

Berkley Books by Agatha Christie
 APPOINTMENT WITH DEATH
 THE BIG FOUR
 THE BOOMERANG CLUE
 CARDS ON THE TABLE
 DEAD MAN'S MIRROR
 DEATH IN THE AIR
 ^'V DOUBLE SIN AND OTHER STORIES ;;
 ',. ^ ELEPHANTS CAN REMEMBER
 THE GOLDEN BALL AND OTHER STORIES
 ,.; THE HOLLOW y
 _ S- • THE LABORS OF HERCULES ^.. t^_
 T'r^AS-*' • THE MAN IN THE BROWN SUIT ^^|ss?:?4&
 • •&v^.-^%'p .-. • ^-''.'....^^'.f.1^^
 ^-' ' THE MOVING FINGER
 '^' MISS MARPLE: THE COMPLETE SHORT STORIES
 ^i^S". 'Aito1 • mr. BARKER PYNE, DETECTIVE . A;
 '" THE MURDER AT HAZELMOOR 1
 ,,, THE MURDER AT THE VICARAGE
 MURDER IN MESOPOTAMIA
 MURDER IN RETROSPECT
 MURDER IN THREE ACTS "'
 THE MURDER ON THE LINKS
 THE MYSTERIOUS MR. QUIN
 .<<.'
 saa.
 ?•%
 N OR M? -sfsnf
 PARTNERS IN CRIME iss-i
 THE PATRIOTIC MURDERS
 PIOROT LOSES A CLIENT
 THE REGATTA MYSTERY AND OTHER STORIES
 H SAD CYPRESS
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 THERE IS A TIDE...
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 THIRTEEN AT DINNER
 THREE BLIND MICE AND OTHER STORIES
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 THE WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION AND OTHER STORIES
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 N OR M? t 'SS- 4
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 G. P. Putnam's Sons B
 ^ is
 ' PRINTING HISTORY
 Dodd, Mead edition published 1941
 Berkley edition / June 1984
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 For information address: G. P. Putnam's Sons,
 200 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016.
 ISBN: 0425098451
 A BERKLEY BOOK ® TM 757,375

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Tommy Beresford removed his overcoat in the hall of the flat. He hung it up with some care, taking time over it. His hat went carefully on the next peg.

He squared his shoulders, affixed a resolute smile to his face and walked into the sitting room where his wife sat knitting a Balaclava helmet in khaki wool.

Mrs. Beresford gave him a quick glance and then busied herself by knitting at a furious rate. She said after a minute or two:

"Any news in the evening paper?"

Tommy said:

"The Blitzkrieg is coming, hurray, hurray! Things look bad in France."

Tuppence said: . ;»'

"It's a depressing world at the moment."

There was a pause and then Tommy said:

"Well, why don't you ask? No need to be so damned tactful."

"I know," admitted Tuppence. "There is something about conscious tact that is very irritating. But then it irritates you if I do ask. And anyway I don't need to ask. It's written all over you."

"I wasn't conscious of looking a Dismal Desmond."

"No, darling," said Tuppence. "You had a kind of nailed to the mast smile which was one of □^aisfhtsi Christie the most heart-remi^g «|ungs I have ever seen."

Tommy said wil]i a gi-jl;

"No, was it resly g^s ^H as all that?"

"And more! vyi, c^iae on, out with it. Noth ing doing?"

"Nothing doing (Th.k? don't want me in an ; capacity. I tell ^ 1'iippence, it's pretty thic;

when a man of fdity-ssim is made to feel like a do< dering grandfathg ftAtvff, Navy, Air Force, Fo

eign Office, one ^ misay the same thing--I'i.

too old. I may besq^ir-d later."

Tuppence said:

"Well, it's theart^ie for me. They don't wai

people of my age lor ^ixntsing--no, thank you. N<

for anything else, Th^ey 'd rather have a fluffy chi

who's never seenjy^iiaiii. or sterilized a dressing than they would lay-e me who worked for three

years, 1915 to 19^ i^i wariou capacities, nurse i i the surgical warding opiating theatre, driver o

a trade delivery va ^n<il^ter of a General. This

that and the other-^ll., 1 assert firmly, with cor

She sighed. She said
"I wish we could find
rotten when one has seen
; Her eyes rested on
photograph of the
uniform, with the

Tommy's. ? ,:

Tommy said:

"It's worse for a
all--and do up parcel;

Tuppence said:

"I can do all that
not old enough to
neither one thing nor
The front door bell
flat was a small service
H She opened the door
man with a big fair
face, standing on the
His glance, a quick
in a pleasant voice:

□N OR M? 5

"Are you Mrs. Beresford?"

"Yes." "A.v!' ^" "My name's Grant. I'm a friend of Lord Easthampton's.

He suggested I should look you and

your husband up." 3^ "Oh, how nice, do come in." R^ She preceded him into the
sitting room.

"My husband, er--Captain--"

"Mr." :',. I *|

"Mr. Grant. He's a friend of Mr. Carter--of Lord
Easthampton's."

The old nom de guerre of the former Chief of
the Intelligence, "Mr. Carter," always came more
easily to her lips than their old friend's proper
title.

For a few minutes the three talked happily together.
Grant was an attractive person with an
easy manner.

Presently Tuppence left the room. She returned
a few minutes later with the sherry and some
glasses.

After a few minutes, when a pause came, Mr.

Grant said to Tommy:

"I hear you're looking for a job, Beresford?"

An eager light came into Tommy's eye.

"Yes, indeed. You don't mean--" .^ Grant laughed, and shook his head.

"Oh, nothing of that kind. No, I'm afraid that
has to be left to the young active men--or to those
who've been at it for years. The only things I can
suggest are rather stodgy, I'm afraid. Office work.

Filing papers. Tying them up in red tape and

pigeon-holing them. That sort of thing." y-^ -^ Tommy's face fell. a^--s."* ^S^''^ >'

"Oh, I see!" ^.'-::-,, sSj,;,^ Grant said encouragingly: ^"%»% A *

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"Oh, well, it's better than nothing. Anyway,
come and see me at my office one day. Ministry of
Requirements. Room 22. We'll fix you up with
something." p? ^ ••'^

The telephone rang. Tuppence picked up the
I receiver, g

"Hullo--yes--what?" A squeaky voice spoke ygss3
agitatedly from the other end. Tuppence's face

t changed. "When? Oh, my dear--of course--I'll come over right away...."

1 She put back the receiver. ^aa&ta?

* She said to Tommy:

<< ' 'That was Maureen.' '•^

"I thought so--I recognized her voice from , Tuppence explained breathlessly: |||| ?>

"I'm so sorry, Mr. Grant. But I must go round to this friend of mine. She's fallen and twisted her ankle and there's no one with her but her little girl, so I must go round and fix up things for her and | get hold of someone to come in and look after her. Do forgive me." ^".1 ^g K^ I

^ "Of course, Mrs. Beresford, I quite under- ^" | stand." BB'

^| Tuppence smiled at him, picked up a coat which H had been lying over the sofa, slipped her arms into ; it and hurried out. The flat door banged. :'.• Tommy poured out another glass of sherry for his guest. ^'".''s^'s'S^T?''' •".11 •'....''

-. "Don't go yet," he said. <"Acy

"Thank you." The other accepted the glass. He sipped it for a moment in silence. Then he said:

"In a way, you know, your wife's being called away is a fortunate occurrence. It will save time."

si^ Tommy stared. ' ;•"-•. ••^ - •;• ^v •

>> "I don't understand." 1^'^- ^-S^,,,^

□,,, NORM? ; 7

Grant said deliberately: a "You see, Beresford, if you had come to see me at the Ministry, I was empowered to put a certain proposition before you."

The colour came slowly up in Tommy's freckled face. He said: ' ""a

"You don't mean: ^" ^ , .^|^B,,^:, ;^

Grant nodded. gS&s^te*^ a*-!- Safe "Easthampton suggested you," he said. "He told us you were the man for the job." g;xy^|^%g Tommy gave a deep sigh. a^ ^ ' " " ly^ "Tell me," he said. ^ w&^ "This is strictly confidential, of course." ^^^ Tommy nodded. *.^; ,c. ,s , "Not even your wife must know. You under, : stand?"

"Very well--if you say so. But we worked together before."

"Yes, I know. But this proposition is solely for T-- - .-^ .-- . ^-^ ^W^K^;-v ' ,, ;.you."

|g ^,.,, ,^ ^,;,^ ^

"I see. All right:" 1' "I' ^ ^|"Ostensibly you will be offered work--as I said just now--office work--in a branch of the Ministry functioning in Scotland--in a prohibited area where your wife cannot accompany you. Actually^; you will be somewhere very different."

Tommy merely waited. ^.,.,^r: . s;,

Grant said:

"You've read in the newspapers of the Fifth Column? You know, roughly at any rate, just what that term implies."

Tommy murmured: :...-:, ^Irs'SS

.. '-^ ^S^."*-^^^

The enemy within."

"Exactly. This war, Beresford, started in an optimistic spirit. Oh, I don't mean the people who really knew--we've known along what we were

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up against--the efficiency of the enemy, his aerial

strength, his deadly determination, and the co-ordination of his well-planned war machine. I mean the people as a whole. The good-hearted, muddleheaded democratic fellow who believes what he wants to believe--that Germany will crack up, p ,, that she's on the verge of revolution, that her|| I weapons of war are made of tin and that her men& | are so underfed that they'll fall down if they try to march--all that sort of stuff. wishful thinking, as|g the saying goes. ||j "well, the war didn't go that way. It started^ .;, badly and it went on worse. The men were all|& I right--the men on the battleships and in the planes^ and in the dugouts. But there was mismanagement^; and unpreparedness--the defects, perhaps, of our||| qualities. We don't want war, haven't considered it seriously, weren't good at preparing for it. "The worst of that is over. We've corrected our mistakes, we're slowly getting the right men in the right places. We're beginning to run the war as it should be run--and we can win the war--make no mistake about that--but only if we don't lose if first. And the danger of losing it comes, not y .from outside--not from the might of Germany's |g||bombers, not from her seizure of neutral countries uand fresh vantage points from which to attack-- from within. Our danger is the danger of *Troy--the wooden horse within our walls. Call it wthe Fifth Column if you like. It is here, among us. Men and women, some of them highly placed, Ssome of them obscure, but all believing genuinely in the Nazi aims and the Nazi creed and desiring to substitute that sternly efficient creed for the muddled easy-going liberty of our democratic --.institutions." ,,,----- --

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Grant leaned forward. He said, still in that same pleasant unemotional voice:

"And we don't know who they are...."

Tommy said: " But surely--'" Has Grant said, with a touch of impatience:

"Oh, we can round up the small fry. That's easy enough. But it's the others. We know about them. We know that there are at least two highly placed in the Admiralty--that one must be a member of General G----'s staff--that there are three or more in the Air Force, and that two, at least, are members of the Intelligence, know Cabinet secrets. We know that because it must be so from the way things have happened. The leakage--a leakage from the top--of information to the enemy, shows us that." l^1'

Tommy said helplessly, his pleasant face perplexed:

"But what good should I be to you? I don't know any of these people."

Grant nodded. If '.fi^'-i. ^, "ySisi --.

"Exactly. You don't know any of them--aw? they don't know you." ^ He paused to let it sink in and then went on.

"These people, these high up people, know most of our lot. Information can't be very well refused to them. I was at my wits' end. I went to Easthampton. He's out of it all now--a sick man --but his brain's the best I've ever known. He thought of you. Nearly twenty years since you worked for the Department. Name quite unconnected

N Or M

with it. Your face not known. What do you say--will you take it on?" ; ^ ^ ' ^ - Tommy's face was almost split in two by the magnitude of his ecstatic grin. "Take it on? You bet I'll take it on. Though I can't see how I can be of any use. I'm just a blasted amateur."

"My dear Beresford, amateur status is just what ; ^'v, is needed. The professional is handicapped here. | You'll take on in place of the best man we had or E1 are likely to have."

Tommy looked a question. Grant nodded. ^11 "Yes. Died in St. Bridget's Hospital last TuesJI|S

day. Run down by a lorry--only lived a few hours. Accident case--but it wasn't an accident. "||Syg^ Tommy said slowly: "I see." ^?;:1,^By""',l'gi|^ Grant said quietly: ^:^^., "And that's why we have reason to believe that

Farquhar was on to something--that he was getting somewhere at last. By his death that wasn't an accident." 'SS ^'^^k.^^^w^s'-^' ' Tommy looked a'questibn;''' ' ' Grant went on: lsf^ ''s^--

"Unfortunately we know next to nothing of what he had discovered. Farquhar had been methodically following up one line after another. ^ Most of them led nowhere.'" ^ 8- Grant paused and then went on: BA^2 "- "Farquhar was unconscious until a few minutes } before he died. Then he tried to say something, |||J what he said was this: N or M Song Susie." f

"That," said Tommy, "doesn't seem very illu' minating." ----- Grant smiled. ^ ^,^.

"A little more so than you might think. N or M, you see, is a term we have heard before. It refers ^g to two of the most important and trusted German agents. We have come across their activities in other countries and we know just a little about them. It is their mission to organize a Fifth ' Column in foreign countries and to act as liaison

□NORM? fr 11 officer between the country in question and Germany. N, we know, is a man. M is a woman. All we know about them is that these two are Hitler's

most highly trusted agents and that in a code message we managed to decipher towards the beginning of the war there occurred this phrase-- Suggest N or Mfor England. Fullpowers--'1^.

"I see. And Farquhar--" is18 "As I see it, Farquhar must have got on the track of one or other of them. Unfortunately we don't know which. Song Susie sounds very cryptic --but Farquhar hadn't a high class French accent! There was a return ticket to Leahampton in his pocket which is suggestive. Leahampton is on the South coast--a budding Bournemouth or Torquay. Lots of private hotels and guest houses.

Amongst them is one called Sans Souci--' fewK Tommy said again: >>>>?"" "Song Susie--Sans Souci--I see." &^ fc Grant said: , < ' "Do you?" <'-- ^ / ^aAQ:^ - .x's "The idea is," Tommy said, "that I should go there and--well--ferret round." : sy^w? "That is the idea.'" ly, ^. ^,

Tommy's smile broke out again-sfe * ^ "A bit vague, isn't it?" he asked. "I don't even know what I'm looking for." ;%- "And I can't tell you. I don't know. It's up to you."

Tommy sighed. He squared his shoulders.

"I can have a shot at it. But I'm not a very brainy sort of chap."

"You did pretty well in the old days, so I've heard."

"Oh, that was pure luck," said Tommy hastily.

"Well, luck is rather what we need."

