have destroyed? Another cabin roof fell in, and

there was the same great shower of orange sparks. And now the gimcrack timbered

roof of the lobby block was going. It caved slowly inward and then collapsed

like a badly cooked soufflé, and more showers of sparks went up gaily and burned

themselves out as they briefly drifted away on the wind. The extra burst of

flame showed up the two cars beside the road, the gray Thunderbird and the

shining black sedan. But there was still no sign of the gangsters and none of

James Bond. I suddenly realized that I had forgotten all about time. I looked at

my watch. It was two o'clock. So it was only five hours since all this had begun!

It could have been weeks. My former life seemed almost years away. Even last

evening, when I had sat and thought about that life, was difficult to remember.

Everything had suddenly been erased. Fear and pain and danger

had taken over. It

was like being in a shipwreck, an airplane or a train crash, an earthquake or a

hurricane. When these things happen to you, it must be just the same. The black

wings of emergency blot out the sky, and there is no past and no future. You

live through each minute, survive each second, as though it is your last. There

is no other time, no other place but now and here. And then I saw the men! They

were coming up toward me on the grass, and each was carrying a big box in his

hands. They were television sets. They must have salvaged them to sell and make

themselves a little extra cash. They walked side by side, the thin man and the

squat, and the light from the flaming cabins shone on their sweating faces. When

they came to the charred arches of the covered way to the lobby block, they

trotted quickly through, after glancing up at the still-burning roof to make

sure it wouldn't fall on them. Where was James Bond? This was the perfect time

to get them, with their hands full! Now they were only twenty yards away from me,

veering right toward their car. I cringed back into the dark cave of the carport.

But where was James? Should I run out after them and take them on alone? Don't

be idiotic! If I missed, and I certainly would, that would be the end of me. Now,

if they turned round, would they see me? Would my white overalls show up in the

darkness? I got farther back. Now they were framed in the square opening of my

carport as they walked across the grass a few yards from the still-standing

north wall of the lobby building from which the wind had so far kept most of the

flames. They would soon vanish round the corner, and a wonderful chance would

have gone! And then they stopped, stock still, and there was James facing them,

his gun arming dead steady between the two bodies! His voice cracked like a whip

across the lawn. "All right! This is it! Turn round! The first man drops his

television gets shot." They turned slowly round so that they faced toward my

hideout. And now James called to me, "Come over, Viv! I need extra hands." I

took the heavy revolver out of the waistband of my overalls and ran quickly

across the grass. When I was about ten yards away from the men, James said,

"Just stop there, Viv, and I'll tell you what to do." I stopped. The two evil

faces stared at me. The thin man's teeth were bared in a sort of fixed grin of

surprise and tension. Sluggsy let off a string of curses. I pointed my gun at

the television set that covered his stomach, "Shut your mouth or I'll shoot you

dead." Sluggsy sneered. "You and who else? You'd be too frightened of the bang." James said, "Shut up, you, or you get a crack on that ugly head of yours. Now

listen, Viv, we've got to get the guns off these men. Come round behind the one

called Horror. Put your gun up against his spine and with your free

hand feel

under his armpits. Not a nice job, but it can't be helped. Tell me if you feel a

gun there and I'll tell you what to do next. We'll go at this slowly. I'll cover

the other, and if this Horror moves let him have it." I did as I was told. I

went round behind the thin man and pressed the gun into his back. Then I reached

up with my left hand and felt under his right arm. A nasty, dead kind of smell

came from him, and I was suddenly disgusted at being so close to him and

touching him so intimately. I know that my hand trembled, and it must have been

that that made him take the chance, for, suddenly, in one quick flow of motion,

he had dropped the television, whirled like a snake, slapping the gun out of my

hand with his open palm, and clutched me to him. James Bond's gun roared, and I

felt the wind of a bullet, and then I began to fight like a demon, kicking and

scratching and clawing. But I might have been fighting with a stone



statue. He

just squeezed me more agonizingly to him, and I heard his dry voice say, "Okay,

limey. Now what? Want the dame to get herself killed?" I could feel one of his

hands loosening itself from me to get to his gun, and I began struggling again.

James Bond said sharply, "Viv. Get your legs apart!" I automatically did as I

was told, and again his gun roared. The thin man let out a curse and set me free,

but at the same time there came a splintering crash from behind me and I whirled

round. At the same time as he had fired, Sluggsy had hurled the television set

over his head at James Bond, and it had crashed into his face, knocking him off

balance. As Sluggsy shouted, "Scram, Horror!" I dived for my gun and, prone in

the grass, clumsily fired it at Sluggsy. I would probably have missed him anyway,

but he was already on the move, weaving across the lawn toward the cabins like a

football player, with the thin man scrambling desperately after him. I fired

again, but the gun kicked high, and then they were out of range and Sluggsy

disappeared into Number 1 cabin away on the right. I got up and ran to James

Bond. He was kneeling down in the grass with one hand to his head. As I came up

he took the hand away, looked at it, and swore. There was a big gash just below

the hairline. I didn't say anything but ran to the nearest window of the lobby

building and smashed it in with the butt of my gun. A burst of heat came out at

me, but no flames, and, just below, almost within reach, was the table the

gangsters had used, and on it, among some smoldering remains of the roof, the

first-aid kit. James Bond shouted something, but I was already over the sill. I

held my breath against the fumes, grabbed the box, and scrambled out again, my

eyes stinging with the smoke. I wiped the wound as clean as I could and got out

Merthiolate and a big Band-Aid. The cut wasn't deep, but there would soon be a

bad bruise. He said, "Sorry, Viv. I made rather a hash of that round." I thought

he had too. I said, "Why didn't you just shoot them down? They were sitting

ducks with those sets in their hands." He said curtly, "Never been able to in

cold blood. But at least I ought to have been able to blast that man's foot off.

