

THE COMPANIONS OF DOCTOR WHO

HARRY SULLIVAN'S WAR



It is ten years since Harry Sullivan left UNIT and gave up his travels in the TARDIS with the Doctor and Sarah Jane.

Since then he has been engaged in top secret work, developing antidotes to nerve toxins. But when he is transferred to Yarra in the Hebrides to work on weapons research, he has severe misgivings. For one thing, it goes against much of what he believes in. For another, someone is out to kill Harry Sullivan.

Who wants Harry safely out of the way? What significance does a painting by Van Gogh have in the affair? And can Harry's old friend, the Brigadier, really be involved in a scheme which threatens the security of the Western World?

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IAN MARTER

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A Brush With Death

Despite the grey chilly weather outside, the deserted gymnasium felt hot and stuffy. Harry Sullivan lay on the padded bench, gasping and running with sweat as he forced his numb arms to push the barbell up off his chest and then locked his elbows in a final agonising repetition of the bench-press routine. 'Forty . . .' he panted, logging his progress and his age with the same number. 'Life begins at forty . . .' he muttered wryly, trying to lower the heavy barbell safely onto the bench behind his head and screwing up his eyes with the effort.

'Is that so?' boomed a rich bass voice above him.

Harry opened his eyes to see a grinning brown face looming over him upside down. The crippling weights were effortlessly snatched out of his hands by a gigantic West Indian who playfully wielded the barbell as though it were a squash racket, his enormous arms bulging with awesome power as he casually placed it on the floor.

'Don't think I've had the pleasure . . .' Harry gasped, wiping the sweat out of his eyes with one hand and waving the other in the air in a proffered handshake. 'But thanks a lot, old chap.'

A resonant chuckle tinged with malice made Harry glance sharply up again. He just managed to glimpse an explosion of glossy brown muscles before a crushing weight suddenly landed on his chest, forcing all the breath completely out of his lungs.

'Not at all, old chap!' boomed the grinning strongman. 'Always glad to help out.' An earthquake of a laugh shook the empty gymnasium and the huge face vanished from Harry's panic-stricken view.

For a few seconds, Harry lay stunned and helpless. Then he grasped the barbell and his eyes bulged with effort as he vainly attempted to shift it off his flattened ribcage. His ears thumped like steam-hammers and brilliantly coloured flashes exploded

in his head as the steel bar pressed relentlessly into his body. He tried to call out, but there was no air in his squashed lungs and he couldn't even snatch the smallest breath. With desperate determination he gripped the bar with both hands on the left side of his body and managed to push it slowly across his chest, so that it overbalanced on the right side and the huge iron discs hit the floor with a deafening clang. At last he was able to take a few gulps of air, but the bar was still crushing the right side of his chest. With a defiant yell he seized the discs on the left-hand end of the bar and managed to raise them just enough to enable him to push them back over his head. The massive barbell rolled back along the edge of the bench and then crashed to the floor.

'Forty-one . . .' he croaked, gratefully swallowing the stale air and listening to the echo of the falling weights until long after it had died away. He lay on the bench for several minutes, gingerly massaging his bruised and aching ribs and checking that none had been broken. Eventually he levered himself painfully to his feet and staggered into the shower room.

Under the fiercely refreshing jets of water, Harry puzzled over his narrow escape. Surely it couldn't have been a practical joke? The barbell which the awesome stranger had dropped onto his chest had been more than a hundred pounds heavier than the one Harry had just been using. But the alternative seemed equally unthinkable - that a stranger had tried to kill him in such a way as to make it appear an accident. But who? And why? He pondered these questions while he dried himself and then slipped on casual slacks, smart shirt and double-breasted navy blue blazer. As he knotted his Dartmouth College tie in the steamy mirror, he reflected that his month's leave had not begun very promisingly. Glancing at his youthful, square-jawed features he had a sudden shocking thought.

Forty-one! Tomorrow was his birthday!

Happy Birthday!

Surgeon Lieutenant-Commander Harry Sullivan RN hated birthdays, so the following day he decided to ignore his own. He also decided to try to forget all about his unpleasant experience in the gymnasium, though his sore ribcage made this rather difficult and, as he walked along Pall Mall towards Trafalgar Square in the watery May sunshine, he could not deny that he was keeping a wary eye open for the brown giant with the tree-trunk arms, just in case!

He had planned to spend the day in cultural pursuits, hoping that this might help him to resolve the difficult dilemma he was facing over his future career. He had never been completely happy working in the Biological Defence Establishment at Tooth Tor on Dartmoor, but at least his research into antidotes against the powerful new nerve toxins had been defensive and not offensive. But the terse memorandum he had received several days earlier from General Schlitzburger in Geneva, informing him that he was to be transferred to the Weapons Development Establishment on the Hebridean island of Yarra, had hit him like a bombshell. Harry loathed the whole idea of weapons development, though he was reluctantly prepared to work on defensive research. Since leaving UNIT ten years earlier he had scarcely had the opportunity to practise medicine at all, and he had trained as a doctor in the first place, hadn't he?

As he strode up the steps of the National Gallery turning all this over in his mind, Harry was suddenly seized by a terrible cramping pain in his chest and a sensation like having a hot knife thrust down his windpipe. He gasped and stumbled against one of the pillars of the portico, clutching his raw and

tender ribs with both hands. The full horror of the attack in the gymnasium overwhelmed him again. Ridiculous speculations flitted through his mind as he leaned against the pillar trying to relax and breathe normally. Could his secretive NATO masters in Geneva be trying to get rid of him, he wondered, remembering his heated argument with Rear-Admiral de Longpre at the Admiralty two days before, when he had demanded to be allowed to remain in Defence rather than transfer to Weapons Development? Did they fear he might become a security risk because of his discontentment with his job? Or did somebody else somewhere have a more sinister reason for wanting him out of the way?

Harry jumped as a slim hand grasped his own, firmly but gently.

'Are you okay?' asked a husky female voice close to his ear.

Harry caught a whiff of subtle perfume and felt a warm breath on his cheek. 'I think so . . .' he murmured, turning his head in surprise. 'Yes, I'm perfectly . . . perfectly . . .' His voiced folded up in his throat as he found himself staring into a pair of pale blue eyes set in a strong but pretty oval face and framed by curly straw-coloured hair.

'Are you sure?' the girl asked earnestly, frowning with concern as she squeezed Harry's arm with both hands.

Despite his groggy condition, Harry's instinctive macho pride instantly took over. 'Of course I am,' he said loudly, flexing his arm muscles. 'I'm in the pink.'

'You *do* look a little flushed,' the girl said with a delightful smile, squeezing his arm even harder. 'It's all right. You don't have to prove anything, you know.'

Harry tugged himself free, adjusting his tie and clearing his throat with embarrassment. 'No, of course not . . .' he croaked, backing towards the revolving door leading into the gallery. 'But thanks anyway.' He turned on his heel and fled unsteadily into the building leaving the girl in her expensive tracksuit style outfit staring after him with huge amused eyes.

As Harry's awkward, confused figure disappeared through the door, the girl's smile faded and her mouth set in a determined line. 'This is going to be easier than I

thought . . .' she murmured to herself. Hoisting her fashionable bag more securely onto her shoulder she set off in pursuit.

Harry wandered unseeingly round the galleries; or rather, he saw the paintings but he didn't look at them - they passed in an endless succession of anonymous images. His chest still hurt and he had a headache, but his mind was wide awake, going over the events of the past few days since he left Tooth Tor on his month's leave to decide on his future. He entered yet another gallery and his eyes suddenly opened with reawakened interest. A painting of brilliant yellow sunflowers in a vase stirred some deeply buried memory from his childhood. He stopped and smiled with surprise and pleasure. 'Van Gogh . . .' he murmured, glancing round excitedly. 'This is more my cup of tea.' 'What a good idea.'

Harry recognised the husky voice. He turned to see the girl with the oval face standing in front of Van Gogh's *Self Portrait With A Bandaged Ear*. She was smiling at him with her wide mouth and huge pale eyes. Harry nodded curtly and frowned. Then he walked right up to the painting and pretended to study it in minute detail, examining the brush strokes and the cracks in the varnish with his nose almost touching the canvas.

'You can see it much better from am here . . .' the girl suggested, turning sideways to display her strong, sensuous figure.

Harry ignored her for a few more seconds, peering intently at the bandage over the missing ear in the picture. It looked almost as if it had been added later, in a different and thicker kind of paint. Fascinated, Harry reached out as if to pick at the ridge of paint and pull the bandage away in his fingers. Then he turned abruptly to the stranger. 'What's a good idea?' he demanded frostily.

'Tea,' she said brightly. 'I thought you were offering.'

Not having the faintest notion of what she was talking about, Harry started to walk rudely away. Then he stopped and looked into the girl's eyes. As if by magic, he felt his head

lighten and the persistent tight band round his chest seemed to loosen. He strode over and took her arm firmly.

'Why not?' he said recklessly and led her towards the refreshment room.

It was hot in the tea room and Harry loosened his tie while the girl poured out the tea and handed him a buttered scone. As he took the plate, she brushed his hand with her little finger.

'My name's Samantha,' she purred, almost challengingly.

Harry took a noisy sip of very hot tea and licked his scalded lips. 'Laury Varnish' he lied, dabbing at his watering eyes with his paper napkin.

The girl looked delighted. 'Not American are you?' she exclaimed in surprise.

Harry failed to notice that her innocent smile was just a little too naive to be true. He shook his head. 'American father,' he lied again, loosening his tie even more and stuffing the entire scone into his mouth. To his dismay he was obliged to take another sip of hot tea to make the doughy mass chewable.

'What a coincidence. My father's American too!' Samantha told him, putting a second scone on his plate. 'What do you do, Laury?'

Harry forced his jaws open and shut and manfully worked his way through the choking mouthful. When he could finally speak again he shrugged nonchalantly. 'Oh, nothing much ... I work in . . .in insecticides and things,' he lied a third time, blowing on his tea.

'You're a chemist!'

Harry grimaced uncomfortably. 'Not exactly,' he mumbled. 'Actually, I'm a doctor.'

'What a coincidence. So's my dad!' Samantha topped up his still full cup with yet more hot tea and then leaned conspiratorially towards him. 'Listen, Laury. Since you're a doctor, maybe I can win you over to my pet good cause,' she whispered.

Harry glanced sidelong at her and thought of wildlife reserves and recycled bottles and free-range eggs. Her subtle perfume made him feel lightheaded again. 'Depends what it is, my dear,' he replied pompously.

Samantha clapped her hands. 'You're so gorgeously old-fashioned, Laury,' she breathed, leaning even closer.

Harry reknotted his tie defensively and moved his chair back.

'Well, old chap, I'm into ACHES,' she announced. Harry looked blank.

'The Anti-Chemical Hazard Environment Society.'

Harry went pale. 'Oh, my giddy aunt . . .' he muttered, dabbing at his brow with the napkin and racking his brain for a suitable remark to put Samantha off the scent. She was getting far too near the mark and he was only too well aware how feeble his cover story must seem. He squirmed with shame as he wondered how long it would take her to decipher his alias and identify him as Harry Sullivan.

'Samantha's not a Russian name is it?' he asked, taking a gulp of tea in a bid to disguise his lack of subtlety and instantly regretting it as his throat burned and his eyes started watering again.

He didn't notice Samantha's momentary frown and the nervous way she hurriedly adjusted the batik silk scarf loosely knotted around her slender neck. Quickly resuming her relaxed air, she leaned over and poured some milk into Harry's dark tea. 'Of course it is,' she giggled, 'and I'm a colonel in the KGB!'

Harry glanced suspiciously at the milk jug. 'What do you really do?' he demanded, attempting a casual smile.

Samantha shook her head tantalisingly and fingered her scarf. 'I do batik,' she said. 'Do you like it?'

Harry looked baffled. 'What's batik?'

Samantha laid her long slim hand on his. 'Why not come over to my place and I'll show you?' she murmured enticingly.

Harry looked mildly shocked. 'Oh, I say . . . I don't think that would be right.' 'Why ever not?'

Harry glanced at her fingers. 'Well, I mean to say . . . you're not married,' he pointed out. 'Are you?'

'Of course I'm not!' Harry pulled a face at the very idea.

Samantha took his hands in her own. 'Then everything's just as it should be, isn't it?' she laughed. 'You can come and see my batik.'

Harry gazed into her wide fathomless eyes and let his stroke his fingers. She moved her chair closer to his round the little circular table. 'Doctor Varnish, I think you need looking after,' she told him. 'You don't look too well to me. Perhaps working among all those chemicals and things is making you ill.'

Harry immediately snatched away his hands and massaged his tender ribs. 'Nonsense, dear girl. I'm in tip-top condition,' he protested.

Samantha shook her head slowly. 'That wasn't the impression I got when I saw you outside the gallery, Laury.'

Harry stood up abruptly. 'It's been very nice meeting you, Miss Samantha,' he said stiffly. 'I'm afraid I have to go now.'

'Back to your DDT and your slug pellets?'

Harry drew himself up to his full six feet and stared coldly down at her mocking face as he buttoned his smart blazer with its Royal Yacht Squadron badge. 'I told you. I'm a doctor,' he declared icily.

Samantha jumped up. 'Okay, then back to your leeches! she retorted, giving him a saucy kiss on the cheek.

Surgeon Lieutenant-Commander Sullivan took the neatly folded white handkerchief from his breast pocket and wiped any trace of lipstick firmly away. Then something mysterious in the girl's sparkling eyes caught him off guard and he gazed uncertainly into them as if mesmerised. He was on the brink of asking her if she went there often but managed to stop himself in time. 'Might have a spot of lunch together when I'm next in town . . .' he proposed hesitantly.

Samantha nodded eagerly. She searched in her bag and handed him a stylish business card. 'Contact me in code!' she teased.

Harry's jaw dropped open in surprise and confusion. How much did she know about him, he wondered? Pulling himself together, he gave her a curt nod, shook her hand and strode out of the tea room.

When he got home to his spacious flat near Regent's Park, Harry found a postcard waiting on the mat. He frowned at the picture of stark, barren islands under a huge stormy sky and then grinned with pleasure when he turned it over and discovered that it was from Teddy Bland, an old friend from naval college days at Dartmouth.

Teddy was now a senior researcher at the NATO Weapons Development Establishment on Yarra where Harry was shortly to be transferred. The card invited him to come up and spend a few days of his leave there. Harry was delighted to see that Teddy's sister, Esther, would also be there. He had always nurtured a soft spot for Esther and had once almost proposed to her. But then he had been seconded to the United Nations Intelligence Taskforce and they had grown apart during Harry's eventful travels with that vagabond Time Lord, the Doctor, and his young companion, Sarah Jane Smith.

Harry read the few persuasive words Esther had scribbled round the edge of the card several times: *Would be so lovely to see you again, dear old thing. Lots of love, Esther.* His eyes misted over momentarily. 'Dear old thing,' he murmured tenderly. He blew his nose and shook his head with a smile of admiration at Teddy's artful ways. His old pal knew that Harry would probably have avoided visiting Yarra without the tempting bait in the shape of the buxom, red-headed Esther.

Harry studied the photograph of the wild Hebridean landscape. London was beginning to get on his nerves already. He decided that he was getting paranoid and that he had begun to lose his grip on things. He needed a change. The sophisticated allure of Samantha soon gave way to fond memories of Esther's robust outdoor charms. All at once he noticed a large white envelope lying under the hallstand. Fishing it out, he saw that it bore a Yarra postmark. Inside he found an old-fashioned birthday card with a picture of a tea clipper under full sail. In her large sloping handwriting Esther had written *Many Happy Returns, Harry - in more ways than one I hope!!*

Harry solemnly carried the solitary birthday card into the

lounge and placed in on the mantelpiece between his rowing and his rugger trophies.

'See you soon, old girl . . .'he murmured, his mind made up.

The Castle

Harry spent an extremely enjoyable few days with Teddy and Esther. The sea air and bracing swims with Esther in the clear cold water helped to restore his flagging vitality. Teddy showed him round the -Yarra Research Centre and introduced him to his future colleagues, while Esther dragged him off on long hearty walks all over the island in search of stone circles and Iron Age mounds to collect material for her book on the Ancient Hebrides. In the evenings, over the malt whisky, Teddy did his best to persuade his old friend to accept his transfer from Biological Defence at Tooth Tor to Biological Weapons Research at Yarra. Gradually Harry's opposition began to crumble.

When he regretfully said goodbye to his hosts and drove his red MG sports car onto the converted naval landing-craft which plied weekly between Yarra and the mainland across the North Minch, Harry realised that his future was almost certain to be in Weapons after all. Esther's infectious laughter still echoed in his ears as he drove ashore at Port MacDui and turned south through the Torridon mountains towards Glasgow and the motorway to London. He had been very touched by Esther's shy confession that she had always loved him and that she had never met anyone else she wanted to marry. Perhaps the idea of marriage wasn't quite so dreadful after all, he admitted, as the powerful car breasted a steep hill and started to zigzag down the narrow road towards the cold grey waters of the Dead Loch.

Glancing in his mirror, Harry frowned with irritation at the Land Rover that had been sitting on his tail for the last few miles. It was much too close for comfort. Spotting a short

stretch of lay-by on a bend ahead, he pulled over and waved the vehicle past. To his annoyance the Land Rover simply slowed and waited for him to proceed. He squinted in the mirror in a vain attempt to make out the bulky figure at the wheel. 'Pigheaded idiot!' he snorted and accelerated off down the perilously twisting road above the still, leaden loch. After a couple more hairpin bends, he saw a long straight stretch ahead with a steep drop on the nearside. Slowing down, he waved the Land Rover past again with furious gestures. 'Go on you cretin!' he yelled at the blank windscreen reflected in his mirrors.

Suddenly the Land Rover revved violently, swerved savagely out across the road and drew level with the MG. Harry glanced sideways and glimpsed a large head set on a thick neck and topped with a deerstalker. 'Probably thinks he's the local Laird . . .' Harry snarled, steering towards the nearside as the Land Rover edged to the left. 'Look out!' he gasped, punching his horn several times as the other vehicle veered abruptly and rammed the gleaming offside of his car.

But the protesting blare from the twin chromium horns on the MG's front bumper only seemed to encourage the madman behind the wheel of the Land Rover, who started to force the MG closer and closer to the edge. His face the colour of chalk, Harry struggled to turn his steering wheel to the right, his eyes glancing wildly at the precipitous drop into the Loch only inches from his nearside wheels. Sweat poured into his eyes as he fought to keep his skidding car on the narrow road. In desperation he suddenly stamped on his brakes. With a shriek of tearing, scraping metal the Land Rover ripped its way past. But unknown to Harry, a section of the MG's wing caught in the wire spokes of the front offside wheel and instantly locked it solid. The car spun fiercely round to the right and shot across the road and up the steep bank on the other side. Hitting a rock, it reared up and toppled sideways, rolling over and over until it came to rest upside down in the ditch, with three of its wheels still spinning madly and its engine racing.

Inside, Harry lay folded up against the crumpled soft-top, his eyes staring and his body motionless . . .

Harry felt as though he were fighting his way up out of a deep swamp. Tight bands seemed to bind his chest and his head and his eyes throbbed as the darkness pressed down on them like tons and tons of black mud. With agonising slowness he struggled up towards the fresh air and the light, writhing and threshing his limbs against the clinging, sucking mass of the swamp. Whenever he opened his mouth to breathe, the stifling mud oozed into his lungs and choked him, and whenever he stopped his struggle to rest a moment he felt himself being dragged inexorably back into the unknown depths.

Then, after what seemed like hours of relentless battle, he at last broke through to open space above. Painfully he heaved his battered body out of a kind of hole in the floor of some gigantic echoing building. As his aching eyes grew accustomed to the light again, he saw that the walls of the vast chamber were covered with paintings - thousands and thousands of them stretching into the distance along and upwards. But there was something very odd about them. They were all identical, all pictures of a man with a bandaged ear . . .

All at once he heard a voice in the distance. It was repeating the same phrase over and over again like a gramophone record with a faulty groove. Eventually he made it out. It was a girl's voice and it was saying, 'You don't look too well to me . . . You don't look too well to me . . .' in a husky murmur. Suddenly Harry recognised it. 'Samantha . . .?' he croaked, slowly opening his eyes.

A wall of light hit him. He shut his eyes and groaned in agony. His head was splitting and his neck was stiff and sore. One of his knees felt as though someone were hitting it repeatedly with a heavy hammer. Once more he opened his eyes a crack and then gradually let the light in. He found that he was lying on a large bed in a tall whitewashed room with landscapes and hunting scenes hanging all around it. Thick rugs were scattered over the irregular flagstone floor. A large leaded window was set into the thick wall opposite the heavy oak door.

He tried to get up, but he instantly fell back as something

exploded in his head and his stomach bubbled with nausea. 'Concussion,' he muttered, clutching his abdomen. He took his pulse and then felt cautiously around for broken bones. There didn't seem to be any.

After a few minutes he rolled himself carefully sideways at an angle, got his feet onto the floor and then very slowly levered himself upright. Groaning with sickness, he staggered across to the window and peered out through screwed-up eyes. Outside he saw a stone terrace with low battlements. Beyond, heather-clad slopes stretched down to the grim water of the Dead Loch under the gun-metal sky. Harry shivered. His blazer and shoes were missing. Gradually his memory returned. He remembered the duel with the Land Rover and then his ordeal in the gymnasium the week before. In between everything was just a blank.

He no longer had any doubt that somebody wanted him dead. Shuffling painfully over to the door, he turned the handle, expecting to find the door locked. But to his surprise it creaked open. He peered out into the deserted stone corridor which ended in a flight of steps leading downwards. Gritting his teeth against the excruciating pain in his knee and his head, Harry ventured along the passage and began to creep down the curved flight of worn steps, stopping every few seconds to listen with bated breath. The steps seemed to be part of a tower and he soon came across a stout door leading off to the right. He listened with his ear pressed against the gnarled wood and what he heard made the hair spring up on the back of his neck.

It was a familiar voice that he had not heard for ten years or more. Deep and resonant, it was a precise military voice.

' . . . and these sections of the special UNIT force were used for covert surveillance and for counter-insurgency strikes under my direct command . . . ' it was saying in a relaxed, amiable tone. Conquering his shocked astonishment with great difficulty, Harry held his breath and listened as the voice mumbled on, calmly divulging the most confidential details of the organisation for which Harry had worked ten years before and about which he had been warned never to speak to anyone, anywhere, ever again.

Suddenly the waves of nausea erupted once more in his stomach, his head throbbed and his injured knee burned. He sank down on the steps and buried his head in his hands. On top of everything else this latest shock was a bitter blow. The voice was that of Alistair Gordon Lethbridge-Stewart. It was the Brigadier! Harry uttered a pitiful moan and then keeled over against the banisters, unconscious.

When he came to, he was again lying on the bed in the whitewashed room. His bleary vision revealed a tall man dressed in tweeds standing by the window.

'Where am I . . .?' he murmured, licking his parched lips.

The hazy figure turned and came over to the bed. 'You're in Castle Mackie,' replied a loud American voice. 'How are you feeling?'

Harry shut his eyes and tried hard to think of a word that would adequately describe his condition. There wasn't one. 'A bit under the weather,' he groaned eventually. He blinked a few times and the tall man came into focus. He had long grey hair and a full beard and his ruddy features were craggy like the landscape outside.

The man smiled bleakly, 'I'll say you are,' he chuckled. 'You had a lucky escape back there. You could've been killed. You'll need to rest up a while.'

Harry tried to shake his head and winced at the pain in his stiff neck. 'But I can't. . . I've got to get back to London at once.' he protested feebly.

The stranger sighed. 'No way'. I'm a doctor and I'm telling you that . . .'

Harry forced himself up onto his elbows. 'Well *I'm* a doctor too and I'm jolly well telling *you* . . .'. He stopped in mid-sentence as the pain in his knee, his head and his chest intensified.

The man held out a large hand. 'Glad to know you. I'm Alexander Shire.'

Harry tried to think, his eyes straying to the brooding paintings adorning the walls. 'How do you do . . . I'm . . . Varnish. Doctor Laury Varnish,' he mumbled unconvincingly.

Shire sat on the edge of the bed and folded his arms. 'Well now Doctor Varnish, you've suffered a severe concussion together with minor lesions to the head, chest and knee . . .'

'I'm perfectly well aware of my injuries Doctor Shire,' Harry snapped, wishing that his brain did not feel like wet cotton wool. 'Somebody forced me off the road and when I find out who's responsible I'll . . .'

Shire laughed. 'Your memory's a little shaken up,' he interrupted. 'You skidded and hit a rock my friend. My ghillie saw the whole thing. Your car's a write-off I'm afraid.'

Harry's temper flared. 'Your so called ghillie . . .' he began, but the hammering in his head forced him to sink back onto the pillows panting and bathed in sweat.

The gaunt American leaned over him frowning with concern. 'I'm going to give you a small injection,' he murmured. 'It'll help you relax and restore your respiration pattern . . .'

Harry had no choice but to submit. He lay helpless with his eyes closed, trying to ignore the pain and to make some sense of the confused tangle of impressions flashing constantly in and out of his dazed mind - the fearsome strongman in the gymnasium ... the postcard from Teddy Bland ... the girl in the gallery ... the duel with the mysterious driver of the Land Rover ... the Brigadier's voice apparently betraying UNIT secrets. . . He wanted to leap to his feet and to get to the bottom of the whole puzzle. But as he felt the cold needle pierce his arm, he could only succumb to whatever fate held in store for him.

Shire watched his patient sink rapidly into a deep trance. Then he took a small voice-activated tape recorder from his pocket, switched it to 'Ready' mode and placed it carefully under the bed. He sat for a while, checking Harry's heartbeat and his breathing with a stethoscope. Finally, with a smile of satisfaction, he strode out and locked the door behind him.

After about fifteen minutes Harry's lip's began to move, at first silently and then gradually uttering odd words and then phrases and finally complete sentences. Under the bed, the tape recorder switched itself quietly on and off, catching Harry's increasingly elaborate utterances in longer and longer takes. Soon he was talking quite coherently, as though

he were fully conscious and aware of his surroundings. Only the slightest slur in his voice betrayed the fact that he was under the influence of a powerful and dangerous drug. For almost an hour he talked about his anxieties with his job and the difficult decision he was faced with concerning his future. He revealed details about his work at Tooth Tor and about what he had seen on Yarra. Eventually his speech became more and more slurred and his sentences disintegrated into nonsense. At last he fell silent and lay motionless, his skin pale and cold.

Several hours later he woke up with a start. His headache had gone, his chest felt much less tight and his knee was only throbbing dully. He got up and tottered over to the window. It was clearer now and a pale afternoon sun was just breaking through the ragged cloud over the Dead Loch. Harry glanced at his watch. Half past four. It was time for some action he decided. He padded over to the door and turned the handle. It was locked. 'Damnation!' he muttered, joggling the ornate brass knob in vain. Hazy memories of the tall American unfolded in his mind. His arm still stung from the injection, but everything else was blurred and vague. However, one thing seemed certain. He hadn't been locked in for his own protection.

He returned to the window. It was about a ten foot drop onto the terrace. 'Come on old chap, it's the only answer,' he told himself. After a fierce struggle with the rusted catch, he managed to open the tall narrow casement. Leaning out, he saw that both the long terrace around the castle and the hillside below it were deserted. On the shore of the loch about a quarter of a mile away he spotted a small boathouse. From what he remembered of the local maps he had studied, Mackie Station lay three or four miles beyond the far shore, on the railway line from Fort William to Glasgow. It was his only hope.

Harry squeezed himself backwards through the window onto the narrow outside ledge. Taking a deep breath, he gripped the bottom of the frame and swung himself over the edge so that he was swinging by his fingers with his toes three

or four feet from the paving. Then he dropped heavily onto the terrace and stumbled along the castle wall until he reached the base of the nearby tower. All at once he realised that he had no shoes and that his wallet and keys were in his missing blazer. He pressed himself into the angle between the castle wall and the tower and tried to think. He wasn't going to get very far without money and something on his feet. There was no alternative. He had to go back into the castle.

Harry cautiously worked his way round the broad tower and came across a small door. To his immense relief it opened. Slipping inside, he found himself climbing a spiral stone staircase and in a few seconds he was outside the door through which he had heard the Brigadier's voice earlier on. He listened. There was silence inside the room. He knocked gently at first and then quite loudly. Still no sound from within. He glanced around and peered fearfully along a passage which he hadn't noticed before. It led off the stairwell behind him and no doubt led into the main house. There was no sign of life anywhere.

The door opened with a creak and Harry entered a large, almost circular room lined with books and tapestries and with long narrow windows overlooking the Dead Loch. A massive desk covered in papers stood in the centre and to one side there was a huge open fireplace stacked with fresh logs. Harry sighed with relief as he noticed his blazer slung over the back of a chair and his shoes neatly stowed underneath. With anxious haste he checked the pockets and found his keys and his wallet intact. He struggled into the blazer and shoved his feet into his shoes. 'So far so good . . .' he muttered, turning to leave.

But his instinctive curiosity got the better of him. He quickly scanned the titles on the loaded bookshelves. 'Oh my giddy aunt!' he exclaimed, recognising the titles of several learned medical books. 'Chap's a neurologist by the looks of things . . . What a coincidence!' He glanced through the miscellaneous papers littering the desk. '*No to Biological Weapons . . . Stop Germ-Warfare Research Now . . . The Poisoned Planet . . .*' he murmured, frowning in

astonishment. 'I say, how jolly odd!' On a side-table he noticed a solitary brown leather glove with a monogrammed button which looked strangely familiar. Underneath it was a pile of pamphlets giving information about the Van Gogh Society. A vivid image suddenly rose in Harry's mind of Samantha standing in front of the portrait of the man with the bandaged ear and he was just about to pick up one of the pamphlets when the ornate antique telephone on the desk started ringing.