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|||Tommy considered a minute or two. Then he said: --- Siysa.^1-'-'^ fe^1 " About this place. sans souci--" |||

gg;M|Grant shrugged his shoulders. "A a" .^s m"May be all a mare's nest. I can't tell. Farquhar may have been thinking of 'Sister Susie's sewing shirts for soldiers.' It's all guesswork."

B''And Leahampton itself?" ;

"Just like any other of these places. There are rows of them. Old ladies, old Colonels, unim- ; peachable spinsters, dubious customers, fishy cus- < tpmers, a foreigner or two. In fact, a mixedbag."

I^Tommy said doubtfully:

|||"And N or M amongst them?" Ite

"Not necessarily. Somebody, perhaps, who's in i touch with N or M. But it's quite likely to be N or

M themselves. It's an inconspicuous sort of place, a boarding-house at a seaside resort."

^"You've no idea whether it's a man or a woman f I've to look for?"

Grant shook his head. "rf<" * > ^^

Tommy said: ' 'Well, I can but try.' ' fe s "Good luck to your trying, Beresford.

Now--to details--"

I Half an hour later, when Tuppence broke in, i panting and eager with curiosity. Tommy was alone, whistling in an armchair with a doubtful expression on his face. |||i 1&.4& | "Well?" demanded Tuppence, throwing an in- ^g finity of feeling into the word. &>^ w^"1 "A job--of kinds.' 'y,^1*8^ "What kind?" "- .i

| Tommy made a suitable grimace.

□y, N OR M? H 13

"Office work in the wilds of Scotland. Hushhush and all that, but doesn't sound very thrill-

"Both of us, or only you?"

"Only me, I'm afraid." & ^

"Blast and curse you. How could our Mr.

Carter be so mean?"

"I imagine they segregate the sexes in these jobs. Otherwise, too distracting for the mind."

"Is it coding--or code breaking? Is it likely Deborah's job? Do be careful. Tommy; people

queer doing that and can't sleep; walk about aIiH night groaning and repeating 978345286 or something like that and finally have nervous breakdowns and go into homes." |

"Not me." sssf'

Tuppence said gloomily: '9s"I

expect you will sooner or later. Can I come, too--not to work but just as a wife? Slippers in front of the fire and a hot meal at the end of the|

w

Tommy looked uncomfortable.^- ^ i.a»<fr I "Sorry, old thing. I am sorry. I hate leaving

y°"--"

"But you feel you ought to go," murmured ;;

Tuppence reminiscently. ^B |
 "After all," said Tommy feebly, "ySS can knit,"' yonknow." www w
 "Knit?" said Tuppence. "Knit?" &wSS^, ffff
 Seizing her Balaclava helmet, she flung it on the
 ground. B
 "I hate khaki wool," said* Tuppence, "and Navy wool and Air Force blue. I should
 like to
 knit something magenta!"
 ^ "It has a fine military sound," said Tommy.
 "Almost a suggestion of Blitzkrieg." S'SJ
 □141'" Agatha Christie S^
 AwlHe felt definitely very unhappy. Tuppence,
 ' ^ however, was a Spartan and played up well, admitting
 freely that of course he had to take the job
 and that it didn't really matter about her. She
 »% added that she had heard they wanted someone to ^'q scrub down the First Aid Post
 floors. She might ^;:i possibly be found fit to do that.
 Tommy departed for Aberdeen three days later.
 Tuppence saw him off at the station. Her eyes
 were bright and she blinked once or twice, but she
 ; ;i kept resolutely cheerful.
 W Only as the train drew out of the station and
 Tommy saw the forlorn little figure walking away
 down the platform did he feel a lump in his own
 throat. war or no war he felt he was deserting
 Tuppence....
 He pulled himself together with an effort.
 Orders were orders.
 Having duly arrived in Scotland, he took a train
 the next day to Manchester. On the third day a
 train deposited him at Leahampton. Here he went
 to the principal Hotel and on the following day B^g made a tour of various private
 hotels and guest ^AB houses, seeing rooms and inquiring terms for a
 long stay. ^3
 Sans Souci was a dark red Victorian villa, set on
 the side of a hill with a good view over the sea
 from its upper windows. There was a slight smell
 ---- of dust and cooking in the hall and the carpet was
 worn, but it compared quite favourably with some
 of the other establishments Tommy had seen. He
 interviewed the proprietress, Mrs. Perenna, in her
 office, a small untidy room with a large desk
 covered with loose papers.
 Mrs. Perenna herself was rather untidy look?;
 ing, a woman of middle-age with a large mop of
 □N OR M? jg% 15 K|
 fiercely curling black hair, some vaguely applied
 makeup and a determined smile showing a lot of
 very white teeth.
 Tommy murmured a mention of his elderly <|y^ cousin. Miss Meadows, who had stayed
 at Sans ||g|
 Souci two years ago. Mrs. Perenna remembered ^ Miss Meadows quite well--such a dear
 old lady ^ _at least perhaps not really old--very active and |
 such a sense of humour, tt ^
 Tommy agreed cautiously. There was, he knew""'! a real Miss Meadows--the Department
 was careful
 about these points. ^,;,;, , ,,,,
 And how was dear Miss Meadows? Sp%^®B&
 Tommy explained sadly that Miss Meadows
 was no more and Mrs. Perenna clicked her teeth |
 sympathetically and made the proper noises and
 put on a correct mourning face.
 She was soon talking volubly again. She had,

she was sure, just the room that would suit Mr. Meadows. A lovely sea view. She thought-Mr. Meadows was so right to want to get out of London. Very depressing nowadays, so she understood, and of course, after such a bad go of influenza--

Still talking, Mrs. Perenna led Tommy upstairs and showed him various bedrooms. She mentioned a weekly sum. Tommy displayed dismay. Mrs. Perenna explained that prices had risen so appallingly. Tommy explained that his income high unfortunately decreased and what with taxation and one thing and another-- ; ^ Mrs. Perenna groaned and said: ' "This terrible war-" Tommy agreed and said that in his opinion that fellow Hitler ought to be hanged. A madman, that's what he was, a madman.

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Mrs. Perenna agreed and said that what will rations and the difficulty the butchers had in getting the meat they wanted--and sometimes too much--and sweetbreads and liver practically disappeared, it all made housekeeping very difficult but as Mr. Meadows was a relation of Miss Meadows, she would make it half a guinea less. Tommy then beat a retreat with the promise to think it over and Mrs. Perenna pursued him to the gate, talking more volubly than ever and displaying an archness that Tommy found most alarming. She was, he admitted, quite a handsome woman in her way. He found himself wondering what her nationality was. Surely not quite English?

The name was Spanish or Portuguese, but that would be her husband's nationality, not hers. She might, he thought, be Irish, though she had no brogue. But it would account for the vitality and the exuberance.

It was finally settled that Mr. Meadows should move in the following day.

Tommy timed his arrival for six o'clock. Mrs. Perenna came out into the hall to greet him, threw a series of instructions about his luggage to an almost imbecile-looking maid, who goggled at

Tommy with her mouth open, and then led him into what she called the lounge.

"I always introduce my guests," said Mrs. Perenna, beaming determinedly at the suspicious glares of five people. "This is our new arrival, Mr. Meadows--Mrs. O'Rourke." A terrifying mountain of a woman with beady eyes and a moustache* gave him a beaming smile. --l "Major Bletchley." Major Bletchley looked at Tommy appraisingly and made a stiff inclination of the head.,, —

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"Mr. von Deinim." A young man, very stiff, fair-haired and blue-eyed, got up and bowed. |||

"Miss Minton." An elderly woman with a lot of S beads, knitting with khaki wool, smiled and tittered.

"And Mrs. Blenkinsop." More knitting--and untidy dark head which lifted from an absorbed contemplation of a Balaclava helmet.

Tommy held his breath; the room spun round. |||| Mrs. Blenkinsop! Tuppence! By all that was"

On the following morning Tommy rose early and strolled down to the front. He walked briskly to the pier and was returning along the esplanade when he spied a familiar figure coming in the other direction. Tommy raised his hat.

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"Good morning," he said pleasantly. "Er_ Mrs. Blenkinsop, isn't it?"

There was no one within earshot. Tuppence replied: - - a^J r^

"Dr. Livingstone to you." afe?

"How on earth did you get here. Tuppence?"

murmured Tommy. "It's a miracle--an absolute miracle."

"It's not a miracle at all--just brains." " *

"Your brains, I suppose?"

"You suppose rightly. You and your uppish Mr. Grant. I hope this will teach him a lesson."

"It certainly ought to," said Tommy. "Come on. Tuppence, tell me how you managed it. I'm simply devoured with curiosity."

"It was quite simple. The moment Grant talked of our Mr. Carter I guessed what was up. I knew it wouldn't be just some miserable office job. But his saying so showed me that I wasn't going to be allowed in on this. So I resolved to go one better. I went to fetch some sherry and, when I did, I nipped down to the Browns' flat and rang up Maureen. Told her to ring me up and what to say. She played up loyally--nice high squeaky voice--you could hear what she was saying all over the room. I did my stuff, registered annoyance, compulsion, distressed friend, and rushed off with every sign of vexation. Banged the hall door, carefully remaining inside it, and slipped into the bedroom and eased open the communicating door that's hidden by the tallboy."

' 'And you heard everything?'

"Everything," said Tuppence complacently.

Tommy said reproachfully: '. s^|

"And you never let on."

"Certainly not. I wished to teach you a lesson.

0NORM? 21

""oil and your Mr. Grant."

"He's not exactly my Mr. Grant and I should say you have taught him a lesson."

"Mr. Carter wouldn't have treated me so shabbily" said Tuppence. "I don't think the Intelligence is anything like what it was in our day."

Tommy said gravely:

"It will attain its former brilliance now we're back in it. But why Blenkinsop?"

"Why not?" '. ig^ss

"It seems such an odd name to choose."

"It was the first one I thought of and it's handy | for underclothes." ^.^a^a^

"What do you mean. Tuppence?" ""* rite

"B, you idiot. B for Beresford, B for Blenkinsop.

Embroidered on my cami-knickers. Patricia

Blenkensop. Prudence Beresford. why did you

choose Meadows? It's a silly name."

"To begin with," said Tommy, "I don't have large B's embroidered on my pants. And to continue,

N Or M

I didn't choose it. I was told to call myself Meadows. Mr. Meadows is a gentleman with a respectable past--all of which I've learned by heart."

"Very nice," said Tuppence. "Are you married or single?"

"I'm a widower," said Tommy with dignity. "My wife died ten years ago at Singapore." He g-why at Singapore? " fe^

Swe've all got to die somewhere. what'swrong wilfc Singapore?"

"Oh, nothing. It's probably a, most suitable place to die. I'm a widow." ^ , where did your husband die?'' -,*-? ..;

"Does it matter? Probably in a nursing home. I "therjancy he died of cirrhosis of the liver."

□A Agatha Christie §1°

11 ':. "'

" |8 "I see. A painful subject. And what about your I H son Douglas?" HIB I" ' _ "Douglas is in the Navy." i,

® "So I heard last night." ^ ^ ;

"And I've got two other sons. Raymond is in ^ - the Air Force and Cyril, my baby, is in the Ter- g| ritorials."pj ; . . "And suppose someone takes the trouble to -m |g| check up on these imaginary Blenkinsops?"

"They're not Blenkinsops. Blenkinsop was my second husband. My first husband's name was | Hill. There are three pages of Hills in the] I telephone book. You couVn.'tcheckupon^l the I T Vlt *f A " -t 99 ^^^B^'"6-'^^"' ^"^^ ' ^Vl^"'-? yv!!''Stsiw^G: ^ i ' i Hills if you tried - .. .^B'^w'i'?'''*?'^"*^' fii'ffi^'y ' :'' :^ 1 i «^»g ^g ^ trouble with you. Tuppence. You s | will overdo things. Two husbands and three sons. I'll K It's too much. You'll contradict yourself over the m

"No, I shan't. And I rather fancy the sons may's ^s^awSataes^ ' - - ^"K!aS

1||| come in useful. I'm not under orders, remember. |gg|

1% I'm a free-lance. I'm in this to enjoy myself and §i| vs& I'm going to enjoy myself. "AB IB

I "So it seems," said Tommy. He added gloom-B ^_J ny; "if you ask me, the whole thing's a farce.",, , | ' 'why do you say that?" i?fe:iR. ,a "Well, you've been at Sans Souci longer than I ^ have. Can you honestly say you think any one of those people who were there last night could be a r

*1| dangerous enemy agent?" H ^ Tuppence said thoughtfully: '^'tiff^^^S^^

"It does seem a little incredible, There's the ^| young man, of course." N1 ' ' ' ^S "Carl von Deinim? The police check up on m refugees, don't they?"

iil "I suppose so. Still, it might be managed. He's

□N OR M? 23

an attractive young man, you know."

"Meaning the girls will tell him things? But what girls? No Generals' or Admirals' daughters floating around here. Perhaps he walks out with a Company Commander in the A.T.S." ^M

"Be quiet. Tommy. We ought to be taking this seriously." ^

"I am taking it seriously. It's just that I feel we're on a wild goose chase." ^.^ ^

Tuppence said seriously: "A a

"It's too early to say that. After all, nothing's going to be obvious about this business. What about Mrs. Perenna?" ^?-,v: |

"Yes," said Tommy thoughtfuUy, "there's Mrs. Perenna, I admit--she does want explain-

N Or M

ing." .A
 Tuppence said in a business-like tone: "what about us? I mean, how are we going to cooperate?"
 Tommy said thoughtfully: "We mustn't be seen about too much together."
 "No, it would be fatal to suggest we know each other better than we appear to do. What we want to decide is the attitude. I think--yes, I think--pursuit is the best angle."
 "Exactly. I pursue you. You do your best to escape, but being a mere chivalrous mate doesn't always succeed. I've had two husbands and I'm on the look-out for a third. You act the part of the Tiunted widower. Every now and then I pin you down somewhere, pen you in a cafe, catch you walking on the front. Everyone sniggers and thinks it very funny."
 "Sounds feasible," agreed Tommy.
 Agatha Christie
 Tuppence said: "There's a kind of age-long humour about the chased male. That ought to stand us in good stead. If we are seen together, anyone will do is to snigger and say, 'Look at poor %oldMeadowes.'" Tommy gripped her arm suddenly, and said: "Look ahead of you." By the corner of one of the shelters a young man stood talking to a girl. They were both very earnest; they were wrapped up in what they were saying.
 "Carl von Deinim. Who's the girl, I wonder?"
 "She's remarkably good looking, whoever she is."
 Tuppence nodded. Her eyes dwelt thoughtfully on the dark passionate face, and on the tight-fitting pullover that revealed the lines of the girl's figure. She was talking earnestly, with emphasis.
 "Carl von Deinim was listening to her."
 Tuppence murmured: "I think this is where you leave me." "Right," agreed Tommy. He turned and strolled in the opposite direction. At the end of the promenade he encountered Major Bletchley. The latter peered at him suspiciously and then grunted out, "Good morning." "Good morning," i& Ifff/Si ILp "See you're like me, an early riser," remarked S *Bletchley. nm f .- Tommy said: " m I . waa^' ,. ^ "One gets in the habit of it out East. Of course, that's many years ago now, but I still wake early. "I? > "Quite right, too," said Major Bletchley with approval. "God, these young fellows nowadays _ make me sick. Hot baths--coming down to breaker Later. Noynder the Ger^
 NORM? ^ 25
 -S-rf;- " . ? , . ; mans
 have been putting it over on us. No stamina. Soft lot of young pups. Army's not what it was, anyway. Coddle 'em, that's what they do nowadays. Tuck 'em up at night with hot water bottles. Faugh! Makes me sick!" a K
 Tommy shook his head in a melancholy fashion and Major Bletchley, thus encouraged, went on.