Must have just nicked it, and now he's still in the game." I said severely, "It

seems to me damned lucky you're in it too. Why didn't Sluggsy kill you?" "Your

guess is as good as mine. It looks as if they've got some kind of a headquarters

over at Number 1. Perhaps he left his armament there while they did the job on

the lobby. He may not have liked carrying live bullets around with him so near

to the flames. Anyway, war's declared now, and we're going to have quite a job

on our hands. Main thing is to keep an eye on their car. They'll be pretty

desperate to get away. But they've somehow got to kill us first.  
They're in a

nasty fix and they'll fight like hellcats." I finished fixing the cut.  
James

Bond had been watching cabin Number 1. Now he said, "Better get  
under cover.

They may have got something heavy in there, and they'll have  
finished fixing the

Horror's foot." He got to his feet. He suddenly yanked my arm and  
said, "Quick!" At the same time I heard the tinkle of glass away on  
the right and a deafening

rattle that I supposed was some kind of machine-gun. On our heels,  
bullets

whipped into the side of the lobby building. James Bond smiled.  
"Sorry again,

Viv! My reactions don't seem all that smart tonight. I'll do better." He  
paused.

"Now, let's just think for a minute." It was a long minute, and I was  
sweating

with heat from the burning lobby. Now there was only the north wall  
and the bit

we were sheltering behind as far as the front door. The rest was a  
mass of

flames. But the wind was still blowing the fire southward, and it

seemed to me

that this last bit of masonry might stand up a long while yet. Most of the

cabins were on their way to burning out and, on that side of the clearing, there

was a lessening of the glare and sparks. It crossed my mind that the blaze must

have been visible for miles, perhaps even as far as Lake George or Glens Falls,

yet no one had turned up to help. Probably the highway patrols and the fire

services had enough on their hands with the havoc caused by the storm. And, as

for their beloved forests, they would reckon that no fire could spread through

this soaking landscape. James Bond said, "Now this is what we're going to do.

First of all, I want you somewhere where you can help but where I don't have to

worry about you. Otherwise, if I know these men, they'll concentrate on you and

guess that I'll do anything, even let them get away rather than let you get

hurt." "Is that true?" "Don't be silly. So you get on over the road

under cover of this bit of building and then work back, keeping well out of sight, until

you're just about opposite their car. Stay quiet, and even if one or both of

them gets to the car, hold your fire until I tell you to shoot. All right?" "But

where will you be?" "We've got what are known as interior lines of defense—if we

consider the cars as the objective. I'm going to stick around here and let them

come at me. It's they who want to get us and get away. Let 'em try. Time's

against them." He looked at his watch. "It's nearly three. How long before first

light around here?" "About two hours. Around five. But there are two of them and

only one of you! They'll do a sort of what they call 'pincers movement.' " "One

of the crabs has lost a claw. Anyway that's the best I can do for a master plan.

Now you get on across the road before they start something. I'll keep them

occupied." He went to the corner of the building, edged round, and took two

quick shots at the right-hand cabin. There was a distant crash of glass and then

the vicious blast of the sub-machine gun. Bullets splatted into the masonry and

whipped across the road into the trees. James Bond had pulled back. He smiled

encouragingly. "Now!" I ran to the right and across the road, keeping the lobby

building between me and the end cabin, and scrambled in among the trees. Once

again they tore and scratched at me, but now I had proper shoes on, and the

material of the overalls was tough. I got well inside the wood and then began

working along to the left. When I thought I had gone far enough I crept down

toward the light from the flames. I ended up where I had wanted to, just inside

the first line of trees with the black sedan about twenty yards away on the

other side of the road and a fairly clear view of the flickering battlefield.

All this while, the moon had been dodging in and out through the scudding

clouds—in turns lighting everything brightly and then switching itself off and

leaving only the changing glare that came mostly from the blazing left half of

the lobby block. Now the moon came fully out and showed me something that almost

made me scream. The thin man, crawling on his stomach, was worming his way up

the north side of the lobby block, and the moonlight glinted on the gun in his

hand. James Bond was where I had left him, and, to keep him there, Sluggsy now

kept up a steady stream of single shots that flicked every few seconds at the

angle of the wall toward which the thin man was worming his way. Perhaps James

Bond guessed the significance of this steady fire. He may have known that it was

meant to pin him down, because now he began moving along to the left, toward the

burning half of the building. And now he was running, bent low, out across the

browned grass and through the billowing smoke and sparks toward the charred,



flickering ruins of the left-hand line of cabins. I caught a brief glimpse of

him diving through one of the carports at around Number 15, and then he was gone,