Harry dropped the glove and fled down the steps and out onto the terrace. As he eased the tower door shut as quietly as he could, he hoped he had remembered to close the study door behind him. Through a half-open window above him, he heard Alexander Shire's voice answering the telephone. Taking advantage of the diversion, he crept along the terrace until he came to an arch leading into the central courtyard. As he peered round the buttress his mouth dropped open in amazement. Parked among an assortment of cars was a muddy Land Rover! Harry debated with himself whether to risk going over to see if its nearside was at all damaged. Then he suddenly heard voices from the courtyard. Instantly he retreated back across the terrace and leaned over the battlements. The drop to the hillside was about twelve feet. In desperation Harry glanced up at the windows overlooking the terrace to make sure he was not observed. Then he clambered onto the parapet, manoeuvred himself round so that he could lower himself as far as possible by his upstretched arms, and finally dropped the last five or six feet into the heather. As he landed, a fiery pain shot through his injured knee, but he forced himself to hobble down the grassy slopes towards the boathouse.

Inside the dilapidated shed he found a sizeable yacht and a tiny dinghy with patched hull and broken oars. His nautical eye looked more and more doubtful as he manhandled the shabby tub into the grey water and fitted the splintered oars into the corroded rowlocks. He clambered into the little seven footer and started to row. To his dismay he found that he was facing the wrong way. Groaning miserably with pain and shame, he turned himself round to face the stern and

tried again. He immediately realised that he was extremely weak and that the burst of restored energy he had enjoyed since waking from his drugged sleep was virtually exhausted. He would be very lucky to get across the three quarters of a mile or so of water, let alone manage to reach Mackie Station across the rugged moors beyond. Gritting his teeth, he forced his arms to work the oars and struggled to compensate for the fact that one oar was longer and broader than the other which tended to propel the boat in a circular direction. At least his knee was less painful now that his weight was off it. To his amazement, no one seemed to be following him.

Half way across the brooding water, he suddenly became aware that his feet were getting wet. Water had started swishing over his shoes. The dinghy was obviously leaking quite badly. Harry frantically redoubled his feeble efforts and tried to recall his days as stroke oar in the Dartmouth College Ace Eight. 'One two three four . . . One two three four . . .' he chanted through his clenched teeth, willing the sluggish, rapidly-filling boat through the water. He worked his aching body like a robot, ignoring the rising water, the pain and the splinters in his hands. But it was no good. Before he was a hundred yards off the opposite shore, the boat suddenly disappeared under him and he found himself floundering as pitifully as a fish stranded on a riverbank. Treading water, he snatched off his shoes and clamped the laces between his teeth. He dragged off his blazer, put it behind him and tied the arms in a reef knot around his waist. Then he struck out in desperation for the shore. The effort was crippling. His sodden clothes dragged him down and his battered body screamed out for rest, but he fought the Dead Loch with inexorable determination. Several times his head lolled under the surface and he swallowed pints of dank peaty water, but despite his bursting lungs and thundering ears, he drove his arms and legs like a machine and at long last felt the muddy bottom under his feet. Sobbing with relief, he staggered through the shallows and collapsed in the heather, utterly exhausted.

When Harry came to again he was frozen stiff and the sky was almost dark. He could hear faint voices calling to each

other from across the still water. He sat up quickly. Lights were moving about on the terrace of Castle Mackie and on the slopes below. 'Come on old man, time we were off . . .' he told himself, shaken wide awake by the sight of three vehicles suddenly appearing on the track leading from the castle entrance, their headlights piercing the twilight with sinister purpose. He glanced at his watch and the luminous dial said seven fifty. Hauling himself to his feet, he started clambering awkwardly up the steep hillside in what he hoped was the approximate direction of Mackie Station. He had three desperate hopes. First, that there would be an early moon. Second, that Shire and his friends would not think of the station. Third, that there would be a train to Glasgow.

His first hope was granted and the moon rose about half an hour later, helping to guide him over the wild hill and then across the boggy moor on the other side. After an hour's slogging, he found himself in a narrow little valley full of dark corners and eerie shadows. The increasing pain in his knee forced him to stop frequently and massage the swelling joint though fortunately he had picked up a stout branch to use as a walking stick. Reaching the end of the valley, he glimpsed distant lights and set off across another moor of bogland and rutted heather towards what he reckoned must be Mackie Station. It was, and at a quarter past ten exactly he settled himself thankfully on the wooden bench in the small open shelter that served as the station building. The lights from the cluster of nearby houses and scattered farms which formed the community of Mackie were a comforting sight. How Harry wished he could knock at a friendly door and ask to dry his still damp clothes and beg a cup of tea and an oatcake or even a grilled kipper! But as he listened to the wind whining among the telephone wires strung alongside the gleaming rails of the single-track line, he felt vulnerable and uneasy, suspicious of everyone. His one desire was to sink into a hot bath in his own flat and try to forget everything that had happened . . .

Harry woke with a start and saw headlights rising and dipping along the switchback road up from the Dead Loch. His heart sank. It looked as if his second hope had not been

granted and that they were coming for him after all. Then he heard a rumbling sound coming from the north and his spirits soared as his third hope appeared round a curve in a string of welcoming yellow lights. As the diesel locomotive and the brightly lit coaches thundered to a halt, Harry heard the sound of revving engines and squealing brakes nearby. But as soon as he had clambered aboard, the train hooted and lurched off again into the night. He headed straight for the buffet and downed three double whiskies. Unfortunately there were no vacant sleeping compartments, so he curled up across some empty seats and didn't wake again until the train pulled into Euston just before noon next day.

Persuasion

Safe in his own bed at last, Harry slept the clock round and when he finally surfaced he felt much better, in spite of his ordeal during the past forty-eight hours. As he cracked open :us boiled eggs, it occurred to him that perhaps Doctor Shire's injection had done him some good after all and that possibly he had misjudged the man. Wasn't he a neurologist, just like Harry himself? And could Harry be sure that his disjointed recollection of recent events was entirely accurate? He scowled in frustration as he peeled off the eggshells and ran through in his mind the sequence of suspicious incidents: the tweedy figure at the wheel of the Land Rover; Shire himself dressed in tweeds; the locked bedroom; the anti-biological warfare pamphlets; the glove.

Harry dunked a toast soldier into an egg and chewed thoughtfully. Then he suddenly dropped his spoon with a clatter. 'The Brigadier!' he exclaimed, thumping the table. "The glove . . . and the voice . . . I'm sure it was the 3rigadier's voice . . . there in Shire's study large as life!" He drank some cold tea and tried to remember what the Brigadier had been saying. Something about UNIT. 'Golly, what the devil was he doing there spilling the beans about UNIT like that?' Harry cried indignantly, as if he expected the egg to provide an answer.

Then he remembered his wrecked car lying on the roadside above Dead Loch. If it was traced to him through the registration, awkward questions would be asked. His NATO and Admiralty superiors would be after his blood. 'What a mess!' he fumed, dumping the dirty plates into the sink. 'I haven't a clue where to begin . . .' He glanced at his

watch. It was Saturday. If he hurried he might still find a *Guardian* at his local newsagents round the corner from Lords Cricket Ground. He had to find out whether he was in the news or not!

All the *Guardians* had gone so Harry had to make do with *The Times*. He stood in the cluttered little shop impatiently searching through the pages for some small item about the wreck, but he could find nothing at all. With a sigh of relief he folded the paper up and was about to leave when the cover of a magazine caught his attention. He went over to the rack, his eyes widening as he stared at the dramatic cover photograph. There was the West Indian strongman from the gymnasium clad in a jazzy pair of leopardskin trunks. He was lifting the back wheels of a vehicle off the ground with a kind of bit gripped between his teeth which was attached to the bumper by two chains. Underneath, a caption blared: *JAMAICAN SUPERMAN, RUDOLF RAINBOW - SEE CENTREFOLD FOR MORE INCREDIBLE FEATS*. Harry stared at the cover for several seconds, more startled by the vehicle than by the gigantic straining figure lifting it.

Mr Rudolf Rainbow was lifting a Land Rover!

'T say . . . ' Harry gasped eventually. 'My giddy aunt!' He took down the magazine and hastily turned the pages. Perhaps he was mistaken. Perhaps it wasn't the same man. But it was. There was no doubt. The centrepage spread showed the man from the gymnasium surrounded by astonished spectators and snapping chains round his chest, punching nails through blocks of wood, and crushing oil drums between his knees. Harry shut the magazine with a shudder and replaced it on the rack. He was now convinced that Mr Rudolf Rainbow had been out to kill him. But why? And where did Alexander Shire fit in, if at all?

His shocked reverie was broken by the sound of a clipped military voice at the counter behind him. 'Must have *The Times* you know. Crossword. Top priority. Many thanks . . .'

Harry froze. The hairs on his neck prickled up and his mouth went dry as dust.

'Good grief! Sullivan! Look as if you've seen a ghost. How are you?'

Harry's hand was seized and pumped vigorously up and down. His glazed eyes focussed on the trim moustache and surprised eyebrows of Alastair Gordon Lethbridge-Stewart. 'I say . . . Brigadier!' he gasped.

The immaculate figure in fawn raincoat, cavalry twills and check cap guffawed with amiable delight. 'Fancy meeting you here Sullivan,' he cried, nodding in the direction of the cricket ground. 'Going to the match?'

Harry shook his head dumbly.

'Oh, pity. Should be a massacre. Australia are fifty-one for five.' The Brigadier squeezed Harry's palm excitedly.

Harry became mesmerised by the brown leather glove on the Brigadier's other hand. It had a monogrammed button. The hand holding his own was bare.

'Can't get up so often in term time,' the Brigadier chatted away affably.

Harry nodded and grinned politely, his mind preoccupied with the events at Castle Mackie. 'No, I suppose not,' he murmured.

'Must go. Missed this morning's play,' the Brigadier breezed on. He fumbled in his pocket and pressed a card into Harry's hand. 'I'll be up at Stewart Lodge for the summer hols,' he boomed. 'Come up and spend a week sometime. Get away from the old firm for a bit!'

And before Harry could reply, the Brigadier had marched out of the cramped little shop flourishing his newspaper in farewell.

Harry looked at the card. It said:

BRIGADIER ALISTAIR GORDON
LETHBRIDGE-STEWART DSO. MC.
STEWART LODGE, MACKIE, INVERNESSHIRE.
TEL. MACKIE 321

He stared at the address, his mind reeling at the coincidences which seemed to be breeding like rabbits. Part of his special training for UNIT had demonstrated how an enemy could accomplish the complete psychological breakdown of a target victim by manipulating a series of events to suggest that he or she was being hunted down or threatened in some mysterious way by unknown agencies. His work at Tooth

Tor was highly classified and he was supposed to keep a constant look-out for the slightest suspicious circumstances.

He stood on the pavement in the watery sunshine gazing after the briskly striding figure and felt a sudden urge to run in pursuit of his former commanding officer and to confront him with the events of the past week. But then he felt a thrill of cautious anticipation. Suppose the Brigadier were engaged in some kind of secret operation, despite being officially retired from UNIT? It would be so tempting to get involved. Harry hesitated and frowned. 'No, my lad, your days of putting both left feet in it are definitely over . . .' he told himself firmly. He would just have to wait. Wait and see What happened next.

When he got back to his flat the telephone was ringing. Teddy Bland sounded overjoyed to hear his voice.

'Thank goodness, old chap, we thought you'd bought it . . .'
Teddy crackled faintly at the other end. 'Esther heard on the local news. They found your car but no body or anything. What on earth happened to you?'

Harry was on the brink of launching into a long detailed account of everything that had happened to him in the past ten days. Then he thought better of it. He wouldn't tell anyone any more than he had to. He laughed nonchalantly. 'Oh, just overtired I think, thanks to your splendid hospitality. I swerved to avoid a ... a deer and then I hit a rock or something. Don't remember anything else. Just a few bruises and a spot of concussion that's all. I couldn't get any help out there in the sticks so I left the old girl in a heap and jumped on a train. I've only just got back,' he gabbled.

'You were damned lucky by the sound of it,' Teddy remarked, his voice coming and going on the island's radio-telephone link. You ought to be more careful, old man. You haven't changed a bit you know!'

'No, you haven't, dear old Sullers, and I hope you never will.'

Harry blushed as Esther's contralto voice blasted out of the receiver, interrupting her brother. 'You need someone to look after you,' Esther went on

earnestly. 'Now, promise me you'll be a good boy.'

Harry fiddled with the telephone chord in embarrassed silence.

'Listen, old chap, we really do need you up here on Yarra.' Teddy resumed persuasively. 'As I told you the other day, we've got some exciting new projects coming up and you'll be a tremendous asset to our team.'

'And I'll be able to keep an eye on you,' Esther butted in again.

Harry shrugged helplessly and stared at his birthday card on the mantelpiece. 'I'll think about it,' he promised when Teddy came back on the line. 'Thanks for a jolly good time. And don't worry, I'm perfectly all right.'

As he put down the telephone Harry heard his letter box snap shut. On the front door mat he found a plain white envelope simply marked *Lieutenant-Commander H. Sullivan RN* which had obviously just been delivered by special courier. He stared at the NATO seal on the back for several seconds and then, with a grimace of resignation he tore it open and read the brief letter inside. It was from NATO Headquarters in Geneva:

Dear Commander Sullivan,

You are hereby informed that your transfer to the Yarra Establishment from Tooth Tor is confirmed and will take effect from June the first. You are also informed that from that date your rank will be that of Surgeon-Commander. Congratulations. Sincerely yours, Caspar Schlitzburger (General)

Harry read the letter several times and it quickly dawned on him that perhaps his recent adventures had been a kind of test, a probationary assault course which he appeared to have passed with flying colours. His reluctance to transfer to weapons research and his doubts about Esther's intentions paled into insignificance in the light of his promotion and the solution to the mystery of recent events. How glad he was that he hadn't said anything to the Brigadier about his suspicions. That might have ruined his chances altogether! He went over to his wardrobe mirror, threw back his shoulders and stuck out his chest. 'Commander Sullivan I presume!' he cried, saluting his reflection smartly. 'Nice to have you aboard, old man.'

An Odd Weekend

Harry's first couple of months on Yarra passed quickly and happily enough. He was glad to be working with Teddy Bland again and at first he found the research on the development of nerve poisons hundreds of times more powerful than any in existence a great challenge. Professor Conrad Gold, the Director of the Research Establishment, assured him that his expertise in antidote therapy would be a vital factor in the success of the project, and Harry felt a lot better knowing that in a way he was still involved in the defensive rather than the offensive side of things. Naturally Esther was overjoyed to have Harry staying nearby and she kept badgering him to put on his new Surgeon-Commander's uniform for her. Patiently Harry explained that he only wore it on ceremonial occasions now that he was no longer on active service, but eventually he gave in and allowed her to snap him with her polaroid camera while he posed like an Admiral at Jutland or Trafalgar. She also tried to persuade him to regrow the sideburns which he had shaved off when he left UNIT, but he flatly refused. Undeterred, Esther insisted that he grow a moustache, but Harry brusquely pointed out that he belonged to the Senior Service and not the Airforce so a moustache was out of the question. Fortunately Esther's research for her book frequently took her away from Yarra, so Harry was occasionally able to enjoy a much needed breather from her perpetual attentions. The barren bleakness of the island suited him more than the barren bleakness of Dartmoor because the sea was all around and he had always missed the sea since his early days on the dear old *Ark Royal*. Part of him regretted that he hadn't

managed to spend more time serving in Her Majesty's Ships. After all, he was a sailor as well as a neurologist!

One weekend in early August Harry took up the Brigadier's invitation to visit him at Stewart Lodge. Despite the sunshine, he wore a white polo neck sweater to keep out the chill northwesterly breeze on the two and a half hour crossing in the naval supply tug. As he jumped ashore at Port MacDui his eyes lit up. Parked on the quayside in all its newly-restored glory was his red MG. Angus Donaldson at his tiny garage in Fort William had been as good as his word. With loving care Harry folded down the hood, threw his grip into the back and started the engine. 'Sweet as a nightingale . . .' he murmured, driving carefully through the little fishing port and turning southeast onto the road leading through Applecross Forest. Drinking in the pine-scented air, he sped along the winding highland roads, his carefree mood spoilt only by a nagging instinct to keep checking in his mirrors for any sign of a Land Rover following him. Two hours later he drove cautiously down the notorious road to the shore of Dead Loch, thankful to have arrived in one piece this time.

Stewart Lodge was situated on the opposite side of the loch from Castle Mackie. It was a modest but rambling house hidden by huge trees and set in extensive grounds running along the shore. Harry marvelled at how close he had been to a friendly welcome during his ordeal crossing the Dead Loch all those weeks ago, for the Brigadier greeted him with a hearty dinner of smoked salmon and prime Angus beef, followed by Harry's favourite prune crumble for dessert. The feast was served by the Brigadier's butler, a bald and burly man of few words known as Sergeant Curly. After dinner they caught up with each other's news over a decanter of malt whisky beside a cosy log fire.

The Brigadier described how, since retiring from UNIT, he had become Senior Mathematics Master at a private school in Sussex and was enjoying life enormously. In some embarrassment Harry could only hint apologetically at the nature of his own activities before he was obliged to fall silent. He wished he could forget the Official Secrets Act but

he knew that he was forbidden to discuss his work, even with someone like the Brigadier.

But his host waved away his apologies as he refilled Harry's glass. 'My dear Sullivan, no need to explain a thing,' he laughed. 'Of course, confidential stuff. I quite understand.' Then he steered the conversation towards their past exploits together and they chatted happily for hours about The Doctor in his various incarnations, about Sarah Jane Smith and Jo and Sergeant Benton, about Jamie and Zoe and about the Daleks and the Cybermen and all manner of old friends and enemies. Harry listened enthralled while the Brigadier relived some of his most dramatic adventures and it was almost dawn by the time they drained their glasses and retired to bed.

Harry was so exhausted that he could barely be bothered to unpack. As he crossed to the wall cupboard to hang up a shirt, he was stopped in his tracks by the picture over the guest room fireplace. It was a smaller reproduction of the Van Gogh portrait of the artist with a bandaged ear. T say, what a coincidence . . . he breathed, staring at the painting in amazement. He shuffled over and examined the thickly painted bandage which had so intrigued him when he had seen the original in London. With a tired shrug he eventually tore himself away and opened the cupboard door. His cry of shock and alarm would probably have woken the whole house had he not drunk so much of the Brigadier's Glenmackie malt. It emerged as a kind of strangled honk as he dropped the shirt on its hanger and recoiled against the bed, his eyes bulging with astonishment.

There in the bottom of the spacious cupboard a body was lying on its side, folded up in a foetal position. Squinting in the feeble light from the bedside lamp, Harry made out the face of a young woman of about thirty dressed in a blue denim trousersuit. She seemed to be utterly motionless, like a corpse.

Harry shook his fuzzy head and knelt down to turn the girl's face towards him. 'Oh my giddy aunt! Samantha . . .!' he gasped, recognising the strong oval features, wide mouth and straw-coloured hair. He swallowed

hard. It seemed as if the nightmare events of May were returning to haunt him again. With cool professional discipline he felt for a pulse in the girl's neck. Then all at once she opened her eyes and sat bolt upright, butting Harry's prominent chin with her forehead.

T dreamt I was being strangled . . .' she exclaimed, snatching his hand away from her throat.

Harry dabbed at his watering eyes with his sleeve and ribbed his numbed chin. 'What the dickens are you doing here, Samantha?' he demanded incredulously.

Samantha blinked the sleep out of her eyes and giggled at him as she got to her knees. 'I've come to carry you off with me!' she announced in a dramatic whisper.

Harry ruffled frantically through his curly brown hair as if to restore normal mental activity. 'You've what?' he exclaimed in stunned disbelief.

She flung her arms around his neck, her eyes flashing with a wicked gleam. 'Listen Laury, I'm a liberated modern woman. I knew you'd never get in touch . . . not even in code. So I took the initiative. I've come to get my man!'

Harry gaped at her for a moment, his mouth hanging open. But . . . but how on earth did you know I was here?' he protested, gesturing wildly around him in the confined space. 'I mean to say . . . 'He fell silent, utterly at a loss for words.

Samantha drew him closer to her and he tried to wriggle free, but she held him firmly nose to nose.

Harry breathed her fragrant perfume. 'You mean . . . you came all this way just to . . . ' He tailed feebly into silence again.

Samantha shrugged and pressed herself against him. 'Oh it's not so far. About three miles by road,' she whispered. And it's a beautifully clear night.

'Three miles . . . ?' Harry wrestled himself free and sat up on the bed, earnestly wishing he hadn't drunk so much whisky.

Samantha scrambled out of the cupboard and sat herself down beside him. 'I live across the loch, in Castle Mackie,' she said brightly. 'It's much nicer than this pokey old place.'

Harry opened his mouth to speak and promptly shut it again, determined not to say too much too soon - which was a bad habit he was trying hard to cure.

They sat in silence for a moment.

'How did you get in here?' Harry suddenly asked, shifting away as she snuggled up against him.

She put her finger on his lips. 'There are some questions a gentleman never asks a lady,' she scolded him gently.

Harry bristled indignantly. 'I am perfectly well aware of that,' he retorted.

'So don't ask.' Samantha leaned forward and kissed him lightly on the lips.

Harry gazed into her lagoon-like eyes and cleared his throat nervously. 'Sorry,' he whispered. He felt helpless with weariness, alcohol and confusion. 'Well, I'm jolly flattered that you've gone to all this trouble . . .' he mumbled after a pause.

'I do hope you aren't going to disappoint me, Laury,' she murmured challengingly with a mischievous pout.

Harry tried to think quickly. 'I'll come and visit you,' he promised.

Samantha grasped his hands and jumped up as though she intended to pick him up and carry him off there and then.

'Not now. Another time.' Harry added firmly, getting to his feet. He picked up his rumpled shirt and hung it in the cupboard.

'Why not now?'

Harry shrugged. 'This is such a short visit. I haven't seen the Brigadier for years,' he explained lamely.

'The Brigadier's a drag,' Samantha snapped sulkily. 'Though I must admit he's got good taste.' She nodded at the reproduction over the fireplace.

Harry was about to agree and mention the coincidence about the paintings when they heard a movement in the passage outside. Next moment there was a knock on the door. Quick as a flash, Samantha kissed him on the cheek and dived back into the cupboard. Without even thinking, Harry slammed the door behind her.

'Come in,' he said, after a pause.

Sergeant Curly's huge bullet head peered into the guest room. 'Is everything tae yer satisfaction, Commander Sullivan?' he inquired in his throaty brogue.

Harry's hand flew up to conceal any trace of lipstick there might be on his cheek. 'Oh, yes indeed, Curly, yes, all ship-shape and Bristol fashion,' he laughed with forced jollity.

Curly nodded and rubbed the side of his broken nose. Well, I'm just next door if there's anything ye need, sir. Goodnight tae ye.'

As soon as the butler had gone, Harry opened the cupboard door. His jaw dropped in amazement. The cupboard was empty. Samantha was nowhere to be seen. Flabbergasted, he flopped onto the bed and cradled his woozy head in his hands, wondering whether the Brigadier's whisky had given him hallucinations. But then he realised that he could still smell Samantha's distinctive perfume lingering in the air. She had definitely been there moments before. He roused himself and decided there had to be a logical explanation. Searching around in the gloom, he discovered that the cupboard was much bigger than he thought. In fact it served both the guest room and the room next door. Obviously Samantha had escaped through the neighbouring room. Glad to have solved at least part of the mystery, Harry collapsed thankfully onto the bed still in his clothes and fell fast asleep almost immediately.

Next morning he came down late to discover that the Brigadier had already gone out for a walk by the loch. He ate a lone but hearty breakfast of porridge, kippers and toast under the beady and unblinking gaze of Sergeant Curly who waited on him with ponderous efficiency. Later, on his way outside, he noticed a solitary brown leather glove on the hallstand. He examined it carefully and was convinced that it matched the one he had seen in Alexander Shire's study three months earlier. As he replaced it he became aware of the butler's impassive stare from the dining room doorway.

'Lost one just like this recently . . .' he chuckled selfconsciously.

Curly's expression did not change. 'If I should come

across it I'll send it on tae ye, sir,' he replied with icy respect, striding away towards the kitchen.

When Harry eventually caught up with his host by the loch, he asked innocently about Castle Mackie's mysterious owner.

The Brigadier reacted with surprising venom. 'Fellow called Shire. American. Retired neurologist or something,' he snorted, gesturing across the grey water. 'Complete upstart. Fancies himself as Lord of the Manor. Hardly spoken to him. Wouldn't be seen dead in his confounded caste.'

As they walked along in silence for a while, Harry's suspicions began to be rekindled and he became extremely uneasy. He tried to decide whether to come clean about his experience in Castle Mackie three months ago and to tackle the Brigadier head on about the voice he had overheard in the turret room.

'Thinks he's bringing culture to the wilds,' the Brigadier fumed, swiping at the heather with his swagger-stick. 'Tried to recruit me into some damn art appreciation society or something.'

Harry saw his chance. 'Not the Van Gogh Society?' he asked casually.

The Brigadier viciously beheaded a tall thistle. 'Something like that. Lot of nonsense.'

Harry clenched his fists and took a deep breath. 'There's a Van Gogh in the guest room,' he blurted out, glancing sidelong at his companion.

The Brigadier stopped dead and stared at Harry thunderstruck. 'Good grief! Are you sure?' he exclaimed, pale and trembling.

Harry hesitated a moment, unsure what he had provoked. 'Only a reproduction of course,' he added quickly.

The Brigadier relaxed and smiled. 'Thank goodness for that!' he boomed in evident relief. 'Thought I was going to have to take out extra insurance . . .' He let out a tremendous guffaw and strode on.

Harry gazed after him and decided that he was getting nowhere fast with his investigation. Catching up with the

Brigadier, he gave up probing and tried to enjoy the rest of the weekend as best he could. But his doubts nagged at him like a dog toying with an old slipper, and it was with a certain amount of relief that he set off back to Yarra early on the Monday morning.

Unexplained Mysteries

However, the following week back at the Research Centre turned out to be pretty disastrous. Harry found it almost impossible to concentrate on his work. One of his duties was to make sure that all personnel engaged in the Attila Programme received thorough check-ups and regular treatment with special antidote substances to protect them from any accidental contamination with the fantastically lethal new nerve toxins being developed in the heavily-guarded laboratories.

One day he discovered that he had injected one of the female enzyme scientists with ten times the correct dosage of nykor inhibitase. Appalled at his incredible mistake, Harry waited in helpless suspense to see what would happen to the woman. There was nothing he could do to counteract the effect of the antidote and it would just have to be allowed to metabolise naturally. Three days later she came to see him complaining that she had started putting on weight alarmingly and that her hair had begun to fall out. She even tugged a small cluster of auburn curls out in front of his startled eyes and scattered them on his desk. Hiding his dismay as best he could, Harry examined her and was thankful to find no further symptoms ... at least for the present. He reassured her that she had suffered a minor reaction and sent her away on a fortnight's sick leave. Then he spent a sleepless night trying to make up his mind whether he should admit his mistake and resign or just sit tight and hope that nothing more serious would occur.

When he bumped into Teddy Bland in the refectory the following lunchtime he considered confiding in his old

friend, but Teddy was excited about a spectacular breakthrough in the cell culture department and didn't seem to notice Harry's furrowed brow and sullen silence until lunch was almost over.

Suddenly he leaned across and said 'Harry Sullivan, you know what you need? A girlfriend. Better still a wife.' He nudged his old friend mischievously. 'Esther's coming over again in a couple of weeks.'

Harry managed a pale smile. 'Oh, I say. Jolly good . . .' he mumbled into his coffee.

A week later, the enzymologist returned to work cheerful and grateful. She told the astonished Harry that her weight had almost got back to normal and that her hair had stopped falling out. His face lit up when she then revealed that she had not suffered a single migraine since her inhibitase treatment had begun. When she had gone, Harry sat in his office for hours, poring over all the articles he could lay his hands on relating to chronic headache and migraine. Perhaps he had made a major discovery! He might even write a paper for one of the medical journals! One thing at least was certain - he'd had a lucky escape.

Three days later the woman burst into his office without even knocking. Harry sat rigid in his chair fearing the worst.

'Doctor Sullivan it's incredible . . . It's a miracle!' she cried, tears of joy in her eyes.

Harry went very white. 'What . . . what's happened?' he asked nervously.

The enzymologist patted her tummy with a radiant smile. 'We've done it at last!' she exclaimed.

Harry looked blank. 'What have we done?'

'I'm pregnant! We always thought I couldn't have children . . . But I'm pregnant! My husband's delighted!'

Harry swallowed hard and sighed with relief. 'Oh, I say. Well done, old thing!' he croaked with a touch of hysteria in his voice. 'Well, we'd better have a look at you.'

When she had gone, Harry took a phial of the nykor inhibitase out of his drugs safe and stared at the colourless, innocent-looking chemical for a long time while a host of fantastic possibilities flooded into his reeling mind. He began

to imagine that he might be on the brink of making medical history.

His dreamy smile instantly vanished when the door to his office suddenly burst open again and Esther Bland stood before him flushed and breathless, with her red hair in wild disarray.

'Surprise, surprise, Sullers ... I came back early!' she shrieked, flinging her arms round his neck and smothering him in her ample bosom.

'Jolly good, old girl . . .' came his muffled reply as he struggled to free himself.

'Come to dinner *chez nous ce soir, mon cher,*' Esther commanded, swirling out like a whirlwind. 'I've got so much to tell you . . .'