"Discipline, that's what we need. Discipline. How are we going to win the war without discipline? Do you know, sir, some of these fellows come on parade in slacks--so I've been told. Can't expect to win a war that way. Slacks! My God!"

§1 Mr. Meadows hazarded the opinion that things were very different from what they had been.

<^;

aa

"It's all this democracy," said Major Bletchley gloomily. "You can overdo anything. In my opinion they're overdoing the democracy business. Mixing up the officers and the men, feeding ?N&S together in restaurants--Paugh!--the men don't %| like it, Meadows. The troops know. The troops always know." «g gg

"Of course," said Mr. Meadows, "I have no real knowledge of Army matters myself--" ^ ^4 The Major interrupted him, shooting a quick sideways glance.

"In the show in the last war?^!?!^1^1^1^1^1 ifc'-fABi^'ftA^'A*-. ^sfe^"^^;^&

"Oh, yes."

"Thought so. Saw you'd been drilled. Shoul- mg ders. what regiment?" ^ ^'pf^

"Fifth Corfeshires." Tommy remembered to produce Meadows'military record. ^*

"Ah. yes, Salonica!"^!! ,

"Yes." " -^ fc-a^iji / : ^

I'll "I was in Mespot." -:'' ^*

Bletchley plunged into reminiscences. Tommy

□i6 ""'m "sAgatha Christie ^ 1^

•aw •.' " y^ rtff

listened politely. Bletchley ended up wrathfully.

^ "And will they make use of me now? No, they will not. Too old. Too old be damned. I could teach one or two of these young cubs something m | about war." ;gt 1\$ S1

"Even if it's only what not to do?" suggested

•."••:_ ' ?^Ar ,;: ;'i'^'---^ ^yja^ ^Tf^ ;

Tommy with a smile. .A-.x^1^1^1^1^1 ,,, dl '''^^_'^

, "Eh, what's that?" •. H.

A sense of humour was clearly not Major |

I

g Bletchley *s strong suit. He peered suspiciously I 3 at his companion. Tommy hastened to change the 1%: conversation. ^

: "Know anything about that Mrs.-Blenkensop^y

g I think her name

US "That's right. Blenkinsop. Not a bad looking i

S woman-bit long in the tooth-talks too much.

^ Nice woman, but foolish. No, I don't know her. |

| She's only been at Sans Souci a couple of days."J|

| He added: "whydoyouask?"^,..p,,^..^,^yy^

9. ;-i Tommy explained. ..-aaS&&,.'

g "Happened to meet her just now. Wondered if

j she was always out as early as this?" m ""

, "Don't know, I'm sure. Women aren't usually

given to walking before breakfast--thank God," g

B "Amen," said Tommy. He went on: "I'm not

I much good at making polite conversation before ^H

, breakfast. Hope I wasn't rude to the woman, but I

I wanted my exercise." ^
 Major Bletchley displayed instant sympathy, r
 j "I'm with you, Meadows. I'm with you.
 | Women are all very well in their place, but not fss&
 ^ before breakfast." He chuckled a little. "Better be
 careful, old man. She's a widow, you know."
 "Is she?" ^%|3fe SK^S|
 The Major dug him cheerfully in the ribs. ial
 □m ^NbrM? 27 ,%
 "M^e know what widows are. She's buried two
 husbands and if you ask me, she's on the lookout
 for number three. Keep a very wary eye open,
 Meadows. A wary eye. That's my advice.'" ? ^
 And in high good humour Major Bletchley i% wheeled about at the end of the parade
 and set the
 pace for a smart walk back to breakfast at Sans
 Souci. *®
 In the meantime. Tuppence had gently con--
 tinued her walk along the esplanade, passing quite ^
 , '-^y^'^
 close to the shelter and the young couple talking '
 there. As she passed she caught a few words. It ^ was the girl speaking. %||j|8?;%
 t| '^: " ^
 "But you must be careful, Carl. The very least 1||
 suspicion--"®- iPH^-. %L : ':'
 Tuppence was out of earshot. Suggestive
 words? Yes, but capable of any number of harmless
 interpretations. Unobtrusively she turned and
 again passed the two. Again words floated to her.
 "Smug, detestable English..."
 The eyebrows of Mrs. Blenkinsop rose ever so
 slightly. "^ ^^^fi^'|
 Hardly, she thought, a very wise conversation.
 ___ '.. ''t':,!'^^3:.
 Carl von Deinim was a refugee from Nazi persecution,
 given asylum and shelter by England.
 Neither wise nor grateful to listen assentingly to
 such words. r;s::i ^ ^ ? ' '»fe
 Again Tuppence turned. But this time, before
 she reached the shelter, the couple had parted
 abruptly, the girl to cross the road leaving the sea
 front, Carl von Deinim to come along in Tuppence's
 direction. ^ Hg
 He would not, perhaps, have recognized her but ?^ for her own pause and hesitation.
 Then quickly,
 he brought his heels together and bowed. t%
 Tuppence twittered at him. ^ sy ^
 □__ Agatha Christie ^
 < < /^ iLS^b'
 Good morning, Mr. von Deinim, isn't it? Such
 ^^^ely morning." B tw "Ah, yes. The weather is fine." ^ .. J ^PPence ran on. ftl %1
 i* (<It quite tempted me. I don't often come out -- ^ before breakfast. But this
 morning, what with not
 sleeping very well--one often doesn't sleep well in a ^ange place, I find. It takes
 a day or two to ac- ^ custom oneself, I always say." ^"1 ^°h, yes, no doubt that is
 so."
 'And really this little walk has quite given me
 86 an appetite for breakfast."
 "You go back to Sans Souci now? If you permit
 I will walk with you." He walked gravely by her
 side. ,,, _____
 - ^"PPence said: sa M " s''
 J ' ' ^u also are out to get an appetite?' ' ^ Gravely he shook his head. m fo

(t ^» -- '^ ^ :';,

_ | ^h, no. My breakfast I have already had it. I f~
H am on myway^o work." -----

^» '^ ^aresearchchemist."

So that's what you are, thought .Tuppence, I

baling a quick glance at him. fete« Carl von Deinim went on, his voice stiff. ^

. " ^ came to this country to escape Nazi persecu- m.. tion. l ^ ^ | ygry little
money--no friends. I do now

what useful work I can." ^ ^

-^g ,-" He stared straight ahead of him.'

GQnscious of some undercurrent of strong feeling y |

--^ ^ng him powerfully. i | . 3S |

^ She murmured vaguely: ^ ^ ^ "sil 'Oh, yes, I see. I see. Very creditable, I
am^lllkt

^ure." ^ ^ ^ , , ^ ..^...^ .B ,

_ ^ carl yo" Deinim said: ^ ^K ^ / | " ^ly two brothers are in concentration camps. Kr

□ N OR M? 29

^'..'.'.-s^

My father died in one. My mother died of sorrow ^ and fear." |p, ^ ^ _ gf^

^ Tuppence thought: - ' i^

"The way he says that--as though he had I
learned it by heart." - .; '^ ^

Again she stole a quick glance at him. He was
still staring ahead of him, his face impassive.

They walked in silence for some moments. Two
men passed them. One of them shot a quick glance
at Carl. She heard him mutter to his companion: n

"Bet you that fellow is a German." y^

Tuppence saw the colour rise in Carl von
Deinim's cheeks. B | g |

li? Suddenly he lost command of himself. That tide
of hidden emotion came to the surface. He stammered:

"You heard--you heard--that is what they say
_ I _"

"My dear boy!" Tuppence reverted suddenly to I'll
her real self. Her voice was crisp and compelling.

"Don't be an idiot. You can't have it both ways."

l l He turned his head and stared at her.

Hi "What dn vnn mpfln?" SS8» M ^
gl. w iidi uu yuu iicdii; ^fc-'-' , ":'''^'^?' %%^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ w' ^ m

"You're a refugee. You have to take the rough
with the smooth. You're alive, that's the main
thing. Alive and free. For the other--realize that

it's inevitable. This country's at war. You're a
German." She smiled suddenly. "You can't expect

the mere man in the street--literally the man
in the street--to distinguish between bad Germans
and good Germans, if I may put it so crudely."

He still stared at her. His eyes, so very blue,
were poignant with suppressed feeling. Then, suddenly,

he too smiled. He said: I'll Is

"They said of Red Indians, did they not, that a
good Indian was a dead Indian?" He laughed.

; a''''1. ifswiz

i , -'' fl'sw

□ t8 Agatha Christie

"Good morning, Mr. von Deinim, isn't it? Such
a lovely morning." ^ < ; , ; * > ;

^ "Ah, yes. The weather is fine." ||a ::;

Tuppence ran on. st"

"It quite tempted me. I don't often come out
before breakfast. But this morning, what with not

sleeping very well--one often doesn't sleep well in a strange place, I find. It takes a day or two to accustom oneself, I always say." ;;

,a"Oh, yes, no doubt that is so." iB5s"

"And really this little walk has quite given me an appetite for breakfast."

"You go back to Sans Souci now? If you permit I will walk with you." He walked gravely by her

side. "i.;^ .^."^ ,y
Tuppence said: "" "" A"-1 ' i^-.,--

"H^''You also are out to get an appet^?" - Siy

III Gravely he shook his head. |^|

llll "Oh, no. My breakfast I have already had it. I am on my way to work. "Ip

"work?" -Bs ^;;i"%®, ^sa

' I am a research chemist.' ? ^

So that's what you are, thought Tuppence, stealing a quick glance at him. |K|!

Carl von Deinim went on, his voice stiff.

"I came to this country to escape Nazi persecution.

I had very little money--no friends. I do now what useful work I can."

He stared straight ahead of him. Tuppence was conscious of some undercurrent of strong feeling moving him powerfully. ^8 < | She murmured vaguely:

"Oh, yes, I see. I see. Very creditable, I am ; sure." @^w ,.,g^

I Carl von Deinim said: ^fi\$^^

; "My two brothers are in concentration camps.

□v father died in one. My mother died of sorrow and fear." ,, g|g| %..

Tuppence thought: ^ |||

"The way he says that--as though he hadfis learned it by heart."

Again she stole a quick glance at him. He was still staring ahead of him, his face impassive. |

They walked in silence for some moments. Two | men passed them. One of them shot a quick glance i

at Carl. She heard him mutter to his companion:

"Bet you that fellow is a German." ^ |%\$IS|N

Tuppence saw the colour rise in Carl von llH^t Deinim's cheeks. ^.^

Suddenly he lost command of himself. That tide ,51 of hidden emotion came to the surface. He stam^^,^ ^J

mered:

"You heard--you heard--that is what they say ;|

"My dear boy!" Tuppence reverted suddenly to

her real self. Her voice was crisp and compelling.

"Don't be an idiot. You can't have it both ways."

He turned his head and stared at her.

"What do you mean?" ^:^^ ^-^ -' -

"You're a refugee. You have to take the rough with the smooth. You're alive, that's the main thing. Alive and free. For the other--realize that

it's inevitable. This country's at War. You're a German." She smiled suddenly. "You can't expect

the mere man in the street--literally the man in the street--to distinguish between bad Germans

and good Germans, if I may put it so crudely."

He still stared at her. His eyes, so very blue.

were poignant with suppressed feeling. Then, suddenly.

he too smiled. He said^|| ^y-A

"They said of Red Indians, did they not, that a

good Indian was a dead Indian?" He laughed.

10 Agatha Christie - "To be a good German I must be on time at my work. Please. Good morning."

Again that stiff bow. Tuppence stared after his retreating figure. She said to herself:

"Mrs. Blenkinsop, you had a lapse then. Strict attention to business in future. Now for breakfast at Sans Souci."

The hall door of Sans Souci was open. Inside, Mrs. Perenna was conducting a vigorous conversation with someone.

"And you'll tell him what I think of that last lot of margarine. Get the cooked ham at Quiller's--it was twopence cheaper last time there, and be careful about the cabbages--"

She broke off as Tuppence entered, and

"Oh, good morning, Mrs. Blenkinsop, you are an early bird. You haven't had breakfast yet. It's all ready in the dining room." She added, indicating her companion: "My daughter, Sheila. You haven't met her. She's been away and only came home last night."

Tuppence looked with interest at the vivid, handsome face. No longer full of tragic energy, bored now, and resentful. "My daughter Sheila. Sheila Perenna."

Tuppence murmured a few pleasant words and went into the dining room. There were three people breakfasting--Mrs. Sprout and her baby girl, and big Mrs. O'Rourke. Tuppence said, "Good morning" and Mrs. O'Rourke replied with a hearty, "The top of the morning to you" that quite drowned Mrs. Sprout's more anaemic salutation.

The old woman stared at Tuppence with a kind of devouring interest. "

NOftM? 31

" 'Tis a fine thing to be out walking before breakfast," she observed. "A grand appetite it gives you." ^ ;w.>^

Mrs. Sprout said to her offspring: ^- feSitt "Nice bread and milk, darling," and endeavoured to insinuate a spoonful into Miss Betty Sprout's mouth.

The latter cleverly circumvented this endeavour ,.; by an adroit movement of her head, and continued to stare at Tuppence with large round eyes. She pointed a milky finger at the newcomer, gave her a dazzling smile and observed in gurgling tones: "Ga--GaBouch." a

"She likes you," cried Mrs. Sprout, beaming on Tuppence as on one marked out for favour.