presumably into the trees at the back to work his way up and take Sluggsy in the

rear. I watched the thin man. He was nearly at the corner of the building. Now

he was there. The single shots ceased. Without taking aim, and firing with his

left hand, the thin man edged his gun round the corner and sprayed a whole

magazine, blind, down the front wall where James and I had been standing. When

no answering fire came, he jerked his head round the corner and back again, like

a snake, and then got to his feet and made a sweeping motion with his hand to

show that we had gone. And now there came two quick shots from the direction of

cabin Number 1, followed by a bloodcurdling scream that stopped my heart, and

Sluggsy came backing out onto the lawn, firing from the hip with his right while

his left hand dangled down at his side. He continued to run backward, screaming

with pain, but still firing his machine gun in short bursts, and then I saw a

flicker of movement in one of the carports and there came the deep answering

boom of the heavy automatic. But Sluggsy switched his aim, and James Bond's guns

went silent. Then they began again from another place, and one of the shots must

have hit the machine gun because Sluggsy suddenly dropped it and began to run

toward the black sedan, where the thin man was crouching, giving long-range

covering fire with two guns. James Bond's hit on the sub-machine gun must have

jammed the mechanism, for it went on firing, jerking round like a flaming

Catherine wheel in the grass and spraying bullets all over the place. And then

the thin man was in the driving seat, and I heard the engine catch, and a spurt

of smoke came from the exhaust, and he flung open the side door and Sluggsy got

to it and the door was slammed on him by the forward leap of the car. I didn't

wait for James. I ran out into the road and began blazing away at the back of

the car and heard some of my bullets wham into the metal. Then the hammer

clicked on nothing, and I stood and swore at the thought of them getting away.

But then came the steady crash of James's gun from the far side of the lawn,

while fire spat back from the front window of the car. Until all of a sudden the

black sedan seemed to go crazy. It made a wide swerve and looked to be heading

across the lawn straight for James. For a moment he was caught in its great

lights as he stood there, the sweat gleaming on his naked chest, and fired, in

the classic stance of the dueler, as if at a charging animal. I thought he was

going to be mown down and I began to run across the grass toward him, but then

the car veered away and, its engine roaring in bottom gear, made straight for

the lake. I stood and watched, fascinated. Thereabouts the lawn was cut to the

edge of a low cliff, about twenty feet high, below which is a fishing pool, and

there were some rough-hewn benches and tables for people to sit and picnic. The

car tore on, and now, whether or not it hit a bench, its speed would certainly

get it to the lake. But it missed all the benches and, as I put my hand up to my

mouth in horrified excitement, it took off over the edge and landed flat on the

water with a giant splash and crash of metal and glass. Then, quite slowly, it

sank, nose down, in a welter of exhaust gas and bubbles, until there was nothing

left but the trunk and a section of the roof and rear window slanting up toward

the sky. James Bond was still standing, gazing at the lake, when I ran up to him

and threw my arms round him. "Are you all right? Are you hurt?" He turned

dazedly toward me and put his arm round my waist and held me tight. He said

vaguely, "No. I'm all right." He looked back toward the lake. "I must have bit the driver, the thin man. Killed him, and his body jammed the accelerator." He

seemed to come to himself. He smiled tautly. "Well, that's certainly tidied up

the situation. No ragged edged to clean up. Dead and buried all in one go. Can't

say I'm sorry. They were a couple of real thugs." He let go of me and thrust his

gun up into its holster. He smelled of cordite and sweat. It was delicious. I

reached up and kissed him. We turned away and walked slowly across the grass.

The fire was only burning fitfully now, and the battlefield was almost dark. My

watch said it was three-thirty. I suddenly felt utterly, absolutely finished. As

if echoing my thoughts, James said, "That's worked the Benzedrine off. How about

getting a little sleep? There are still four or five cabins in good shape. How

about 2 and 3? Are they desirable suites?" I felt myself blushing. I said

obstinately, "I don't mind what you think, James, but I'm not going to leave you

tonight. You can choose either 2 or 3. I'll sleep on the floor." He laughed and

reached out and hugged me to him. "If you sleep on the floor, I'll sleep on the

floor too. But it seems rather a waste of a fine double bed. Let's say Number

3." He stopped and looked at me, pretending to be polite. "Or would you rather

have Number 2?" "No. Number 3 would be heavenly." Fourteen: Bimbo CABIN Number 3 was airless and stuffy. While James Bond collected our "luggage" from among the

trees, I opened the glass slats of the windows and turned down the sheets on the

double bed. I should have felt embarrassed, but I didn't. I just enjoyed

housekeeping for him by moonlight. Then I tried the shower and found

miraculously that there was still full pressure, though farther down the line

many stretches of the pipes must have melted. The top cabins were nearer to the

main. I stripped off all my clothes and made them into a neat pile

and went into

the shower and opened a new cake of Camay ("Pamper your Guests with Pink Camay—

With a scent like costly French Perfume... blended with Fine Cold Cream" I

remembered, because it sounded so succulent, it said on the packet) and began to

lather myself all over, gently, because of the bruises. Through the noise of the

shower, I didn't hear him come into the bathroom. But suddenly there were two

more hands washing me and a naked body was up against mine and I smelled the

sweat and the gunpowder and I turned and laughed up into his grimy face and then

I was in his arms and our mouths met in a kiss that seemed as if it would never

end while the water poured down and made us shut our eyes. When my breath was

almost exhausted, he pulled me out from under the shower and we kissed again,

more slowly, while his hands wandered over my body and desire came in waves of

dizziness. I simply couldn't stand it. I said, "Please, James! Please

don't! Or

I shall fall down. And be gentle. You're hurting me." In the moonlit dusk of the

bathroom, his eyes were only fierce slits. Now they relaxed into tenderness and

laughter. "I'm sorry, Viv. It's not my fault. It's my hands. They won't stay

away from you. And they ought to be washing me. I'm filthy. You'll have to do it.