Harry sat for a while, fingering the phial of antidote and picturing Esther Bland in a maternity frock. 'I wonder what a hundred times the correct dose would do . . .?' he muttered mildly, his face creasing into a slightly malicious grin.

The unexpected side-effects of the antidote overdose began to preoccupy Harry to the disadvantage of his proper work. Night after night he stayed later and later in the laboratory, experimenting with the effect of different concentrates of nykor inhibitase on cell cultures and protein samples. He was becoming convinced that he had stumbled on a cure for certain types of infertility in women and a therapy that seemed to avoid the risk of multiple births of twins, triplets and so on. He became so distracted with his new research that the antidote part of the Attila Programme began to fall seriously behind schedule. Eventually he was summoned to see Professor Conrad Gold, the Director of the Yarra Establishment.

Gold did not like Harry Sullivan. He was an old-fashioned academic who mistrusted military types and especially sailors. When Harry was ushered into his office Gold ignored him for several minutes, pretending to be absorbed in confidential papers. When he at last deigned to look up, a dark cloud settled over his shiny pale face as he noticed that Harry was wearing his uniform.

'Surgeon-Commander Sullivan, sir. I believe you want to

see me,' Harry announced smartly. He had deliberately worn his naval uniform to annoy Gold and to underline his non-civilian status.

Gold took the hint. 'Sit down *Mister* Sullivan . . .' he said in his nasal high-pitched voice, pushing his halfmoon spectacles back up on his hooked nose.

Harry banged his cap down on the desk and sat in the vacant chair opposite Gold.

The Director came straight to the point. 'It would appear that the antidote programme is lagging way behind schedule,' he declared, fixing Harry with his small brown eyes. 'Can you account for the delays, Mr Sullivan?'

Harry made himself count up to three before answering. 'Certainly Professor. I'm rather worried about some unexpected side-effects and I'm carrying out a series of more intensive tests,' he replied brazenly.

Gold shifted his plump body impatiently in the huge leather armchair. 'Side-effects? What sort of side-effects?' he demanded suspiciously.

Harry shrugged. 'I can't be sure yet,' he bluffed. 'I need more time to check my results.'

Gold got up and waddled across to look out of his window at the sprawling groups of prefabricated buildings and portakabins which formed the Yarra Research Establishment. 'Mr Sullivan, before you joined us here the entire programme was progressing entirely satisfactorily,' he sneered. 'I would remind you that time is of the utmost importance.'

Harry nodded eagerly. 'Oh absolutely, Professor,' he agreed. 'But so are safety and reliability.'

Gold swung sharply round and sat down again. 'I recall that you have in the past expressed doubts about weapons research,' he said quietly, opening a folder in front of him. 'I do hope you are not trying to be obstructive.'

Harry flushed with anger and sprang to his feet, glaring at the security file on the desk. 'I must protest, sir. My loyalty is unquestionable!' he objected.

Gold shrugged and smiled sourly. 'No one questions your loyalty, Mr Sullivan,' he retorted, 'merely its precise direction.'

Harry slowly resumed his seat. 'Has anybody expressed dissatisfaction with my work?' he asked defiantly.

Gold clasped his podgy white hands together. 'The project leader is an old friend of yours, I believe,' he said acidly. 'And no doubt a *loyal* one.'

Harry's strong jaw jutted boldly forward as he kept his mouth tight shut.

'Do you deny that you disapprove of the biological weapons programme we are carrying out on Yarra?' Gold challenged him.

Harry shook his head. 'It's no secret that I'm only prepared to work in defensive research,' he replied candidly. 'That is my job and I'm doing it to the best of my ability. If you are not satisfied with my efforts I suggest you have me transferred back to Tooth Tor.'

The Director bared his silver-capped teeth in rage. He knew that only the military top brass could order such a thing and his own powerlessness infuriated him. 'You will remain here on Yarra, Mr Sullivan!' he shouted.

Harry stood up and took his cap. He saluted Professor Gold with insulting briskness and turned on his heel. It was only then that he noticed the painting hanging on the wall behind him. It was a full-sized reproduction of Van Gogh's *Portrait of the Artist With Bandaged Ear*! He stared at it for a moment but managed to control his astonishment until he got outside Gold's office. Then he let out a shrill whistle of surprise. 'My giddy aunt!' he muttered, putting on his cap at a rakish angle and sticking his hands into his jacket pockets with the thumbs exposed in traditional naval style. Deep in thought, he strolled slowly back to his bungalow. The coincidence of the meeting with Samantha in front of the painting, and then the presence of the reproductions in the Brigadier's guest room and in Gold's office tantalised him. There could be no doubt that something very odd indeed was afoot.

As he reached his quarters, he didn't notice the statuesque figure in a silk trouser suit lurking in the porch.

'Why, hello sailor!' Esther drawled, swinging seductively round the pillar. 'Doin' anythin' interestin' tonight . . .?'

Harry marched straight past her. 'Thinking . . .' he said

firmly, letting himself in. 'Lots and lots of thinking.' And with that he slammed the door.

At precisely the same instant, Teddy Bland entered Gold's office and sat down opposite the Director. He stared at a point on the Professor's shiny domed forehead and tried to make his mouth form intelligible words.

'There can no longer be any doubt, Professor . . . 'he said at last. 'Three ampoules of Attila Specimen 305 are definitely missing. It's a small quantity and of low concentration but lethal in the wrong hands.'

Gold's impassive fleshy face betrayed nothing. He leaned forward, his spectacles sliding down his nose, and tapped Harry's personal file. 'Sullivan must be our prime suspect,' he declared quietly.

Teddy gaped at him in disbelief. 'Harry Sullivan?' he cried with an incredulous chuckle. 'You can't be serious.'

Gold rose and went over to the window. 'Can you suggest a more likely culprit?' he demanded coldly. 'Sullivan's feelings about the Attila Programme are well known. The man has suspicious connections outside the Establishment. Security have been watching him.'

Teddy frowned at Gold's thick neck and sloping shoulders silhouetted against the light. 'It *can't* be Sullers,' he protested after a shocked silence. 'It just can't be . . . '

Gold swung sharply round. 'Your loyalty is very touching Bland,' he sneered. 'Unfortunately I must exercise my judgement in a more objective manner.'

Teddy remained silent, his open, honest face lined with anguish.

'Can you deny that the antidote programme is behind schedule?' Gold challenged him.

Teddy shrugged gloomily and bowed his head. 'There have been some adverse reactions,' he reminded the Director. 'Commander Sullivan's quite right to . . . '

'And one pregnant enzymologist,' Gold interrupted scornfully. 'Ann O'Brien is one of our most valuable personnel. Now we shall lose her until she is safely delivered of her child.'

Teddy jumped up angrily. 'You can hardly blame Commander Sullivan for *that*?' he snapped.

Gold waddled back to his desk. 'I wonder . . .' he murmured slyly. 'I gather that he has recently ordered a number of publications dealing with infertility . . .' He sat down and watched Teddy Bland walking tensely up and down in front of the Van Gogh reproduction. 'I want you to keep a close watch on Sullivan,' he ordered. 'I shall take no action for the moment, but sooner or later he will make a mistake. Then we pounce.'

Teddy resisted an urge to laugh in Gold's face. The very idea of the short plump Professor pouncing on anything suddenly seemed hilarious. 'You seem very sure that he's guilty of sabotage,' he said bluntly.

Gold opened Harry's file and smiled smugly. 'Let's wait and see . . .' he purred.

It was quite late when Teddy Bland knocked at the door of Harry's bungalow that night. Harry quickly bundled the medical papers he had been studying out of sight and then let Teddy in. He was puzzled to find his old friend unusually subdued and he tried to cheer him up by getting out the rum and making them a couple of Dartmouth Specials. They chatted about Esther for a while and then Teddy suddenly told Harry about the missing specimens of Attila 305 Toxin.

Harry looked genuinely shocked. 'I say, old man, what a terrible blow!' he murmured sympathetically. 'Whoever could've taken them?'

Teddy shrugged. 'Haven't a clue, Sullers, but I suppose it must be an inside job.'

Harry was quiet for a while as he paced agitatedly around the small sitting room sipping his drink. Then he stopped. 'This is just what I've always been afraid of Teddy,' he burst out, 'these ridiculously dangerous toxins getting into the wrong hands. Now perhaps people will appreciate my warnings for once.'

Teddy looked up sharply. 'Hang on a bit, old chap, we don't actually know the stuffs fallen into the wrong hands yet, do we?' he pointed out, watching Harry closely.

Harry took their glasses and topped them up. 'Isn't it obvious?' he retorted angrily. 'What else could've happened?'

His outburst of anger made Teddy Bland extremely uneasy about his friend. It almost looked as though Harry were trying to conceal something.

'Now perhaps people will realise how foolish the Attila Programme is . . .' Harry ranted on, swigging at his Dartmouth Special as he wandered restlessly round the room. 'We'd be much better employed trying to solve medicine's problems and to save lives instead of inventing better and better ways of killing people.'

Teddy nodded his agreement. 'Of course, old man, in a better world we could .. '

'A *better world!*' Harry shouted, taking another gulp from his glass and flopping heavily down onto the sofa beside Teddy. 'Listen, old man, I took the Hippocratic Oath, y'know. I mean, old Hippocrates wasn't a hypocrite, he never meant us medics to go around bumping people off right left and centre did he?' Harry leaned forward earnestly. 'We'll never have a better world until we give up all this bally weapons nonsense and start a genuine search for peace and happiness.'

Teddy sipped his Special and wondered nervously whether the security people had bugged his friend's quarters.

'I mean, I've just hit on something quite fantastic,' Harry confided quietly. 'Could be quite a major discovery . . . '

Teddy nodded eagerly, encouraging him to go on.

Harry closed his eyes and sank wearily back against the cushions. 'Can't say any more just at the moment,' he said, pulling a face. 'Very hush-hush, old chap.'

'Oh, come on, Sullers, you can trust me. After all we're old pals, aren't we?'

Harry nodded slyly and tapped his tightly-closed lips with his finger. They sat for a while in silence, both drowsy from the strong nautical cocktail Harry had mixed them.

Eventually Teddy roused himself and tugged the dozing Harry by the sleeve. 'Listen, Sullers, the other week when

you went away for a few days . . . where did you really go?' Harry giggled and said nothing.

'I'm just asking . . . You know, in case those security chaps come snooping around the place,' Teddy added casually.

At the mention of Security, Harry's eyes snapped open and he sat upright, instantly very sober. 'Can't see what business it is of theirs,' he retorted. 'A secret mission ... I went to see an old UNIT friend.'

'Not Lethbridge-Stewart!'

Harry tapped his nose mischievously. 'Could've been,' he teased. 'Listen, Teddy, if Security want to know where I've been let them jolly well find out.'

Teddy stood up decisively. 'Well, I hope you'll do your best to chivvy things along in the antidote department, old chap,' he prompted as tactfully as he could. 'Gold's getting touchy about the hold-ups.'

As Harry showed Teddy to the door, he patted his arm reassuringly. 'I might be going away again next weekend . . . 'he whispered.

'Where to?' Teddy inquired before he could stop himself.

'To visit a damsel imprisoned in a castle,' Harry grinned.

Teddy groaned and shot him a disapproving look. 'Esther's going to be extremely jealous,' he warned. 'And what about getting the research programme back on schedule?'

Harry shook his head. 'Just leave that to me,' he advised. 'If Gold wants results we'll jolly well give him some!'

Harry bolted the door behind Teddy and then made himself a pot of strong coffee. There was so much to think about he hardly knew where to begin. Did Teddy suspect him of stealing the ampoules? Was there a mole in the Establishment? Should he abandon his private research on the nykor inhibitase and smarten up the antidote programme? And what about the mysterious paintings and the strange Samantha and Castle Mackie? Above all, what about the Brigadier? Harry still couldn't really make up his mind about his former commanding officer and he now knew that he would never be able to concentrate properly on his work

until he had laid these niggling doubts to rest. He decided to take the bull by the horns and do a little detective work of his own . . .

The Amateur Investigator

On a blustery wet Saturday morning, Professor Gold stood at the window in his office and watched Harry's red sports car pull up at the distant security checkpoint at the main gate. While Harry hurried into the guardhouse to be searched, three Ministry of Defence policemen came out and thoroughly went over the car. Gold's eyes were screwed up over his half-rim glasses in intense concentration, almost as if he were willing; the policemen to find something incriminating either in the car or on Harry's person. But ten minutes later, Harry emerged from the guardhouse and gave the police a cheery wave as he drove away across the island to the tiny harbour.

Gold watched the red and white striped barrier pole close across the entrance and turned away, digging his well-manicured fingernails into his waxy palms with clammy frustration. He sat at his desk and stared across at the Van Gogh picture, his face growing darker and darker like the lowering sky outside. Suddenly he snatched up the telephone and stabbed at the keys with a stubby signet-ringed finger.

'Miss Bird? Tell the Maintenance Department I want this damned picture taken away first thing Monday,' he bellowed. 'It's beginning to depress me.'

As he drove the long way round the sunlit Dead Loch towards Castle Mackie, Harry hoped against hope that Samantha would be there to help justify his visit. After all, she had invited him, and she had seemed pretty keen to see him again. He stopped the car about a mile away along the shore road and studied the castle through a pair of powerful naval

binoculars. He could just make out a lone Volvo Estate car parked in the courtyard; otherwise the castle looked deserted. He watched for a while and then drove on up the binding track and through the gateless archway into the rear alley yard, which was surrounded on three sides by the castle buildings and on the fourth side by the outer wall. He lurked near the arch to ensure a quick escape if necessary and then walked slowly towards the huge open door, hoping that his open-necked shirt, blazer, ducks and cravat would give him a relaxed and casual appearance. The weather had brightened and the warm sunny sky gave him confidence as he stepped into the dark, vaulted entrance hall.

'Hello there. I say, is there anyone at home?' he called cheerfully. He listened and then repeated his enquiry, but "there wasn't a sound except for the leisurely ticking of a grandfather clock in the corner. The eerie deer heads adorning the rough stone walls seemed to follow him with their glassy amber eyes as he tip-toed across the threadbare carpet to the huge wooden staircase. He started to climb, but topped immediately as the ancient timbers emitted a cacophony of complaining creaks under his plimsolled tread. He listened again and then called out a third time, but still there was no response. Cautiously he went on up.

When he reached the L-shaped landing which stretched around two sides of the hall like a gallery, Harry found that the other side led into a corridor with a curved staircase at the far end. He instantly recognised the door to Shire's study on the far side of the stone stairwell. Tingling with excitement, he advanced along the passage past several closed doors, expecting each one to fly open and disgorge a bunch of Highland warriors armed to the teeth! Reaching the stair-veil, he listened intently at the study door and then knocked smartly on the heavy oak panelling. The knocking echoed round and round inside the tower and Harry reckoned that it must be audible all over the castle. But still there was no response. With every nerve taut as a spring, he turned the handle and opened the door.

The study looked almost exactly as it had on his previous visit, with books and papers scattered everywhere. He hastily

rifled through the pamphlets on the side-table and came across the solitary leather glove buried in the pile. With a thrill of expectation he examined it carefully and found that the button matched the one on the glove on the Brigadier's hallstand at Stewart Lodge. On a sudden impulse, Harry stuffed the glove into his blazer pocket and then arranged the papers into their original disorder. Flicking through one of the leaflets, he noticed that the Van Gogh Society would be holding its Annual General Meeting in Paris on October 1st at the Eiffel Tower Restaurant. On the back, Alexander Shire was listed as United Kingdom Representative. Again on impulse, Harry folded the leaflet up and put it in his pocket with some vague notion that it might one day prove useful as evidence. He went back to the door, which he'd deliberately left ajar so as to detect approaching footsteps, and listened. There was no sound except for the faint moan of the wind off the loch around the tower.

Growing bolder by the minute, Harry wandered round the large circular room peering into drawers and cupboards. In one cupboard he found a stack of audio cassettes all neatly labelled with cryptic titles in red ink. 'Y.G.O.1. . . Y.G.O.3 . . . T.T.A.L.5 . . . S.L.G.R.I . . .' he murmured, scanning the baffling labels with puzzled curiosity. Carefully replacing the stack of cassettes, he moved round to what looked like an ornate drinks cabinet of elaborately carved and highly polished wood. When he opened it up, he was surprised to discover that it contained a sophisticated-looking electronic installation. One panel incorporated a recording deck and when he clicked it open Harry found a cassette inside. 'Y.G.O.4. . .' he muttered, examining the label. Unable to contain his curiosity, he reloaded the cassette, switched on the power and pressed 'Play'.

He heard a sequence of vague sounds suggesting someone moving about in a room and then a voice he instantly recognised said: 'I do hope you are not trying to be obstructive . . .' The hair on Harry's neck prickled as he heard the noise of a chair scraping and then an equally familiar voice saying angrily 'T must protest, sir. My loyalty is unquestionable . . .' After a brief pause, the first voice

whined 'No one questions your loyalty, Mr Sullivan, merely its precise direction . . .'

Incredulous, Harry listened to the recording of his row with Professor Gold the week before. When he'd heard himself leaving Gold's office he left the cassette running for a while but it seemed to be blank except for the sound of Gold moving around. Impatiently he ran the tape fast forward and then switched back to 'Play'. Again he heard the sound of a chair being shoved back and then Teddy Bland's voice saying ' . . blame Commander Sullivan for *that!*' There followed a few indistinct phrases swamped by a burst of static and then Gold's nasal voice said 'I want you to keep a close watch on Sullivan. I shall take no action for the moment, but sooner or later he will make a mistake. Then we pounce . . .'

Suddenly footsteps echoed on the steps outside the study door. Harry frantically switched off the recorder, closed up the fake drinks cabinet and scuttled across the room. As he listened to the approaching footsteps with his heart thumping madly, he tried to remember the title of the tape he had just been playing. Just before the study door was pushed sharply open, he remembered. 'Y.G.0.4 . . .' he muttered. Yarra . . . Gold's Office . . . Tape Four . . . 'So where had the other tapes come from?

As Shire entered his study he found his unexpected visitor casually leafing through some anti-environmental pollution literature piled on a bookshelf. His face registered momentary surprise, but he quickly formed his craggy features into an apologetic smile as Harry looked him directly in the eye and held out his hand.

'Ah, Doctor Varnish we met again . . .' Shire boomed, shaking hands. 'This is indeed a pleasure. I'm only sorry no one was around to welcome you. I hope you'll forgive us.'

Harry gallantly brushed the apology aside. 'On the contrary Doctor Shire, / should ask you to forgive my presumption in just barging in like this.

Shire nodded at the pamphlet about acid rain which Harry held in his hand. 'Are you interested in environmental matters?' he asked amiably, waving to Harry to take a seat.

Harry sat down next to the fireplace. 'Very much so.'

Shire went over to the window. In spite of the blue sky and sunshine the loch looked grey and lifeless. 'We have a prime example of environmental vandalism right here, Doctor Varnish,' he declared bitterly. 'Do you know why it's now called Dead Loch?'

Harry replied that he didn't, though he agreed that it had a feeling of death about it all right.

'It was used for experiments in chemical warfare during World War Two,' Shire explained. 'All the fish died and the loch has remained bare of wildlife ever since. Not even birds settle on it.' He turned to Harry and his tall angular figure looked almost prophetic against the light. 'The water itself looks dead, don't you think Doctor Varnish?'

Harry involuntarily shuddered as he recalled his desperate struggle and the brackish taste of the water he had swallowed all those weeks ago. He grinned wryly. 'It does indeed.'

Shire selected a pipe from the rack on his desk, lit it and tossed the spent match into the empty grate. 'So what brings you back to Castle Mackie?' he inquired.

Harry felt disconcerted. Shire had not mentioned their previous encounter and he was somewhat embarrassed about his method of leaving the castle on that occasion, especially as Shire now seemed so friendly and hospitable. He cleared his throat uncomfortably. 'Well, it's quite a coincidence really,' he laughed. 'I had the good luck to bump into Samantha in London and she . . . well, I was up this way quite by chance and I thought I'd . . . well, pay her a surprise visit, sort of thing.'

Shire frowned and puffed his pipe. 'Samantha?' he echoed, almost as if he didn't recognise the name. Then he smiled broadly, 'I guess she'll be just delighted to see you again,' he boomed, his eyes twinkling with paternal pride. 'That's if she's around,' he guffawed, shaking his head as he sat his large frame on the high fender. 'You know what these young ladies are these days - here there and everywhere!'

Harry's face fell. 'Oh, I say, I do hope she isn't away,' he murmured earnestly.

Shire shrugged. 'I guess she's gone swimming with Rudolf.'

Harry shuddered again. 'Not in the loch, I hope!'

Shire tamped down the tobacco in his pipe. 'In the terrace pool.'

Harry was about to ask who Rudolf was when Shire suddenly leaned across and grabbed a handful of papers off the shelf beside the fireplace. 'We all of us have a responsibility to do what we can to put a stop to this biological warfare business,' he declared abruptly, flourishing the literature which Harry had been examining when he came in. 'Humanity is as much under threat from chemical weapons as it is from the nuclear build-up. As a neurologist, I'm particularly concerned about the possible development of highly sophisticated nerve toxins.'

Harry tried to organise his racing thoughts. He nodded and mumbled his agreement as Shire warmed to his theme and got more and more worked up about the evil being done by military scientists all over the world. At regular intervals in the midst of his tirade Shire paused and puffed violently at his pipe, staring intently into Harry's eyes as if he were searching for something inside Harry's head. Harry quickly realised that Shire obviously had access to some information from inside the Yarra Establishment, although just how much Shire knew he could not tell. He began to feel increasingly uneasy as the American ranted on. It was as if Shire were trying to convert him, perhaps even recruit him as a kind of stooge, a useful insider whom he could exploit to attack the Attila Programme from within. As he listened to the almost fanatical campaigner, Harry began to wonder whether Shire might even have had something to do with the missing ampoules of Attila 305 and he began to grow angry. Although he sympathised with Shire's anti germ-warfare ideas, he drew the line at sabotage.

'I say, old chap,' he suddenly blurted out, interrupting the American in full flight, 'I really must protest at your idea that . . .'

'Laury! How super to see you. Why ever didn't you let me know you were coming?'

Harry stopped talking and looked round in astonishment. There in the doorway stood Samantha, clad in shorts and a loose tee-shirt. Her wet hair was a mass of matted ringlets and she dabbed at it with a towel as she padded barefoot into the study laughing with excitement.

He stood up gallantly and held out his hand. 'I say! Jolly nice to see you too, old thing,' he laughed, tremendously relieved at the timely interruption.

Alexander Shire looked on with amusement as Samantha threw her arms round Harry's neck and kissed him smack between the eyes. She glanced at the pamphlets in her father's hand and grimaced at Harry. 'Just as well I popped in!' she cried. 'Looks like Dad's been on his hobby horse again!'

Harry nodded wryly.

Doctor Shire stood up. 'We can continue our talk later on,' he smiled, patting Harry's arm.

'I look forward to it,' Harry grinned gamely.

Samantha seized him by the hand and pulled him towards the door. 'Come and have a swim in the pool, Laury,' she suggested. 'It's such a lovely day.'

Although he was glad to get away from Shire, Harry followed Samantha rather reluctantly down the steps and round the terrace towards the open-air pool. 'I say, old thing, I haven't got any trunks,' he protested.

Samantha laughed. 'You don't need any here, it's quite secluded,' she assured him.

Harry blushed slightly. 'But I couldn't possibly . . . No, I mean . . .' he stammered.

She took his arm and dragged him along the uneven paving in the sunshine. 'Oh, I'm so glad you came,' she cried, breaking into a run.

Her delight seemed so heartfelt that Harry couldn't help feeling charmed and he soon began to lose some of his customary reserve as he breathed deep lungfuls of bracing air. Samantha stopped at the corner where the ruins of a tower could just be made out in the crumbling battlements. They stood side by side gazing across the loch to the distant mountains.

'Samantha . . .' Harry began tentatively.

She turned eagerly towards him. 'Yes, Laury?'

'This germ warfare business that your father's so . . .'

'Oh yes, Laury, I'm really sorry about all that,' she quickly interrupted. 'Daddy's such a fanatic. He's determined to put a stop to all that research and everything. He thinks the money and the scientific talent should be devoted to research into cancer and things, you know.'

Harry nodded earnestly. 'Well, yes, I quite agree with him,' he paused for a moment. 'But you know, sometimes weapons research produces valuable solutions to problems like . . . like migraine and . . . and infertility . . .' He stopped, appalled at the absurd impression he must be giving her.

But Samantha was gazing almost adoringly at him and he suddenly began to feel butterflies in his stomach. He cleared his throat, loosened his cravat and unbuttoned his blazer. "Even my own modest work with . . . with insecticides . . ." he stammered, beginning to lose his nerve.

'Have you ever discovered anything important, Laury?' Samantha murmured, untying his cravat and undoing another button on his shirt.

Harry struggled to retain his composure. 'Well, I ... I wouldn't exactly say that . . .' he mumbled, grinning shyly. "But recently I have made some rather startling . . ."

At that moment there was a terrific splashing sound nearby. Harry glanced round and glimpsed the blue inviting water of the pool surrounded with astroturf and sunk into the other arm of the terrace. A dark shape was gliding along under the surface like a torpedo.

'That'll be Rudolf,' Samantha murmured without taking eyes off Harry.

He tried to see more clearly, but the sunken pool was partly screened by a row of potted shrubs forming a kind of windbreak between the castle wall and the battlements.

'Rudolf?' Harry frowned, as if he recognised the name from somewhere. He shook his head and shrugged and then turned earnestly back to Samantha. 'When we met in London you told me your pet cause was anti-chemical hazards or something . . .' he recalled.

She giggled and looked surprised. 'Did I? Oh, I was only joking really. I'm not dotty about it like Daddy. In fact I think some of his more fanatical friends are decidedly dangerous!'

Harry glanced furtively round the terrace as if expecting to find them concealed all around him. 'Dangerous?' he echoed uneasily. 'How do you mean?'

Samantha continued to undo the remaining button on Harry's shirt. 'Well, all Pop really wants to do is expose what the government is up to in these secret research places. But some of his friends seem ... I don't know, a bit odd.'

Harry was about to ask casually whether the Brigadier was one of them when there was a playful roar from the pool.

'Hey, Sammy, come on in and bring your friend, the water's lovely!' boomed a rich bass voice which Harry thought he recognised.

He craned to look at the pool and saw a patch of swirling water where the underwater swimmer had dived under again.

Samantha grabbed his arm. 'Come on in, Laury, it's a real treat!' she cried, dragging him across the terrace and down the short flight of steps to the poolside.

He stood on the edge, staring at the big shape powering through the water close to the bottom, up and down without coming up for air.

'Are you going in, Laury Varnish?' Samantha demanded, with a wicked look in her eyes.

'I told you, I can't. I haven't got any . . .'

Next moment Harry was flying through the air. He hit the water with a terrific splash, spreadeagled in his clothes like a corpse. Spluttering and choking he came to the surface and struck out for the opposite end of the pool with a strong and stylish crawl, while Samantha's silvery laughter mocked his struggle against the drag of his sodden garments. As he reached the other end and prepared to haul himself out, he was confronted by a pair of massive legs dripping with water. Shaking the water out of his eyes, he squinted upwards at the colossal glistening torso of Rudolf Rainbow towering above him. Harry gasped at the awesome figure standing on the

tiling. The shoulders looked as wide as a building. The grinning giant hitched up his leopardskin swimming trunks and reached down to grab Harry's collar.

'That Miss Samantha's just full of mischief,' he guffawed, hauling Harry's thirteen stone frame out of the water with one hand as if he were an overnight bag and setting him gently down on the astroturf patio.

'Much obliged, I'm sure,' Harry gasped, emptying the water out of his plimsolls and glaring at Samantha as she trotted round to commiserate with her sodden victim.

'Sorry, Laury, I just couldn't resist it,' she shrieked, pointing at his flattened hair and the soaking ducks clinging to his legs like ruckled stockings.

'You swim well in those clothes. That's not easy,' Rudolf Rainbow complimented Harry.

Harry struggled out of his dripping blazer, eyeing his onetime assassin with wary awe. 'I do my best to keep fit,' he muttered.

'So does Rudy,' Samantha purred, running her finger over the corrugated iron muscles on the strongman's stomach.

'Is there somewhere I can change?' Harry asked curtly. 'I've got some spare clothes in the car.'

Samantha clapped her hands. 'Oh goody, you can stay the night!' she beamed, leading him across to the small changing and shower room in the wall of the keep. 'Give me the keys and I'll fetch your gear for you.'

Without thinking, Harry handed over his car keys. Samantha gave him a towel. 'I shan't be a mo . . .' she called brightly and ran off along the terrace.

As he slowly peeled off his wet clothes and started drying himself, Harry was aware of the enormous shadow cast by the fearsome Jamaican across the frosted window. All at once the changing room door slammed shut. There was an ominous click and then silence. He tried to open the door, but it refused to budge. He was locked in! He banged and yelled on the door and window for several minutes, but his shouts were ignored. Furious with himself, Harry sat on the bench wrapped in the huge beach towel and waited, nervously eyeing the pile of twisted horseshoes and steel bars bent in

half lying in the corner - no doubt the debris from Rudolf's work-outs!

Harry instinctively felt that Samantha would not be bringing his spare clothes after all. There was no way he could break out. The door was an inch thick and the window stoutly barred. He was disgusted with himself for being so easily duped just when he had begun to make a little headway and unearth some fascinating clues. The brown glove was safe in his blazer pocket and the Van Gogh Society pamphlet would hopefully survive once it had dried out. But he cursed himself for not having slipped one of the cassettes into his pocket too. He tried to recall the oddly abbreviated titles on the tapes in the study. He was pretty sure that Y.G.O. stood for 'Yarra. Gold's Office'. But what were the others? And how had the recordings been obtained?