"Sometimes she's so shy with strangers.'" <;

"Bouch," said Betty Sprout. "Ah pooth bag," she added with emphasis.

"And what would she be meaning by that?" demanded Mrs. O'Rourke, with interest.

"She doesn't speak awfully clearly yet," confessed

Mrs. Sprout. "She's only just over two, you

know. I'm afraid most of what she says is just

Bosh. She can say Mama, though, can't you, darling?"

Betty looked thoughtfully at her motherland remarked with an air of "Guggle bick."

"'Tis a language of their own they have, the Hide angels," boomed out Mrs. O'Rourke. "Betty dading, say Mama now."

Betty looked hard at Mrs. O'Rourke, frowned and observed with terrific emphasis: "Nazer--" "There now, if she isn't doing her best; And a lovely sweet girl she is."

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Mrs. O'Rourke rose, beamed in a ferocious manner at Betty, and waddled heavily out of the room.

"Ga, ga ga," said Betty with enormous satisfaction, and beat with a spoon on the table.

Tuppence said with a twinkle: "What does Na-zer really mean?"

Mrs. Sprot said with a flush: "I'm afraid, you know, it's what Betty says when she doesn't like anyone or anything."

"I rather thought so," said Tuppence.

Both women laughed.

"After all," said Mrs. Sprot, "Mrs. O'Rourke means to be kind but she is rather alarming--with that deep voice and the beard and--and every thing."

With her head on one side Betty made a cooing noise at Tuppence.

"She has taken to you, Mrs. Blenkinsop," said Mrs. Sprot.

There was a slight jealous chill. Tuppence fancied, in her voice. Tuppence hastened to adjust matters.

"They always like a new face, don't they?" she said easily.

The door opened and Major Bletchley and Tommy appeared. Tuppence became arch.

"Ah, Mr. Meadows," she called out. "I've beaten you, you see. First past the post. But I've left you just a little breakfast!"

She indicated with the faintest of gestures the seat beside her.

Tommy, muttering vaguely: "Oh, er--rather thanks," and hurriedly sat down at the other end of the table.

Betty Sprot said "Putch!" with a fine splutter

□NORM?

of milk at Major Bletchley, whose face instantly assumed a sheepish but delighted expression.

"And how's little Miss Go Peep this morning?" he asked fatuously. "Go Peep!" He enacted the

play with a newspaper.

Betty cowered with delight.

Serious misgivings shook Tuppence. She thought:

"There must be some mistake. There can't be anything going on here. There simply can't!"

To believe in Sans Souci as a headquarters of the Fifth Column needed the mental equipment of the White Queen in Alice.

□On the sheltered terrace outside. Miss Minton was knitting.

Miss Minton was thin and angular, her neck was stringy. She wore pale sky-blue jumpers, and chains or bead necklaces. Her skirts were tweedy

and had a depressed droop at the back. She greeted Tuppence with alacrity. "Good morning, Mrs. Bienenkops. I do hope you slept well." Mrs. Bienenkops confessed that she never slept ; very well the first night or two in a strange bed. Miss Minton said, "Now, wasn't that curious? It : was exactly the same with me."

Mrs. Bienenkops said, "What a coincidence, and what a very pretty stitch that was." Miss Minton, flushing with pleasure, displayed it. "Yes, it * was rather uncommon, and really quite simple. She could easily show it to Mrs. Bienenkops if] Mrs. Bienenkops liked." "Oh, that was very kind

of Miss Minton, but Mrs. Bienenkops was so stupid, she wasn't really very good at knitting, not at following patterns, that was to say. She could only do simple things like Balaclava helmets, and even now she was afraid she had gone wrong somewhere. It didn't look right, somehow, did it?"

Miss Minton cast an expert eye over the khaki mass. Gently she pointed out just what had gone wrong. Thankfully, Tuppence handed the faulty helmet over. Miss Minton exuded kindness and

ipatronsage. "Oh, no, it wasn't a trouble at all. She |had knitted for so many years."

"I'm afraid I've never done any before this dreadful war," confessed Tuppence. "But one •feels so terribly, doesn't one, that one must do ^something." • Npi ^aA

"Oh, yes, indeed. And you actually have a boy in the Navy, I think I heard you say last night?"

"Yes, my eldest boy. Such a splendid boy he is-though I suppose a mother shouldn't say so. Then I have a boy in the Air Force and Cyril, my baby, is out in France."

"Oh, dear, dear, how terribly anxious youTmiist Tuppence thought: s&<

"Oh. Derek. my darling Derek. . . . Out in the hell and mess-and here I am playing the fool-acting the thing I'm really feeling . . ."

She said in her most righteous voice: i''''

"We must all be brave, mustn't we? Let's hope it will all be over soon. I was told the other day on very high authority indeed that the Germans can't possibly last out more than another two months."

Miss Minton nodded with so much vigour that all her bead chains rattled and shook.

"Yes, indeed, and I believe"-her voice low- ,,, ered mysteriously-"that Hitler is suffering from t a (fiscal-absolutely fatal-he'll be raving mad byAugust." g^

•Tuppence replied briskly: ''''''''''''''': ''''

"All this Blitzkrieg is just the Germans' last effort. I believe the shortage is something frightful "i Germany. The men in the factories are very dissatisfied. The whole thing will crack up."

"What's this? what's all this?"

sifi

□H

. and Mrs. Cayley ca Cayley putting his que;

"Dicky," and nodded her head with great satisfaction.

HH tfw ^^

"That child is learning to talk in the most wonderful way," said Miss Minton. "Say Ta ta, Betty. Tata."

Betty looked at her coldly and remarked:

"Gluck!" ' ,;. ^:

Then she forced Bonzo's one arm into his woollen coat and, toddling over to a chair, picked

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up the cushion and pushed Bonzo behind it.

Chuckling gleefully, she said with terrific pains: gl

"Hide! Bow wow. Hide." "

Miss Minton, acting as a kind of interpreter, said with vicarious pride:

"She loves hide and seek. She's always hiding things." She cried out with exaggerated surprise:

"Where is Bonzo? Where is Bonzo? Where can Bonzo have gone?" ? ^

Betty flung herself down and went into ecstasies of mirth.

Mr. Cayley, finding attention diverted from his explanation of Germany's methods of substitution |

of raw materials, looked put out and coughed aggressively. ®8^?^

Mrs. Sprot came out with her hat on and picked

up Betty. ^ . ^ . ^ ggi. Attention returned to Mr. Cayley. SH

Sa; "You were saying, Mr. Cayley?" said Tuppence.

r

But Mr. Cayley was affronted. He said coldly: ^ : "That woman is always plumping that child

down and expecting people to look after it. I think

I'll have the woollen muffler after all, dear. The

>, MM

sun is going in.

"Oh, but, Mr. Cayley, do go on with what you were telling us. It was so interesting," Miss Minton begged.

Mollified, Mr. Cayley weightily resumed his discourse, drawing the folds of the woolly muffler

closer round his stringy neck.

"As I was saying, Germany has so perfected her system of--"

jll Tuppence turned to Mrs. Cayley, and asked:

"What do you think about the war, Mrs.

Cayley?"

□N OR M? 39

Mrs. Cayley jumped.

"Oh, what do I think? What--what do you

mean?" ^ ^

"Do you think it will last as long as six years?"

Mrs. Cayley said doubtfully:

"Oh, I hope not. It's a very long time, isn't it?"

"Yes, a long time. What do you really think?"

Mrs. Cayley seemed quite alarmed by the question.

She said: .'^jiss^ 'Ap* |

"Oh, I--I don't know. I don't know at all.

Alfred says it will." ^ j^

"But you don't think so?" SS »

"Oh, I don't know. It's difficult to say, isn't

I19" te'&Si'.^^:.-^- "A!^.

Tuppence felt a wave of exasperation. The chirruping

Miss Minton, the dictatorial Mr. Cayley,

the nitwitted Mrs. Cayley--were these people really typical of her fellow countrymen? Was Mrs. Sprot any better with her slightly vacant face and boiled gooseberry eyes? What could she, Tuppence, ever find out here? Not one of these people, surely--

Her thought was checked. She was aware of a shadow. Someone behind her who stood between her and the sun. She turned her head. : ^;a Mrs. Perenna, standing on the terrace, her eyes on the group. And something in those eyes--scorn, was it? A kind of withering contempt. Tuppence thought:

I must find out more about Mrs. Perenna.

□40 III Agatha Christie ifc

"Brought down some golf clubs with you, : didn't you, Meadows?" ^ H| : Tommy pleaded guilty. - B^

"Ha! I can tell you, my eyes don't miss much. Splendid! We must have a game together. Ever played on the links here?"

Tommy replied in the negative.

"They're not bad--not bad at all. Bit on the short side, perhaps, but lovely view over the sea and all that. And never very crowded. Look here, what about coming along with me this morning? We might have a game." ^

"Thanks very much. I'd like it." " " " " " "Must say I'm glad you've arrived," remarked , Bletchley as they were trudging up the hill. "Too I many women in that place. Gets on one's nerves.

Glad I've got another fellow to keep me in countenance.

You can't count Cayley--the man's a

kind of walking chemist's shop. Talks of nothing but his health and the treatments he's tried and the drugs he's taking. If he threw away all his little pill boxes and went out for a good ten mile walk every I day he'd be a different man. The only other male

I in the place is von Deinim, and to tell you the ; truth, Meadows, I'm not too easy in my mind s about him." I "No?" said Tommy.

"No. You take my word for it, this refugee business is dangerous. If I had my way I'd intern the lot of them. Safety first." ^IJB %H

"A bit drastic, perhaps." M" ----

"Not at all. War's War. And I've got my suspicions of Master Carl. For one thing, he's clearly not a Jew. Then he came over here just a month --only a month, mind you--before war broke i out. That's a bit suspicious." |

□g ^ ^ ^ ^ ' ^ ^ ^ '"

Tommy said invitingly:

"Then you think--" > ' "Spying-- that's his li^ie game!"

"But surely there's nc,f», ,no r>f .

J" ruling 01 &rpat inilitari? <>..

^ naval importance hereabouts?" "" ""tary or

"Ah, old man, tha^s where _thPortsmouth

he'd be und^r sunerv'i" ^ plymouth or ^

place like this. nobody boZTs F'In a sleepy ' ? coast, isn't it? The truth o^6"1 Irs on the I S. a great deal too easy Mth hes^ ernment is ^

1 Anyone who cared could ^lCTe ^ ^"s.

-, a long face and talk abc^^ -d pull a

A-centration camps. Loo^^0^111^ - ,3

fe arrogance in every line S ^ . ^? ,11^ . 1

--that's what he is--a Nazi " "e s a Nazl

"what we really need ,,, fi,,, ,,,,, . SU '"." .. -

N Or M

F doctor or two " said Toff ? untry is a witch 1^ 1
I.1 "ocior or iwo, saia i on:my pleasantiu taM_|
I' "Eh, what's that?" %: mly- w^^ " "To smell out the sp|pc " Tnr», x S gravely. '
onlmy explained j^ |
"Ha, very good that--yerv eo^ o ,, . ^ i
out-yes, of course." y g od- smell em ^ 1
|1 Further conversation w,, hrrtioti* < 1" they had arrived at the clu^8111 to an
end. ^
Tommy's name was pi^ (jq^ 3 -----
their round. ---lor started on
Tommy was a mediocn pnlfcr^^ -- -
niiu mai ilia BiailualU 01 pav wa<i in»» ^ o- - "
for his new friend. The M-^onb; "g
IJU1 WUIl dv two lin any!
one to play, a very happy Sate of events
"Good match, Meada/es "--,"
-you had bad luck wiLh^'AZ.?0011 mtch
□42 Agatha Christie ^B ?'3:
turned off at the last minute. We must have a
game fairly often. Come along and I'll introduce
you to some of the fellows. Nice lot on the whole;
some of them inclined to be rather old women, if
you know what I mean? Ah, here's Haydock--
you'll like Haydock. Retired naval wallah. Has
that house on the cliff next door to us. He's our
local A.R.P. warden." |||
Commander Haydock was a big hearty man
with a weatherbeaten face, intensely blue eyes,
and a habit of shouting most of his remarks. ^. w» ; He greeted Tommy with
friendliness. ; ^;aBB|
"So you're going to keep Bletchley countenance
at Sans Souci? He'll be glad of another man.
Rather swamped by female society, eh, Bletchley?"
is sb . a
"I'm not much of a ladies' man," said Major
Bletchley.
"Nonsense," said Haydock. "Not your type
of lady, my boy, that's it. Old boarding house
pussies. Nothing to do but gossip and knit."
"You're forgetting Miss Perenna," said Bletch-1
ley. ^ I
"Ah, Sheila--she's an attractive girl all right. S
Regular beauty if you ask me." y. "I'm a bit worried about her," said Bletchley. | s
"what do you mean? Have a drink. Meadowes?
What's yours. Major?" n;
The drinks ordered and the men settled on the8 jverandah of the clubhouse, Haydock
repeated his
"question. (Major Bletchley said with some violence: I.??
"That German chap. She's seeing too much of
him."...;
| "Getting sweet on him, you mean? H'm, that's
bad. Of course he's a good looking young chap in
□^ , NORM? 43
his way. But it won't do. It won't do, Bletchley.
We can't have that sort of thing. Trading with the
enemy, that's what it amounts to. These girls--
where's their proper spirit? Plenty of decent
young English fellows about." »
Bletchley said: > ;<
"Sheila's a queer girl--she gets odd sullen fits
when she will hardly speak to anyone."
"Spanish blood," said the Commander. "Her
father was half spanish, wasn't he?"

"Don't know. It's a Spanish name, I should think." ; : , , , ^ , ,
 The Commander glanced at his watch. ' "About time for the news. We'd better go in and listen to it." I | | g
 The news was meagre that day, little more in it than had been already in the morning papers. After commenting with approval on the latest exploits of the Air Force--first-rate chaps, brave as lions--the Commander went on to develop his own pet theory--that sooner or later the Germans would attempt a landing at Leahampton itself--his argument being that it was such an unimportant spot.

"Not even an anti-aircraft gun in the place! Disgraceful!"
 ^ . H all f l

The argument was not developed, for Tommy and the Major had to hurry back to lunch at Sans Souci. Haydock extended a cordial invitation to Tommy to come and see his little place, "Smugglers' Rest." "Marvellous view--my own beach--every kind of handy gadget in the house. Bring him along, Bletchley."

It was settled that Tommy and Major Bletchley should come in for drinks on the evening of the following day.

□ Apatha Christie
 After lunch was a peaceful time at Sans Souci. Mr. Cayley went to have his "rest" with the devoted Mrs. Cayley in attendance. Mrs. Blenkinsop was conducted by Miss Minton to a depot to pack and address parcels for the Front.