They won't obey me." I laughed up at him and pulled him under the shower. "All

right, then. But I shan't be gentle. The last time I washed anyone it was a pony

when I was about twelve! Anyway, I can hardly see which bit of you's which!" I

got hold of the soap. "Put your face down. I'll try not to put too much in your

eyes." "If you put any in, I'll—" My hands stopped the rest of the sentence and I set about scrubbing his face and hair and then moved on down his arms and

chest, while he stood bowed and holding with both hands to the water pipe. I

stopped. "You'll have to do the rest." "Certainly not. And do it properly. You never know. There might be a world war and you'd



have to be a nurse. You might

as well learn how to wash a man. And anyway, what the hell's this soap? I smell

like Cleopatra." "It's very good. It's got costly French perfume in it. It says

so on the package. And you smell delicious. Much better than your gunpowder

smell." He laughed. "Well, get on. But hurry." So I bent down and began and of course in a minute we were in each other's arms again under the shower and our

bodies were slithery with water and soap and he turned the shower off and lifted

me out of the shower cabinet and began to dry me lingeringly with the bath towel

while I leaned back within his free arm and just let it happen. Then I took the

towel and dried him, and then it was silly to wait any longer and he picked me

up in his arms and carried me through into the bedroom and laid me down on the

bed and I watched through half-closed lashes his pale shape as he went around

drawing the curtains and locking up. And then he was lying beside me. His hands

and his mouth were slow and electric, and his body in my arms was tenderly

fierce. Afterward he told me that when the moment came I screamed. I didn't know

I had. I only know that a chasm of piercing sweetness suddenly opened and

drowned me and that I dug my nails into his hips to make sure of taking him with

me. Then he sleepily said some sweet things and kissed me once and his body

slithered away and lay still and I stayed on my back and gazed up into the red

darkness and listened to his breathing. \* \* \* I had never before made love, full

love, with my heart as well as my body. It had been sweet with Derek, cold and

satisfying with Kurt. But this was something different. At last I realized what

this thing could be in one's life. I think I know why I gave myself so completely to this man, how I was capable of it with someone I had met only six

hours before. Apart from the excitement of his looks, his authority, his

maleness, he had come from nowhere, like the prince in the fairy tales, and he

had saved me from the dragon. But for him, I would now be dead, after suffering

God knows what before. He could have changed the wheel on his car and gone off,

or, when danger came, he could have saved his own skin. But he had fought for my

life as if it had been his own. And then, when the dragon was dead, he had taken

me as his reward. In a few hours, I knew, he would be gone—without protestations

of love, without apologies or excuses. And that would be the end of that—gone,

finished. All women love semi-rape. They love to be taken. It was his sweet

brutality against my bruised body that had made his act of love so piercingly

wonderful. That and the coinciding of nerves completely relaxed after the

removal of tension and danger, the warmth of gratitude, and a woman's natural

feeling for her hero. I had no regrets and no shame. There might be many

consequences for me— not the least that I might now be dissatisfied with other

men. But whatever my troubles were, he would never hear of them. I would not

pursue him and try to repeat what there had been between us. I would stay away

from him and leave him to go his own road, where there would be other women,

countless other women, who would probably give him as much physical pleasure as

he had had with me. I wouldn't care, or at least I told myself that I wouldn't

care, because none of them would ever own him—own any larger piece of him than I

now did. And for all my life I would be grateful to him, for everything. And I

would remember him forever as my image of a man. How silly could one be? What

was there to dramatize about this naked male person lying beside me? He was just

a professional agent who had done his job. He was trained to fire guns, to kill

people. What was so wonderful about that? Brave, strong, ruthless with women—

these were the qualities that went with his calling, what he was paid to be. He

was only some kind of spy, a spy who had loved me. Not even loved, slept with.

Why should I make him my hero, swear never to forget him? I suddenly had an

impulse to wake him up and ask him: "Can you be nice? Can you be kind?" I turned

over on my side. He was asleep, breathing quietly, his head resting on his

outflung left forearm, his right arm tucked under the pillow. Again the moon

outside was bright. Red light filtered through the curtains, mixing the black

shadows of his body with shining crimson highlights. I bent closely over him,

breathing in his male-ness, longing to touch him, to run my hand down his

sunburned back to where the brown became abruptly white where his summer

bathing-trunks had been. After looking long at him, I lay back. No, he was as I

had thought him to be. Yes, this was a man to love. \* \* \* The red curtains at

the other end of the room were moving. Through half-sleeping eyes I wondered why.

Outside, the wind had dropped and there was no sound. Lazily I raised my eyes to

look above me. The curtains at this end of the room, above our bed, were

motionless. There must be a small breeze coming off the lake. Come on! For

heaven's sake go to sleep! And then, with a sudden ripping noise high up on the

opposite wall, the bits of curtain hung sideways. And a big, glittering turnipface, pale and shiny under the moon, was looking through the glass slats! I never knew that hair could stand up on end. I thought it was invented by writers.

But I heard a scratching on the pillow round my ears and I felt the fresh night

air on my scalp. "I wanted to scream, but I couldn't." "My limbs were frozen."

"I couldn't move hand or foot." I thought these too were fictions. They aren't.

I simply lay and stared, noting my physical sensations—even to the symptom that

my eyes were so wide open that they ached. But I couldn't move a finger. I was—

another phrase from books—frightened stiff, stiff as a board. The face behind

the glass window slats was grinning. Perhaps the teeth were bared, like an

animal's, with effort. The moon glistened off the teeth and off the eyes and off

the top of the hairless head to make a kind of child's sketch of a face. The

ghost face jerked slowly round the room, looking. It saw the white bed with the

twin smudges of the heads on the pillow. It stopped looking and slowly,

painfully, a hand, with shiny metal in it, came up beside the head and smashed

clumsily downward through the panes of glass. The noise was a trigger that

released me. I screamed and hit sideways with my hand. It probably didn't help.