As darkness fell and it grew chillier, Harry huddled in the towel brooding over the strange and contradictory events. What really rankled with him was Samantha's treachery, but her father's motives were more puzzling. If he wanted Harry Sullivan dead, why on earth didn't Rudolf Rainbow just kill him in a quiet corner and have done with it?

A Human Guinea Pig

After what felt like hours in the cold darkness, Harry at last heard raised voices approaching along the terrace. Moving stiffly over to the door, he could just make out the sound of Alexander Shire fiercely arguing with another man with a strong foreign accent. Eventually he heard Shire say Rudolf, bring Sullivan out of there. We don't want him freezing to death.' The door was flung open and Rainbow ducked his head in. 'Get dressed . . .'he snapped. Harry pulled on his damp shirt and ducks, picked up his plimsolls and sodden blazer and edged past the looming strongman onto the moonlit terrace.

He was confronted by Shire and two other men whom he had never seen before. One of the strangers was aged about fifty. Shortish and stocky, he was wearing a tweed hacking jacket and plus-fours. The other man was about Harry's age. Slim and pale, he was dressed in jeans and a leather jacket. Shire and the older man resembled a couple of local gentry preparing to go out on a grouse shoot.

Shire frowned with apparent concern. 'Commander Sullivan, I'm really sorry about this. I've been tied up with a bunch of business, otherwise you'd've been let out long ago,' he drawled.

Harry saw that the masquerade was over. They knew his real identity now. He stuck his prominent jaw even further out. 'Doctor Shire, I've had quite enough of this hanky panky. What the devil is going on around here?' he demanded.

Shire waved his hands vaguely as though he were powerless to act as he himself wished. 'I'm afraid you have

no choice but to assist us in our objective,' he declared.

Harry was about to retort that he certainly did have a choice when he heard the slow, almost monstrous breathing of Rudolf Rainbow behind him. 'And what *is* your objective Doctor Shire?' he asked.

The elder stranger stepped forward and held out something which glinted in the moonlight.

At first Harry thought it was a small knife. But then he realised that it was a small glass ampoule. 'The Attila 305 . . . 'he gasped, a cold sweat breaking out all over his body.

'Precisely,' replied the stranger. 'And since you have devoted so much of your time and talent to help develop these substances, we think you should at least have the opportunity to demonstrate their effectiveness.'

Harry's eyes widened in horror. The episode was rapidly turning into a nightmare. 'You're mad!' he blurted out. 'Quite mad.'

The stranger smiled. 'I do not think you people have any right to call *us* mad,' he said with deadly irony.

Harry stepped forward, hoping that soon he would wake up from this bad dream. 'I don't think you people have any idea what that stuff can do!' he cried, appealing in desperation to Shire, who remained silent and withdrawn.

The foreigner held the ampoule up towards the moon and peered closely at its contents. 'That is exactly what we wish to find out, Commander Sullivan,' he said, shaking the ampoule to and fro. 'With your expert help, of course.'

Before Harry could react, his arm was clamped in a huge fist from behind and he was propelled along the terrace following Shire and the two foreigners. A few minutes later, he was pushed into the back of the Land Rover in the courtyard. Rudolf squeezed in beside him, while Shire and the other two crammed themselves into the front. As Shire drove swiftly out through the arch, Harry glanced miserably at his red MG still parked nearby. He wondered what had happened to Samantha and whether he had misjudged her earlier. Perhaps she was innocent after all, a victim like himself.

Shire drove round the end of the loch and turned up a narrow track not far from Stewart Lodge. The track climbed rugged bluffs and dropped down into eerie valleys as it wound its way higher and higher onto the bleak moors which separated the loch from the forbidding humps of the distant Grampian mountains. After several miles it petered out at an abandoned croft which had only half its roof intact and its windows securely boarded up. Harry was bundled out of the Land Rover and into the dark ruin by Rudolf. They were followed by the two strangers, while Shire remained in the driving seat staring blankly through the windscreen. The elder stranger stood silhouetted in the doorway making an incongruous figure with his tweed hat and plus-fours, while the younger man hovered silently at his shoulder.

'We know that you have been working on the antidote programme for the Attila Project, Commander,' rasped the older man. 'No doubt you have received regular doses for your protection . . .?'

He paused but Harry remained silent, clutching his soggy blazer in one hand while Rudolf kept the other locked in his iron grip.

The man held up the tiny ampoule between his thumb and forefinger and slowly waved it about. 'We wish to find out how effective your antidote treatment is against the toxin,' he said in a hushed voice that sent a cold shiver through his victim. 'That is our objective.'

Harry shook his head in disbelief. 'That stuff is incredibly volatile,' he said hoarsely. 'If you break that phial you'll be overcome in seconds.'

The man nodded towards the Land Rover. 'We shall be wearing masks,' he breathed, smiling in the stark moonlight.

Harry uttered a mirthless laugh. 'You're ignorant fools,' he shouted contemptuously. 'Ionase compounds are absorbed through the skin as well as the membranes.'

The man nodded with satisfaction. 'Thank you so much, Commander. I hoped you would be able to give us such vital information.'

Harry could have bitten out his own tongue for so carelessly giving away the essential detail about dermal absorption.

Once again he had fallen for a simple trick.

At that moment, Alexander Shire appeared in the doorway. 'Okay, Zbigniew, this has gone far enough . . . **1** he said through clenched teeth. 'You've found out what you wanted to know. We needn't take this charade any further.'

Zbigniew stepped back as Shire put out his hand to lead him back to the Land Rover. 'I fear this is no charade, Alexander,' he retorted menacingly, flourishing the ampoule of deadly nerve toxin. 'I intend to conduct an experiment here. Just as we planned.'

Shire's pale face looked like a stone mask in the moonlight. 'You're crazy!' he shouted, lunging forward to grab the ampoule.

Zbigniew threw the phial into the ruin. 'Catch it, Rudolf! Catch it!' he shrieked in a panicky falsetto.

The giant flung out his hand but he was too slow. The ampoule flew past his fingertips and cracked against the far wall of the croft behind Harry's head.

'Get out, Rudolf! Get out!' Zbigniew screamed, shoving Shire and the other man towards the Land Rover. 'For God's sake get out of there!'

As the other three scrambled into the vehicle, Rudolf lumbered past Harry's frozen figure and slammed the door of the croft shut. With a few massive blows of his bare fist he drove a six inch spike through the door and into the stout frame, imprisoning Harry as securely as any cell. Then he threw himself into the back as the Land Rover accelerated away down the track towards the loch.

Harry's shocked paralysis lasted only a few seconds. The slightly ether-like odour of the leaking Attila 305 soon forced him into action again. The squashy feel of the wet blazer in his hand suddenly reminded him of another vital property of ionase compounds. They were extremely hydrophobic and moisture was known to be a highly effective barrier against the toxin's vapour.

Pulling himself together, he ran over to the wall and flung the sodden blazer around the cracked ampoule lying on the ground. Carefully he picked it up and then wrapped it round

and round as many times as the material would go, desperately hoping that the water-impregnated cloth would prevent the deadly vapour escaping into the atmosphere. Gently he laid the bundle at the foot of the wall and then he retreated as far away as he could get and started searching the barred-up windows and the immovable door for some means of getting out of his prison. He knew that even if some of the toxin did escape he had a certain degree of immunity because of his regular antidote treatments, but he couldn't be sure how much they would protect him.

I just hope Gold gets to hear about what I'm going through for his precious antidote programme . . . he muttered ruefully, trying the door again in vain. Then he glanced up at the glorious night sky through the derelict roof. It seemed that it was the only route to freedom. Harry searched frantically around in the deep shadows for something he might be able to use as a ladder, but all he could find was a few lengths of rusty chain. With stiff, cold fingers he tried to knot them together to form a continuous length of about fifteen feet which he estimated would just about suffice. There was no time to test each one of the bulging, clumsy knots. Taking careful aim, he flung a handful of chain up over a broken-off piece of rafter that looked reasonably secure. His first couple of throws missed, but at last he managed to get the chain over the beam so that it hung down in two equal lengths on either side. Reaching up, he swung on the chains to test that they supported his weight. The rafter creaked alarmingly but seemed firm. He was about to haul himself up out of the croft, when he suddenly remembered the glove and the pamphlet still tucked in his blazer pockets.

He hesitated, biting his lip in anguished indecision. Should he risk disturbing the cracked phial and exposing himself to the toxin, or should he abandon the evidence and flee while he could? He decided to risk it. He darted over and cautiously unwrapped the layers of blazer, taking care not to uncover the ampoule itself. He eased the glove and the soggy pamphlet out of the pocket and crammed them into his sail cloth trousers. Then he folded the layers of blazer back around the smothered ampoule as tightly as he could. As he

ran back to the chains, he felt a sudden ominous stiffness in his joints and he blinked as white spots began flashing intermittently before his eyes. There was an awful tightness around his heart.

'Gosh, I've got to get away from here right now!' he gasped, leaping recklessly for the chains. The broken rafter groaned and swayed as he heaved himself hand over hand up the wildly swinging and twisting links. Several shattered slates dislodged themselves and sliced past his ears as he fought to overcome the creeping paralysis in his straining muscles but at last he managed to grab the waggling stump of rafter and haul himself out onto the roof. As he rested a moment, checking his racing pulse and struggling to breathe against the slowly tightening band around his chest, he suddenly had a horrible thought. Gingerly he felt the back pocket of his ducks and his fingers closed thankfully round the bulging outline of his wallet. For the moment fate was smiling on him and he would not have to go back to get the vital item after all. Next moment he had another horrible thought. Samantha still had his car keys and he had no idea where she was.

Suddenly there was a loud splitting noise and the section of buckled slates and splintered rafters on which he was perched abruptly sagged under his weight. Desperately he scrabbled at the loose slates and got himself up onto a more secure patch. He would now have to slide down and jump off the edge into the heather. As he poised himself to make the dangerous descent, he heard the distant sound of a car engine revving and changing gear and a few seconds later he saw headlights slicing across the moonlit moors. He instantly recognised the throaty roar of his MG as it eagerly raced up and down the switchback track. But a sinister rushing sound was beginning to fill his ears and flashing lights were exploding more and more frequently in his eyes. He felt sick and dizzy, unsure of his footing as he clung to the protruding rafters and tried to prepare himself to let go.

The next thing he knew was that the car was skidding to a halt at the end of the track and that Samantha's vague figure was running towards the croft.

'Samantha. . .Get back. . . Getaway from the building!' he yelled.

The girl stopped and stared up in astonishment at the figure crouched on the crumbling roof. 'Laury . . . Thank goodness you're okay!' she cried. 'What's going on?'

Harry clutched his head as the rushing sound became almost unbearable. 'You must get away quickly!' he yelled. 'They've released some of the toxin inside . . . It's deadly . . . Get away . . .!'

'But you're okay aren't you?' she argued, coming closer again.

Harry fought to keep his balance on the slippery slates as his head whirled round and round like a hurdy gurdy. 'Only just . . .! he gasped. 'I've had antidote treatment but you . . . Go on . . . Get back in the car . . .'

But Samantha seemed rooted to the spot as she watched Harry slowly working his way down the crumbling slope towards the gutter. 'Be careful, Laury . . .! she called anxiously as another patch of slates collapsed under him.

'Do as I say . . . Please get in the car . . . The stuffs escaping. . . I can feel it myself . . .! Harry pleaded, forcing his rapidly seizing up joints to keep moving. Reaching the gutter, he poised himself to leap the eight feet or so to the ground.

All at once Samantha lurched sideways and clutched her head in her hands. Her body started convulsing and her breathing broke up into short, panicky gasps. 'My eyes . . . Everything's flashing . . . And my heart's fluttering ... I can't move my . . . move my . . .! With a pitiful moan she collapsed into the heather.

'Hold on, old thing,' Harry shouted. 'I'll get you out of here. He jumped off the roof and landed heavily on a hummock of thin grass barely covering a huge slab of rock. A sharp pain shot up his ankle to his hip as he hobbled towards the shuddering figure lying in the glare of the headlights. A cold prickling sensation enveloped him as he reached Samantha and tried to haul her to her feet. Her skin felt cold and clammy, her eyes were glazed over and her jaw seemed frozen. She made no response to his repeated urgings to pull

herself together. Harry picked her up and began to lug her over to the car, but after only two or three steps his legs buckled and he fell to his knees. Gasping for breath, he tried to crawl the thirty yards or so to the car dragging Samantha's inert body behind him, but he was already far too weak. Groaning with frustration, he released her hand and crawled the rest of the way, his head spinning and thudding as the ionase toxin really began to take hold. He forced his sluggish body into the cramped driving seat and started the engine. For a moment or two he considered driving over to Samantha and attempting to lever her into the passenger seat, but he realised that he might only have a few more seconds in which to save himself.

'I'm sorry, old thing ... I can't help it. . . I'll have to go . . . Come back with help . . . Hang on if you can . . .' he whimpered, wincing at the excruciating pain in his jaw. He let in the clutch with an abrupt jerk and drove in a skidding semi-circle back onto the track. He had just about enough sensation left in his arms and legs to operate the controls as the MG revved and juddered its way erratically across the moors towards the loch. He reckoned that if he could at least get as far as Stewart Lodge he might be able to summon help - even if the Brigadier was on the side of the enemy. Perhaps he could even confront the Brigadier with the glove and the overheard voice in Shire's study. Harry strove with all his remaining strength to manoeuvre the powerful car along the twisting rutted track and to keep his mind from straying into foggy fantasy. He tried to concentrate on the pathetic image of Samantha lying unprotected only yards from the evaporating ionase toxin. Since the incident at the pool that afternoon he had been trying to decide whether she was in league with her father and his fanatical associates, but now he was convinced of her innocence and determined to help her.

Blinded with cold sweat, he fought against the twitching spasms which repeatedly overwhelmed his body and threatened to cause him to lose control of the car. How he wished he could concentrate on the crippling symptoms of the Attila Toxin 305 and make a thorough record of his reactions. Such data would be invaluable to the antidote programme. As he slewed and swerved the MG down towards the lochside road, he switched off the lights in the hope that it would let him approach undetected. There was just enough moonlight to steer by,

though the car was constantly bouncing and scraping against the low banks on either side. Squinting through the cascades of white spots flashing in his eyes, he could just make out Castle Mackie squatting dark and lifeless across the loch. But below him, a light shone upstairs through the trees surrounding Stewart Lodge. Harry switched off the engine with rigid fingers and coasted the last few hundred yards onto the road and into the small driveway in front of the Brigadier's house. Tugging on the handbrake with both arms, he sat for a few minutes in the shadowy moonlight and tried to prepare himself for the ordeal ahead. His symptoms seemed to have stabilised, but he couldn't be sure how much longer he would remain conscious.

Harry prised himself out of the low-slung car and staggered over to the front porch of Stewart Lodge. He remembered Sergeant Curly telling him about a spare key sudden behind a loose brick next to a drainpipe. With agonisingly slow fingers he eventually managed to pull the brick free. To his relief, the key was in its place in the recess. Wiping the sweat out of his eyes, he fumbled around in the darkness trying to fit the key into the lock, cursing his clumsiness and blowing on his fingers to try and ease their paralysing numbness. There was so little time. He had to get to a telephone . . .

More Clues

Once inside the Lodge, Harry found he could breathe a little more easily though his movements were still feeble and slow. The moonlight hardly penetrated the thick stained-glass panes surrounding the front door and his vision was still so blurry that he had to grope his way around the hall. Eventually he located the telephone but he was dismayed to find there was no dialling tone. He decided that there must be a receiver off the hook somewhere in the house. He tried to remember where he had noticed telephone extensions during his previous visit and recalled one in the lounge, one in the guest room. . . and no doubt there was one in the Brigadier's bedroom. He cautiously felt his way into the lounge and found the receiver in its normal position. Still there was no dialling tone. He ventured up the dark stairs and saw a light under the door to the butler's room. As quietly as he could he slipped into the guest room and shut the door. Switching on the light, he found everything much as he had left it several weeks earlier. He checked the telephone and again the earpiece was dead. Filled with mounting hopelessness and frustration he turned to leave.

Suddenly he noticed the Van Gogh reproduction over the small fireplace. In his anxiety to summon help for Samantha he had forgotten completely about his intention to investigate his suspicions concerning the Brigadier. He crept across to the glass-fronted picture and tried to examine it through bloodshot, watering eyes. Lifting the side of the frame away from the wall, he peered behind and a tremor of excitement shook his numbed

body. Through the hole which held the nail supporting the picture, there protruded a thin wire which was connected to an object resembling a fat coin fixed to the back of the picture with adhesive tape. The object was obviously a microphone and it was fixed directly behind the bandaged missing ear of the man in the portrait. Harry mumbled to himself in disbelief as he carefully replaced the frame against the wall and wiped off any fingerprints with his damp handkerchief. As he stuffed the handkerchief back into his pocket, he came across the folded leather glove from Shire's study. All thoughts of Samantha's safety vanished from his confused mind as he began to see the case against the Brigadier hardening relentlessly.

Harry crept back downstairs and searched around on the hallstand by the front door. At last he unearthed the other leather glove from underneath a stack of old newspapers. After listening for any sign of movement in the silent house, he switched on the hall light and compared the gloves. There was no doubt. They formed a pair. The monograms on the buttons matched exactly. Harry sank onto the stool beside the telephone and stared at the evidence dejectedly. He had no doubt that the picture in Gold's office on Yarra was similarly bugged like the one upstairs and somehow connected to Shire's study in Castle Mackie. He wondered how many other innocent visitors besides himself had been lured to Stewart Lodge to have their private conversations secretly recorded. He put the gloves down on the telephone table and rubbed his exhausted eyes. His vision seemed to have improved a little. Suddenly he noticed some indentations on the message pad beside the telephone. They were the impression of a short message which had obviously been written on the previous sheet and torn off. The markings were just legible and they looked like a map reference: *S8.01N. 05.22W.*

Harry had been so preoccupied with the gloves and the message pad that he had not heard the faint sounds of someone stirring upstairs. All at once he heard a floorboard creak on the landing. Lurching to his feet, he ripped the sheet off the pad and crammed it into his shirt pocket. Then he turned and stumbled towards the front door, stopped, remembered the gloves and went back to fetch them. Just as he grabbed

them off the table, he saw a figure at the top of the stairs wearing an old military overcoat as a dressing-gown. It was Sergeant Curly.

'I say, Curly . . .' Harry muttered, forcing his rigid jaw to move. 'So sorry to wake you, old chap ... I was ... I was just passing and I wanted to . . . wanted to . . .' He racked his brain for some plausible excuse. 'I just wanted to return the Brigadier's glove . . .' he explained lamely, replacing the gloves on the table. 'Must've picked it up by mistake the other week . . .'

The burly figure stared impassively down at the tipsy-looking intruder without saying a word.

Harry suddenly remembered Samantha. 'I wondered if I could use the telephone . . . Friend of mine's had a bit of an accident,' he stuttered unconvincingly, reaching for the receiver.

The butler started heavily down the stairs, his battered face still not betraying any emotion. 'I'm right sorry, Commander Sullivan,' he growled shoving his hands in the overcoat pockets. 'I'm afraid ye ken a wee bit too much about our business here and I don't think the master'll be too pleased at yer breaking in like this. Lucky for you he's away just now.'

Steadying his weakened body to attempt a surprise dash out to the car, Harry stretched out his hand for the gloves. He caught a glimpse of Curly's hand suddenly moving in the pocket. Next moment there was a deadly swishing sound and a gleaming switchblade flashed past his hand and pinned the gloves to the table. Harry recoiled awkwardly and seized an umbrella from the hallstand behind him. Wielding it like a hatchet, he retreated towards the front door knowing full well that he would have to turn to open the door and that the butler would be on him in an instant. Glancing down, he noticed the long narrow length of loose carpet running from the front door to the foot of the staircase, and a desperate idea occurred to him.

'I do assure you, Sergeant Curly ... I have no idea what you're talking about,' he stalled, feeling the door against his back.

The butler stepped onto the other end of the carpet and

advanced towards him. Suddenly Harry flung the umbrella like a boomerang so that it sliced through the air into Curly's face and then he bent down, seized the sides of the carpet and yanked them up and backwards as hard as he could. Curly flung up his hands to parry the whirling umbrella and was simultaneously thrown backwards and sideways against the banisters as the carpet was pulled from under his feet. Harry opened the door and fled as fast as his semi-paralysed legs would carry him. Dazed by the impact of his bullet head against the stair post, Curly hauled himself upright and staggered in pursuit, grabbing the knife out of the table as he passed by.

Meanwhile Harry had forced his protesting body back into the MG and was desperately fumbling with the ignition key. At last the engine started and he thrust the lever into first gear. But before he could let in the clutch, Curly's bulk loomed in the doorway and something sizzled through the air. Harry ducked as the fabric of the hood was slit open inches from his scalp as if it were tissue paper. His head hit the steering wheel and his foot was jerked off the clutch pedal, causing the car to leap forward and then stall. While Harry fought his way back to consciousness, the butler lumbered over and started tearing the hood open. The switchblade was dislodged and clattered onto the floor between Harry's knees. Dizzy and befuddled, Harry groped around, grabbed the knife and began stabbing viciously upwards with one hand while with the other he frantically restarted the engine. As he accelerated forward, he heard a yell of pain and felt the hot sticky sensation of dripping blood on his hand. There was a heavy thud as Curly was hurled sideways clutching his wounded forearm. Harry threw the car onto the road and roared away into the silver moonlight without thinking which way he should turn or knowing where he should make for.

Curly staggered back into the hall and grabbed the telephone. It was dead. Cursing, he banged the receiver down and stumbled up to his room where he found the receiver slightly dislodged by the glass in which he kept his false

teeth. Holding his bleeding wrist and grimacing with pain he dialled a number. There was a long pause before anyone answered. 'Waldo? Get me Mr Brodsky quick!' he snapped. There was another long silence.

Finally Zbigniew's guttural voice blasted out of the earpiece. 'What have you been doing Curly? Are you okay? We tried for two hours to get you,' he complained. 'It went wrong. The phial is broken. You must get up here into the cellar before the toxin ...'

'Listen to me,' Curly interrupted. 'There's nothing amiss with me that a bandage and a shot o' malt won't cure. Sullivan's just been here but he got away ...'

There was an exclamation of disbelief from the receiver like a cross between a squawk and a sob. 'Sullivan?!' Brodsky echoed incredulously. 'But that is not possible ...'

'He was here!' Curly repeated, trying to staunch his wound with a pillow.

There was a stunned silence at the other end of the line. 'But how *could* he?' Brodsky snarled. 'Unless the girl ... The girl! I knew it was madness to trust her ...' he burst out furiously.

Curly heard Brodsky talking to Waldo in their own language.

'Was Sullivan alone?' Brodsky demanded.

'He was, sir,' Curly replied. 'I think he's heading south towards Crianlarich.'

There was more muttered conversation between the two foreigners and then Shire's voice came anxiously through the receiver. 'Are you sure you're okay Curly? No symptoms of stiffness or drowsiness at all? No blurred vision or anything?'

'I'm just fine except for a stabbed arm,' Curly said stoically.

'What about Sullivan?' Shire asked tensely. 'Did he seem okay?'

'Och, he was a wee bit groggy, but he got away. He said his friend had an accident ...'

There was more muffled conversation at the other end. 'No, it is too dangerous,' Brodsky suddenly shouted. 'If she is up at the ruin she will not survive. We must stop Sullivan.'

He is obviously protected by the antidote treatment. We must take him alive. He is vital to our purpose . . .' At that point the telephone went dead.

The Chase

Harry drove like a man possessed. He had decided to get to London and to inform Admiral de Longpre of everything he knew and as he careered along the twisting road heading south, he tried to shut everything else out of his mind. His head now felt a little clearer and his vision had improved, although his body still felt as if it had been beaten with wet sandbags. However his arms and legs were much more under control. On the left of the road the moon lit up the barren wasteland of Rannoch Moor where solitary blasted trees stood stranded in the boggy wilderness, their bare branches upraised as though in defence against some invisible attacker. Harry sympathised with their plight. He felt isolated and unable to trust anyone after his experiences at Castle Mackie and Stewart Lodge.

He braked hard as the MG topped a humpback bridge across a burn and stopped at a junction with the main road. To the right the signpost indicated *Glencoe* and *Fort William*, and to the left *Bridge of Orchy* and *Crianlarich*. Harry swung the wheel to the left and accelerated along the well-surfaced main road. He was gambling that Shire and his friends would guess that he was taking the fastest route south through Glasgow, so he planned to fox them by taking the longer route through Stirling and Edinburgh. Gathering clouds had begun to obscure the moon and he was forced to switch on the headlights, even though he knew the MG's powerful beams gave away his presence for miles around. It was five in the morning and as the miles clicked up on the dashboard, Harry found himself having to fight against a steadily creeping drowsiness. Every few seconds he glanced in the mirrors, but

the road behind remained deserted.

Leaving the silent little town of Crianlarich, he found the tiny road leading over the mountains to Callander. Checking the map, he saw that it would shorten his journey by about ten miles and also keep him off the main road for a while. But the short cut turned out to be little more than a pair of rubble ruts separated by a grass strip and the MG bucked and reared like a dinghy in a storm as it roared up the steep incline. The black four thousand foot peak of Ben More towered above the road on the left and Harry shuddered as he imagined breaking down on the forsaken byway. Eventually the car reached the top of the pass but just as it started to descend on the other side, there was a dull bang and the steering went lumpy. Harry stopped and struggled out of his seat. The front offside tyre was flat. He kicked at it in frustrated fury and stubbed his toe against the rim of the wheel. He hopped about for a few seconds bellowing with pain and then sank back into the driver's seat utterly exhausted. He decided that it was better to save the spare for the main roads ahead rather than risk it blowing on the treacherous farm track. He was about to start off again when he suddenly slumped forward against the steering wheel. His eyes closed. A minute later he was sound asleep.

When Harry woke up it was almost light. Through the wet cotton wool feeling in his ears he was suddenly aware of a high-pitched whine and a clattering noise approaching rapidly overhead. Groaning with fatigue and discomfort, he thrust aside the tattered remnants of the car's roof and stared up into the pale clear sky above Ben More. Next moment a helicopter whirled into view high over the peak. At first it seemed to continue straight overhead towards the south and Harry breathed a sigh of grateful relief. But then, to his horror it abruptly turned and retraced its path until it was hovering directly above the car. Frantically he started the engine and the MG lurched off downhill. His aim now was to get back onto the main road as quickly as he could because if that was Shire and his friends overhead, he wanted to make himself as inconvenient to assassinate as possible. He cheered

with delight when the track descended sharply into a deep valley containing a small loch and joined up with a road running along the lochside which was signposted *Balquhid-der*. He knew it should lead to the main road to Callander.

As he manoeuvred the swerving and shuddering car into the turning, he heard the helicopter getting louder and louder as it dropped swiftly towards him and soon he could actually feel the powerful downdraught from the rotors through the shredded roof. But he uttered another cheer when he found that the road was overshadowed by trees in many places and overhung on one side by steep rocky slopes and bordered on the other by the loch, so there was nowhere for the chopper to land. Despite the banging, wobbling vibration of the flat front tyre, Harry put his foot down and set his face in a determined devil-may-care smile. As the red MG tore through Balquhidder with the juddering chopper following only fifty feet above it, a startled postman skidded his bike into a wall and sat in the road gaping at the chase with wildly staring eyes. A few miles further on, Harry came to a junction with the main road south to Callander.

He couldn't believe his luck. The fine early morning had brought out the end-of-season holiday traffic and coaches, caravans and cars loaded with camping equipment were already on the move. The helicopter quickly climbed and kept its distance above and behind him, but still it followed relentlessly. Soon Harry came to a layby where several dor-mobiles had parked overnight. The occupants were beginning to organise themselves to get on the road again. Harry drew in among the vehicles and got out to change the damaged tyre. While he struggled with the jack, the helicopter hovered for a while and then suddenly tipped forward and shot away into the haze towards the south east. It looked as if his pursuers had anticipated his intentions.

As he tightened the nuts on the spare wheel, Harry decided to stick to his plan and head for Stirling and Edinburgh. His pursuers would hardly dare to attempt to snatch him or kill him on the main roads. He was just clipping the chrome hubcap into place, when he heard the voice of a little girl behind him.

'Here mister, would ye like a shot o' ma jelly babies?'

He turned and smiled at the little tot. 'Thanks very much, I'd love one . . .' he said, selecting a black sweet from the sugary congealed mass in the crumpled bag. He looked at the jelly baby for a moment and then at the freckled little face. It stared back at him as if daring him to eat the precious titbit. He glanced at the black jelly baby and suddenly a horrifying image filled his mind of the child lying helpless at the roadside, her body rigid and twisted and the jelly babies scattered from her paralysed little hand. It was as though he had been asleep and had suddenly awakened to realise the true horror of the situation.

He took the child's tiny hand. 'Where's your mummy and daddy?' he asked in a quiet but frightening voice.

She pointed at a caravan parked among the dormobiles.

'Come on quickly . . .' Harry ordered, pulling the child roughly after him.

As they approached the caravan, a woman of about thirty dressed in shorts and a tee-shirt looked out of the door.

'You must turn round and go south immediately,' Harry told her, picking up the child and holding her out to the mother. 'There's great danger. Please go back now . . .'

Speechless, the woman snatched her daughter away from him, her eyes wide with alarm and suspicion.

'Please tell your husband . . .' Harry begged her, backing away towards his car.

'Hey Donald, there's some Sassenach maniac here with little Helen . . .' the woman suddenly screamed in a raucous voice.