Mr. Meadows strolled gently out into Leahampton, cigarettes,

Sluppcv ai ^ > v . . , , , .
 latest number of Punch, then after a few minutes of apparent irresolution, he entered a bus bearing the legend old pier. gg | g | |

The old pier was at the -- ^ - ' - ^ - - - - ' ^ ^ - 11 " ^ pi v 11 A ^ X » » * .

to house agents as the least desirable end. It was West Leahampton and poorly thought of. Tommy " ' ^ - L -- ^ " » " " iiwasa H " " - ~ i -

flimsy and weather-worn affair with a few moments - - - l . , 1 ^ - - - - j ^ t t ^ C n E die - U U 11 U p ^ ; n » » / - -

tant intervals. There was no one on it but some children running up and down and screaming in voices that matched quite accurately the screaming of the gulls, and one solitary man sitting on the end fishing. I'll use Mr. Meadows strolled up to the end and gazed down into the water. Then he asked gently:

H "Caught anything?" ^ ; | g
 "" The fisherman shook his head. ^
 "Don't often get a bite." Mr. Grant reeled in his line a bit. He said without turning his head: "What about you, Meadows?"

i Tommy said:
 "Nothing much to report as yet, sir. I'm digging myself in." | 1 | - _ "Good ^ Tell me"

□ . - ^ " N OR M ? f s p j 45
 Tommy sat on an adjacent post, so placed that , y » , he commanded the length of the pier. , ^ Then he s ^ l

began.

"I've gone down quite all right, I think. I gather | you've already got a list of the people there?" jg^ Grant nodded. "There's nothing to report as yet. SB! I've struck up a friendship with Major Bletchley.

We played golf this morning. He seems the ordinary type of retired officer. If anything, a shade too typical. Cay ley seems a genuine hypochondriacal invalid. That, again, would be an easy part to act. He has, by his own admission, been a good deal in Germany during the last few years."

"A point," said Grant, laconically.

"Then there's von Deinim." ||||

"Yes. I don't need to tell you, Meadows, that ~von Deinim's the one I'm most interested in."

K "You think he's N?" p^ ^ss,,. "ara® Grant shook his head. 8&1 sasfe:'

"No, I don't. As I see it, N couldn't afford to be a German." ||| ||§ i-'I^B?!!;'1^ "Not a refugee from Nazi persecution, event"

"Not even that. We watch, and they know we watch, all the enemy aliens in this country. Moreover--this is in confidence, Beresford--very a shortly all enemy aliens between 16 and 60 will be

interned. whether our adversaries are aware of that fact or not, they can at any rate anticipate that such a thing might happen. They would never risk the head of their organization being interned.

N, therefore, must be either a neutral--or else he is (apparently) an Englishman. The same, of course, applies to M. No, my meaning about von Deinim is this: He may be a link in the chain. N or y M may not be at Sans Souci, it may be Carl von Deinim who is there and through him we may be

□46 ^Agatha Christie led to our object^-- That does seem to be highly possible. The mfi16 so as I cannot very well see that any of the (Other inmates of Sans Souci are likely to be the person we are seeking."

"You've had (them more or less investigated, I suppose, sir?"

Grant sighed--"a sharp quick sigh of vexation.

"No that's ji/st wnat lt>s impossible for me to do. I could hav<e them looked up by the department easily enough--but I can't risk it. Beresford. For you see th1® rot is in the department itself.

One hint that 1'^ go1 "^ ^ on sans souci fm any reason--an^ the organization may be put ^ wise. That's wr1"® Y011 come in, the outsider. |

That's why you''^ got to work in the dark, without help from il"- It's our only chance-- and I daren't risk alar""^them- There's only one person I've been able to check up on." ^ "Who's that, sir?"

Grant smiled. 'w "Carl von De1111111 himself. That's easy enough.

Routine. I can tfa^ him looked up--not from the' Sans Souci an.gic' ^t from the enemy alien ; angle." ""®? '^'- ^

^ Tommy askeci curiously: ^ ^.1 ^

^ "Andtheres^t7"

A curious sm?10 came over the other's face.

"Master Cartls exactly what he says he is. His father was indi^c1'^!) was arrested and died in a concentration c^"1?-- Carol's elder brothers are in camps. His mother died in great distress of mind a year ago. He epcaped to England a month before war broke out. von Deinim has professed himself^ anxious to hel^P this country. His work in a^'

chemical research laboratory has been excellent' and most helpN on the problem of immunizing

□^A^

Ip* '""% .^ - .vnorm? ^ 47

certain gases and in general decontamination experiments."

..^H1

Tommy said: S^a

gg "Then he's all right?"""" B® "Not necessarily. Our German friends are notorious for their thoroughness. If von Deinim was sent as an agent to England special care would be taken that his record should be consistent with his own account of himself. There are two possibilities. The whole von Deinim family may be parties to the arrangement--not improbable under the painstaking Nazi regime. Or else this is not really Carl von Deinim but a man playing the part of Carl von Deinim.'" S |

Tommy said slowly: "I see." He added inconsequently: ,* ;^ "He seems an awfully nice young fellow." 'Sighing,

Grant said: "They are--they nearly always are. It's an odd life this service of ours. We | respect our adversaries and they respect us. .You usually like your opposite number, you know- even when you're doing your best to down him."

There was a silence as Tommy thought over the strange anomaly of war. Grant's voice |broke into his musings. . |p K "But there are those for whom we've neither respect nor liking--and those are the traitors within our own ranks--the men who are willing to betray their country and accept office and promotion from the foreigner who has conquered it."

Tommy said with feeling: ^ill'*,?® "My God, I'm with you, sir. That's a skunk's trick." gp

"And deserves a skunk's end." ®?s^"j;tKs%;

Tommy said incredulously: Siss-- ^a&iSi

"And there really are these--these swine?"

□48 Agatha Christie

"Everywhere. As I told you. In our service. In the fighting forces. On Parliamentary benches. High up in the Ministries. We've got to comb them out--we've got to! And we must do it quickly. It can't be done from the bottom--the small fry, the people who speak in the Parks, who sell their wretched little news-sheets, they don't know who the big bugs are. It's the big bugs we want, they're the people who can do untold damage--and will do it unless we're in time." ?

Tommy said confidently: ^p* ™ ^?f

"We shall be in time, sir." *""* ^- y^a" -, |*S

... Grant asked: ' ^?at,,;%?

"What makes you say that?" 8% ||^, ^1;:

Tommy said: ';11'

"You've just said it--we've got to be!"

The man with the fishing line turned and looked full at his subordinate for a minute or two, taking in anew the quiet resolute line of the jaw. He had a new liking and appreciation of what he saw. He said quietly: ' -^y^1 te&a^

"Good man." %a»} I He

went on:

"What about the women in this place? Anything strike you as suspicious there?"

"I think there's something odd about the

woman who runs it."

"Mrs. Perenna?" VSS

"Yes. You don't--know anything about her?"

Grant said slowly:

"I might see what I could do about checking her antecedents, but as I told you, it's risky."

"Yes, better not take any chances. She's the only one who strikes me as suspicious in any way.

There's a young mother, a fussy spinster, the hypochondriac's brainless wife, and a rather fear-

^ni, looking old Irish-woman. All seem harmless ^owh on the face of it." y :^'S I'that's the lot, is it?" ||

"t(o. There's a Mrs. Blenkinsop-- arrived three ^ago."

;.m "Veil?" - ^<-^w "^\!™ '» ya ^nuny said: 8^,..^NI&,.. |g|

l| "Mrs. Blenkinsop is my wife." ^ |gg

^ the surprise of the anntmncenient Grant'?" vok(was raised. He spun around, sharp anger in his hze. "I thought I told you, Beresford, not to ^the a word to your wife!"

"<)uite right, sir, and I didn't. If you'll just lister" i^ISI"

Sliccinctiy, Tommy narrated what had oc- i^ cu"6d. He did not dare look at the other. He &SS ^^fully kept out of his voice the pridejhat.he

secr^iy felt. '-.fe^--^^ij I

IH ^here was a silence when he brought the story to an end. Then a queer noise escaped from the 8

oth^r. Grant was laughing. He laughed for some min(ites.

"(take my hat off to the woman! She's one in a thousand!"

"(agree," said Tommy. - * ' " '"";: w^.'^ "gasthampton will laugh when I tell him this. "ITS s He earned me not to leave her out. Said she'd get

the getter of me if I did. I wouldn't listen to him. ^i^P^ you. though, how damned careful you've

8^j <o be. I thought I'd taken every precaution

a|»li»st being overheard. I'd satisfied myself ^ b^Qfehand that you and your wife were alone in

the flat. I actually heard the voice in the telephone

ailirf8 Your wife to come round at once, and ^

---- , .™R..Aj.--_» . ,..... , ...

□52 Agatha Christie

Tuppence replied that she thought she was going to like Leahampton very much, and be

happy there.

"That is," she added in a melancholy voice, "as happy as I can be anywhere with this terrible anxiety weighing on me all the time."

"Ah, now, don't you be worrying yourself,"

Mrs. O'Rourke advised comfortably. "Those fine

boys of yours will come back to you safe and

sound. Not a doubt of it. One of them's in the Air

Force, so I think you said?" ^,

"Yes, Raymond." a^ ' 'And is he in France now, or in England?'" :

"He's in Egypt at the moment, but from whatj

he said in his last letter--not exactly said--but we

have a little private code if you know what I;

mean?--certain sentences mean certain things. I;

think that's quite justified, don't you?" ^ Mrs. O'Rourke replied promptly:

"Indeed and I do. 'Tis a mother's privilege."

"Yes, you see I feel I must know just where he§J

is." . IP KB

Mrs. O'Rourke nodded the Buddha-like head.

"I feel for you entirely, so I do. If I had a boy

out there I'd be deceiving the censor the very same way, so I would. And your other boy, the one in the Navy?"

Tuppence entered obligingly upon a saga of Douglas.

"You see," she ended. "I feel so lost without my three boys. They've never been all away together from me before. They're all so sweet to me.

I really do think they treat me more as a friend than a mother." She laughed self-consciously. "I have to scold them sometimes and make them g(out without me."

□N OR M? 53

("What a pestilential woman I sound," thought Tuppence to herself.)

She went on aloud.

"And really I didn't know quite what to do or where to go. The lease of my house in London was up and it seemed so foolish to renew it and I thought if I came somewhere quiet, and yet with a good train service—" She broke off. .,-y, Again the Buddha nodded. SB1

"I agree with you entirely. London is no place at the present. Ah! the gloom of it! I've lived there myself for many a year now. I'm by way of being an antique dealer, you know. You may know my shop in Cornaby Street, Chelsea? Kate Kelly's the name over the door. Lovely stuff I had there, too—oh, lovely stuff—mostly glass—waterford, Cork—beautiful. Chandeliers and lustres and punchbowls and all the rest of it. Foreign glass, too. And small furniture—nothing large—just small period pieces—mostly walnut and oak. Oh, lovely stuff—and I had some good customers. But there, when there's a war on, all that goes west. I'm lucky to be out of it with as little loss as I've had."

A faint memory flickered through Tuppence's mind. A shop filled with glass, through which it was difficult to move, a rich persuasive voice, a compelling massive woman. Yes, surely, she had been into that shop. aH

Mrs. O'Rourke went on. "

"I'm not one of those that like to be always complaining—not like some that's in this house. Mr. Cayley for one, with his muffler and his shawls and his moans about his business going to pieces. Of course it's to pieces, there's a War on—and his wife with never Boo to say to a goose.

□54 ;^1. Agatha Christie -^^"y. "'^

Then there's that little Mrs. Sprot, always fussing about her husband."

"Is he out at the front?" J^s^^

' , 'T"f'-' ,/--''(;;^;

"Not he. He's a tuppenny-halfpenny clerk in an insurance office, that's all, and so terrified of air raids he's had his wife down here since the beginning of the war. Mind you, I think that's right

where the child's concerned--and a nice wee mite

she is--but Mrs. Sprot, she frets, for all that her husband conies down when he can. ... Keeps say- >.

ing Arthur must miss her so. But if you ask me | Arthur's not missing her over-much--maybe he's ? got other fish to fry." ,,,,,,.... ^ ^

Tuppence murmured: ||| .--

"I'm terribly sorry for all these mothers. If you g let your children go away without you, you never :M stop worrying. And if you go with them it's hard on the husbands being left."

"Ah! yes, and it comes expensive running two establishments." i'S'll-^^ fSS-

"This place seems quite reasonable," said Tuppence.

'Yes, I'd say you get your money's worth.88 Mrs. Perenna's a good manager. There's a queer woman for you now." S&^ '

"In what way?" asked Tuppence. |H g§/

Mrs. O'Rourke said with a twinkle: ' j| "You'll be thinking I'm a terrible talker. It's

|||true. I'm interested in all my fellow creatures, that's why I sit in this chair as often as I can. You see who goes in and who goes out and who's on the verandah and what goes on in the garden.

What were we talking of now--ah, yes, Mrs.

IH Perenna, and the queerness of her. There's been a grand drama in that woman's life or I'm much mistaken." ^

□^ NORM? 55

"Do you really think so?"

"I do now. And the mystery she makes of

; herself! 'And where might you come from in Ki Ireland?' I asked her. And would you believe it,

she held out on me, declaring she was not from Ireland at all." ^;R^ --

,; "You think she is Irish?" -- "Of

course she's Irish. I know my own country women. I could name you the county she comes from. But there! 'I'm English,' she says, 'and my husband was a Spaniard'--"

Mrs. O'Rourke broke off abruptly as Mrs. Sprout came in, closely followed by Tommy.

Tuppence immediately assumed a sprightly manner, a^?

"Good evening, Mr. Meadows. You look very brisk this evening." ^s^ 'I'llr^ .-- ^.

Tommy said: itoa..... "

"Plenty of exercise, that's the secret. A round of golf this morning and a walk along the front this afternoon." ^ ; -^

Millicent Sprout said:

"I took Baby down to the beach this afternoon. She wanted to paddle but I really thought it was rather cold. I was helping her build a castle and a dog ran off with my knitting and pulled out yards of it. So annoying, and so difficult picking up all the stitches again. I'm such a bad knitter."

H "You're getting along fine with that helmet, Mrs. Blenkinsop," said Mrs. O'Rourke, suddenly turning her attention to Tuppence. "You've been just racing along. I thought Miss Minton said that you were an inexperienced knitter."