The crash of glass had wakened him. I might even have spoiled his aim. But then

came the double roar of guns, the solid slap of bullets into the wall above my

head, another great splintering of glass, and the turnip face had gone. "Are you

all right, Viv?" His voice was urgent, desperate. He saw that I was and didn't

wait for an answer. The bed heaved and suddenly the moonlight threw a great

block of light through the door. He ran so quietly that I didn't hear his feet

on the concrete floor of the carport, but I could visualize him flattening

himself against its wall and edging round. I just lay and stared, aghast—another

literary word, but an accurate one—at the jagged remains of the window and

remembered the glistening, horrible turnip head that must have been a ghost.

James Bond came back. He didn't say a word. The first thing he did was to get me

a glass of water. The prosaic action, the first thing a parent does when the

child has nightmares, brought back the room and its familiar shapes from the

black and red cave of the ghosts and the guns. Then he fetched a bath towel and

put a chair under the smashed window and climbed on it and draped the towel over



the window. I was suddenly conscious of the muscles that bunched and relaxed in

his naked body and I was amused at how odd a man looks without any clothes on

when he is not making love but just moving about a room doing kind of household

chores. I thought that perhaps one ought to be a nudist. But perhaps only under

forty. I said, "James, don't ever get fat." He had fixed the towel as a curtain.

He got down off the chair and said absent-mindedly, "No. That's right. One

shouldn't get fat." He put the chair tidily back beside the desk where it

belonged and picked up his gun that he had put down on the desk. He examined the

gun. He went to his small pile of clothes and took out a new clip and substituted it for the old one and came over to the bed and slipped the gun

under his pillow. Now I realized why he had lain like that, with his right hand

doubled under the pillow. I guessed that he always slept like that. I thought

his must be rather like a fireman's life, always waiting for a call. I thought

how extraordinary it must be to have danger as your business. He came and sat

down on the edge of my side of the bed. In the filtering scraps of light his

face looked drawn and sort of blasted, as if by shock. He tried to smile, but

the tense muscles wouldn't let him and it was only a crooked sketch of a smile.

He said, "I nearly got us both killed again. I'm sorry, Viv. I must be losing my

touch. If I go on like this I'm going to catch trouble. When the car went into

the lake, remember a bit of the roof and the rear window was left sticking out

of the water? Well, there was obviously plenty of air trapped in that corner. I

was a damned fool not to have worked that out for myself. This fellow Sluggsy

only needed to knock out the rear window and swim ashore. He was hit several

times. It must have been hard going for him. But he got to our cabin. We ought

to be dead ducks. Don't go round the back in the morning. He's not a pretty

sight." He looked at me for reassurance. "Anyway, I'm sorry, Viv. It ought never

to have happened." I scrambled off the bed and went and put my arms round him.

His body was cold. I hugged him to me and kissed him. "Don't be silly, James! If

it wasn't for me, you wouldn't have got into all this mess. And where would I be

now if it wasn't for you? I'd not only have been a dead duck, but a roasted one

too, hours ago. The trouble with you is you haven't had enough sleep. And you're

cold. Come into bed with me. I'll keep you warm." I got up and pulled him to his

feet. He caught me to him. He reached down with both hands and pressed my body

hard into his. He held me like that for a time, quite still, and I felt the way

his body was gaining warmth from mine. Then he lifted me up and laid me softly

back on the bed. And then he took me fiercely, almost cruelly, and once again

there came the small scream from someone who was no longer me and then we were

lying side by side and his heart was pounding wildly against my breast and I

found that my right hand was clenched in his hair. I relaxed my cramped fingers

and reached down for his hand. I said, "James, what's a bimbo?" "Why?" "I'll tell you when you've told me." He laughed sleepily. "It's gangster language for

a whore." "I thought it was something like that. They kept on calling me that. I

suppose it must really be true." "You don't qualify." "Promise you don't think I'm a bimbo?" "Promise. You're just a darling chick. I'm cow-simple about you."

"What's that mean?" "It means crazy for a girl. Now, that's enough questions. Go to sleep." He kissed me gently and turned over on his side. I curled up against

him, fitting myself close in to his back and thighs. "This is a nice way to

sleep—like spoons. Good night, James." "Good night, darling Viv." Fifteen: The Writing on My Heart THOSE were the last words he spoke to me. When I woke up the

next morning he was gone. There was only the dent down the bed where he had lain,

and the smell of him on the pillow. To make sure, I jumped out of

bed and ran to

see if the gray car was still there. It wasn't. It was a beautiful day and there

was heavy dew on the ground, and in the dew I could see the single track of his

footprints leading to where the car had been. A bobolink flew crying across the

clearing, and from somewhere in the trees came the dying call of a mourning dove.

The ruins of the motel were black and hideous, and a ghostly wisp of smoke rose

straight up into the still air from the remains of the lobby block. I went back

into the cabin and had a shower and began briskly to pack my things into my two

saddlebags. Then I saw the letter on the dressing table and I went and sat on

the bed and read it. It was written on motel paper from the writing desk. The

writing was very clear and even, and he had used a real pen and not a ball-point.

Dear Viv, You may have to show this to the police, so I will be businesslike. I

am on my way to Glens Falls, where I will make a full report to the

police after

telling the Highway Patrol to get to you immediately. I will also get in touch

with Washington and they will almost certainly put Albany in charge of the case.