Harry didn't wait to explain. He levered himself into the MG and scorched out of the layby in a flail of chippings and turf. He drove blindly and furiously for several minutes, appalled at his hysterical outburst and desperately trying to calm himself down. He reminded himself that the 305 Toxin was a low concentration specimen. Provided that his blazer remained damp for another twelve hours or so, there was little danger of the vapour doing much damage. He was feeling much better since his nap on the pass below Ben More - except for stiff joints and intermittent spells of giddiness

and nausea. As he changed down for a sharp bend ahead, he felt something warm and sticky in his hand. It was the squashed black jelly baby. With a wry grin, he popped it into his mouth. It was the first thing he had eaten for twenty-four hours. As he chewed it with relish, he suddenly thought of the Doctor and just for once allowed himself to wish that the errant Time Lord would materialise in his confounded police box and take charge of the situation there and then.

An hour later, Harry was driving along the north shore of the Firth of Forth towards the suspension bridge that would take him across to Edinburgh. He was beginning to feel almost optimistic since he had seen nothing of the helicopter after it had disappeared over the layby. London at last began to seem within reach. But his optimism soon proved to be shortlived. Glancing in his mirrors before changing lanes to follow the signs to the bridge approach road, he suddenly glimpsed the Land Rover behind him slipping out of a side turning and accelerating rapidly in pursuit. Harry immediately put his foot hard down but the traffic was much too dense to allow him to lose his pursuers. He dodged in and out provoking a lot of fist waving and hooting, but it was no good. Whenever he looked in the mirrors the Land Rover was always right behind him. He tried to identify the occupants, but the reflections in the windscreen made it impossible.

As the towers of the suspension bridge came into view in the distance, Harry noticed the gigantic reddish-brown cantilevers of the monumental old Forth Railway Bridge looming beyond them, and a crazy and dangerous plan occurred to him. Keeping a sharp lookout, he glimpsed a narrow minor turning off on the left about half a mile ahead. Stamping on the accelerator, he yanked the wheel to the right as if he intended to overtake in the fast lane. Sure enough the Land Rover pulled out in pursuit. Harry drew level with the front of the slower traffic in the nearside lane and let the Land Rover creep up right behind him as he slowed the MG down a little. With his eyes glued to the turning ahead, he suddenly accelerated past the slow vehicles and swung the wheel hard to the left, cutting across them and just managing to

manoeuvre into the angled side road. The Land Rover was stuck helplessly in the fast lane, unable to turn because of the line of slower traffic and unable to brake because of the fast traffic behind it.

Grinning with triumphant satisfaction, Harry followed the quiet side turning and was delighted to discover that it led towards the embankment carrying the main railway line towards the railway bridge. Checking his mirrors he saw nothing of the Land Rover behind him as he followed the road round parallel to the embankment. All he needed now was somewhere suitable to hide the startling red MG in case his pursuers managed to get back on his tail. Fortune seemed to smile on him once again, for the road suddenly turned to the left and passed under the embankment through a short stretch of tunnel. Harry skidded to a halt in the gloomy, smelly gully and braced himself for the ordeal to come.

He knew that trains crossing the Forth always slowed down at the start of the bridge. Therefore the London-bound trains from Aberdeen or Dundee or Perth should be travelling quite slowly along the North Queensferry embankment above him, just before reaching the bridge a few hundred yards away. He planned to wait in the tunnel until he heard a train approaching from the north, and then to scramble up the embankment and hopefully jump onto the train as it slowed down. He checked his watch. It was already almost nine o'clock. To calm his nerves he thumbed through the wad of soggy banknotes in his wallet and made sure that he still had the scrap of message pad from Stewart Lodge with its curious impression. He felt an overwhelming craving for sleep and switched on the radio to help keep himself awake, but the radio refused to function in the tunnel. His drowsiness increased and he lay back in the driving seat and closed his eyes. Almost immediately he saw a vivid image of Samantha lying unconscious in the heather outside the croft and a sharp pang of guilt shot through him. How could he have abandoned her?

Suddenly he heard a low sonorous rumbling noise. Jerking himself fully awake, he scrambled out of the car and listened. It was impossible to be sure which direction the train was

going. He locked the car - though such a precaution seemed pointless considering the wrecked state of the roof - and ran to the end of the tunnel. 'False alarm, old chap . . .' he muttered, as he realised that the train was on the bridge and therefore heading north. He listened to the click of the wheels as the train passed overhead and was reassured that it seemed to be travelling at scarcely more than a trotting pace. As he turned towards his car, he had a sudden premonition of danger. He started walking quickly back to the MG and all at once Shire's metallic silver Volvo Estate drove into view round the bend in the road beyond the tunnel.

Harry froze, recognising the car from the courtyard at Castle Mackie. For a moment he couldn't move, then he pulled himself together and turned and stumbled out of the tunnel as fast as his stiff legs would carry him. He scrambled over the rusted chainlink fence at the foot of the embankment and started scrabbling up the steep tussocky grass slope towards the railway tracks. The Volvo screeched to a stop outside the end of the tunnel below him and he heard doors banging and Brodsky's voice yelling instructions. Harry clawed with his fingers and thrust with his feet in his frantic bid to reach the railway line above and he soon discovered that his body was still pathetically weak from the effects of the Attila 305. He heard the massive bellows-like breathing of the West Indian strongman as he set off up the bank in pursuit like a huge bear. At last Harry reached the top and began to run along the track towards the towering structure of the bridge. He reckoned he might manage to outrun Rudolf for a short distance, but the bridge looked impossibly long, its tracks stretching to infinity through an endless chain of colossal steel arches. His only realistic hope was for a southbound train to appear very soon.

Already out of breath, Harry stumbled along, constantly missing his footing on the awkwardly spaced sleepers. Eventually he reached the beginning of the bridge and heard Rudolf steadily gaining on him. It was no use. He couldn't run any faster. Glancing up, he noticed a steel ladder running up the side of one of the enormous tubes forming the main supports of the northern cantilever. Steel hoops were fitted

round the ladder to protect the climber from falling. Harry judged that the muscleman's huge shoulders would never be able to squeeze through the hoops. Crossing the tracks, he swung himself onto the ladder and began to climb. Even his own robust but more modest frame could only just fit inside the metal rings 'So much for Samson . . .' he gasped, trying not to look down at the sunlit water of the River Forth almost two hundred feet below. But when he stopped for a moment to get his breath, ominous vibrations of the ladder prompted him to glance down. To his dismay he saw that Rudolf Rainbow was climbing slowly but steadily up the outside of the framework using the steel hoops as rungs!

'Oh, my giddy aunt!' Harry wailed, clinging dizzily to the ladder as it creaked and shook under the strongman's two hundred and seventy pound bulk. It seemed he had no choice but to go on up the gigantic tube. Closing his eyes, he struggled on higher and higher among the maze of struts and girders crisscrossing between the main tubes of the tower. The wind was beginning to whip and tug at his clothes as if it wanted to pluck him off the bridge and hurl him into the water. A panicky fit of nausea seized him and he clung to the ladder with one hand and covered his mouth with the other. Glancing down again, he saw that Rudolf was barely forty feet away and climbing strongly. Next moment the bridge began to judder and Harry thought he detected the distant rumble of a train. Gritting his teeth against the growing urge to vomit, he forced himself to lean precariously out from the ladder so that he could see the northern end of the bridge. His moment had come. A southbound Inter City express had just clattered onto the North Queensferry end at a leisurely pace.

Harry made a split second decision. Copying a trick he'd once seen in a Laurel and Hardy film, he gripped the sides of the ladder with the insteps of his plimsolls and started sliding rapidly downwards like a fireman on a pole. To give himself confidence and also to fight the burning in the palms of his hands, he shouted and screamed at the top of his voice. Below him, Rudolf looked upwards startled and confused. Then he stopped climbing and prepared to grab his quarry as he slid past. But as Harry drew level with Rudolf, he took careful

aim and kicked backwards with his heel, dealing the strongman a vicious mule kick on the nose. With a bellow of rage and pain, Rudolf flung out his hands to grab Harry but he overbalanced, his feet slipped and he fell into the hoop below, his wedge-shaped body jamming itself just above the waist. Harry slid on down the ladder, his hands raw and his ankles throbbing with cramp as he pressed his soles against the metal to brake his descent. Every few seconds he had to stop to let his burning palms cool and he began to despair of reaching the track in time.

At last he dropped onto the low steel parapet at the base of the cantilever tube just as the train began to thunder past. He balanced his body ready to jump. Then for a few seconds he lost his nerve and almost gave up. Luckily he glimpsed a partly open window in one of the doors near the end of the train and as it drew level with him he launched himself forward. Hooking both arms over the edge of the window, he forced it fully open. At the same instant he was yanked sideways and with his legs flailing helplessly in the air, he dragged himself through the opening with his last reserves of strength. Next moment he found himself sprawling at the feet of an elderly lady in a tartan dress who was sipping from a miniature of whisky as she returned to her seat from the buffet car. The startled passenger gaped at the scruffy intruder, glanced suspiciously at her drink, and then fled through the sliding doors into the carriage.

Shaking all over, Harry hauled himself upright and shut the window. Then he staggered into the lavatory to clean himself up. He got a terrible shock when he looked in the mirror. His hair was matted and covered in mud and splinters of wood. His face was hollow-eyed and deathly pale and streaked with grease, rust and sweat. His eyes were severely bloodshot, with a wild and desperate look in them. His once white shirt was torn and stained with blood and dirt and his filthy ducks were snagged and misshapen. One of his plimsolls had split open at the toe and the other one was losing its sole. Finally, his swollen hands were scratched and blistered and his nails were blackened and broken. He washed himself as best he could and tidied his hair, but in the mirror the

result looked just as bizarre with his messed-up clothes contrasting starkly with his cleaner face and hair. He looked and felt very much like an escaped prisoner.

He stayed in the lavatory until the train had made its brief stop at Edinburgh, then he cautiously made his way to the buffet on the alert for any sign of Shire and his friends. Ignoring the astonished stares of the other passengers, he made his way back to an empty nonsmoker seat carrying a plastic tray stacked with sausage rolls, pork pies, crisps, fruit pies and several cans of Guinness. While he was ravenously devouring his first food for thirty hours, the ticket collector appeared. He eyed the dishevelled passenger suspiciously as he counted the damp banknotes and wrote out Harry's ticket.

'My car broke down . . .' Harry explained awkwardly through a mouthful of pie. 'Well, actually it was an accident . . . Somebody forced me off the road . . . into a river . . .'

The ticket collector gave Harry a sour smile as he handed him his ticket. 'One single to King's Cross, *Mr Bond* . . .' he muttered and went on his way.

Harry grinned to himself, flattered. Five minutes later he was sound asleep.

Up on the windswept structure of the bridge, Rudolf Rainbow struggled to escape from the steel hoop. His legs and lower body had slid through fairly easily, but his widely tapering upper torso had stuck fast and his efforts to free himself had jammed him even tighter. Growling with fury at Harry's escape, he raised his arms over his head and forced his chest even further down into the hoop. Then with giant gulps of air he inflated his chest until it bulged out above and below the hoop. With a roar of brute determination he brought down his arms, expanding the massive muscles on his chest and under his arms. There was a bang and one end of the hoop tore away from its anchorage riveted to the steel tube. With a contemptuous snarl, Rudolf bent open the hoop and released himself.

On the track a hundred feet below, Zbigniew Brodsky and Waldo dodged aside as rivets and washers ricocheted around them.

'I should have sent you up there instead . . . ' Brodsky told his compatriot in Romanian. 'You have such finesse. The gorilla is more interested in demolishing the bridge than catching Sullivan.'

Waldo nodded. 'My turn next time . . . ' he vowed quietly, gazing coldly along the bridge towards the south.

Trapped

In London the rain was bucketing down. Harry woke up just as the train glided smoothly into King's Cross. He felt much better after his five hour sleep and as he sat in the taxi, he began to think about what he was to tell Rear-Admiral de Longpre at the Admiralty next day. But as he ran through the extraordinary events in his mind he realised that there was a strange gap. He remembered the drive in the Land Rover from Castle Mackie to the ruined croft . . . but his next recollection was of driving in the MG and the sound of the tyre blowing. In between was completely blank and yet he was sure something important had happened to him and his body still ached with a cold stiffness which had something to do with it . . .

As he paid the taxi and walked up the steps of his 1930s apartment block, he glanced warily around the deserted street. Since waking up on the train he had forgotten all about keeping a sharp look-out for the enemy. His guard was slipping. He stood in the open meshwork lift glancing all round the stairwell as the ancient machinery slowly hauled him up to the fifth floor. The respectable front doors presented an impression of innocence and security, but he scrutinised each one as it passed as if he expected an assassin to leap out at him at any moment.

He listened outside his own front door for a few seconds before venturing cautiously inside. No sooner had he shut and bolted the door behind him, than he suddenly felt very dizzy and confused. His recovery was obviously nothing like as complete as he had imagined. He shuffled into the bedroom and collapsed onto the bed. He lay in a daze, trying

to fill in the missing part of his memory about events in the ruined croft. But the more he tried to remember the bigger the gap seemed to grow, until soon he could recall nothing at all from the moment he drove off the naval ferry at Port MacDui to the moment he jumped onto the train on the bridge. The sinister gap stretched like a gigantic black hole and relentlessly swallowed him up. In a few minutes he was unconscious.

He woke with a start and peered blearily at his watch. It was noon and it was Monday. He had slept for something like nineteen hours! He tottered into the hall and picked up the pile of mail he had walked over the previous afternoon and took it into the kitchen. Sorting quickly through the bills and official communications, he suddenly came across a small envelope just addressed to Laury L. Varnish. It had been delivered by hand. Inside was a single sheet of paper bearing nothing but a long sequence of typed numbers: 0201170116 040505140501070312041208141114091510150618151912201 3 2107251825. Harry gaped at the strange message and tried to throw off the wet sandbag that seemed to have settled on his head. But it was no good, he could make neither head nor tail of the numbers.

Later, lying in a hot bubbly bath, he tried substituting letters of the alphabet for the numbers, but that resulted in nonsense. However the bath cleared his head and refreshed him as it eased a lot of the stiffness out of his joints. Also his memory gradually began to return. Suddenly he heard a familiar voice inside his head. 'Contact me in *code* . . .' it said and giggled. He stared at the envelope again. 'T knew you'd never contact me . . . Not even in *code* . . .' said the voice. All at once he remembered.

'*Samantha!*' Harry gasped. He leaped out of the bath and dried himself in feverish excitement. Then more and more details about events at the ruin came back to him. He saw Samantha's twisted body lying in the glare of the headlights. But if the message was from her she must have recovered already, unless of course it had been lying on his doormat for some time. He tried to think back. He was sure she hadn't

mentioned leaving him a message when they met at Castle Mackie two days earlier. So perhaps the message had only just arrived and perhaps Samantha was all right after all. She might have sent the message to let him know, or perhaps to warn him about some danger. But how on earth could he decipher it? Suddenly he had an idea. Percy Jolly!

'Good old Percy. . .' he muttered, unearthing his address book and hurrying out to the telephone. 'If Percy can't crack it, nobody can!' Harry smiled as he thought of Percy's tall birdlike figure with its stooped shoulders, enormous head and permanent sad expression. When Percy answered he didn't seem at all surprised. It was as if he had been expecting a call from Harry all along. In his quavering voice he invited Harry round for tea that very afternoon. Forgetting all about his intended meeting with Rear-Admiral de Longpre, Harry quickly dressed and rang for a cab. But he waited indoors for the doorbell to ring before venturing outside. He wasn't taking any more unnecessary risks . . .

The retired GCHQ cypher expert lived in a modest little villa beside the Thames at Richmond. Harry had met him when Percy had been seconded to UNIT for several months and a shared interest in sailing had kept them in touch from time to time ever since. Percy showed Harry into his study overlooking the river and cluttered with model ships and all kinds of nautical bric-a-brac.

'Well, dear boy, and what can I do for you?' he inquired, wheeling in a tea trolley laden with goodies.

Harry handed him the envelope containing the coded message. 'I'm a bit worried, Percy,' he confessed. 'I'm in the middle of a rather hush-hush operation and I received this today. It's all Greek to me, but I hoped you might be able to shed some light.'

Percy slipped on his hornrimmed reading glasses and switched on the desk lamp. 'Laury L. Varnish . . .' he murmured, peering at the envelope. Then he laughed without altering the mournful look on his face. 'It's a joke, dear boy. It's an anagram of your name!'

Harry nodded sheepishly. 'But it's the numbers inside I

can't work out,' he explained, stirring his tea.

Percy spread the sheet of paper on the desk and studied it, his lips slowly moving as he jotted numbers and letters on a pad with a stub of pencil. Harry sat on the other side of the desk and impatiently sipped his Earl Grey.

After about a minute Percy stifled a yawn of boredom, took off his spectacles and rubbed his eyes. 'Piece of fruit-cake, dear boy?' he suggested gloomily, reaching across to the trolley and cutting two generous slices.

Harry fidgeted restlessly. 'Well, any luck Percy?'

The cryptologist shrugged and munched some cake. 'Oh this . . . It's nothing interesting. Merely a Boy Scout code,' he mumbled, pushing the pad over the desk. "There you are, dear boy.'

Harry stared at the three simple words Percy had scribbled under a jumble of numbers and letters: *GALLERY NOON TUESDAY*.

'Is that all?' he asked disappointedly, glancing at the seventy-odd numbers forming the original coded version. 'How does it work?'

Percy shrugged unenthusiastically. 'Just divide the numbers up into groups of four,' he explained. 'Each group represents a single letter. The first two numbers in the group denote the position of the letter in the message and the second pair of numbers indicates the position of the letter in the alphabet.'

Harry looked at the first four numbers. '0201 . . . That means the second letter is A . . .' he said, frowning at the decoded words Percy had written out on the pad. 'But it's so simple!'

Percy nodded. 'Far too elementary, dear boy. And it only works for messages up to ninety-nine letters long in this crude format. Whoever sent it obviously assumed you'd be able to decipher it by yourself.'

Harry blushed with embarrassment. 'I say, I'm truly sorry to have bothered you with each trivialities, Percy,' he mumbled. 'Gallery. . . Noon . . . Tuesday. . . It's obviously some friend or other having a little game.'

'Are you interested in pictures, dear boy?' inquired his

host mournfully, cutting himself another slice of cake.

Harry nibbled at his own untouched wedge of fruit-cake. 'Van Gogh . . .' he answered absently without thinking. 'I quite like his stuff.' His mind was elsewhere, filled with images of Samantha in the tea room at the gallery all those weeks ago.

'Any idea who might have sent it?' Percy asked casually.

Harry heard his voice from a great distance. 'Somebody called Samantha Shire . . .' he whispered mechanically.

The cryptographer uttered a shout of laughter and almost spilt his tea. 'Sounds like another anagram to me, dear boy!' he cried, his face as gloomy as ever.

Harry dropped his half-eaten cake onto the plate and stood up abruptly. 'Thanks so much for the tea . . .' he said, snatching up the coded message and the envelope. 'You've been a great help, Percy.'

Without another word, Harry turned and hurried out of the room.

Percy Jolly waited until he heard the front door slam behind his departing visitor and then picked up the telephone. The merest hint of a smile was just visible at the corners of his drooping mouth as he dialled a number and waited, doodling with the stub of pencil among the numbers and letters scattered on the pad.

When he got home, Harry locked the coded message, the Van Gogh Society pamphlet and the rumpled sheet from the Brigadier's telephone pad safely in a drawer in his bureau. As he turned the key he noticed that something was amiss with the contents of the shelves behind the folding desk top. Nothing was missing, but his orderly files had obviously been disturbed. At first he suspected Mrs. Wrigglesworth his cleaning lady, but the bureau had been locked during his absence in Scotland. There was no doubt that somebody had been snooping around. Harry grimaced with distaste as he realised that Special Branch had probably searched his flat following the disappearance of the three ampoules of Attila 305 Toxin from Yarra. He went round the apartment looking for any further signs of a break-in or of interference with his

possessions. On the kitchen floor he found a few scattered tea leaves. 'Good lord, the bounders have even been through my tea caddy!' he exclaimed in disgust.

While he was checking through his address book, something slipped out from between the pages. It was the card Samantha had given him in the tea room at the National Gallery showing her address in London. Harry darted across to the telephone and dialled her number. He listened with mounting anxiety and frustration as the ringing tone went on and on and nobody answered. Eventually he gave up and wandered uneasily round the flat, wishing that it was already the next day and time for the rendezvous at the gallery. Gradually he convinced himself that it was no longer safe for him to remain in the flat. Shire's mob or the Special Branch might pay him an unexpected visit. Now that he was under suspicion officially, it was imperative that he should lie low until he had seen the Admiral and told him the whole extraordinary story.

He quickly packed a few things into an overnight bag, phoned for a cab and drove to a small insignificant hotel in Pimlico. The room was drab but clean and he spent the rest of the evening rehearsing his story for Admiral de Longpre and also wondering whether he really would see Samantha in the National Gallery at noon next day. And if not Samantha, then who?

Harry arrived at the gallery early and spent a nail biting half hour wandering around without really looking at anything. When his watch finally beeped at noon it made him jump. He hurried into the room devoted to Van Gogh and sat down opposite the *Self-Portrait With A Bandaged Ear*. Two ladies in frightful hats stood behind him discussing the sunflower picture in loud county voices, but otherwise the room was empty. Several minutes passed, the ladies moved on, and Harry grew more nervous than ever. Perhaps Percy had been right. Perhaps the whole thing was a joke. The more he considered the tale he was to tell at the Admiralty that afternoon, the more incredible it seemed.

'Hello, Laury . . .'

A prickly shiver shot up Harry's spine. 'Thank goodness you're all right, old thing!' he exclaimed hoarsely, swinging round on the shiny leather seat. But what he saw made him go cold all over.

Samantha was sitting pale and hunched in a wheelchair, her eyes concealed behind dark glasses and her body awkwardly twisted under her clothes. Behind her stood the dark haired young man Harry had seen at the croft with Brodsky.

Harry half rose and then sat down again, trying to imagine Samantha's eyes behind the glasses. But her anguished face told how much she was suffering. 'I've been so worried about you . . .' Harry muttered shamefacedly. 'I'm sorry about what happened, but there was nothing I could do for you.'

Samantha's thin pale hands clenched in a tight knot. Father says I need treatment badly and that only you can help me . . .' she said in a drained, unsteady voice quite unlike her usual lively tone.

Harry shrugged miserably. 'But all the stuff I'd need is on Yarra,' he replied in a hollow voice. 'I can't go back there . . . Not yet anyway, they suspect me. They're probably coking for me this very minute. I'm in one hell of a pickle.' He took the girl's hand and tried to test her pulse. It was intermittent and weak. She was clearly very sick indeed.

'Do not touch!' Waldo snapped, gripping the handles of the wheelchair menacingly.

'But she's very ill. I'm a doctor and I can help her,' Harry protested, jumping to his feet.

'What we want from you is the antidote data,' Waldo retorted. 'You will get it for us as soon as possible.'

Harry shook his head angrily. 'But I've just explained to you

'Laury, I'm afraid . . .' Samantha murmured, tears suddenly starting down her chalk-white cheeks. 'I can't walk and my eyes can't stand the light. Please, you must help me . . .'

The piteous voice and the tears cut Harry to the heart and a sharp surge of fury overwhelmed him. 'Look what you people have done!' he fumed, gazing contemptuously at the sullen young man.

Waldo's dark eyes bored back into Harry's. 'Mr Brodsky wants the antidotes,' he said chillingly. 'And so does your little lady here. Remember, Mr Brodsky has not much time. The girl has even less.'

Before Harry could respond, Waldo swung the wheelchair abruptly round and pushed it quickly out of the gallery. For several minutes Harry stood motionless in front of the painting that had haunted him for the past four months, the image of the stricken Samantha etched deeply in his mind. She was in grave danger unless she received skilled medical care with highly specialised drugs, and he could not provide the treatment without obtaining the necessary substances from Yarra. For a moment he considered going after them and rescuing Samantha from Waldo's clutches, but he immediately thought better of it. No doubt other members of the gang would not be far away and in any case he didn't want to attract attention to himself. His first priority was to see Rear-Admiral de Longpre before Shire's mob did any more damage or before the authorities caught up with Harry himself.

'I hope the Admiral's in today . . .' he muttered, hurrying out through the crowded galleries. As he reached the main doors, he caught sight of two men dressed in sports jackets, drab trousers and anonymous raincoats standing by the pillars at the top of the steps leading down into Trafalgar Square. As he stepped outside one man nudged the other and they both stared at him. 'Oh, my giddy aunt, the Special Branch . . .' Harry gasped, turning aside and walking swiftly down the other flight of steps and across the road towards the fountains. Glancing over his shoulder he saw that the two men were following him. Reaching the opposite pavement, he broke into a run down the steps and across the piazza towards The Mall where the Admiralty was situated.

Unfortunately, he failed to notice two similar men lurking at the base of one of Landseer's famous lion statues at the foot of Nelson's Column. Next moment he ran straight into them and was held helplessly in their arms. He thought momentarily of making a break for it, but the other two men were closing fast around the basin of the fountain.

One of his captors flashed an identity card. 'Superintendent Spode, Special Branch . . .' he announced smugly. And you are Surgeon Commander Harry Sullivan, sir?'

Harry nodded dumbly.

'Alias Laury L. Varnish?' Spode added with a chuckle.

Harry shrugged and bowed his head in shame, hemmed in by the four policemen.

'You are detained on suspicion of stealing classified government materials and of conspiring with enemies of the State,' Spode rapped officiously. I must warn you that . . .'

'I demand to be taken to my commanding officer, Rear-Admiral de Longpre,' Harry interrupted, nodding across the road at the Admiralty Arch. 'I am engaged on a confidential assignment.'

Spode smiled at Harry and at his three colleagues. 'Fetch the car, Emerson,' he ordered. 'The Commander's going further than he thinks!'

The Prisoner

The next few days were the most miserable in Harry's entire existence. The Special Branch officers took him to a small scruffy building in Vauxhall Bridge Road and formally charged him. Then, after a brief interview with his solicitor, he was driven to Wormwood Scrubs Prison to be held on remand pending trial. As a Special Category Prisoner, Harry had a cell to himself where he was served meals alone. He was allowed one hour's exercise each day, again alone, except for a warder as escort.

His cell overlooked vast playing fields behind the prison and in the distance he could just see the church on top of Harrow-on-the-Hill where he had been christened forty-one years before. At first he stood for hours, staring misty-eyed through the bars at the far-away spire. Then he took to listening to the small transistor he was permitted to have together with his books.

He listened to the news bulletins every hour in the hope of catching some mention of himself or of Shire and his friends. But there was not a word about them nor about the thefts from Yarra. Very soon, Harry began to feel almost as if he had been somehow eliminated. There was no word from the Admiralty. Nothing from Teddy Bland, nor from Esther. In the long hours alone, which he spent going over the events since his unnerving experience in the gymnasium, he began to feel helpless, as if he had no one to turn to.

On the Saturday his solicitor, Mr Hetherington of Hetherington Popplewell and Bright in Baker Street, came to see him with depressing news. The police had found his MG abandoned under the railway embankment at North Queens-

ferry and in the glove compartment they had discovered an ampoule of Attila 305 Toxin. Harry sat stunned and speechless.

'I fear things really do look quite hopeless for us at the present,' Hetherington murmured, gloomily fingering his red and yellow spotted bowtie. 'You really will have to try and give us something much more substantial to work out any kind of defence.'

Harry glanced up hopefully. 'Will Sir Algernon take the brief?' he asked.

Cedric Hetherington sniffed and stared over his glasses like a headmaster at a naughty pupil. 'Sir Algernon is in Bermuda and won't be back until next week,' he replied. 'We shall have to wait and see. In the meantime, Commander Sullivan, what hard evidence can you submit to support your version of events?'

Harry thought about the tapes in Shire's study, the gloves on the Brigadier's hallstand, the bugged pictures, the broken ampoule wrapped in his blazer in the ruin, the wrecking of his car, the encounter in the gymnasium ... He shrugged secretively. 'Did you give my note to Rear-Admiral de Longpre?' he asked eagerly.

Hetherington nodded pessimistically.

'You haven't heard anything from him?'

'No, Commander Sullivan, I fear we have not.'

Harry fell silent again.

Hetherington patted the long sparse strands of gingerish hair stuck flat across his bald crown with a well-manicured forefinger. 'Commander Sullivan, we are not magicians, merely lawyers,' he pointed out brusquely.

'I need more time to think,' Harry said unhelpfully.

Hetherington shrugged wearily. 'You seem determined to investigate and solve this case yourself rather than to secure your own acquittal,' he complained, locking his briefcase and preparing to leave. 'I fear you will find that a rather ambitious project to achieve from the confines of your prison cell.'

Harry said nothing. He felt even more isolated than ever. He knew that he couldn't justify his story without implicat-

ing the Brigadier. He also knew that to do so would condemn him to ridicule and certain conviction. The clang of the cell door echoed in his head for hours after Hetherington had departed. He sat on his bunk listening to the happy shouts coming from the playing fields on the early September 'indian summer' breeze and wondering whether there was any hope of an interview with the Admiral after all. The Royal Navy appeared to have washed its hands of him. Perhaps Hetherington was right and perhaps he had no choice but to tell his story in court and hope for the best. The prospect seemed so hopeless that Harry threw himself onto his bunk and tried to sleep, as if to avoid thinking about the impossible task ahead of him. He was also haunted constantly by guilt over Samantha's cruel situation. How could he possibly help her now?