Tuppence flushed faintly. Mrs. O'Rourke's eyes were sharp. With a slightly vexed air, Tuppence

□56 I'll; Agatha Christie ^s^':,

"I have really done quite a lot of knitting. I told Miss Minton so. But I think she likes teaching people."

Everybody laughed in agreement, and a few

minutes later the rest of the party came in and the gong was sounded. ??

The conversation during the meal turned on the absorbing subject of spies. Well-known hoary chestnuts were retold. The nun with the muscular arm; the clergyman descending from his parachute and using unclergymanlike language as he landed with a bump; the Austrian cook who secreted a wireless in her bedroom chimney; and all the things that had happened or nearly happened to aunts and second cousins of those present. That led easily to Fifth Column activities. To denunciations of the British Fascists, of the Communists, of the Peace Party, of conscientious objectors. It was a very normal conversation, of the kind that may be heard almost every day, nevertheless Tuppence watched keenly the faces and demeanour of the people as they talked, striving to catch some tell-tale expression or word. But there was nothing. Sheila Perenna alone took no part in the conversation, but that might be put down to her habitual taciturnity. She sat there, her dark rebellious face sullen and brooding.

Carl von Deinim was out tonight. So tongues could be quite unrestrained, ill ^ ||V I Sheila only spoke once towards the end of dinner.

Mrs. Sprout had just said in her thin fluting voice:

"Where I do think the Germans made such a mistake in the last war was to shoot Nurse Cavell. It turned everybody against them."

□N OR M? 57

It was then that Sheila, flinging back her head demanded in her fierce young voice: "Why shouldn't they shoot her? She was a spy, wasn't she?"

"Oh, no, not a spy."

"She helped English people to escape--in an enemy country. That's the same thing. Why shouldn't she be shot?"

I "Oh, but shooting a woman--and a nurse." *"

|;^ Sheila got up.

febr; «j think the Germans were quite right," she said.

She went out of the window into the garden. ?

Dessert, consisting of some under-ripe bananas

and some tired oranges, had been on the table some time. Everyone rose and adjourned to the lounge for coffee.

Only Tommy unobtrusively betook himself to the garden. He found Sheila Perenna leaning over the terrace wall staring out at the sea. He came and stood beside her. "W

By her hurried, quick breathing he knew that (., something had upset her badly. He offered her a

|fc cigarette, which she accepted.

He said: ^ ^ %"Lovely

night." '*'::35| ^ S|

In a low intense voice the girl answered:

"It could be...."

Tommy looked at her doubtfully. He felt, suddenly, the attraction and the vitality of this girl- There was a tumultuous life in her, a kind of compelling power. She was the kind of girl, he thought, that a man might easily lose his head over.

, "If it weren't for the war, you mean?" he said- g&"I don't mean that at all, I hate the war."

□8 w^ ">:' Agatha Christie Hi-' ' " |p

--:'. ^'^^saC ; ;;- ^y?

^ ^ "So do we all."

l^ftJS "Not in the way I mean. I hate the cant about it, |jff the smugness--the horrible, horrible patriotism."

"Patriotism?" Tommy was startled.

"" "" "Yes, I hate patriotism, do you understand? All this country, country, country! Betraying your country--dying for your country--serving your country. Why should one's country mean any& thing at all?"

aaJg Tommy said simply: "I don't know. It just 1%; as does." &:

"Not to me! Oh, it would to you--you go

abroad and buy and sell in the British Empire and * J come back bronzed and full of cliches, talking [

about the natives and calling for Chota Pegs and yS, all that sort of thing." ^ -BK Tommy said gently: '-^ s-i^Q

"I'm not quite as bad as that, I hope, my dear." filf ; "I'm exaggerating a little--but you know what _ s I mean. You believe in the British Empire--and--and--the stupidity of dying for one's country."

t ^ "My country," said Tommy drily, "doesn't |g^

^ys seem particularly anxious to allow me to die for |||

'SSff: "t »

l^'. 'r. ll. ilp^-

"Yes, but you want to. And it's so stupid! ik Nothing's worth dying for. It's all an (ctea--talk--

| froth--high-flown idiocy. My country doesn't g;

| mean anything to me at all." pounds

"Some day," said Tommy, "you'll be surprised

to find that it does."

"No. Never. I've suffered--I've seen--" %|||

She broke off--then turned suddenly and impetuously upon him.

ggg ' ' Do you know who my father was?' ^ -;

Bals "No." Tommy's interest quickened. :

"His name was Patrick Maguire, He--he was a

□NORM? ' 55

follower of Casement in the last war. He was shot

as a traitor! All for nothing! For an idea--he

worked himself up with those other Irishmen.

Why couldn't he just stay at home quietly and

mind his own business? He's a martyr to some

people and a traitor to others. I think he was ^ just--stupid!"

I Tommy could hear the note of pent-up rebellion

coming out into the open. He said: '

"So that's the shadow you've grown up with?"

"Shadow's right. Mother changed her name. r. we lived in Spain for some years. She always says

Hthat my father was half a Spaniard. We always tell ^ lies wherever we go. We've been all over the Continent.

Finally we came here and started this place.

gc I think this is quite the most hateful thing we've "doneyet." „ -.-...^ , ' -

Tommy asked: " ' ' ;" ' ^ ' '-' ^ "How does your mother feel about--things?"

"You mean--about my father's death." Sheila

| was silent a moment frowning, puzzled. She said

slowly: "I've never really known . . . she never

talks about it. It's not easy to know what mother

feels or thinks."

Tommy nodded his head thoughtfully. ^ ^^ .ajn

Sheila said abruptly: < "I--I don't know why I've been telling you this.

I got worked up. Where did it all start?" 'p^';'

a "A discussion on Edith Cavell." Aa^ i "Oh, yes--patriotism. I said I hated it."

"Aren't you forgetting Nurse Cavell's own

words?" * "what words?"

"Before she died. Don't you know what she said?" --

He repeated the words: ^ ;' t '

□60 Agatha Christie ^^

^: . -y

"Patriotism is not enough . . . I must have no |k p hatred in my heart." &". "Oh." She stood there stricken for a moment. ^ Then, turning quickly, she wheeled away into the shadow of the garden.,,,,, ^ ^ |

sjdf^ '' So you see, Tuppence, it would all fit in."

BUS Tuppence nodded thoughtfully. The beach

around them was empty. She herself leaned against a breakwater, Tommy sat above her, on the breakwater itself, from which post he could see anyone who approached along the esplanade.

Not that he expected to see anyone, having ascertained with a fair amount of accuracy where people would be this morning. In any case his rendezvous with Tuppence had borne all the signs of a casual meeting, pleasurable to the lady and ; slightly alarming to himself. yy """,," y

(i;,,. Tuppence said: Baar^ @* "I"Mrs. Perenna?" *

"Yes. M, not N. She satisfies the requirements."

wffi Tuppence nodded thoughtfully again. 'Mit "Yes. She's Irish--as spotted by Mrs. ,O'Rourke--won't admit the fact. Has done a

igood deal of coming and going on the continent.

gll Changed her name to Perenna, came here and started this boarding house. A splendid bit of camouflage, full of innocuous bores. Her husband was shot as a traitor--she's got every incentive for running a Fifth Column show in this country. Yes, | it fits. Is the girl in it, too, do you think?"

Tommy said finally: *s3i

□N OR M? :^% 61

"Definitely not. She'd never have told me all this otherwise. I--I feel a bit of a cad, you know."

Tuppence nodded with complete understand-

yyww; wob "''.^ ^-'v "(i^ ing. |g| -"- - ^ S^;@S

"Yes, one does. In a way it's a foul job, this." I ^"But very necessary." ""Oh, of course."

Tommy said, flushing slightly:

"I don't like lying any better than you do--"

Tuppence interrupted him.|<§ "I don't mind lying in the least. To be quite honest I get a lot of artistic pleasure out of my lies. & what gets me down is those moments when one

forgets to lie--the times when one is just oneself

--and gets results that way that you couldn't have

got any other." She paused and went on: "That's

what happened to you last night--with the girl.

She responded to the real you--that's why you

feel badly about it." «,a^;A ,s "I believe you're right. Tuppence." SUS.^ ' a

"I know. Because I did the same thmg myself

-with the German boy." |||J ,,.|i>i'

Tommy said: i

"What do you think about him?"

Tuppence said quickly: ' ^"t^ "If you ask me, I don't think he's got anything to do with it."

"Grant thinks he has. "- . ^,| |||t. j "Your Mr. Grant!" Tuppence's mood

"changed. She chuckled. "How I'd like to have

seen his face when you told him about me."

"At any rate, he's made the amends honorable. You' re definitely on the j oh."

I Tuppence nodded, but she looked a trifle abstracted.

gin ^ S^iSJS,-^^ She said: "Aw '"" ' -,^:"" 'y^ N Or M
 "Do you remembci
 we were hunting dow
 member what fun it was Tommy agreed, his
 "Rather?" ^ "Tommy--why isn' ^ He considered the i
 grave. Then he said:
 "I suppose it's reall:
 Tuppence said shari
 "You don't think--
 "No, I'm sure we'
 time--it won't be fun. This is the second wai
 quite different about t]
 "I know--we see tti
 and the horror. All th
 to think about before.
 "That's it. In the 1
 now and then--and hi
 and went through he
 were good times, too.'
 Tuppence said:
 "I suppose Derek fe
 "Better not think
 Tommy advised.
 "You're right."
 "We've got a job. ^ Let's get on with it. '. looking for in Mrs. Pe:
 y: "We can at least s
 cated. There's no on
 that you've got your e> Tuppence consider® _ "No, there isn't. T
 □HpNORM? ^ 63'^
 arrived, of course, was to size them all up and
 assess, as it were, possibilities. Some of them seem
 quite impossible." " ?; '-^ ^"%;
 "Such as?" ' "" -9*::" ""' ^
 "Well, Miss Minton, for instance, the 'cornpleat'
 British spinster, and Mrs. Sprout and her
 Betty, and the vacuous Mrs. Cayley."
 "Yes, but nitwittishness can be assumed."
 "Oh, quite, but the fussy spinster and the absorbed
 young mothers are parts that would be
 fatally easy to overdo--and these people are quite
 natural. Then, where Mrs. Sprout is concerned,
 there's the child."
 | "I suppose," said Tommy, "that even a secret
 agent might have a child.'" . ': ||\$|
 "Not with her on the job," said Tuppence.
 "It's not the kind of thing you'd bring a child ^ into. I'm quite sure about that.
 Tommy. I know. ^ You'd keep a child out of it." ^ "I withdraw," said Tommy. "I'll
 give you Mrs.
 Sprout and Miss Minton, but I'm not so sure about
 Mrs. Cayley."
 "No, she might be a possibility. Because she g really does overdo it. I mean there
 can't be many ^ women quite as idiotic as she seems."
 j| "I have often noticed that being a devoted wife '^;^ "saps the intellect,"
 murmured Tommy. :
 "And where have you noticed that?" demanded
 Tuppence.
 "Not from you. Tuppence. Your devotion has
 never reached those lengths."
 "For a man," said Tuppence kindly, "you
 don't really make an undue fuss when you are ill."
 Tommy reverted to a survey of possibilities. » "Cayley," said Tommy thoughtfully.
 "There
 □64 Agatha Christie

N Or M
might be something fishy about Cayley."

"Yes, there might. Then there's Mrs. O'Rourke."

S': ^ "' W

"What do you feel about her?"

"I don't quite know. She's disturbing. Rather feefofum, if you know what I mean."

"Yes, I think I know. But I rather fancy that's

just the predatory note. She's that kind of woman." >y?

Tuppence said slowly:

""She--notices things."

She was remembering the remark about knitting.

"Then there's Bletchley," said Tommy.

"I've hardly spoken to him. He's definitely your chicken." ^

"I think he's just the ordinary pukka old school ' type. I think so." ,

"That's just it," said Tuppence, answering a ^i, stress rather than actual words.

"The worst of this

sort of show is that you look at quite ordinary S|

everyday people and twist them to suit your mor- fe;

bid requirements." sfe

"I've tried a few experiments on Bletchley," ^, said Tommy.

"What sort of thing? I've got some experiments in mind myself."

"Well--just gentle ordinary little traps--about dates and places--all that sort of thing."

"Could you condescend from the general to the particular?"

"Well, say we're talking of duck shooting. He mentions the Fayum--good sport there such and such a year, such and such a month. Some other time I mention Egypt in quite a different connection.

Mummies, Tutankhamen, something like

□NORM? 65

that--has he seem that stuff? When was he there? ^Check up on the answers. Or P. &

0. boats--1 "mention the names of one or two, say So-and-so

was a comfortable boat. He mentions some trip or

other, later I check that. Nothing important, or ^anything that puts him on his guard--just a check

up on accuracy.''

"And so far he hasn't slipped up in any way?"

"Not once. And that's a pretty good test, let me -tell you. Tuppence."

| "Yes, but I suppose if he was N, he would have his story quite pat.''

"Oh, yes--the main outlines of it. But it's not

so easy not to trip up on unimportant details. And

then occasionally you remember too much- more, that is, than a bona ride person would do.

An ordinary person doesn't usually remember offhand

whether they took a certain shooting trip in ^1926 or 1927. They have to think a bit and search ^their memory.''

"But so far you haven't caught Bletchley out?" ^ "So far he's responded in a perfectly normal

manner."

| "Result-negative." IgKiC.^S '

"Exactly."

"Now," said Tuppence. "I'll tell you some of my ideas."

And she proceeded to do so,

%a.

Ill

On her way home, Mrs. Blenkinsop stopped at the post office. She bought stamps and on her way

out, went into one of the public call boxes. There she rang up a certain number, asked for "Mr. @^

Stag
van,
-y;"
afe

□66 Agatha Christie
Faraday," and held a short conversation with him. She came out smiling and walked slowly homewards, stopping on the way to purchase some knitting wool.
It was a pleasant afternoon with a light breeze. Tuppence curbed the natural energy of her own brisk trot to that leisurely pace that accorded with her conception of the part of Mrs. Blenkinsop. Mrs. Blenkinsop had nothing on earth to do with herself except knit (not too well) and write letters to her boys. She was always writing letters to herp" boys--sometimes she left them about half finished.

Tuppence came slowly up the hill towards Sans Souci. Since it was not a through road (it ended at Smugglers' Rest, Commander Haydock's house) there was never much traffic--a few tradesmen's vans in the morning. Tuppence passed house after house, amusing herself by noting their names. SK Bella Vista (inaccurately named, since the merest glimpse of the sea was to be obtained, and the main view was the vast Victorian bulk of Edenhoime on the other side of the road). Karachi was the next house. After that came Shirley Tower. Then Sea View (appropriate this time), Castle Clare (somewhat grandiloquent, since it was a small house), Trelawny, a rival establishment toils spsgthat 'f Mrs. Perenna, and finally the vast maroon"" l||||bulk of Sans Souci. ^ 'Si- It was just as she came near to it that Tuppencefe became aware of a woman standing by the gate ^Bpeering inside. There was something tense and viligant about the figure.