I shall pull every string to see that you are not worried too much and that they

let you go on your way after getting your statement. Glens Falls will have my

route and the registration number of the car, and they will be able to pick me

up, wherever I am, if you need any help or they want to know anything more from

me. You won't be able to get any breakfast so I shall have the Patrol bring you

a Thermos of coffee and sandwiches to keep you alive. I would much like to stay

with you, if only to see Mr. Sanguinetti! But I very much doubt if he will be

turning up this morning. I guess that when he heard nothing from his two strongarm boys he went like hell to Albany and got on the first plane for the south on his way out to Mexico. I shall tell Washington that that's my guess and they

should be able to pick him up if they get a move on. He should get

life for this,

or what's known as "from now on," or "The Rosary," in the language we've been learning. And now listen. You, and up to a point me, have saved the insurance

company at least half a million dollars, and there'll be a big reward. I'm not

allowed to accept rewards by the rules of my job, so there's no argument about

that, even if it weren't a fact that it was you who took the principal burden of

all this and it's you who are the heroine. So I'm going to make a real issue of

this and see that the insurance company does the right thing. And something else.

I wouldn't be at all surprised if one or both of those hoodlums wasn't wanted by

the police and has a reward on his head. I'll see to that too. As for the future,

drive very carefully the rest of the way. And don't have nightmares. These sort

of things don't often happen. Treat it all as just a bad motor accident you were

lucky to get out of. And go on being as wonderful as you are. If you ever want

me or need any help, wherever you are, you can get me by letter or cable, but

not by telephone, c/o Ministry of Defence, Storey's Gate, London, S.W. 1. Ever,

J.B. PS. Your tyre pressures are too high for the South. Remember to take them

down. PPS. Try Guerlain's "Fleurs des Alpes" instead of Camay! \* \*  
\* I heard the

roar of motorcycles coming up the road. When they stopped, there was the brief

wail of a siren to announce who they were. I put the letter inside the front of

my overalls and pulled up the zip and went out to meet the Law. They were two

state troopers, smart and young and very nice. I'd almost forgotten such people

existed. They saluted me as if I was royalty. "Miss Vivienne Michel?" The senior,

a lieutenant, did the talking while his Number Two muttered quietly into his

radio, announcing their arrival. "Yes." "I'm Lieutenant Morrow. We hear you had some trouble last night." He gestured with his gloved hand at the ruins. "Seems

like we heard right." "Oh, that's nothing," I said disdainfully. "There's



a car in the lake with a corpse in it and another corpse behind cabin Number 3." "Yes,

Miss." There was a hint of disapproval at my levity. He turned to his companion,

who had clipped back the microphone to the set behind his saddle. "O'Donnell,

take a look round, would you?" "Okay, loot." O'Donnell strode off across the

grass. "Well, let's go and take a seat somewhere, Miss Michel." The lieutenant

bent down to one of his saddlebags and produced a carefully wrapped package.

"Brought along some breakfast. 'Fraid it's only coffee and doughnuts. That suit

you?" He held out the package. I gave him a full-candlepower smile. "That's

terribly kind of you. I'm starving. There are some seats over by the lake. We

can choose one that's out of sight of the sunk car." I led the way across the

grass, and we sat down. The lieutenant took off his cap and produced a notebook

and pencil and pretended to go through his notes to give me a chance to get

started on a doughnut. He looked up and produced his first smile.  
"Now don't

worry about this, miss. I'm not taking a statement. The captain's  
coming up

himself for that. Should be along any time now. When they gave me  
the hurry call

I got down the bare facts. But what's worrying me is that that radio  
just hasn't

left me alone since then. Had to cut down my speed the whole way  
here from Route

9 to keep on listening to instructions from the station—that Albany  
was

interested in the case, that even the top brass in Washington was  
breathing down

our necks. Never heard such a load coming over the air. Now, miss,  
can you tell

me how it's come about that Washington's mixed up in this, and  
within a bare

couple of hours of Glens Falls getting the first report?" I couldn't  
help

smiling at his earnestness. I could almost hear him calling over to  
O'Donnell as

they roared along, "Hell, we'll have Jack Kennedy on our tails any  
moment now!"

I said, "Well, there's a man called James Bond who's involved. He saved me and

shot these two gangsters. He's some kind of an English agent, secret service or

something. He was driving from Toronto to Washington to report on a case, and he

got a flat and ended up at the motel. If he hadn't, I'd be dead by now. Anyway,

I guess he must be someone pretty important. He told me he wanted to make sure

this Mr. Sanguinetti didn't get away to Mexico or somewhere. But that's more or

less all I know about him, except that—except that he seemed a wonderful guy."

The lieutenant looked sympathetic. "Guess so, miss. If he got you out of this

trouble. But he's certainly got a fix in with the F.B.I. They don't often tangle

in a local case like this. Unless they're called in, that is, or there's some

federal angle." The thin wail of sirens sounded far down the road. Lieutenant

Morrow got to his feet and put his cap on. "Well, thanks, miss. I was just

satisfying my curiosity. The captain will be taking over from here. Don't you

worry. He's a nice kind of a guy." O'Donnell came up. "If you'll excuse me,

miss." The lieutenant moved off with O'Donnell, listening to his report, and I

finished the coffee and followed slowly, thinking of the gray Thunder-bird that

would now be hammering out the miles southward, and of the sunburned hands on

the wheel. \* \* \* It was quite a cavalcade that came sweeping up the road between

the pines—a squad car with outriders, an ambulance, two other police cars, and a

recovery truck that came toward me across the grass and went on down to the lake.

Everyone seemed to have had their orders, and very soon the whole area was

covered with moving figures in olive-green or dark blue. The heavily built man

who soon came forward to meet me, followed by a junior officer who turned out to

be the stenographer, looked every inch the detective-captain of the films—slowmoving, kindly-faced, purposeful. He held out his hand.

"Miss Michel? I'm Captain Stonor from Glens Falls. Let's go somewhere where we can have a talk,

shall we? One of the cabins, or shall we stay out in the open?" "I've had about

enough of the cabins, if you don't mind. Why not over there—my breakfast table.