He was roused by the warder rapping on the cell door and checking through the spyhole before opening it. 'Another visitor to see you, Commander!'

Harry eagerly jumped up. 'Is it the Admiral?'

The cheerful warder laughed. 'Don't think so, mate. This one's a young lady,' he announced, unlocking the door.

Forgetting the regulations, Harry grabbed the officer's arm. 'She's not in a wheelchair is she?' he asked anxiously.

Gently the warder detached the prisoner's fingers and led him off to one of the interview rooms. 'Not when I saw her she weren't,' he replied.

The interview room was a bare cell, with a table and two chairs under the high window and a chair by the door for the escort. Harry saw a young woman of about thirty sitting at the table. She was wearing a fashionable pink boiler-suit outfit with green boots, and a rainbow-coloured plastic shoulder bag sat on the floor beside her. Harry did not recognise her face in profile at all. Her hair was brown and wavy, held back by a pair of sunglasses perched on her forehead. Her figure looked petite under her billowy clothes.

'Good afternoon . . .' Harry mumbled, holding out his hand as he advanced hesitantly.

The visitor jumped up and turned to face him, smiling a brilliant freckled smile. 'Hello, Harry. Long time, no see!'

Harry uttered a grunt of surprise and stood gaping like an idiot at his old friend Sarah Jane Smith.

Despite his embarrassing and desperate situation Harry was overjoyed to see her. They had not met for ten years or more since their involvement with The Doctor in his battle against the Zygons. They stood smiling and hugging each other and eventually they sat down on opposite sides of the table in accordance with regulations.

Harry rubbed his hands together with glee. 'Well, I say, old thing, how did you . . . 'He stopped as he glimpsed a familiar gleam of warning in Sarah's enormous eyes. 'No... of course . . . you're not a thing . . . 'he corrected himself with a wry grin, recalling the past occasions when he had made the same mistake. 'But how did you know I was here?'

Sarah Jane wrinkled her nose and tapped her lips with a finger. 'I have my sources,' she said tantalisingly. 'I'm trying to break into Fleet Street with an article on the anti-biological warfare brigade, all very hush-hush. In fact I've been trying to contact you for some time - but you're rather hard to get. Haven't changed at all, Harry, have you!' She gestured round the cell and giggled.

Harry scarcely managed a smile. He sensed that one of Miss Smith's direct questions was in the offing. He was right.

'So what are you doing in here, you wicked boy?'

Harry glanced at the warder and cleared his throat. 'Can't say, old . . . old girl. It's all *sub judice*.'

'Not yet it isn't!' Sarah retorted, taking out her notepad and pencil.

Harry sighed, cheered up no end by Sarah's characteristic brushing aside of red tape and nonsense. 'I really can't say a thing until I've seen de Longpre,' he insisted.

'Who's de Longpre?' Sarah demanded, pencil poised over pad.

Harry was aware of the warder's eavesdropping presence. 'Still with your aunt in Croydon?' he asked loudly.

Sarah took the hint. 'No, moved to Camberwell.' Then she whispered 'Have you seen the Brigadier at all?'

Harry opened his mouth to reply and promptly shut it again.

Sarah Jane leaned forward. 'Surely he could help you, Harry? I mean, he knows lots of the top brass, doesn't he? He'll get you off in no time at all.'

Harry groaned quietly and buried his face in his hands in despair.

Disconcerted, Sarah watched him for a few minutes, uncertain what to say.

Harry pulled himself together. 'Don't let's talk about me,' he pleaded. 'Tell me about you. How's your investigation going?'

Sarah decided to humour him for the moment. 'Fascinating but slow.' She tapped her notebook. 'I've just been up in Scotland interviewing Alexander Shire.'

Harry fixed his features into as blank a mask as he could, while inside he tingled with excitement and burst with questions. 'Who's he?' he blurted out.

'Oh, just some retired American neurologist. He inherited this castle and he's the leader of ACHES . . .'

'The Anti-Chemical Hazard Environment Society?' Harry murmured as casually as possible.

'Bingo!' Sarah laughed. 'They're trying to stop industrial pollution of the rivers and the lochs and the coastal waters and they're also against all this secret research into biological weapons that's going on.'

Harry grinned sourly. 'He sounds a real eccentric,' he snorted. 'Does he live all alone and play the bagpipes at full moon?'

Sarah chuckled and shook her head. 'He's got a daughter by his English wife . . . called Samantha.' She pulled a face.

Harry leaned forward. He was almost trembling. 'What's . . . what's she like?' he asked hoarsely.

Sarah gave him a severe look. 'Not your type at all,' she mocked. 'A bit Sloane Ranger, I'm sorry to say.'

'You met her?'

'Yes. She's exhausting. She took me out in a boat and we went riding.' Harry stared at her with almost manic eyes. 'Are you all right?' Sarah murmured, touching his hand. 'When did you see her?' Harry croaked.

Sarah shrugged. 'Day before yesterday I think. Yes, Thursday. Why, is it important?'

Harry clasped his hands together and hunched over the table as if he were in intense pain. 'It could be vital, old girl,' he whispered gratefully.

'Five minutes,' the warder warned them in a bored voice.

Sarah Jane grimaced at the man in irritation. Then she turned earnestly to Harry. 'Is there anything I can do for you?' she offered.

Harry smiled and tried to conceal his confusion, 'No, thanks Sarah, you've already been a terrific help.'

Sarah Jane stood up and then promptly sat down again. 'I'm going to see the Brigadier,' she announced defiantly. 'There must be some way he can help you.'

Harry seized her hands roughly. 'No, you'll do nothing of the sort,' he told her through clenched teeth. 'I don't want him involved, do you hear? Promise me you won't . . .'

Sarah winced with pain as he squeezed her hands and she looked puzzled and frightened by Harry's violent reaction. She freed herself and thrust her notebook and pencil hastily into her bag. 'I'll come and see you again soon . . .'

she promised, kissing him on the forehead as she stood up. 'Try and keep your pecker up - old chap!'

Back in his cell, Harry paced up and down occasionally thumping the wall to release some of his pent-up fury. From what Sarah had just told him, it was obvious that he had once again let himself be hoodwinked by a simple trick. Samantha had played the scene in the wheelchair very cleverly, though Harry still couldn't quite understand how she had managed to make her pulse so convincingly erratic. Even more baffling was Samantha's remarkable recovery from the crippling effects of the Attila 305 Toxin. Harry himself had been protected by his antidote treatments on Yarra, yet he had still suffered severe symptoms from his exposure to the toxin. So how on earth had Shire's daughter achieved her fantastic recovery . . . assuming that the girl Sarah Jane had met really was Samantha?

The next few days passed agonisingly slowly. There was no word from the Admiral, no visit from the security services and no interrogation. The appalling monotony was broken only on the Tuesday, when Harry was taken to the magistrates' court for the routine renewal of his remand in custody. The following day Cedric Hetherington arrived with both good and bad news. Sir Algernon Flowers had agreed to appear in Harry's defence. The bad news was that Special Branch had searched the Mackie Estate and discovered the broken ampoule of Attila 305 still wrapped in Harry's blazer in the ruin. They had also found the dried-out remains of the Acid Rain Pamphlet in one of the pockets. Harry couldn't remember taking the pamphlet and was tempted to suggest that it may have been planted as evidence against him. But he made himself keep quiet.

'I fear that now you are linked with Shire and a sinister secretive organisation calling itself EAR . . .' the solicitor concluded.

'EAR?' Harry echoed morosely.

'The European Anarchist Revolution,' Hetherington explained. 'Apparently run by a character called Zbigniew Brodsky.'

Harry stared into space and nodded very slowly. 'My giddy aunt . . .' he mumbled. 'EAR . . . The Van Gogh pictures . . . Of course!'

Hetherington frowned irritably. 'I beg your pardon?'

'So what's happened to Shire?' Harry asked, ignoring the question.

'Apparently Shire and his daughter have simply disappeared,' said Hetherington, shuffling some papers. He leaned forward, his cold eyes filled with doom. 'It's even worse for you than I feared, Commander. You were observed meeting the daughter and her minder in the National Gallery the day the Branch arrested you.' Hetherington leafed through the brief statement Harry had made to him the week before. 'Sir Algernon will need a lot more than this to make any kind of defence case,' he sighed resignedly. 'He'll come and see you in a few days. I do hope you'll be a little more forthcoming with him.'

With a curt nod, Hetherington gathered his papers up and swept out.

Harry sat staring expressionlessly at the wall, brooding over what he had just learned. From time to time he burst into a short fit of hollow giggling. 'EAR . . .' he muttered in the lonely silence. 'Self-portrait with a bandaged ear . . .' How Sarah Jane would laugh if she knew! He began to wonder when he would see his old ally again. It was beginning to look as if he might have to trust her after all. He thought back over their escapades together and it all seemed so far away now, as if it had never really happened.

His reverie was rudely shattered by the warder. 'Who's flavour of the month then!' the officer grumbled good-naturedly. 'Your young lady's here again. Lucky you're Special Category, otherwise she'd have to wait till Saturday.'

Harry jumped up, fired with new energy and purpose. In the interview room he greeted Sarah with a warm hug and a chaste peck on the cheek. 'I say, it's a real tonic to see you again, old . . .' He laughed and pulled a guilty face. 'Sorry!'

They sat down and Sarah took a deep breath as she gazed at Harry's happily smiling features. 'You're going to be very cross with me, Harry, but I went to see the Brigadier . . .'

Harry half rose to his feet and his face clouded with anger. Sarah quickly went on 'Before you order me to walk the plank, listen.'

Harry sat down, speechless. He felt mortally betrayed. Could he trust nobody after all? 'I didn't get to see him Harry.'

Harry sighed with relief, but the gleam in Sarah's eye told him that worse was to come.

'Harry, the Brigadier's disappeared!'

Harry cast his mind back to what Hetherington had told him earlier and his face became gloomy and resigned. 'So the Brig's done a bunk with the rest of them!' he muttered in a flat voice. His last shreds of hope had dissolved. The Brigadier must surely be implicated. 'Didn't he leave any message or anything?' he asked.

Sarah shook her head. 'According to the headmaster he just vanished into thin air during morning break the day

before yesterday. None of the kids or the staff saw him go.'

After a dismal silence Harry grinned ruefully. 'Well, it looks as if I can get going on my defence with Sir Algy now . . . Bit of a relief in a way I suppose.'

Sarah looked as if she wanted to ask all kinds of questions, but she suppressed her curiosity and frowned as she remembered something. 'There was one thing . . . The headmaster said that there was something odd written on the blackboard in the Brigadier's classroom. The chalk had been rubbed out, but it was just visible.'

Harry's face lit up with expectation. 'A message?' he suggested eagerly, clutching at any straw.

Sarah hesitated. 'I think he said it might have been some sort of map reference . . .'

Harry grabbed her hand in a frenzy of excitement. 'Did he make a note of it?'

Sarah wrinkled her nose in disgust. 'No. Unbelievable, isn't it! I went to have a look myself, but it was too late. Another teacher had written all over the board.' She shuddered. 'Latin verbs.'

Harry groaned. 'Could've been a vital clue . . .' he complained, drumming his fingers on the table in frustration. He debated whether to take Sarah into his confidence about the indentations on the scrap of paper from the message pad in Stewart Lodge. It could be connected with the traces on the blackboard in the Brigadier's classroom. He decided to risk it. 'Listen, Sarah, do you think you could get something from my flat for me?' he murmured casually.

'Yes, of course. What is it you want?'

He told her.

'Just a blank piece of paper?' Sarah echoed, disappointed.

Again Harry took her hand, but this time more gently. 'Believe me old girl, it could be vital,' he murmured. 'Just ask Mrs Wielegorski in the fiat next door to give you my spare key.'

Sarah looked doubtful. 'But will she give it to a complete stranger?'

Harry smiled tenderly at her. 'Oh yes, she's heard an awful lot about you. I used to tell her . . .' He blushed and fell silent.

Sarah was touched at this shy confession. She needed no further persuasion. She kissed Harry goodbye and hurried away, promising to return with the scrap of paper as soon as she could.

Harry waited for Sarah's next visit in a state of agitated anticipation. But on the Friday morning his hopes were dashed by the arrival of a brief little letter. Sarah had written:

Dear Harry, Sorry but the police have sealed up your flat and nobody's allowed in. Worse still, my editor's sending me to Rome to cover a World Health Organisation Conference on the environment and pollution. Hope you'll be alright. See you when I see you. Love, S.J.

Harry took this cruel blow on the chin. In fact it made him more determined than ever to get to the bottom of the EAR business and the role of the Brigadier in the whole affair. Cedric Hetherington had been quite right when he grumbled that his client seemed more keen to solve the mystery than to clear his own good name. It was exactly what Harry intended to do.

The first interview with Sir Algernon Flowers was not a success. The jovial, red-faced old barrister with his blue pinstripe suit, red tie and red rose buttonhole did his best to make sense of Harry's confused and fantastic narrative, but Harry's mind was preoccupied with trying to recall the details of the vital indentations on the scrap of paper locked uselessly in his bureau drawer. When Hetherington finally ushered the baffled advocate out of the cell, their client didn't even notice they had gone. Harry simply carried on jotting down letters and figures on dozens of bits of paper which were gradually littering the cell floor. He wrote apparently at random, staring for a long time at each different version to check whether it jogged his memory: '55N. 05W . . . 53N. 95.2W . . .' he muttered and a tingle of recognition fluttered up his spine as he stared at the 05.2W. It did look familiar, but what on earth went with it? S3N. didn't look right at all. He rummaged through the snowstorm of paper around him but none of the co-ordinates seemed to match up with the

05.2W., which looked better and better the more he stared at it.

Finally, utterly exhausted, Harry crept into his bunk and sank into a deep sleep. He began to have a vivid and terrifying dream in which he was imprisoned in a vast library filled with atlases. Mile upon mile of shelves groaned under the weight of dusty tomes through which he was condemned to search forever and ever, vainly seeking a magic map reference that would lead him to freedom. Goblin-like figures, among them the headmaster who had failed to note down the vital details from the blackboard, scuttled through the echoing tomb jeering and mocking him. Eventually he woke up bathed in sweat, his arms nailing to ward off the evil beings, and found himself clutching handfuls of scraps of paper which were being blown around his cell by a strong dawn wind. In the pale early daylight he peered at the scribbling in his hands. One of them caught his attention and rang a loud and clear bell in his memory.

'Fifty-eight point zero one North . . .' he exclaimed, leaping out of his bunk and searching among his small selection of books. He found the scrap of paper with the promising longitude co-ordinate - 05.2W, - which he'd been studying the night before, and placed it on the table beside the newly discovered latitude co-ordinate. 'Fifty-eight point zero one North . . . Five point two West . . .' he murmured with mounting excitement as he tried hard to visualise the markings he had seen on the Brigadier's message pad. He felt sure it was almost correct, though there seemed to be a digit missing somewhere in the second half of the formula. 'Never mind, it's near enough!' he cried, with a surge of triumphant optimism sweeping through him.

By a marvellous stroke of luck Saturday was his day to visit the prison library. Having committed the map reference to memory, Harry flushed the scraps of paper with his jottings down the lavatory and waited with unbearable impatience for the warder to come and collect him. When at long last he found himself alone in the tiny Reference Section, he turned the pages of the Times Atlas with trembling fingers, repeating 'Fifty-eight point zero one North . . . Five point

two West . . .' under his breath as if afraid he might forget the vital numbers. His excitement grew as he discovered that the location was in the north-west of Scotland. He took a ruler and measured 58.01N. latitude and 05.2W. longitude on the Western Scotland map. Then, to his dismay, he found that the two lines crossed each other at a point in the sea just to the east of the Summer Isles. 'Perhaps it's a wreck of some sort . . .' he mumbled doubtfully.

Suddenly he remembered about the missing digit. If his reconstruction of the map reference really was incomplete, then maybe the true location would be a little to the west of the spot in the sea . . . In other words on the Summer Isles themselves! Harry realised at once that he would require a much more detailed map to enable him to make any kind of reasonable guess, but the small prison library possessed no such maps. He sat staring at the spot in the sea where the two lines intersected on the map and fretting at his inability to take his investigations any further. He was convinced that the co-ordinates were somehow directly connected to everything that had been happening to him, but there was absolutely nothing he could do until Sarah Jane came to see him again. He would just have to be patient and trust her.

Double Bluff

The lonely monotony was broken when Tuesday came round again and Harry was taken for his little outing to the magistrates' court to be remanded in custody for another week. One privilege he enjoyed as a Special Category Prisoner was that he did not have to travel in the prison van with the other remand prisoners. As he sat in the back of the car behind darkened windows and sandwiched between two Special Branch officers, he suddenly noticed that the driver was not heading back towards the Scrubs, but in virtually the opposite direction.

'I say, where are we going now?' he asked uneasily. It had just occurred to him that perhaps he was at last being carted off to the dreaded MI5 interrogation.

'You'll see soon enough!' snapped the hefty officer to whom he was handcuffed.

'Or rather you will if you've got X-ray vision . . .' laughed the other man.

Next moment Harry found that he couldn't see a thing. He had been very effectively blindfolded.

'Leave it alone, Commander,' advised the first man as Harry attempted to adjust the blindfold with his free hand. 'You won't be uncomfortable for very long.'

The car was soon speeding along what Harry guessed to be either the M4 or the M40 motorway and a few minutes later the sound of aircraft suggested that it was the M4 heading west past Heathrow Airport. They travelled in silence for a short time and then the car turned off the motorway and started driving along winding country roads. Harry imagined that they must be somewhere in the neighbourhood of Eton and Windsor, an area dotted with large lonely mansions

secluded among trees in huge grounds . . . The ideal setting for long-term secretive interrogation sessions.

Suddenly the driver uttered a loud curse and the car swerved violently and braked hard. They sat motionless for several minutes.

'Damn cows!' one of the escorts breathed as Harry heard the slow plodding of a large herd being moved across the narrow road.

Eventually they moved off again, but almost at once Harry heard the driver cry out again, this time in alarm. Next moment there was an almighty thump as something hit them apparently head on. Unable to see what was happening, Harry sat huddled between his escorts trying to make sense of the confused yells and shouts erupting all around him. He heard the rear doors of the car being wrenched open and then he was abruptly yanked sideways and out of the car. His handcuffed wrist was seized in an iron grip and his hand was jerked viciously at an angle. He heard a snapping of chains and he was then lifted bodily under the arms and carried for several yards before being roughly bundled into another vehicle. There were more shouts followed by the slamming of doors and the revving of motors. The blindfold slipped slightly and Harry glimpsed the inside of a Land Rover as they reversed sharply away from the front of the car he had just been travelling in. He just caught sight of one of his Special Branch escorts lying on the grass verge and of the other out cold across the back seat. The terrified driver was sitting bolt upright, frozen with panic.

The Land Rover reversed up onto the opposite verge and then shot away in the opposite direction to the way the car had been travelling. With a sense of foreboding Harry turned to see who his rescuers were. He glimpsed a bicep the size of a football and then the blindfold was shoved back over his eyes. His throbbing hand was grabbed again and he felt two massive sets of steel fingers bending and twisting the bracelet of the handcuff still locked around his wrist. He cried out with pain as the metal dug into his flesh. A couple of seconds later he heard a snap and the handcuff was removed.

'Thanks a lot . . .' he mumbled, massaging his wrist.

'I should've done that to your miserable neck up on the bridge,' growled Rudolf Rainbow's bass voice.

'Where are we going?' Harry inquired nervously as the Land Rover speeded up and bounced wildly along the lanes, his delight at being rescued turning rapidly to panic and uncertainty.

He got another shock when Alexander Shire's anglicised American voice came from the passenger seat in front. 'Commander Sullivan, it's great to see you again . . .' he boomed. 'I hope you'll excuse this intrusion, but my associates and I still need your help. As you know, my daughter is extremely ill and she may die unless she receives prompt treatment.'

Shire paused. Blind as he was, Harry stared into the darkness trying to imagine the American's gaunt features looming over the back of the seat at him. He decided to play along with Shire's deception and to say nothing about his awareness of Samantha's astonishing recovery. Keeping silent now might well pay dividends in the future he decided.

'Commander Sullivan, you can give her that treatment,' Shire added in a menacingly quiet voice.

'Why don't you get your Yarra friends to treat her?' Harry retorted sarcastically. 'They seem jolly efficient at stealing the toxin in the first place.'

Shire laughed drily. 'You are the expert in antidote treatment. Your survival up at the croft was spectacular to say the least,' he replied.

'I was lucky,' Harry argued.

'You are too modest, Commander. You will use your skill to cure my daughter and you will give us all your data on the antidote project,' Shire insisted.

'Why should I?' Harry challenged, irritated by Shire's smugness.

The American laughed once again. 'You are an escaped prisoner charged with grave offences against the State. If you fulfil your demands, we could help you to - shall we say - disappear?'

Harry thought hard. Obviously he was lost if he did as Shire asked. Whether the plan succeeded or not, he would be

on the run for the rest of his life. He didn't fancy drinking himself into an early old age exiled in some South American Republic. On the other hand, a few days of freedom might give him the chance to locate the map reference and solve the mystery of the Brigadier's involvement. It might even allow him to bring the entire gang to justice!

'AH right, Shire, I'll co-operate. But only for Samantha's sake,' Harry reluctantly agreed, after a suitable pause.

'Your concern for Sammy's real touching,' Shire drawled. 'Just be sure you deliver the goods.'

They drove in silence for a time, twisting and turning along little used lanes and byroads. Harry had long since given up trying to keep a mental map of their meandering route, but he was well aware that he was going to need a quick getaway if things went as he was planning.

'I shall need to return to Yarra before I can do anything for Samantha,' Harry said eventually.

'But that's far too risky!' Shire objected.

'I need equipment and of course all my notes are there,' Harry explained.

'Security will be tighter than ever. It'd be suicide,' the American insisted.

Risking the displeasure of his massive custodian, Harry ripped off the blindfold defiantly. He saw that Sergeant Curly was driving the Land Rover, his forearm heavily bandaged. He stared arrogantly at Shire. 'Listen, old man, if I'm going to help your daughter you'll have to let me organise things my way,' he declared brusquely.

Shire turned round to face him. 'You're gonna need protection Commander,' he pointed out. 'Protection a little more convincing than your feeble alias, *Laury L. Varnish!* '

Harry's chin jutted defiantly. 'Look here, Shire . . . '

The American shook his head grimly. 'I don't just mean the security people,' he interrupted in a hard voice. 'Our friend Mr Zbigniew Brodsky has gotten a little excitable since you last met. He's got his own ideas about your future I'm afraid.'

Harry glanced at Rudolf Rainbow's stone face beside him. Yes, well he's had a couple of goes at me already, and

failed,' he muttered smugly.

Next moment Harry heard a sharp intake of breath and the creak of tortured metal as the strongman crushed the handcuff bracelet into a tight knot in his hands. At the same time the Land Rover braked and turned sharply into a gateway leading through enormous trees to a vast gothic Victorian mansion.

'Welcome to EARACHES!' Shire guffawed as they got out. 'The European Anarchist Revolution Anti-Chemical Hazard Environment Society . . .'

Harry noted that Curly had left the key in the ignition.

Shire and Curly ushered Harry into the library while Rudolf Rainbow lumbered away down the dark corridor towards the back of the house. The library was a large gloomy room with tall pointed windows edged with stained-glass panels. The remains of a huge log fire lay in the marble fireplace.

'I'll need a complete change of clothes and some cash,' Harry announced in a businesslike tone, shaking his head at the alcoholic refreshments offered by Shire's scowling associate.

Alexander Shire signalled to Curly and the burly butler handed him a treble Glenfiddich malt whisky and then left the room.

'You don't have a lot of time, Sullivan,' Shire warned him, sipping his whisky neat. 'Samantha has only a few days before her condition becomes irreversible.'

Harry grinned confidently. 'I'll also need a detailed map or two.'

Shire gestured at the crowded bookshelves. 'We have a complete set of the Ordnance Survey.'

Harry went over and thumbed through the neat rows of maps by the window. To his immense relief he saw that the Yarra map was included as an inset panel in the map showing the coastline of Ross and Cromarty and the Summer Isles. 'This Yarra map should do,' he said casually.

Shire told him to help himself. Meanwhile he helped himself to another generous measure of malt.

A moment later, Sergeant Curly returned, carrying a set of

garments that might be taken for the clothes of an average tourist - casual trousers, a check shirt, a windcheater and sneakers. They looked a little on the large side, but Ham-reckoned they would do. In a couple of minutes he had changed into the new gear.

'How do I look?' he inquired in a dreadful American accent, grinning at Curly and Shire in turn.

The butler, who had not said a word since Harry's kidnapping, turned away biting his lip in frustration at not being able to take his revenge on Harry for their fight at Stewart Lodge.

Alexander Shire winced and gulped more whisky. 'Not bad. Just so long as you don't bump into any Americans.'

Harry zipped up the windcheater and frowned. 'I'm not sure this jacket thing's quite pukka. It's a bit big on me. And I'll have to do something about my hair.'

Shire nodded. 'There's a mirror in the bathroom.' He took a leather wallet out of the small rucksack Curly had brought in with the clothes. 'I'll put five hundred in here,' he said. 'If you need any more you'll have to hold up a goddamn bank.'

Harry laughed nonchalantly and went off up to the bathroom. Curly stood at the library door in the entrance hall and watched him all the way up the stairs, as if he was reluctant to let his charge out of his sight.

In the ornate tiled bathroom, Harry wet his curly hair and combed it as flat as he could with a parting at the side. Together with the new clothes, the transformation was pretty good. After a final check in the mirror, Harry went over to the huge bath and examined the ancient brass and copper geyser. Even with his lack of technical knowhow he could see that the primitive contraption had no pilot light or safety diaphragm and this gave him an idea. He glanced out of the window to check out the rear of the premises and got quite a shock. On the immaculate lawn below the terrace, Rudolf Rainbow was lying on his back stripped to the waist and bounding an enormous garden roller up and down on his stomach. 'That should keep the fellow pinned down for the moment . . .' he muttered with wry satisfaction.

Turning to the antique geyser, Harry turned on the water tap and opened the gas valve to half full. There was instantly a sinister hissing from the burner jets beneath the tank and a pungent smell of gas began to fill the bathroom. He turned the water tap to reduce the flow of water without affecting the gas flow, so that the noise of the water dropping into the bath would be less obvious. Then he waited for a few more seconds before emerging from the bathroom and strolling casually downstairs, earnestly practising his atrocious American accent. 'Hey, can you tell us the way to Ben Nevis? Okay, thanks a bunch. Hey, this is just great! Have a nice day . . .'he drawled harshly.

Curly stared at him with hatred and contempt as he sauntered into the library.

'It's not too bad after all, old man. I think I can cope,' Harry told Shire complacently, picking up the wallet and the map and slinging the rucksack over his shoulder.

Shire looked suddenly old and worn as he watched Harry check the contents of the wallet. 'I sure hope so, Sullivan,' he muttered gulping his drink. 'I hope so for all our sakes. Now we'd best get down to details . . .'

Harry whipped out a handkerchief and blew his nose dramatically. 'By the way, I thought I smelt gas upstairs. It seemed quite strong,' he warned

Shire glanced at Curly and jerked his head towards the ceiling. 'That goddamn muscleman again!' he shouted. 'He's probably busted the tap!'

Curly nodded and went off to investigate upstairs.

Shire sat down in a shabby armchair and motioned Harry to the one opposite.

Harry grinned and shook his hand. 'Can't stop now old chap. Be in touch . . .'He waved and ran out of the house.

Luckily the key was still in the ignition. Harry started up and accelerated the Land Rover out of the driveway in a cascade of flying gravel. He drove several miles before he was finally able to get his bearings. An hour later, he was sitting on the platform at Watford Junction eating a pork pie and waiting for the first train north.

It had been quite a morning.

Secrets Of The Burial Mound

During the long journey north Harry pored over the borrowed map, searching for a likely spot to correspond with the location of the co-ordinates on the Brigadier's message pad. Eventually, on one of the smaller islands in the Summer Isles group not far off the west coast of Ross and Cromarty, he pinpointed a hillock or mound marked as an ancient monument site. The site was almost at 58.01N., 05.22W. which Harry now believed to be the original map reference. Several times it crossed his mind that the Brigadier might just have been using the reference to illustrate a point in a lesson, but something at the back of his mind kept insisting that it was far more significant than that.

When he reached Glasgow, Harry hired a car using Sergeant Curly's driving licence which he had found in the Land Rover before dumping it. He then drove through most of the night all the way up to Lochally, a tiny fishing village on the coast near the Summer Isles. From there he hoped to be able to hire a small boat to take him across the narrow stretch of water to the island with the ancient monument site marked on the map. He arrived just before dawn, utterly exhausted after the long drive through the Highlands. There was no-one about, so he parked among some trees just outside Lochally and snatched a few hours sleep.

He woke around nine o'clock with the sun beating through the windscreen and found himself gaping at the ruddy weatherbeaten face of a young policeman peering through the half open side window.

'Good morning, sir. Is everythin' all right?' asked the officer.

Harry sat bolt upright and wound the window fully down. 'Oh yeah, sure everythin's just dandy right now . . .' he drawled, praying that the bobby wouldn't ask to see his passport or papers. 'I got here too late to find someplace to stay round here.'

The policeman glanced at the car hire firm's window sticker. 'Ye're a long way frae Glasgie, sir.'

Harry racked his muddled brain for a suitable explanation. 'Yeah, well I'm lookin' at ancient burial mounds and stuff and I heard there was one on the island over there . . .' he explained in a bizarre mixture of Bronx and Alabama accents. 'Ah was hopin' ta git a boat over ta take a look see.'