U Almost unconsciously. Tuppence softened the "" sound of her own footsteps, stepping cautiously upon her toes.

□IIH --i^N OR M? ',67

It was not until she was close behind her, that&s" the woman heard her and turned. Turned with a

start. S?? ^^'-f^^N 88

She was a tall woman, poorly, even meanly dressed, but her face was unusual. She was not ' young--probably between forty and fifty--but

there was a contrast between her face and the way .^y^ she was dressed. She was fair-haired, with wide cheekbones and had been--indeed still was-- beautiful. Just for a minute Tuppence had a feeling that the woman's face was somehow familiar ip to her, but the feeling faded. It was not, she ^ thought, a face easily forgotten.

;;;
|i^ The woman was obviously startled, and the Hi flash of alarm that flitted across her face was not lost on Tuppence. (Something odd here?)|%»tg| ||

: Tuppence said: """""""""" B ,, "Excuse me, are you looking for someone?" ""' *
S The woman spoke in a slow foreign voice, pro- y^.,., nouncing the words carefully

as though she had

learned them by heart.

"This 'ouse is Sans Souci?"

"Yes. I live here. Did you want someone?"

There was an infinitesimal pause, then the woman said:

"You can tell me, please. There is a Mr. Rosen-stein there, no?" |^|

"Mr. Rosenstein?" Tuppence shook her head.

"No. I'm afraid not. Perhaps he has been there and left. Shall I ask for you?"

But the strange woman made a quick gesture of refusal. She said: :. t '^s

"No--no. I make mistake. Excuse, please."

Then, quickly, she turned and walked rapidly down the hill again.

Tuppence stood staring after her. For some

□68 Agatha Christie

reason, her suspicions were aroused. There was a contrast between the woman's manner and her words. Tuppence had an idea that "Mr. Rosenstein" was a fiction, that the woman had seized at the first name that came into her head.

Tuppence hesitated a minute, then she started down the hill after the other. What she could only describe as a "hunch" made her want to follow the woman. 1.,^';'.''

Presently, however, she stopped. To follow

would be to draw attention to herself in a rather

marked manner. She had clearly been on the point

of entering Sans Souci when she spoke to the woman; to reappear on her trail would be to

arouse suspicion that Mrs. Blenkinsop was something

other than appeared on the surface--that is

to say if this strange woman was indeed a member of the enemy plot.

No, at all costs Mrs. Blenkinsop must remain what she seemed.

' Tuppence turned and retraced her steps up the hill. She entered Sans Souci and paused in the hall.

The house seemed deserted, as was usual early in the afternoon. Betty was having her nap, the elder members were either resting or had gone out.

Then, as Tuppence stood in the dim hall thinking over her recent encounter, a faint sound came to her ears. It was a sound she knew quite well --the faint echo of a ting.

The telephone at Sans Souci was in the hall. The sound that Tuppence had just heard was the sound made when the receiver of an extension is taken off or replaced. There was one extension in the house--in Mrs. Perenna's bedroom.

Tommy might have hesitated. Tuppence did not hesitate for a minute. Very gently and carefully

□t NORM? 69

'I' off the receiver and put it to her ear. ^ne was using the extension. It was a ^lice. Tuppence heard:

^rything going well. On the fourth, then,

Sed." ^ -

K Aan's voice said: fa.^ %;;

'is

Aearryon."

'was a click as the receiver was replaced. "'we stood there frowning. was that Mrs.

I 's voice? Difficult to say with only those yrds to go upon. If there had been only ^inore to the conversation. It might, of be quite an ordinary conversation--cer- ^ere was nothing in the words she had ', 'l to indicate otherwise.

iidow obscured the light from the door.

fte jumped and replaced the receiver as ^enna spoke.

"> a pleasant afternoon. Are you going out,

i^nkensop, or have you just come in?"

| was not Mrs. Perenna who had been 'it from Mrs. Perenna's room. Tuppence

', 'ed something about having had a pleasant I'd moved to the staircase.

i Perenna moved along the hall after her. "ned bigger than usual. Tuppence was con- V her as a strong athletic woman.

)ud: a|

ihst get my things off," and hurried up the

As she turned the corner of the landing she

i, l with Mrs. O'Rourke, whose vast bulk

i'llhe top of the stairs.

tr, dear, now, Mrs. Blenkensop, it's a great

;louseemtobein."

('id not move aside, just stood there smiling

I >t Tuppence just below her. There was, as

□68 Agatha Christie

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□N OR M? 69

^ she lifted off the receiver and put it to her ear.

H Someone was using the extension. It was a

(| man's voice. Tuppence heard:

"--everything going well. On the fourth, then,

I as arranged." " ^ . . ; - . - w, y ^ ' ' A woman's voice said: , , , . y ^ , , , - wfe - ^ ^

"Yes, carry on." Si ^ - iy ^ v ^ ^ ^ j s r s ^ ^ 4 j l H There was a click as the receiver was

replaced.

'; Tuppence stood there frowning. Was that Mrs. Perenna's voice? Difficult to say with only those _ j three words to go upon. If there had been only ^ ^ a little more to the conversation. It might, of ,^^_ course, be quite an ordinary conversation--cer'^^B tainly there was nothing in the words she had overhead to indicate otherwise, yi, A shadow obscured the light from the door.

Tuppence jumped and replaced the receiver as

. Mrs. Perenna spoke. ; "Such a pleasant afternoon. Are you going out, Mrs. Blenkinsop, or have you just come in?" ~ ^^So it was not Mrs. Perenna who had been ^^speaking from Mrs. Perenna's room. Tuppence murmured something about having had a pleasant walk and moved to the staircase.

Mrs. Perenna moved along the hall after her. She seemed bigger than usual. Tuppence was conscious of her as a strong athletic woman. ^ ^ »

She said:

^^_ "I must get my things off," and hurried up the ^^B stairs. As she turned the corner of the landing she ^^ collided with Mrs. O'Rourke, whose vast bulk j barred the top of the stairs. ^ i ^fe "Dear, dear, now, Mrs. Blenkinsop, it's a great ^ hurry you seem to be in."

, She did not move aside, just stood there smiling | down__yppence just below her. There was, as

L^^--_AB . KH

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always, a frightening quality about Mrs. O'Rourke's smile.

And suddenly, for no reason, Tuppence felt^|^ afraid. Bft^|^

The big smiling Irishwoman, with her deep voice, barring her way and below Mrs. Perenna closing in at the foot of the stairs.

Tuppence glanced over her shoulder. Was it her fancy that there was something definitely menac,, ing in Mrs. Perenna's upturned face? Absurd, she |j|, told herself, absurd. In broad daylight--in a corn-1|

monplace seaside boarding house. But the house |||i was so very quiet. Not a sound. And she herself |

here on the stairs between the two of them. Surely | there was something a little queer in Mrs. s|

O'Rourke's smile--some fixed ferocious quality 1 about it. Tuppence thought wildly, "Like a cat with a mouse."

And then suddenly the tension broke. A little

figure darted along the top landing uttering shrill ^ squeals of mirth. Little Betty Sprout in vest and I

knickers, darting past Mrs. O'Rourke, shouting happily "Peek Go," as she flung herself on Tuppence.

I

The atmosphere had changed. Mrs. O'Rourke, Hlf3 a big genial figure, was crying out: "Ah, the darlin'. It's a great girl she's getting."

Below, Mrs. Perenna had turned away to the door that led into the kitchen. Tuppence, Betty's hand clasped in hers, passed Mrs. O'Rourke and"

ran along the passage to where Mrs. Sprout was waiting to scold the truant, sy^

Tuppence went in with the child. fis f

She felt a queer sense of relief at the domestic atmosphere--the child's clothes lying about, the woolly toys, the painted crib, the sheeplike and

-]*-«

□,^RM? 71

,^

sc^"^\, N 09 face of Mr. Sprot in its
 ^"^\Stractive ^ table' the bllrble of Mrs^\th
 y^ 4< laundry pr^es and really
 sr>6 ^Sci,! "f >nna was a ijttle unfair in <"%!' fterW^ts having meir own
 elec^^ll^Nion
 ^ ^ ,, everyday, ,, ^
 ^Y^ ^s^o"111^ stairs, at?.?^-1 ^wn^^ to herself. Just
 n^rves!^,'''t now .J ,...
 put. ^id Tii^^^, Someone had been
 telephoJ,, ^^ . Perenna's room. Mrs.
 o^0^ ^^r^yodd ^"gto do-It en-
 ^^a4^"^\^0^11
 Jt "'^SSdthat y ^PP^e thfeht, 'a'very
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 ^n^'^thefou^ ^ &
 11 ^l c^ll^ nian the Forth
 g^jidge, ^ (/ ^ attempt to blow that up
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 of SOV%ittTysu/<iina^y aPP011"11"1^ . Mrs.
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 ^^K^o"0 in f6 on the stairs' that tense ^ atmosph^
 □f><<<<>>>)<
 ^

5

Commander Haydock turned out to be a most
 genial host. He welcomed Mr. Meadows and
 Major Bletchley with enthusiasm and insisted on
 showing the former "all over my little place."
 Smugglers' Rest had been originally a couple of
 coastguards' cottages standing on the cliff overlooking
 the sea. There was a small cove below, but
 the access to it was perilous, only to be attempted
 by adventurous boys.
 Then the cottages had been bought by a London
 business man who had thrown them into one and
 attempted half-heartedly to make a garden. He
 had come down occasionally for short periods in
 summer.
 After that the cottages had remained empty for
 some years, being let with a modicum of furniture
 to summer visitors.
 "Then in 1926," explained Haydock, "it was
 sold to a man called Hahn. He was a German, and
 if you ask me, he was neither more nor less than a
 spy."
 Tommy's ears quickened.
 "That's interesting," he said, putting down the
 glass from which he had been sipping sherry, lift*
 "Damned thorough fellows they are," said
 Haydock. "Getting ready even then for this show
 --at least that is my opinion. Look at the situation
 of this place. Perfect for signalling out to sea.

□4 Agatha Christie

Cove below where you could land a motor-boat, ^f| Completely isolated, owing to the contour of the cliff. Oh, yes, don't tell me that fellow Hahn wasn't a German agent." B^y SISSI'^^ "' ^ Major Bletchley said: ^;:.gi.^.-^^|§| ®., ^.1 "Of course he was." efe ,^ "what happened to him?" asked Tommy. |g|| | "Ah!" said Haydock, "thereby hangs a tale. | Hahn spent a lot of money on this place. He had a way cut down to the beach for one thing--con- | crete steps--expensive business. Then he had the ', I'll whole of the house done over--bathrooms, every ^ expensive gadget you can imagine. And who did g| he set to do all this? Not local men. No, a firm from London, so it was said--but a lot of the men who came down were foreigners. Some of them, didn't speak a word of English. Don't you agree ^ with me that that sounds extremely fishy?'' .^ |p| IH "A little odd, certainly," agreed Tommy. ^.' |8| fca" "I was in the neighbourhood myself at the time, living in a bungalow, and I got interested in whatg this fellow was up to. I used to hang about tol., g. watch the workmen. Now I'll tell you this--theyi^w didn't like it--they didn't like it at all. Once ori |^ twice they were quite threatening about it. why fe should they be if everything was all square and aboveboard?"

BIetchley nodded agreement, ^"^^^s.jy

1111 ' 'You ought to have gone to the authorities," he ^ said. -. , - a^A] .,,, "Just what I did do, my dear fellow. Made a||R positive nuisance of myself pestering the police.''

,yiy. He poured himself out another drink.

A "And what did. I get for my pains? Polite inat;»;,., tention. Blind and deaf, that's what we were in ' this country. Another War with Germany was out I

□N OR M? 5 75

of the question--there was peace in Europe--our relations with Germany were excellent. Natural sympathy between us nowadays. I was regarded as

an old fossil, a war maniac, a diehard old sailor.

What was the good of pointing out to people that the Germans were building the finest Air Force in Europe and not just to fly round and have

picnics!" ^ ^ s, Major Bletchley said explosively: K-^ "Nobody believed it! Damned fools! Peace in

our time. Appeasement. All a lot of blah!"

Haydock said, his face redder than usual with

suppressed anger: "A War-monger, that's what they called me. The sort of chap, they said, who was an obstacle to peace. Peace! I knew what our

Hun friends were at! And mind this, they prepare things a long time beforehand. I was convinced that Mr. Hahn was up to no good. I didn't like his

foreign workmen. I didn't like the way he "was spending money on this place. I kept on badgering

away at people.' ' ft "Stout fellow," said Bletchley appreciatively.

"And finally," said the Commander, "I began

to make an impression. We had a new Chief Constable down here--retired soldier. And he had the sense to listen to me. His fellows began to nose

around. Sure enough, Hahn decamped. Just

slipped out and disappeared one fine night. The police went over this place with a search warrant.

In a safe which had been built-in in the dining room they found a wireless transmitter and some pretty damaging documents. Also a big store place

under the garage for petrol--great tanks. I can tell you I was cock-a-hoop over that. Fellows at the club used to rag me about my German Spy complex. They dried up after that. Trouble with us in '66 Agatha Christie this country is that we're so absurdly unsuspecting."

^ ;. n;

"It's a crime. Fools--that's what we are--fools. Why don't we intern all these refugees?"^ Major Bletchley was well away. <t

"End of the story was I bought the place when it came into the market," continued the Commander, not to be sidetracked from his pet story.

"Come in and have a look round, Meadows?"

"Thanks. I'd like to."

Commander Haydock was as full of zest as a boy as he did the honours of the establishment. He threw open the big safe in the dining room to show where the secret wireless had been found. Tommy was taken out to the garage and was shown where ^ the big petrol tanks had been concealed, and li-^ nally, after a superficial glance at the two excellent bathrooms, the special lighting, and the various kitchen "gadgets," he was taken down the steep concreted path to the little cove beneath, whilst j| Commander Haydock told him all over again how |'

extremely useful the whole layout would be to an ggy enemy in war time. Ba

He was taken into the cave which gave the place.

its name and Haydock pointed out enthusiastically |

how it could have been used. |||

Major Bletchley did not accompany the two""""

men on their tour, but remained peacefully sip- b», ping his drink on the terrace.