And by the way, thank you very much for your thoughtfulness. I was starving."

"Don't thank me, Miss Michel." The Captain's eyes twinkled frostily. "It was

your English friend, Commander Bond, who suggested it"—he paused—"among other

things." So he was a commander. It was the only rank I liked the name of. And of

course he was bound to have put the captain's back up—an Englishman with all

this authority. And with the C.I.A. and F.B.I., of all people! Nothing would

irritate the regular police more. I decided to be extremely diplomatic. We sat

down and, after the usual police preliminaries, I was asked to tell my story. It

took two hours, what with Captain Stonor's questions and men coming up from time

to time to whisper hoarsely into his ear, and at the end of it I was exhausted.

Coffee was brought and cigarettes for me ("Not while I'm on duty, thank you,

Miss Michel"), and then we all relaxed and the stenographer was sent away.

Captain Stonor sent for Lieutenant Morrow and took him aside to radio a

preliminary report to headquarters, and I watched the wreck of the black sedan,

that had by now been hauled up the cliff, being towed over the lawn to the road.

There the ambulance was driven over beside it, and I turned away as a wet bundle

was carefully lifted out onto the grass. Horror! I remembered again those cold,

red-flecked eyes. I felt his hands on me. Could it have happened? I heard the

captain say, "And copies to Albany and Washington. Right?" And then he was back

sitting opposite me. He looked at me kindly and said some complimentary things.

I looked appreciative and said, "No, no." I asked when he thought I could get on.

Captain Stonor didn't answer immediately. Instead he slowly reached up and took

off his cap and put it on the table. The armistice gesture, a copy of the

lieutenant's made me smile inside. Then he rummaged in his pockets and took out

cigarettes and a lighter. He offered me one and then lit his own. He smiled at

me, his first non-official smile. "I'm going off duty now, Miss Michel." He sat

back comfortably and crossed his legs, resting his left ankle on his right knee

and holding the ankle. He suddenly looked like a middle-aged man with a family,

taking it easy. He took his first long draw on his cigarette and watched the

smoke drift away. He said, "You can be going any time now, Miss Michel. Your

friend Commander Bond was anxious that you should be put to as little trouble as

possible. And I'm glad to accommodate him—and you. And"—he smiled with

unexpected humor and irony—"I didn't need Washington to add their wishes in this

matter. You've been a brave girl. You got involved in a bad crime and you

behaved like I'd wish any child of mine to behave. Those two hoodlums are both

wanted men. I'll be putting in your name for the rewards. Likewise to the

insurance company, who will certainly be generous. We've booked those Phanceys

on a preliminary charge of conspiracy to defraud, and this Mr. Sanguinetti is

already on the run, as the Commander suggested this morning he would be. We

checked with Troy, as we would have checked anyway, and the normal police

machinery is in motion to pick him up. There will be a capital charge against Mr.

Sanguinetti, if and when we catch up with him, and it may be that you will be

needed as a material witness. The state will pay for you to be brought from

wherever you may be, housed, and taken back again. All this"—Captain Stonor made

a throwaway gesture with his cigarette—"is normal police routine, and it will



look after itself." The astute blue eyes looked carefully into mine and then

veiled themselves. "But that doesn't quite end the case to my satisfaction." He

smiled. "That is, now that I'm off duty, so to speak, and there's only just you

and me." I tried to look just interested and nonchalant, but I wondered what was

coming. "Did this Commander Bond leave you any instructions, any letter? He told

me that he had left you asleep early this morning. That he had gone off around

six and had not wanted to wake you up. Quite right, of course. But" —Captain

Stonor examined the end of his cigarette— "your evidence and the Commander's is

to the effect that you shared the same cabin. Quite natural in the circumstances.

You wouldn't have wanted to be alone any more last night. But it seems rather an

abrupt good-by—after an exciting night like that. No trouble with him, I suppose?

He didn't, er, try to get fresh with you, if you get my meaning?" The eyes were

apologetic, but they probed into mine. I blushed furiously. I said sharply,

"Certainly not, Captain. Yes, he did leave a letter for me. A perfectly straightforward one. I didn't mention it because it doesn't add anything to what

you know." I ran down the zip on my front and reached inside for the letter,

blushing even worse. Damn the man! He took the letter and read it carefully. He

handed it back. "A very nice letter. Very, er, businesslike. I don't get the bit

about the soap." I said shortly, "Oh, that was only a joke about the motel soap.

He said it was too strongly scented." "I see. Yes, sure. Well, that's fine, Miss

Michel." The eyes were kindly again. "Well, now. D'you mind if I say something

personal? Talk to you a minute as if you might be my own daughter? You could be,

you know— almost my granddaughter if I'd started early enough." He chuckled

cozily. "No. Please say anything you like." Captain Stonor took another

cigarette and lit it. "Well, now, Miss Michel, what the Commander says is right.

You've been in the equivalent of a bad motor accident and you don't want to have

any nightmares about it. But there's more to it than that. You've been suddenly

introduced, out of the blue, so to speak, and violently, to the underground war

of crime, the war that's going on all the time and that you read about and see

in movies. And, like in the movies, the cop has rescued the maiden from the

robbers." He leaned forward across the table and held my eyes firmly in his.