The policeman nodded at the island nearest the shore. 'Aye, there's an old barrow thing over yonder, sir. Ye're most likely looking for the *Bryg A Dyr*.'

Harry's jaw dropped open. 'The *Brigadier*!' he exclaimed before he could stop himself.

The policeman laughed and spelt out the name for the stranger. 'I think it means "the grave of trouble" or some such thing,' he added.

Harry pulled himself together smartly. 'Yeah, that's the name. I recall it now,' he chuckled, doing his best to conceal his astonishment.

'My brother-in-law would take ye across,' the man offered. 'He's got ta pick up a lassie he took over yesterday. She's got a wee tent wi' her. Not my idea of a holiday, sir!'

Harry pricked up his ears. 'A young lady eh?'

The policeman winked roguishly. 'A bonnie big lassie, that's for sure . . .'

Two hours later, Harry was clambering out of the brother-in-law's small outboard motorboat onto the makeshift jetty on the island. He gave the man a five pound note and asked him to come back for him at sunset. Then he started climbing up the long winding path which led to a huge rocky outcrop about a mile inland. He had not gone far when he caught sight of a buxom young woman striding along the shore towards the jetty where the boat was waiting for her. She carried a bulky knapsack on her shoulders and her red hair

streamed in the wind like a flame. She turned and waved to him, shouting a greeting which Harry didn't quite catch. He waved back and shouted a half-hearted reply and then suddenly put his head down and strode up the path staring fixedly at the ground. He had just recognised the woman. It was Esther Bland!

When he was far enough away, he turned slightly to look towards the jetty. The woman was talking to the boatman and occasionally glancing in Harry's direction. He prayed fervently that she hadn't recognised him and that the boatman would describe him as an American tourist. As he drew near to the ancient burial mound just below the craggy outcrop, he looked round and saw with relief that the boat had set off towards Loch ally with Esther safely aboard. He sat on a boulder to take a breather and decided that Esther must be making yet another of her archaeological expeditions to gather material for her book. Or was she engaged in something much more sinister he wondered, watching the boat putter its way across the mile or so of water? It was, after all, an extraordinary coincidence for them to have almost met in such an out of the way place.

'The plot thickens, Harry, my lad,' he muttered, resuming his climb up the steep final stretch of path to the mound. All around him the rough silvery grass lay at an angle in the breeze and sparkled in the sunshine. It was a beautiful day.

The Bryg A Dyr mound was a disappointing affair. To the layman it resembled a circular flat-topped dish about forty feet across and about five feet high, set upside down on the sloping hillside below the outcrop. In the centre stood a tall crumbling cairn of large stones and around the rim of the mound a few small upright slabs survived here and there. Its significance as a Bronze Age burial site was completely lost on Harry. He was much more fascinated by the cluster of wildly eroded stacks of rock, whittled by the elements into fantastic almost human shapes, which crowned the summit of the hill. Clambering over the fallen scree, he climbed up through the fissures and between the stacks until he reached the tallest outcrop. From the summit he could look right across the island on the other side, where the ground sloped much more

steeply down to the sea. Half a mile away, he saw a man jumping awkwardly over the side of the large motor launch anchored just offshore and wading through the shallows to the beach. The man's fawn trousers were tucked into high green waders and he wore a hacking jacket and a cloth cap.

For a second or two Harry thought it was the Brigadier, but then he realised that the man was too short and stout. He was carrying what looked like a brown manila envelope hugged against his chest and he kept glancing nervously around him as he hurried up the hillside towards the crags. Harry tucked his head down and observed the approaching figure with increasing excitement. For a while he lost sight of him behind the stacks, but soon he reappeared just below the outcrop, clambering breathlessly up onto the mound and making for the cairn in the middle. Harry's eyes goggled and he let out a faint whistle of amazement. The man with the envelope was the Director of Yarra, Professor Conrad Gold!

Stunned, Harry peered through the rocks and watched Gold kneel by the cairn and start removing a section of smaller stones at the base. It took him some time to open up a sizeable hole in the tightly-packed column. Then he stood up and glanced around to make sure he was alone. Satisfied that he was unobserved, Gold reached down into the hollowed base of the cairn and took out a small envelope which he opened. He read the brief message it contained and stuffed it into his pocket. With nervous haste he pushed the manila envelope he had brought from the cruiser deep into the crevice beneath the cairn. Then he replaced the stones with meticulous care, fitting each one into its appropriate position like a jigsaw puzzle. Finally, he walked round the cairn checking that all looked normal again. After a last glance around the hillside, Gold set off at a brisk pace across the moorland back towards the beach, hands thrust casually in pockets.

So eager was Harry to find out what the deposited package contained, that he could hardly bear to wait until Gold reached his boat, weighed anchor and set course westward out across the North Minch, presumably back to Yarra. He watched the powerful launch carve a white rip in the flat blue

water and then he clambered down from the outcrop and up onto the mound, feeling almost sick with expectation. With reckless haste he scrabbled and tore at the loose stones at the base of the cairn until he had made a hole big enough to put his whole arm into. He drew out the envelope and his fingers began clawing feverishly at the sealed end with almost fanatical impatience. 'Think, dear boy, think . . .' he told himself through clenched teeth. Taking out the car keys, he carefully prised open the flap by sliding a key along the edge. At last it unstuck and Harry reached inside with thumping heart and pulled out several sheets of microfiche film, each sealed in a protective cellophane sheath. He held one up against the -right sky, but the individual pages were far too small for him to identify anything at all. Whatever they were, the sheets were obviously highly classified because each one carried the warning, *SECRET - EYES PROJECT EXECUTIVE ONLY*, in bright red lettering around all four margins.

'So, it was Gold himself . . .' Harry exclaimed, thinking back over his unpleasant interview with the Yarra Director. Gold must have supplied the Attila 305 Toxin to the EARACHES mob. As for Esther, perhaps she had somehow suspected Gold and had tried to trail him? Or had she perhaps planted the message in the cairn? And what about the Brigadier? Perhaps he would collect the microfiches . . .

Harry sat for a long time beside the cairn staring at the sea and wondering what his next move should be. It seemed that he had a fair chance of exposing the entire racket, but he would have to act quickly. It might be only a matter of days before he was rearrested and then it could be too late. As he watched the sun beginning to sink towards the west, he realised that the policeman's brother-in-law would soon be returning to collect him. He had to do something straight away. He stowed the microfiches safely in his knapsack and took out the biro and notepad he had bought at Glasgow Central the previous day. A wild plan to bring the whole affair to a decisive climax had suddenly seized his imagination.

Harry tried to recall the handwriting he had so often seen

on Professor Gold's directives and memos to the Yarra staff. Gold wrote in a small neat hand and always in black ink he remembered. Harry had no fountain pen . . . only a black biro, but it would have to do. He decided that it was far too risky to attempt to forge the Director's actual handwriting, but maybe if he used printed letters the ruse might work. He tried out a few simple words, printed in small squarish lettering which he hoped would closely resemble Gold's longhand script, and after half an hour's painstaking trial and error he reckoned he had achieved a fairly convincing style. On a fresh sheet of notepaper he carefully printed a short message: *PROBLEM WITH MICROFICHES BUT CAN DELIVER ANTIDOTE SAMPLES HERE DAWN SATURDAY. ESSENTIAL WE ALL MEET. VITAL NEWS.* The crudeness of the bait he was laying made him squirm, but it was the best he could think of. Saturday was three days away. The plan would only work if the drop was collected in the next day or two, but it was a risk he had to take.

The noise of an outboard motor scudding across the bay brought him back to the present with a start. He quickly thrust his message into the empty manila envelope, resealed it as well as possible and pushed it into the deep niche in the cairn. Then he did his best to replace the stones in something like their original positions. He just managed to complete the job by the time the dinghy reached the little jetty. The sky was beginning to redden majestically behind the hill as he ran down to the boat, silhouetting the craggy outcrop in a dramatically stark black outline as it had done for centuries past . . .

The helpful brother-in-law directed Harry to his mother's cottage overlooking the bay and the hospitable old widow offered the stranger bed and breakfast and an evening meal at a very reasonable price. Harry's little room had the advantage of looking out over the island and he reckoned that with the aid of binoculars he would be able to see anyone on Bryg A Dyr from the bedroom window. Obliging, the widow lent him her late husband's Zeiss glasses.

Unfortunately the cottage had no telephone, so after a hearty, filling dinner, Harry strolled into the village to the callbox outside the tiny shop-cum-post-office. It took him a few minutes to remember how to work the old-fashioned Button A and Button B mechanism which he hadn't seen since childhood. With a dry mouth and a butterfly feeling in his stomach, he dialled the Yarra Establishment number and asked to speak to Teddy Bland. He knew he was going to have to trust his old friend's loyalty and integrity like never before.

'Bland here,' Teddy cheerfully announced. 'Sorry to keep you waiting.'

'Hello, Teddy. It's Harry Sullivan here.'

There was silence at the other end.

'Teddy, are you still there?' Harry asked anxiously.

'Yes . . . Yes, of course, old man . . . It's just a bit of a shock to hear your voice, that's all,' Teddy answered after another brief pause. 'Where the dickens are you?'

Harry was about to tell him when he thought better of it. Never mind that now, Teddy, just listen. I've found out who the mole is and I know who he's working for. In fact, I think I can trap the entire gang!

Bland was silent for a few seconds. 'But Sullers, old chap, everybody knows it's you . . .' he replied in an embarrassed voice. 'What on earth made you do it?'

Harry bit his lip. It was all going to be much more difficult than he anticipated. 'Listen, Teddy, you've just got to believe me. I know who took the Attila 305 ampoules plus some other stuff. There's going to be a rendezvous on Saturday at dawn. I want you to get Special Branch along and we'll catch them red-handed.'

'You're drunk!' Teddy muttered. 'How the devil did you manage to smuggle rum into the Scrubs? You've got one helluva cheek, I'll say that for you. I'm just very sorry I've got to give evidence against you at the Old Bailey in a few weeks.'

'Will you listen to me?' Harry hissed in desperation. 'I'm not drunk and I'm not in the Scrubs. I got away.' He heard Teddy chuckling away at the other end. 'I saw Esther today!' Harry snapped.

The chuckling stopped abruptly. 'You saw Esther? Where?' Harry hesitated. 'Never mind where. She had a tent.'

Teddy was quiet for a moment. 'She's gone off on one of her damn surveys . . .' he said at last. 'Did you speak to her?'

'No. I was too far away. In any case, I didn't want to give myself away,' Harry explained. 'I only told you because I can't think of any other way to convince you,' he added bitterly.

'How on earth did you escape, Sullers?'

Harry pulled a face at the receiver. 'No time to explain now. Listen, I'm relying on you, so don't let me down, old chap. And by the way, if you still need convincing go and check the microfiche records. I think you'll find you've just lost half a dozen

'Fire away. What do you want me to do?' Teddy interrupted in an altered voice, as if Harry had touched a raw nerve.

'Alert the security people in London, Teddy. Tell them to go to Bryg A Dyr on the Summer Isles at midnight on Friday. All being well, they'll be able to round up the villains at dawn. And, Teddy . . .'

'Yes, old man?'

'Don't breathe a word to anybody on Yarra.'

There was a short silence. 'I just hope this isn't some kind of practical joke . . .' Teddy muttered uneasily.

'Trust me. See you midnight Saturday.'

On the way back to the cottage, Harry noticed that the brother-in-law's boat was moored just above high water mark on the beach below his small house. He made a point of checking that the outboard was still in place underneath its plastic hood and that the oars were neatly stowed in the bottom. When he reached the cottage, he set his alarm and then slept like a log until it beeped at five-thirty next morning.

Instantly wide awake, he rigged the wooden armchair with cushions and pillows and made himself a comfortable observation perch at the window from which he could keep a close watch on the Bryg A Dyr through the binoculars. He

watched for three hours solid and then took a short break for breakfast. After a hearty meal, he drove down to the village telephone box and once again dialled the Yarra Establishment. This time he asked to speak to Professor Conrad Gold.

'Yes?' snapped Gold's hard nasal voice.

Harry took a deep breath. 'Good morning, Professor Gold,' he said brightly. 'I have several extremely interesting snapshots of your activities at Bryg A Dyr. I think you should have first refusal before I take them to Fleet Street.'

There was a tense silence through which Harry could hear Gold's slightly asthmatic breathing growing more and more laboured in the receiver.

'Who is that?' Gold demanded. 'I don't know what you're talking about.'

'The cap suits you,' Harry continued with cruel sarcasm, as if he were examining a set of photographs. 'But these waders. . . really, old chap, they rather clash with the rest of the ensemble, don't you think? What did you tell Miss Bird? That you were off on a fishing trip?'

Harry listened to the speechless breathing with a feeling of ruthless revenge.

'Listen, whoever you are, is this some kind of joke?' Gold whined eventually.

'The name's Sullivan. *Commander* Sullivan,' Harry said smoothly.

'Sullivan?' Gold spluttered in confusion. 'But you're in prison . . . You're waiting trial . . .' he blustered almost hysterically.

'I didn't fancy doing twenty-five years for somebody else's misbehaviour, old chap,' Harry retorted acidly. 'But don't worry, I won't sue you for slander.'

'How much . . . how much do you want?' Gold croaked, his voice breaking in panic.

Harry paused for several seconds, relishing his victim's terror. 'Be at the mound on Saturday at eight o'clock in the morning and bring about fifty thousand pounds with you,' he instructed coldly.

There was a gasp of incredulity from the receiver. 'Fifty

thousand . . . You're mad!' Gold cried hysterically.

'On the contrary, I've never felt saner,' Harry retorted. 'And, Professor . . . Come alone, and don't breathe a word to anyone.'

Back in his room, Harry picked up the binoculars and resumed his watch on Bryg A Dyr. He immediately sat bolt upright with a cry of triumph. Through the glasses he could see a small inflatable rubber dinghy with an outboard motor tied up at the ramshackle jetty on the island. Eagerly he swept the binoculars to and fro across the windblown grassy slopes of the hillside in search of the unknown visitor. At first he could see no-one at all, but then he made out the figure of a man coming round the base of the outcrop from the other side. The man seemed to be gazing around him, no doubt checking that he was alone on the island. Apparently satisfied, he scrambled up onto the mound and knelt down beside the cairn. Harry watched with bated breath while the man worked away, carefully removing the stones just as Gold had done. Then a thrill shot through him as he saw the man take out the manila envelope and tuck it into the waistband of his jeans, pulling the bottom of his thick fisherman's jersey over it to conceal it. The man replaced the stones at the base of the cairn and then set off briskly down the path to the jetty. His woolly hat made identification difficult at first, but when he reached the boat Harry knew for certain who it was.

It was Sergeant Curly, the Brigadier's butler.

Harry watched Curly steer the inflatable to the nearest point on the mainland, which was the clump of trees about half a mile out of the village. Having landed, Curly deflated the craft and carried it up to the road hidden among the foliage. Ten minutes later, Harry heard the sound of a car coming fast towards the village. He ran through into the bathroom on the other side of the cottage, and was just in time to see the metallic-painted Volvo Estate car with the dinghy lashed to the roof rack hurtle past, presumably heading towards Ullapool and the main route south.

As he returned to his room rubbing his hands together with childlike glee, Harry congratulated himself on the

success of his plan so far. But he also knew that the riskiest time lay just ahead. He would have to get out of Lochally and lie low not too far away, so that he could rendezvous with Teddy Bland and the security people at midnight on Friday. Now that the local policeman knew so much about him, he couldn't afford to stay put - just in case Special Branch took it into their heads to pick him up before the showdown.

He walked down to the little shop and bought enough basic provisions to last him a couple of days. Then he returned to the cottage and settled his bill, adding a generous bonus for the old widow's kindness. Loading his bulging knapsack into the car, he drove off along the coast road leading north-west. At a fork he turned right and took a narrow unsurfaced road full of potholes which led to Lochinver. To his right he saw the brooding, bald, loaf-shaped mass of Suilven looming up over the scattered little lochs which covered the area between the mountain and the sea. He had been told that the area also contained a mass of caves and he had decided to become a troglodyte for the next twenty-four hours.

One vital thing he had failed to consider was how to conceal the hired car. All afternoon he drove along the rough tracks among the little lochs, searching for suitable cover. At last he found a cave in the side of a deep gully where the car would be at least partially hidden. Apart from being sheltered and reasonably dry, the cave had very little to recommend it. The floor was rock hard and strewn with sharp stones, and Harry heard invisible creatures constantly scuttling around in the darkness at the back. However, he managed to make himself tolerably comfortable by using the carpet out of the car's spacious hatchback as a mattress and a rug off the back seat as a blanket. By keeping all his clothes on and fortified with frequent sips from the small bottle of brandy he had bought, he hoped to survive the long chilly night without too much discomfort.

Above all, he hoped that nobody would find him . . .

Ambush

Harry woke at dawn with aching bones and a very thick head. After a makeshift breakfast, he left the cave and spent the entire day wandering around the hills and lochs and brooding over the coming showdown at Bryg A Dyr. He felt safer away from the cave during daylight hours, just in case the police came looking for him now that he had given away his general whereabouts to Teddy Bland and Conrad Gold. He didn't trust anybody anymore. At sunset he returned cautiously to the cave in a state of nervous suspense and got ready for the ordeal ahead. He ate a cold supper out of tins, took a nip or two of brandy and then packed everything back into the car. It was dark when he drove back the way he had come the previous day, losing his bearings several times in the maze of tracks and lochs.

By the time he reached Lochally it was past ten o'clock, and to his dismay he discovered that conditions were far from ideal. A strong wind had whipped up off the Atlantic and the sea was running a hefty swell. Worse still, racing clouds obscured the moon and made it impossible to see the islands at all. Harry parked the car among the trees, shouldered the knapsack and walked into the village. Thankfully he found the tiny community deserted. The only signs of life were the solitary street light and the light in the callbox outside the shop. The policeman's brother-in-law's house was in darkness and below it on the sand Harry found the dinghy beached with the outboard and the oars in place just as he had hoped.

He stowed the knapsack in the boat and then started to drag the dinghy down the short stretch of beach to the water.

Although it wasn't all that heavy, the dinghy kept digging itself into the soft sand and it required all Harry's strength to move it. When he eventually got it to the shallows, he had an exhausting struggle to launch it into the heavy waves constantly crashing inshore. But at last, after several false attempts and some painful bruises on his shins, he managed to get the thing afloat and haul himself aboard. Keeping an anxious eye on the dark windows of the house, Harry quickly rigged the oars and began pulling strongly away from the beach. There was something horribly spooky about rowing out to sea in the dark with your back to the rough swell and nothing to guide your way. Black and mysterious, the sea moved all around him like a living thing, its depths and its purpose unknown as it threw the little boat up and down like a plaything.

During his trip out to the island on Wednesday, Harry had noticed that the street light and the telephone callbox had been more or less in line with each other, so now he steered the boat as best he could to make the two lights align themselves one behind the other in the hope that this would put him more or less on course for the island. As he battled against the swell and the fierce currents, he occasionally glanced over his shoulder to see if he could distinguish any sign of land, but all he saw was the awesome ridge of each black swell as it reared up in front of the dinghy. From time to time the moon pierced the clouds to cast a momentary light over the water, but still no sign of land appeared ahead. Harry checked his watch. It was just after eleven. He had less than an hour before the rendezvous at Bryg A Dyr, assuming, of course, that Teddy Bland and the others turned up.

He redoubled his efforts, rowing harder than ever and counting the strokes rhythmically just as he had in his heyday with the Dartmouth College Ace Eight. The boat was constantly being dragged off course by the tide and Harry was forced to use as much energy in correcting his heading as he used to propel the boat against the waves. After another hour of frantic rowing, he at last heard the sound of breakers, and turning round, he glimpsed the faint silhouette of the outcrop as the moon briefly shone through the clouds. With a

whoop of joy, he rowed like a galley slave until the boat eventually grounded on the shingle beach only a few hundred yards from the jetty. He jumped ashore and hauled the dinghy as far up the beach as he could. Tethering the painter to an oar, he rammed the oar deep into the shingle. Then he grabbed the knapsack and started up the hillside towards the eerie, forbidding crags on the summit.

As he drew near the mound stumbling into potholes and tripping over tussocks, he advanced more cautiously. The fitful moonlight made the crags look like a part of the moon's scarred and blasted surface, or the battlements of some villain's castle in a fairy tale. As far as he could tell he was alone, though it was now well after midnight. Feeling his way gingerly in the almost total darkness of the outcrop's shadow, he climbed warily to the top of the rocky stacks from where he could keep watch over the entire island. He crouched among the jagged rocks and waited, impatiently nibbling biscuits and sipping his brandy. The scudding clouds began to thin and the moon cast a pale but useful light over the bay.

By one o'clock there was still no sign of Teddy and the Special Branch and Harry's morale began to weaken. Surely his old friend wouldn't let him down, not after all that he had risked to bring off the coup? The horrible thought occurred to him that he might find himself facing the EARACHES mob and Professor Gold alone - assuming that they turned up at all. As time passed, Harry began to wonder how long he should wait before giving up and returning to the mainland. Two o'clock . . . Three o'clock . . . Still nothing but the moan of the wind and the crash of the distant waves. He decided to give them one more hour.

After a while he heard faint movements in the shadows beneath him. Tensing expectantly, he clenched his fists and prepared to defend himself if necessary. A few seconds later he was blinded as a powerful torch beam hit him full in the face from below.

"That's Sullivan!" someone shouted. It sounded like Teddy Bland.

"Teddy ... Is that you?" Harry called, screwing up his eyes against the glare.

Next moment there was a noise behind him. He was seized by two pairs of hands and manhandled roughly down the rocks and onto the grassy slope at the bottom of the outcrop. Breathless and frightened, he saw that he was flanked by two tall men masked in balaclavas and wearing dark battledress fatigues.

'Well, well, and what a surprise,' chuckled a third figure approaching round the rocks. 'Fancy seeing *you* here, Commander!'

In the feeble moonlight Harry saw that it was Superintendent Spode of the Special Branch. He grinned defiantly. 'You're late, Spode. And now I suppose you're going to arrest me all over again.'

'Indeed, Commander,' Spode agreed, stepping forward. 'You will be charged with . . .'

'Oh, for goodness sake, Spode, I'll handle this!' chimed in a cutting public school voice and a man of about fifty-five dressed in a dark suit, overcoat and bowler hat elbowed the policeman aside and nodded to Harry's captors to release his pinioned arms. 'George Fawcett-Smith, Home Office. . . ' he announced, shaking Harry's hand briskly. 'Don't suppose you have the faintest notion of the trouble you've stirred up, Sullivan. I spent most of yesterday with Rear-Admiral de Longpre trying to sort something out. Technically you're under arrest, but if you can deliver the goods we'll see what can be done.'

Harry smiled with relief. 'I'm most grateful, Mr Fawcett-Smith . . .'

'Don't thank me!' the man exclaimed irritably. 'Thank your persistent friend Mr Bland. He's around here somewhere I believe.'

'Hello, Sullers!' Teddy came trotting over out of the shadows and hugged Harry delightedly. 'Gosh, you haven't changed a bit, old son, getting yourself mixed up in all this business!'

'I thought you weren't coming!' Harry exclaimed, over-Dyed to see his friend at last.

'We got here about ten,' Teddy explained. 'There's some Major or other in charge of operations and he insisted on a

full military recce and everything first. We got a lift from the navy and came the long-way round from the south-west in a little minesweeper. She's hiding in a sea loch somewhere down the mainland coast. Quite an adventure, eh, Sullers?'

Harry grinned nervously, his face pale in the moonlight. 'I only hope the villains all turn up . . .' he confessed. 'Otherwise yours truly's going to be in hot water.'

'You certainly are,' agreed Fawcett-Smith, consulting his luminous watch. He took Harry's arm and led him aside. 'Now, why don't you tell me all about these villains of yours?' he suggested affably.

'I'd be glad to,' Harry responded readily, glad to be recognised at last as a person of some significance in the operation.

But before he could say any more, a man of about his own age dressed in camouflage pullover and trousers tucked into boots marched out of the shadows. 'This Commander Sullivan?' he rapped smartly.

Harry nodded.

'Excellent. Major Sawyer, Special Services,' the newcomer snapped, shaking hands. 'Like to give you a quick briefing, gentlemen, and then I think we should take up our positions. It'll be getting light soon.'

By the time the sun came up behind the distant mountains on the mainland, everyone had been in position for more than an hour. Harry was concealed among the rocks at the foot of the outcrop together with Major Sawyer, Superintendant Spode, the nine Special Services personnel and two Special Branch officers. Teddy Bland and Mr Fawcett-Smith were perched out of harm's way among the pillars of rock above them, together with a Special Services man equipped with a walkie-talkie acting as look-out. Once the sun had risen in a great red globe, casting long fantastic shadows of the crags across the hillside to the west, the restless watchers grew tense with expectation. A shiver ran up Harry's spine as the judder of a helicopter engine suddenly came from the south-east. It was a sound that had haunted him for several weeks now.

The chopper approached rapidly across the bay and then circled Bryg A Dyr several times. Harry instantly recognized

it was the one that had chased him across the mountains. It hovered a hundred feet above the mound for a few seconds and then suddenly swooped down and landed on the flat grass top of the ancient burial site. Harry's spirits rose as he spotted at least four passengers inside, besides the pilot. It looked as if Spode was going to net a bumper catch!

With the rotors idling in the chill air, the door opened and Zbigniew Brodsky jumped out, clad in a leather overcoat, green corduroy trousers and a green corduroy hat. His eyes were hidden behind dark glasses.

'That's Brodsky . . .' Harry murmured into the Major's ear. 'He's the boss of the outfit.'

Brodsky glanced around the deserted hillside and then hurried over to the cairn. He removed the stones haphazardly from the base and reached inside. Finding nothing there, he stood up and shook his head in the direction of the helicopter. Next moment Alexander Shire jumped out and ran crouching low under the whirring blades towards the cairn.

'That's Shire himself . . .' Harry murmured to Sawyer.

As Shire and Brodsky held an urgent conference about what to do next, Rudolf Rainbow emerged from the chopper and then lifted Samantha out onto the grass as if she were a mere doll.

'That's the daughter . . .' Harry gasped in surprise. Sarah Jane was right! She looks as right as rain now.' As he gazed at the girl's frightened face, Harry began to boil with indignation and contempt at the way she had been treated by her father and his associates.

By the cairn a fierce argument seemed to be in progress between Brodsky and Shire. Suddenly Brodsky threw up his arms in disgust and strode across to Samantha. She cried out in pain as he seized her arm and propelled her over to her father. Shire shouted something at his daughter in a surge of rage and then smacked her viciously across the face with the back of his hand.

Harry could stand silently by no longer. Before anyone would stop him, he broke cover and ran up onto the mound. I say, there's no need to do that!' he yelled above the noise of the helicopter.

The two men instantly turned and Brodsky whipped out a revolver. 'Sullivan! It's a trap, it's a trap!' he shouted.

'Go!' ordered Major Sawyer and the nine Special Services men sprang out of hiding and covered the group on the mound with their machine-pistols.

Brodsky immediately flung his arm round Samantha's neck and yanked her in front of him like a shield, pressing his gun against her head. 'Keep back or the girl dies!' he warned, starting to retreat towards the helicopter with Samantha between himself and Sawyer's men.

Shire hesitated for a second and then scurried after them keeping safely behind Brodsky and his daughter.

'Stop where you are!' Major Sawyer commanded. 'You are all under arrest.'

But Zbigniew Brodsky continued edging his way to the door of the chopper. Crouching behind them, Shire suddenly spun round and dived inside. Then Brodsky manoeuvred himself in backwards, still holding his terrified hostage in front of him. Rudolf Rainbow, who had watched the scene in amazement, snatched Samantha up in his huge hands and threw her into the helicopter after the two men. But before the giant strongman could heave himself inside, the chopper's engine roared and it climbed swiftly into the air. Rudolf managed to grab one of the skids and was yanked off the ground, swinging perilously from side to side as his bulk upset the helicopter's balance.

'Hold your fire!' Sawyer ordered, thumping his fist against the rocks in frustration as he watched the machine roaring and wobbling into the sun, resembling some giant wounded insect with the silhouette of the strongman hauling himself up beside the flapping open door.

Harry stood by the cairn in a daze. When at last he looked around he saw that the machine-pistols were aimed menacingly in his direction.

'What the devil did you do that for, Sullivan?' Major Sawyer raged, striding up onto the mound in a fury. 'You idiot! You've ruined the whole operation!'

Harry hung his head for a moment. Then he shook himself and stared the white-faced Major straight in the eye. 'Why

didn't you order your men to fire at the rotors?' he stormed. 'You could easily have disabled that chopper. I don't see why the girl should suffer any more than she already has.'

'Don't try and teach me my job, Surgeon-Commander Sullivan!' Sawyer yelled, grabbing Harry's arm. 'Just what *is* your game anyway?' he snarled suspiciously.

'All right, gentlemen, no point indulging in recriminations. The birds have flown . . .' George Fawcett-Smith intervened, puffing his way up onto the mound.

'I've sent a general alert. They'll be followed,' Sawyer informed the ruddy-faced civil servant, his eyes fixed accusingly on Harry's depressed and worried features.

'What kind of Mickey Mouse operation is this?' demanded Superintendant Spode, stomping furiously onto the mound. 'I'll be making a full report . . .'

Fawcett-Smith tapped the Special Branch man on the chest with the handle of his neatly furled umbrella. '77/ make any reports which may be required, Spode,' he retorted firmly.

'Boat approaching from the west, sir!' Everybody turned to stare up at the look-out perched among the crags.

'That'll be Professor Gold!' Harry exclaimed, breaking the sudden expectant silence.

'Not Conrad Gold?' Teddy Bland cried sceptically, his head appearing next to the look-out's.