"Now don't get me wrong about this, Miss Michel, and if I'm speaking out of turn,

just forget what I'm going to say. But it would be unreasonable of you not to

create a hero out of the cop who saved you, perhaps build an image in your mind

that that's the sort of man to look up to, even perhaps to want to marry." The

captain sat back. He smiled apologetically. "Now the reason I'm going into all

this is because violent emergencies like what you've been through leave their

scars. They're one hell of a shock to anyone—to any dam' citizen. But most of

all to a young person like yourself. Now I believe"—the kind eyes became less

kind— "I have good reason from the reports of my officers to believe, that you

had intimate relations with Commander Bond last night. I'm afraid it's one of

our less attractive duties to be able to read such signs." Captain Stonor held

up his hand. "Now I'm not prying any more into these private things, and they're

none of my business, but it would be perfectly natural, almost inevitable, that

you might have lost your heart, or at any rate part of it, to this personable

young Englishman who has just saved your life." The sympathy in the fatherly

smile was edged with irony. "After all's said and done, that's what happens in

the books and in the movies, isn't it? So why not in real life?" I stirred

impatiently, wanting this stupid lecture to finish, wanting to be gone.  
"Now I'm

coming to the end very quickly, Miss Michel, and I know you think I'm  
being very

impertinent, but ever since I got past middle age on the force, I've  
been

interested in what I call postnatal care after a case like this.  
Particularly

when the survivor is young and might be damaged by what the  
young person has

been through. So I want to leave one thought with you if I may, and  
then wish

you the best of luck and a happy journey on that crazy little scooter-  
thing of

yours. It's just this, Miss Michel." Captain Stonor's eyes continued to  
look

into mine, but they had lost focus. I knew I was going to hear  
something from

the heart. This is a rare thing between generations— between  
grown-ups and

children. I stopped thinking of getting away and paid attention. "This

underground war I was talking about, this crime battle that's always  
going on—

whether it's being fought between cops and robbers or between spies and

counterspies. This is a private battle between two trained armies, one fighting

on the side of law and of what his own country thinks is right, and one

belonging to the enemies of these things." Captain Stonor was now talking to

himself. I imagined that he was reciting something—something he felt very

strongly about, perhaps had said in speeches or in an article in some police

magazine. "But in the higher ranks of these forces, among the toughest of the

professionals, there's a deadly quality in the persons involved which is common

to both—to both friends and enemies." The captain's closed fist came softly down

on the wooden table-top for emphasis, and his inward-looking eyes burned with a

dedicated, private anger. "The top gangsters, the top F.B.I. operatives, the top

spies and the top counterspies are coldhearted, coldblooded, ruthless, tough

killers, Miss Michel. Yes, even the 'friends' as opposed to the 'enemies.' They

have to be. They wouldn't survive if they weren't. Do you get me?"  
Captain

Stonor's eyes came back into focus. Now they held mine with a friendly urgency

that touched my feelings—but not, I'm ashamed to say, my heart.  
"So the message

I want to leave with you, my dear—and I've talked with Washington and I've

learned something about Commander Bond's outstanding record in his particular

line of business—is this. Keep away from all these men. They are not for you,

whether they're called James Bond or Sluggsy Morant. Both these men, and others

like them, belong to a private jungle into which you've strayed for a few hours

and from which you've escaped. So don't go and get sweet dreams about the one or

nightmares from the other. They're just different people from the likes of you—a

different species." Captain Stonor smiled. "Like hawks and doves, if you'll

pardon the comparison. Get me?" My expression cannot have been receptive. The

voice became abrupt. "Okay, let's go, then." Captain Stonor got to his feet and

I followed. I didn't know what to say. I remembered my immediate reaction when

James Bond had shown himself at the door of the motel— Oh, God, it's another of

them. But I also remembered his smile and his kisses and his arms round me. I

walked meekly beside this large, comfortable man who had come out with these

kindly-meant thoughts, and all I could think was that I wanted a big lunch and

then a long sleep at least a hundred miles from The Dreamy Pines Motor Court. \*

\*\* It was twelve noon by the time I got away. Captain Stonor said I was going

to have a lot of trouble from the press, but that he would stave them off for as

long as possible. I could say all I wished about James Bond except what his

profession was and where he could be found. He was just a man who had turned up



at the right time and then gone on his way. I had packed my saddlebags and the

young state trooper, Lieutenant Morrow, strapped them on for me and wheeled the

Vespa out onto the road. On the way over the lawn he said, "Watch out for the

potholes between here and Glens Falls, miss. Some of them are so deep you better

sound your horn before you get to them. There might be other folks with little

machines like this at the bottom of them." I laughed. He was clean and gay and

young, but tough and adventurous as well, by the looks of him and from his job.

Perhaps this was more the type of man I should build dreams about! I said goodbye to Captain Stonor and thanked him. Then, rather frightened of making a fool of myself, I put on my crash helmet and pulled down my saucy fur-lined goggles,

got on the machine, and stamped on the starter pedal. Thank heavens the little

engine fired right away! Now I would show them! By design, the rear wheel was

still on its stand. I let in the clutch fairly fast and gave a quick push. The

spinning rear wheel made contact with the loose surface of the road, and dust

and pebbles flew. And I was gone like a rocket and, in ten seconds through the

gears, I was doing forty. The surface looked all right ahead so I took a chance

and glanced back and raised a cheeky hand in farewell, and there was a wave from

the little group of police in front of the smoking lobby block. And then I was

off down the long straight road between the two sentinel rows of pine trees, and

I thought the trees looked sorry to be letting me get away unharmed. Unharmed?

What was it the captain of detectives had said about "scars"? I just didn't

believe him. The scars of my terror had been healed, wiped away, by this

stranger who slept with a gun under his pillow, this secret agent who was only

known by a number. A secret agent? I didn't care what he did. A number? I had

already forgotten it. I knew exactly who he was and what he was. And everything,

every smallest detail, would be written on my heart forever. The End  
<BookMark>