Harry waved to his old friend with renewed optimism. 'Just you wait and see, old chap! Professor Conrad Gold, or my name's *Davros*!'

At the mention of that alien name, Major Sawyer's face went pale. 'What do you know about him ... I mean if?' he rapped.

Mr Fawcett-Smith glared at Harry as though he had just broken all the clauses of the Official Secrets Act with a single word. 'I say, Sullivan, steady on . . .' he whispered.

'Boat's approaching fast, sir. About a mile off-shore,' sang the look-out.

Major Sawyer quickly pulled himself together again. 'Everybody back in position!' he ordered. As everyone hurried back into hiding, Superintendent

Spode took Harry by the arm.

'Thank you, Spode . . .'George Fawcett-Smith said icily, taking Harry's other arm. 'I'll look after Commander Sullivan.'

The exasperated Special Branch man threw up his hands in despair. 'Very well, sir. I relinquish all responsibility,' he hissed, nodding to his two officers to remain where they were among the rocks.

After the fast and violent activity around the helicopter, the quiet lull while they waited for Gold seemed unreal and eerie. The look-out gave Major Sawyer a running commentary on the radio as Gold brought his cruiser round to the jetty, tied up and scanned the hillside through binoculars before setting off warily up the long path towards the mound.

Harry quickly grew restless concealed below the crags. 'I should be waiting up on the mound,' he protested. 'If he sees I'm not there he'll smell a rat and do a bunk like the other lot.'

The Major shook his head and glanced at his watch. 'He's early. Anyway, he'd expect you to be cautious too,' he snapped. 'Standing up there you'd look too much like bait.'

Fawcett-Smith nodded his agreement.

Harry shrugged helplessly. He didn't like to think of himself as bait at all. He resigned himself to repeating in his mind the brief set of instructions Sawyer had given him. He didn't want anything to go wrong this time.

Eventually Gold reached the edge of the mound. He eyed the outcrop suspiciously before scrambling up the slope onto the plateau surrounding the cairn. Noticing the stones disturbed by Brodsky earlier, he knelt down and examined the hollow base. Puzzled, he stood up. 'Sullivan?' he called nervously. 'Sullivan, where are you . . .?'

The Major prodded Harry forward. 'Here Professor,' Harry said quietly, emerging from among the rocks and cautiously climbing the slope.

Conrad Gold backed away a few steps, staring at Harry like a frightened animal. 'The photographs, Sullivan . . . Where are the photographs?' he whined.

'Where is the money?' Harry grinned, patting his windcheater pocket.

Gold reached into his hacking jacket and pulled out a fat envelope. 'Twenty-thousand in hundreds. It's all I could get in the time,' he claimed hoarsely.

'Used notes, of course.'

'Of course.'

Harry took a crumpled envelope from his windcheater. Listen carefully, Professor. We put our envelopes on the ground. Then we change places, walking clockwise round the edge of the mound and pick up each other's packages.'

'Agreed,' Gold muttered impatiently.

They both slowly placed their envelopes on the grass. Then they moved sideways around the edge of the ancient burial site keeping their eyes fixed on one another. When they reached each other's envelopes they cautiously picked them up. Gold instantly tore at Harry's package like a small child opening a present. Suddenly he noticed that Harry was matching him instead of opening the other package.

'Don't you want to check the money?' he croaked uncertainly.

Harry grinned and shook his head. 'I trust you, Professor,' he said calmly.

Gold pulled a few blank sheets of paper out of Harry's envelope and then peered frantically inside. Finding nothing else, he ripped it to shreds and flung the fragments in the air. No photographs . . . ' he shouted wildly, suddenly pulling a small pistol from his pocket and threatening Harry.

'I haven't got a camera!' Harry scoffed, hurling the bulky package back at Gold as hard as he could. 'Here's a refund!'

A flurry of shots rang out as Gold fired at the package and then at Harry in his momentary confusion. A bullet tore the package apart in the air and suddenly one hundred pound notes were flying everywhere, caught up in the gusty breeze. Next minute the pistol was kicked from Gold's hand by a fusillade of machine-pistol fire. With a shriek of panic, Gold started grabbing at the snowstorm of valuable notes whirling all around him. Within a few seconds he was surrounded by

Sawyer's men and he collapsed onto his knees sobbing and whining as he clutched armfuls of crumpled notes against his chest. Superintendent Spode pushed his way onto the mound and formally arrested him with solemn satisfaction.

Harry stared aghast at the banknotes blowing in all directions. 'Oh my giddy aunt!' he muttered, as Mr Fawcett-Smith ran hither and thither attempting to spear the notes with the sharp end of his brolly.

'Sullivan, you're an imbecile!' yelled Major Sawyer, shaking his machine-pistol in Harry's face.

'Well done, Sullers, you were absolutely ace!' cried Teddy Bland, running up and enthusiastically pumping his friend's hand up and down. 'I never would've suspected Gold. You've done a magnificent job for us all!'

Harry smiled modestly and gently disengaged his trembling hand. 'Thanks, Teddy,' he replied. 'Do you think you could do something for me in return?'

'Absolutely, Sullers. Anything. You name it.'

Harry frowned. 'Well, that's just it, Teddy. The name. Call me anything you like . . . even imbecile if you must. . . but please don't call me *Sullers*. I hate it!'

Teddy Bland looked slightly abashed. 'Sorry, old man . . .' he mumbled, following Harry's gaze to watch Gold being led away. 'By the way, who was the girl?'

Harry shrugged. 'Oh, just Shire's daughter.'

Teddy nudged him. 'Damned attractive for a villain,' he said with a wink. 'No wonder you had to get involved!'

Harry grinned bleakly. 'I'm jolly worried about her, Teddy. I'm going to try and get her away from those bounders if it's the last thing I do.'

At that moment, Superintendent Spode marched over brandishing a set of handcuffs.

Before he could open his mouth, George Fawcett-Smith breezed up with his hands full of screwed-up hundred pound notes. 'Sullivan, you're coming with me to London,' he declared. 'Rear-Admiral de Longpre wants to see you immediately.'

Spode cleared his throat officiously. 'Excuse me, Mr Fawcett-Smith.'

The man from the Ministry grimaced distastefully at the clinking handcuffs. 'Oh, do for heaven's sake put those things away, Superintendant,' he protested wearily. As an afterthought he crammed the bundles of banknotes into the policeman's large hands. 'Do something useful and see if you can find out where these were printed . . .'

Out On A Limb

Two days later, Harry spent the whole afternoon giving his account of events to Rear-Admiral de Longpre in his sunlit office high up in Admiralty Arch. The Chief NATO Liaison Officer's gaunt face gave nothing away, remaining impassive throughout. However, his frequent nods of agreement made Harry feel a little like a stooge at times, as if the authorities had known a great deal all along but had let Harry have his head in order to discover more and more. The Admiral's eyebrows betrayed the slightest surprise only when Harry handed over the precious microfiches.

'Government property,' de Longpre remarked severely, as if it was the actual sheets he regarded as important rather than the secret information they contained in miniature. He screwed his monocle into his eye and scanned the photographic sheets with an air of distaste.

Having finally come to the end of his saga, Harry sat in silence listening to the precise ticking of the polished marine chronometer on the mantelpiece and watching the Admiral lock the microfiches into the safe behind a picture hanging above it. When the Admiral had sat down again and resumed his cold stare across the gleaming desk, Harry felt he could not put off any longer the question that had been gnawing at him for weeks.

'About Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart, sir . . .' he began tentatively.

The Admiral permitted himself a caustic chuckle. 'Poor Alistair! The local police discovered him in the school cellar. He'd been tied up and locked in.'

A flicker of relief lit up Harry's anxious face.

'As is usual, I believe, in crime thrillers, the butler was responsible,' de Longpre continued. 'He's safe and sound in prison and Lethbridge-Stewart's back in his classroom, poor fellow.'

'Oh, thank goodness for that!' Harry sighed, grinning broadly.

'That reminds me,' the Admiral frowned, taking something out of his desk drawer. 'Alistair left this behind yesterday. I must return it. He's getting forgetful in his old age.'

Harry gaped at the fawn woollen glove the Admiral was holding. Eventually he managed to clear his throat. 'So the Brigadier's entirely . . .' He paused. It has just occurred to him that perhaps he should keep quiet about his past suspicions concerning the Brigadier, especially since his own position was still none too certain.

De Longpre replaced the odd glove in his drawer and nodded. 'Yes, entirely, Commander,' he said firmly, closing the matter once and for all. 'As for yourself, Commander Sullivan . . .' The Admiral paused. The sun went in behind a cloud beyond the net curtains. The chronometer ticked. Harry gripped the arms of his uncomfortable chair. The sun burst through again, flooding the office. I think perhaps a little note of apology to our friends in Curzon Street for giving their chaps the slip in the shadow of Windsor Castle . . .' The Admiral chuckled drily.

Harry nodded vigorously. 'Yes, of course, sir.' He hesitated, not sure whether the interview had finally come to an end. His eyes strayed back to the tall, narrow picture covering the safe above the mantelpiece. It was a reproduction of a stylised cubist painting of a woman standing beneath the Eiffel Tower in Paris - *The Woman And The Tower* by Robert Delaunay. He glanced at the desk calendar at the Admiral's elbow and just managed to read the date - September 30th. He stared at the picture and frowned. Something vaguely stirred in the depths of his mind. Something about a meeting . . . and the Eiffel Tower . . . and a date . . .

'Commander Sullivan, did you hear what I said?' The Admiral was on his feet, scrutinising Harry through his monocle.

Harry cleared his throat and sprang up to attention. 'Oh yes, sir ... I mean no, sir . . . I'm sorry, I didn't.' he mumbled.

The Admiral knitted his brows irritably. 'You are granted indefinite leave until your debriefing is completed. The Secretary of State for Defence has ordered that you remain within the United Kingdom until further notice. No more amateur detective escapades, Sullivan. Is that understood?'

Harry bit his lip in disappointment. 'Yes, sir.' He hung his head for a moment and then looked up again. 'I say, sir . . . Have there been any developments? I mean, have the EARACHES mob been caught yet?' he asked hopefully.

De Longpre let his monocle drop out of his eye and dangle on its cord. 'Sullivan, just keep your confounded nose out of things, there's a good chap,' he sighed wearily. 'Everything will be taken care of.'

Harry glanced at the rows of medal ribbons on the Admiral's tunic and then down at his own meagre decorations. He considered that he had earned at least some modest reward for all his hard work. Feeling very hard done by, he shook the Admiral's outstretched hand, saluted and strode smartly out of the office.

By the time the Admiralty limousine dropped him at his flat Harry had worked himself into an agitated frenzy. Although the sun wasn't quite over the yardarm yet, he poured himself a rum and soda and rummaged through his bureau in search of the Van Gogh Society pamphlet he had taken from Shire's study in Castle Mackie. A few minutes later he knew that he had been right. The annual general meeting of the society was being held in the restaurant at the top of the Eiffel Tower the very next day - October 1st.

Harry drained his drink and sank into a chair, his mind racing. He deeply resented the way the authorities had taken him for granted and kept him ignorant and isolated, and being told to keep his nose out of things was the last straw. His mood grew more and more rebellious and he was increasingly tempted to try to finish the job he had taken on single-handed. His next debriefing session was several days away.

Had fate intended the picture in the Admiral's office to jog his memory about the Paris meeting, he wondered?

His mind made up, Harry hurried into the bedroom and took out his tuxedo from the wardrobe. He checked it for moth holes and then selected a ruffled dress shirt from the drawer. He hoped his outfit would be elegant enough for Paris. All he needed now was a flower for his buttonhole . . .

Next morning Harry boarded the Boulogne ferry at Dover expecting at any moment to be accosted by Superintendent Spode and sent back to London like a truant schoolboy. He hoped that by travelling on a daytrip ticket by ferry, he would at least attract less attention than by flying from Heathrow or Gatwick. During the Channel crossing and the train journey to Paris he kept a sharp look-out for any sign that he was being tailed, but as the train clattered through the Parisian suburbs he began to relax. Perhaps he had got away with it, after all! However, one anxiety was soon replaced by another. On the spur of the moment he had imagined that he could gatecrash the Van Gogh Society party without really considering exactly what he could achieve singlehanded against the sinister anarchist group. His main objective was to help Samantha whom he saw as a victim rather than a villain. But as the train pulled into the Gare du Nord, Harry realised that he might be on a wild goose chase. Perhaps the celebration had been cancelled, or perhaps Brodsky and the others would be absent after the dramatic events in Scotland.

He needn't have worried. That evening, when his taxi dropped him beneath the gigantic floodlit structure of the Eiffel Tower, men in dinner suits and women in long elegant evening gowns were streaming into the elevators to be whisked up to the restaurant at the top which had been taken over for the night by the Van Gogh Society. Harry strolled nonchalantly around underneath the tower trying to see if he could recognise any of the stylish guests.

Judging by the numbers it was going to be a huge gathering. As he walked round one of the four massive legs of the tower he suddenly stopped dead in his tracks. Standing by the entrance was a tall woman dressed in white satin and furs.

She looked just like the lady in the painting in the Admiral's office. A shiver wriggled through Harry's body and he stood gaping open-mouthed at the apparition as if it were the miraculous fulfilment of a prophecy. The woman was Samantha Shire.

Harry pulled himself together and was on the brink of going over to her when a tall man in immaculate evening attire strode up and greeted her affectionately. She took his arm and they entered the lobby leading to the elevators. Harry swallowed hard and blinked hesitantly. The tall man was Alexander Shire.

Harry decided to take the bull by the horns. Dashing into the lobby, he tagged onto the queue. At the door to the lift the haughty commissioner glanced at Harry's smart tuxedo, frilly shirt and red rose and raised an eyebrow. Harry pointed to the other lift which had filled up and was about to ascend.

'Monsieur Varnish . . .' he declared. *'Je suis avec Docteur Shire. J'ai perdu ma carte.* Lost the invitation, old chap.'

In the departing lift, Alexander Shire had just caught the words 'Monsieur Varnish'. He turned and stared at Harry over the heads of the other passengers. *'Ca va,'* he called out, flashing Harry an ironic smile. *'Monsieur Varnish est avec moi.'*

'Thanks awfully . . .' Harry called, giving Shire a cheery wave as he disappeared upwards.

'En voiture, Monsieur . . .' the commissioner ordered grandly.

Harry stared at the commissioner for several seconds, hesitating in the entrance to the lift. The elegant guests thronging the lobby hardly looked like notorious revolutionaries. He ought to be safe enough in such sophisticated company. And he should at least manage to speak to Samantha. He had so many questions to ask her . . .

The lavish buffet in the panoramic restaurant was spectacular. Caviar, quail's eggs, smoked salmon and all kinds of rare delicacies were spread on the spotlessly white tablecloths. Champagne corks popped discreetly in the background and the spacious room was filled with the confused buzz of con-

versation in a dozen different languages. Harry mingled with the crowd and tried to pinpoint the ones he knew. It was not difficult to spot Rudolf Rainbow standing by himself behind a pillar, observing the chattering throng. Zbigniew Brodsky was in the centre of the room surrounded by a group of society ladies all hanging on his every word and applauding his jokes. But there was no sign of Alexander Shire nor of Samantha.

A waiter came up to refill Harry's glass. '*Monsieur Varnish*!' he inquired discreetly. Harry nodded and took the cream-coloured envelope the waiter held out on the tray. It was addressed to 'Monsieur L. Varnish'. Inside he found a short note in the same elegant handwriting. It said: *Dear Laury, I'm so sorry but I don't love you any more. Goodbye for ever. Natasha M.* Harry immediately spotted the anagram of 'Samantha' in the signature. Shocked and puzzled, he moved behind a pillar decorated with garlands of artificial sunflowers - no doubt in honour of Van Gogh's famous paintings - and studied the curious message. It occurred to him that it might be in code, so he tried juggling the words and the letters around in his head, but nothing useful resulted. He slipped the note into his pocket and cautiously looked around, hoping to catch the waiter and find out who had given him the envelope.

All at once Harry's eyes were riveted on two figures by the windows overlooking the glittering city. The tall, white figure of Samantha was standing beside a wheelchair with her hand on the shoulder of its occupant. Sitting hunched in the wheelchair was another Samantha, her pale face almost covered by huge dark glasses! She looked just as she had looked when he had last seen her in the National Gallery several weeks ago. Harry took a swig of champagne to steady his nerves and gazed incredulously at the two Samanthas. 'My giddy aunt. . . Why didn't I think of it before?' he gasped, dodging back behind the garlands of flowers to hide his discomfort. 'Identical twins . . . Plain as a pikestaff!' Next moment his empty glass was being generously replenished.

'You got a nerve coming here, Mr Sullivan . . .' said a deep voice close to his ear.

Harry did not need to look round. 'Good evening, Mr Rainbow . . .'he said with exaggerated calmness. 'A nerve? Why? It's a lovely party.' Harry raised his brimming glass. 'And I'm being very well looked after.' He tried to make it sound as if the Eiffel Tower were crawling with Special Branch and Interpol personnel.

'Doctor Shire and Mr Brodsky would like a word.'

Harry glanced into the centre of the crowded restaurant. Brodsky had disappeared. He turned amiably to the West Indian. 'I heard they weren't on speaking terms,' he grinned.

Rainbow jerked his head sideways.

Harry sipped his champagne casually. 'Perhaps you'd introduce me to Miss Samantha's twin sister on the way?'

Rainbow frowned. 'Miss Natasha? There's no time for social chit-chat,' he declared harshly.

Harry desperately played for time. 'Miss Natasha . . .'he echoed, remembering the note in his pocket. 'Do you like Van Gogh, Mr Rainbow?' he asked abruptly.

A shadow of uncertainty passed across the strongman's iron face, as if he had no idea who Van Gogh was. 'Doctor Shire and Mr Brodsky are waiting . . .'he hissed, propelling Harry round the less crowded edge of the gathering towards a pair of doors leading out onto the narrow promenade surrounding the restaurant.

Harry tried to think quickly. This could be the crunch. What could he do? What he needed to do was get to a telephone and alert London. What a triumph it would be for him to lead the authorities right into the nest of villains masquerading as respectable members of an art appreciation society. It would prove once and for all that Harry Sullivan was not an imbecile or an accident-prone goofer. How proud Sarah Jane Smith would be! His fantasy was rudely shattered by the sight of Alexander Shire and Zbigniew Brodsky standing in the shadows by the guardrail as Rudolf Rainbow shoved him through the glass doors. The cold night air hit Harry like a wet sandbag and his head throbbed horribly from the champagne he had swigged.

'Monsieur Varnish, I hope you're having a good time?'

Shire greeted him affably, raising his glass. 'Your health, *Commander Sullivan!*'

Scared and miserable, Harry returned the toast and drained his glass. Rudolf immediately refilled it to the brim. In a desperate attempt to keep calm, Harry started sipping greedily. It did not occur to him that this was exactly what they wanted him to do.

'Why have you disobeyed your instructions to remain in the United Kingdom?' Shire demanded abruptly.

Harry shrugged. 'Curiosity . . . ' he mumbled.

'Curiosity murdered the cat!' Brodsky snapped, staring balefully at him.

Somebody laughed from the shadows. Squinting into the darkness, Harry made out Waldo's neat wiry figure in immaculate evening dress lounging against the guardrail.

Harry sipped more champagne. 'Perhaps, Mr Brodsky. But I am not a cat.'

Brodsky laughed sourly. 'All the same, Commander, you seem to believe that you have nine lives.'

'No thanks to you lot,' Harry retorted recklessly.

Brodsky shook his head. 'You have only yourself to blame if you have used up eight already.'

Harry grinned at Rudolf as the giant topped up his glass yet again. 'Come come, Mr Brodsky, you're forgetting that you still need me,' he muttered defiantly. 'You still want the antidote samples.' Harry turned to Shire. 'And I assume that you want your daughter to recover, Doctor.'

Shire threw back his head and laughed in Harry's face. 'You're a fool, Sullivan,' he scoffed contemptuously. 'Samantha recovered in a few days. The girl you met in the wheelchair is her twin sister Natasha/ The American glanced through the restaurant windows at the glittering throng inside. 'Poor Natasha. No antidote or drug will ever make her walk again. She fell from a horse when she was twelve and injured her spinal cord.'

Harry smiled bitterly. 'So you used her to trick me and I fell for it,' he admitted. 'But then I found out about Samantha's amazing recovery. A friend of mine met her when she came up to Castle Mackie to interview you a few days after the

business up at the ruin.'

Shire frowned uneasily. 'But if you knew she had recovered . . . 'he muttered, glancing at Brodsky and then back at Harry.

Harry gulped some more champagne and nodded slyly. 'I just pretended not to know and went along with your plan so I could get the evidence on Gold . . . '

Brodsky's face was livid with rage. 'You will suffer for this!' he snarled.

Shire put a restraining hand on Brodsky's quivering arm and stared coldly at Harry. 'Your people may have got Gold and Curly,' he growled, gesturing at the brightly lit windows behind him. 'But there's plenty of others to take their places.'

The combination of danger and alcohol had made Harry feel light-headed and reckless. 'Actually, Samantha's rapid recovery has given our research bods some jolly valuable information about Attila 305 Toxin,' he blurted out smugly.

Brodsky waddled over and thrust his waxy perspiring face into Harry's. 'It has also given *us* extremely valuable information, Commander Sullivan,' he sneered. 'And as a result we have no longer any need of your help ... or your hindrance.'

Harry drained his glass for the umpteenth time and glared defiantly at Brodsky. Then he flung the glass over the guardrail and it fell tinkling and smashing against the lattice of steel beneath them. With a swashbuckling flourish, he took off his dinner jacket and flung it after the champagne glass. Taking a deep breath, he squared up to Zbigniew Brodsky in an old-fashioned prize fighter's stance. 'I don't like you, Brodsky . . . ' he cried in a cracked, slurred voice. 'I don't like you one little bit . . . Put up your fists!' He danced unsteadily round the speechless, immobile figure and then tripped over his own feet and slumped against the steel balustrade.

Next moment Rudolf Rainbow lurched forward, grabbed Harry round the waist and hoisted him off his feet. With effortless ease he held his victim out over the balustrade. Harry's heart leaped into his mouth as he stared down into

the darkness yawning almost a thousand feet beneath him. He was instantly sober.

'A tragic accident . . .' Brodsky chuckled icily. 'Commander Sullivan fell from the *Tour Eiffel* while under the influence of alcohol. There were no witnesses.'

Instinctively Harry managed to jam his feet into the criss-cross struts of the balustrade framework. Grasping the guardrail with both hands, he bent his legs and then suddenly straightened them, driving the top of his head as hard as he could against the strongman's jutting chin. Rainbow uttered a roar of surprise and slackened his grip on Harry's belt. Instantly Harry ducked and scrambled away out of reach, down and across the iron latticework.

'You incompetent great colossus!' Brodsky ranted. 'Waldo, get after him. Don't let Sullivan escape!'

As he grappled his way underneath the deck of the promenade, clinging for his life to the iron joists running out at right-angles to the main structure, Harry heard someone clambering over the guardrail in pursuit of him. A few seconds later he saw Waldo's lithe shirt-sleeved figure swinging with agile ease along the beams towards him.

'You are safe now, Englishman . . .' Waldo called mockingly. 'Waldo Tedescu, trapeze artiste extraordinaire of the Romanian National Circus will save you.'

Harry lashed out with his legs in a desperate attempt to straddle one of the thick girders forming part of the restaurant deck. He fought against the dizziness in his head and the nausea rising in his stomach and tried to forget that he was hanging a thousand feet above the ground, with only the tapering steel framework of the tower between him and the concrete paving stones. He knew that if he slipped, the hundreds of crisscrossing struts would shred him into pieces like a lump of cheese on a grater, long before he hit the ground. Hand over hand, he worked his way perilously towards one of the main legs of the tower and at last succeeded in jamming his feet into one of the diamond-shaped spaces formed by the complex steel ribs. With numb fingers he clung to the cold struts. Trembling as the gusty wind clutched greedily at his clothes, he watched the athletic

Romanian swing relentlessly towards him.

Waldo finally stopped barely a yard away, hanging almost casually by one arm and snapping his patent leather shoes provocatively together in his quarry's face. 'Why you do not jump, Englishman?' he taunted. 'It will be so much more simpler for us all . . .'

Without waiting to reply, Harry started climbing awkwardly down the leg of the tower. The spacing between the cross-members forced him to stretch his body to reach the next foothold below before he could risk releasing his grasp on the one above him. To his horror he discovered that the distances between the sections increased as he descended, so that soon he found himself having to hang at full stretch and then drop several feet to reach the next horizontal girder. Each successive drop became more and more nightmarish as he let go and waited for his feet to land on the next beam. The fresh air and the champagne were making his head spin like a badly-balanced top as he teetered unsteadily to his knees and lowered himself ready for the next terrifying jump.

Suddenly he heard a blood-curdling yell. Glancing up, he saw that Waldo was following him, swinging down from strut to strut like a monkey. Harry clung to the beam trying to force himself to make the next blind drop. But he was paralysed with fear, imagining that the next beam would not be there and that he would fall to the ground. Seconds later he felt a crushing sensation in his numbed fingers. Waldo was standing on his hands.

'Jump, Englishman. It is no good. You are finished . . .'

Waldo teased, balancing on his victim's hands like a tightrope walker.

Trapped, with his feet dangling in mid-air and his hands caught under Waldo's shoes, Harry felt his own weight slowly tearing his joints apart. Suddenly it seemed that he had only seconds to live. The events of the past few months flashed through his mind. Nothing made any sense at all. He had been deceived and his feeble efforts had all ended in failure. Harry Sullivan was an imbecile.

Grinning contemptuously, Waldo raised his foot to deliver the final stamp to break Harry's failing grip on the beam.

Somehow Harry found the strength to reach up with his left hand and grab his attacker's ankle. Gritting his teeth against the unbearable strain, Harry gradually transferred more and more of his weight onto Waldo's foot and heard the Romanian gasp in shock at the sudden additional load. His arms felt as if they were about to rip from their sockets. He no longer had any sensation in his right hand under Waldo's shoe and he didn't know whether it was still gripping the beam or not. The more weight he exerted on Waldo's ankle the harder the other shoe pressed onto his fingers. But one thing Harry knew for sure. If he was going to fall, the Romanian was coming with him.

All at once a shrill scream slashed through the darkness. Fingers opened. Feet slipped. Arms and legs flailed desperately in the air. A figure clad in black trousers, dress shirt and black bowtie plunged into the blackness, bouncing sickeningly off the lattice girders as it plummeted to earth. Far below, a mangled body slammed into the ground and lay still, its head and limbs twisted at impossible angles to the torso.

There was silence, except for the whine of the chilly wind through the tower and the faint sound of the band in the restaurant far above playing a cheerful tango.

Early next morning, Inspector Etienne Tartuffe of the Paris police knelt beside the unrecognisable broken body which had been brought into the tower entrance lobby, and frowned sadly at the crumpled note his men had found on the ground outside. 'Poor Monsieur Varnish . . .' he sighed, handing the note to the bare-headed gentleman standing next to him. 'Mademoiselle Natasha is very cruel.'

George Fawcett-Smith gave the note a cursory glance. 'We never suspected the Russians were involved in this mess,' he remarked, handing it back and turning to stare at the barred windows of the police vans parked underneath the tower.

Tartuffe nodded and then shook his head at the unidentifiable corpse. '*Voild*. . . A suicide of the heart . . .' he said solemnly.

Fawcett-Smith shrugged and replaced his bowler hat on his head. 'Yes indeed. Poor Mr Varnish . . .' he agreed,

watching yet another dinner-jacketed figure being led out to the vans. 'I do hope we've heard the last of him. Whoever he is.'

Epilogue

Two days later, on the fifth floor of a block of flats in St. John's Wood, a tall red-haired young woman marched eagerly out of the lift and plonked her suitcase down outside one of the respectable front doors. She rang the bell and waited, humming with impatient excitement. She rang again and listened, but there was no sign of life within. She rang a third time. Still there was no reply.

All at once the next respectable front door along the landing opened and a dignified grey-haired lady looked out. 'Oh, my dear young lady, such a terrible thing . . .' she murmured, wringing her hands and shaking her head in distress. 'You must please come in a moment and I explain . . .'

Mystified, the visitor abandoned her suitcase and entered the neighbouring apartment. As the door closed quietly behind her, the first front door opened hesitantly and a bleary-eyed, pale figure with bandaged hands and forehead and swathed in a red paisley dressing-gown peered warily into the deserted hallway. He mumbled something sleepily to himself and was about to shut the door when he noticed the suitcase at his feet. He stared at it motionless for a few seconds. Then he was suddenly galvanised into action.

He stumbled along the landing, tripping over the loose cords of the dressing-gown as he kicked frantically at the front doors and yelling at the top of his voice 'Mrs Wiele-gorski . . . Everybody . . . Get out at once . . . There's a bomb ... A bomb!'

The Wielegorski's front door flew open and the redhead emerged beaming radiantly. 'Surprise, surprise, Sullers!'

she cried, throwing her arms wide apart. 'I've come to stay for a few weeks . . .'

The figure in the dressing-gown froze and slowly turned as a row of puzzled heads poked curiously out of their front doors at the unseemly commotion. He gaped at the visitor in utter disbelief. 'What the dickens are you doing here?' he eventually gasped.

Mrs Wielegorski shrieked and muttered incoherently as if she had just seen a ghost.

Esther Bland's triumphant smile melted into tender concern. She ran down the hallway and swept up her devastated victim in a passionate embrace. 'Oh, you poor little *mite*, Sullers . . .'

she cooed, whirling him bodily around her. 'I always said you needed someone to look after you . . . And here I am!'