Tommy gathered B?

that the Commander's spy hunt with its successful issue was that good gentleman's principal topic of H; conversation and that his friends had heard it many times.

In fact. Major Bletchley said as much when they g»

were walking down to Sans Souci a little later. 1^'

pounds "Good fellow, Haydock," he said. "But he's,

□'.•'IS! NORM? H| IH 77

not content to let a good thing alone. We've heard all about that business again and again until we're sick of it. He's as proud of the whole bag of tricks j|1^1 up there as a cat of its kittens.' ' S^

The simile was not too far-fetched, and Tommy 'Ai6 assented with a smile.

The conversation then turning to Major Bletchley's own successful unmasking of a dishonest bearer in 1923, Tommy's attention was free to s pursue its own inward line of thought punctuated tef^' by sympathetic "Not really?"--"You don't say so?" and "What an extraordinary business!" which was all Major Bletchley needed in the way of encouragement. §|lfi

More than ever now. Tommy felt thaFwhen the dying Farquhar had mentioned Sans Souci he had been on the right track. Here, in this out of the world spot, preparations had been made a long ^^ time beforehand. The arrival of the German Hahn i^11 and his extensive installation showed clearly ; enough that this particular part of the coast, had been selected for a rallying point, a focus of enemy activity.

That particular game had been defeated by the ,

unexpected activity of the suspicious Commander | Haydock. Round One had gone to Britain. But supposing that Smugglers' Rest had been only the first outpost of a complicated scheme of attack? s^ Smugglers' Rest, that is to say, had represented 'v* sea communications. Its beach, inaccessible save for the path down from above, would lend itself admirably to the plan. But it was only a part of the whole.

Defeated on that part of the plan by Haydock, what had been the enemy's response? Might not he have fallen back upon the next best thing—that

□--?

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is to say. Sans Souci? The exposure of Hahn had come about four years ago. Tommy had an idea from what Sheila Perenna had said, that it was; very soon after that that Mrs. Perenna had returned to England and bought Sans Souci. This next move in the game?

It would seem, therefore, that Leahampton was definitely an enemy center—that there were already installations and affiliations in the neighborhood. ; '

His spirits rose. The depression engendered by the harmless and futile atmosphere of Sans Souci disappeared. Innocent as it seemed, that innocence was no more than skin deep. Behind that innocuous mask things were going on. ?A^^

And the focus of it all, so far as Tommy could judge, was Mrs. Perenna. The first thing to do was to know more about Mrs. Perenna, to penetrate behind her apparently simple routine of running her boarding establishment. Her correspondence with her acquaintances, her social or war working activities—somewhere in all these must lie the essence of her real activities. If Mrs. Perenna was the renowned woman agent, M, then it was she who controlled the whole of the Fifth Column activities in this country. Her identity would be known to few—only to those at the top. But communications she must have with her chiefs of staff and it was those communications that he and Tupence had got to tap.

At the right moment, as Tommy saw well enough, Smugglers' Rest could be seized and held—by a few stalwarts operating from Sans Souci. That moment was not yet, but it might be very near. »py

□ISSBI '^ANORM? "-X 79

Once the German Army was established in control of the channel ports in France and Belgium, they could concentrate on the invasion and subjugation of Britain, and things were certainly ^ going very badly in France at the moment.

Britain's Navy was all-powerful on the sea, so the attack must come by air and by internal treachery--and if the threads of internal treachery, ^ were in Mrs. Perenna's keeping, there was no time SH to lose. .

Major Bletchley's words chimed in with his thoughts:

"I saw, you know, that there was no time to lose. I got hold of Abdul, my sayce--good fellow,

Abdul--" ^ ^

The story droned on. ^|(- ^f^^i,-. ^ ^

Tommy was thinking: ' '

"Why Leahampton? Any reason? It's out of the main stream--bit of a backwater. Conservative, old-fashioned. All those points make it desirable. Is there anything else?" ;'- ".,

There was a stretch of flat agricultural country | behind it, running inland. A lot of pasture. Suitable, therefore, for the landing of troop-carrying airplanes or of parachute troops. But that was true of many other places. There was also a big chemical works where, it might be noted, Carl von :

Deinim was employed. ''Nips^

Carl von Deinim. How did he fit in? Only too well. He was not, as Grant had pointed out, the real head. A cog, only, in the machine. Liable to suspicion and internment at any moment. But in the meantime, he might have accomplished what had been his task. He had mentioned to Tuppence that he was working on decontamination prob- ^

□80 Agatha Christie

lems and on the immunizing of certain gases.

There were probabilities there--probabilities unpleasant to contemplate.

Carl, Tommy decided (a little reluctantly) was in it. A pity, because he rather liked the fellow.

Well, he was working for his country--taking his life in his hands. Tommy had respect for such an adversary--down him by all means--a firing party was the end, but you knew that when you took on your job. w^'0- ^;? ^:

It was the people who betrayed their own land --from within--that really roused a slow vindictive passion in him. By God, he'd get them!

--"And that's how I got them!" The Major wound up his story triumphantly. "Pretty smart bit of work, eh?"

Unblushingly Tommy said:

"Most ingenious thing I've heard in my life, Major." ,^,- - - .'" -- - -

Mrs. Blenkinsop was reading a letter on thin foreign paper, stamped outside with the censor's mark.

"Dear Raymond," she murmured. "I was so happy about him out in Egypt, and now, it seems, there is a big change round. All very secret, of course, and he can't say anything--just that there really is a marvellous plan and that I'm to be ready for some big surprises soon. I'm glad to know where he's being sent, but I really don't see why--" m "I

Bletchley grunted.

"Surely he's not allowed to tell you that?" --

I

□V?. NORM? ||| g||j 81

Tuppence gave a deprecating laugh and looked round the breakfast table as she folded up her ^ precious letter. ^ ' _

"Oh! we have our methods," she said archly.

"Dear Raymond knows that if only I know where (he is or where he's going I don't worry quite so " much. It's quite a simple way, too. Just a certain

word, you know, and after it the initial letters of

the next words spell out the place. Of course it makes rather a funny sentence sometimes--but Raymond is really most ingenious. I'm sure nobody would notice."

Little murmurs arose round the table. The moment was well chosen, everybody happened to be at the breakfast table together for once. Bletchley, his face rather red, said:

"You'll excuse me, Mrs. Blenkinsop, but that's a damned foolish thing to do. Movements of troops and air squadrons are just what the Germans want to know."

"Oh, but I never tell anyone," cried Tuppence. "I'm very, very careful."

"All the same it's an unwise thing to do--and your boy will get into trouble over it some day."

"Oh, I do hope not. I'm his mother, you see. A mother ought to know."

"Indeed and I think you're right," boomed out Mrs. O'Rourke. "Wild horses wouldn't drag the information from you--we know that."

"Letters can be read," said Bletchley.

"I'm very careful never to leave letters lying about," said Tuppence with an air of outraged dignity. "I always keep them locked up."

Bletchley shook his head doubtfully.

"A. W. . . ."
"Sst^is"

I
Agatha Christie

It was a grey morning with the wind blowing coldly from the sea. Tuppence was alone at the far end of the beach.

She took from her bag two letters that she had just called for at a small news agent's in the town. She opened them.

dearest mother,

Lots of funny things I could tell you only I mustn't. We're putting up a good show, I think. Five German planes before breakfast is

today's market quotation. Bit of a mess at the moment and all that, but we'll get there all right in the end.

It's the way they machine gun the poor civilian devils on the roads that gets me. It makes us all see red. Gus and Trundles want to be remembered to you. They're still going strong.

Don't worry about me. I'm all right. Wouldn't have missed this show for the world. Love to old Carrot Top--have the W.C. given him a job yet?

Yours ever-- *

derek.

Tuppence's eyes were very bright and shining as she read and re-read this.

Then she opened the other letter.

dearest mum,

How's old Aunt Gracie? Going strong? I think you're wonderful to stick it. I couldn't. No news. My job's very interesting, but so

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N Or M

hush-hush I can't tell you about it. But I really do feel I'm doing something worth Ev while. Don't fret about not getting any war ; work to do-it's so silly all these elderly women rushing about wanting to do things. They only really want people who are young and efficient. I wonder how Carrots is getting on at his job up in Scotland? Just filling up forms, I suppose. Still he'll be happy to feel he is doing something. ysisk'f.^" ^^ASS Lots of love.,,,, ^, ^^i^^'^^1^ .y,-,,,^'1-^111^!!^^ deborah. ;/. Tuppence smiled.

I; She folded the letters,' smoothed them lovingly | and then under the shelter of a breakwater she H struck a match and set them on fire. She waited; jU until they were reduced to ashes. • Taking out her fountain pen and a small writing | 'pad she wrote rapidly. ^

fc-c F
^^a^^Langherne, :.
. Cornwall.':

^dearest deb, i^-issllfc BisY
a ^ It seems so remote from the war here that I can hardly believe there is a war going on. Very glad to get your letter and know that your work is interesting.

Aunt Gracie has grown much more feeble and very hazy in her mind. I think she is glad to have me here. She talks a good deal about the old days and sometimes, I think, confuses me with my own mother. They are growing more vegetables than usual-have turned the rose garden into potatoes. I help old sikes a bit. It makes me feel I am doing something in □- ' Agatha Christie

I1^": YOT father seems a bit disgruntled think> is you ^y. he too is glad to be d^S sometling. .,.,., ,
Love from your tuppenny mother.

S^ookafrrshsheet.
,1-"/: ,te'K !»,-: ' I
DLING DEgK ' - ----- :*i»: "- ;
^great effort to get your letter. Send n<?. postcar[s often if you haven't time to writf a-iy,..: ',,., ;, ,
T) 'i... .. " ri.,, ,

. he coftle iown to be with Aunt Gracie a bl"<he is ^y feeble. She will talk of you as

th^h you re seven and gave me ten shill- s. m^syesterdatosendyouasatip. i
LJk ct.llor.. . . . : : : _____

old you, has got a job in the
^*l»-t<.iii»-uia. nc IS Up 1-<U1"«%;
I|i soxti(»vhere. getter than nothing, but not ^
..J*3t^

vwy ywi vrju v^aiIUL 1 Up. OIIA1 1
i suppose we'^ got to be humble and take a baCK seat aq leave the war to you young I Wt sa, "Take care of yourself." be-?-caUS(i gathe that the whole point is that you _sndyiii do iiu-^i--_ ^- -- --- --
, ,t, -" ""; uppusiie. cui aon i go ana

be s'lpid.

«, ^°lsoflov -/ , , „
 SS " :/ ' , -- "11 , ; „

^ . 'As" tuppence. ^ ^^ - : . - : :

sh<?put the kters into envelopes, addressed and stamps them aid posted them on her way back to ggj SansSouci. : , ; , ; ,

As she reach^the bottom of the cliffher atten-

□; N OR M? 85

f tion was caughtby two figures ^"^^s ^'"s a little way up. , , , ,
 Tuppence stopPA dead- l was the same woman , she had seen ^td!ty and talking to her was carl I von Deinim. , , , , ' Regretfully TuPP^^ noted the fact that there was no cover Sl" could not get "ear them unseen I and overhear wh»t was being said. R Moreover atthat moment the y011"^^ German ^ turned his head ^ saw her- Rather a^P^^the

two figures ^ted- The woman came rapidly I down the hill, ^ssms the road and passing Tup'

i pence on the oth^"^^-.. „, I Carl von Dei1111" walted "n!1 Tuppence came

^ up to him ' ' ; ' ' * ; " * ; ! ^ T ,

Then, gravelysnd P011^^ he wished her 80od " morning. £ Tuppence said immediately:

"what ery odd lookin8 woman that was to

whom you wereta110^Mr- von Deimm-" ? "v»o i* d Central European type. She-is a

g ; i *ca- It IS » - . ' . - . :

% Czech " VS i ^'

SB^ "Really? A-a friend of yours?"

^ Tuppence's (O^ was a very good copy ° l e in'

| quisitive voice ^ Aunt Gracie in her younger

^ dflvs

I «^q. „ »said Carl stiffly: "I never saw the woman before."

"Oh. really. (thou8ht Tuppence paused

| artistically. (, , , : . : "She

asks me only a (llre(:tloñ-I SPEak Ger'

man to her because she doej not understand much English " saf! ' ??¥'

"I se a A ^e was ^^" "B ihs wsy somewhere?"

"She asked ^ if l knew a Ml"s Gottlleb near

□84 Agatha Christie

the war. Your father seems a bit disgruntled but I think, as you say, he too is glad to be doing something.

Love from your K ^^ tuppenny mother.

She took a fresh sheet. ' '& '

' - - " ; T. " ^ - ' < . ' ' ' ^ }darling

derek, N«8 e^

A great comfort to get your letter. Send field postcards often if you haven't time to write.

I've come down to be with Aunt Gracie a bit. She is very feeble. She will talk of you as though you were seven and gave me ten shill;

ings yesterday to send you as a tip. Nt ' :t

I'm still on the shelf and nobody wants mys% invaluable services! Extraordinary!

Your

father, as I told you, has got a job in they Ministry of Requirements. He is up

North^ somewhere. Better than nothing, but not

what he wanted, poor old Carrot Top. Still I

suppose we've got to be humble and take al

back seat and leave the war to you young' idiots. &

I won't say "Take care of yourself," be>> cause I gather that the whole point is that you

should do just the opposite. But don't go and

be stupid. ^''.Igai ^ Lots of love. &<

W - .--.-' -' fUPPENCE.

She put the letters into envelopes, addressed and stamped them and posted them on her way back to SansSouci.

As she reached the bottom of the cliff her atten-

□^» . '

;|S|s NORM?-?.-. 85

tion was caught by two figures standing talking a little way up.

Tuppence stopped dead. It was the same woman she had seen yesterday and talking to her was Carl von Deinim. sk

Regretfully Tuppence noted the fact that there was no cover. She could not get near them unseen and overhear what was being said.

| Moreover, at that moment the young German ^turned his head and saw her. Rather abruptly, the

two figures parted. The woman came rapidly down the hill, crossing the road and passing Tuppence on the other side.

Carl von Deinim waited until Tuppence came up to him.

Then, gravely and politely, he wished her good morning. .;^k ||H '-' ''.'

Tuppence said immediately:""

"What a very odd looking woman that was to whom you were talking, Mr. von Deinim."

"Yes. It is a Central European type. She is a Czech." ^).e ., alai.?-^

"Really? A--a friend of yours?" ^

Tuppence's tone was a very good copy of the inquisitive voice of Aunt Gracie in her younger days.

"Not at all," said Carl stiffly. "I never saw the woman before."- .^'^y-'^;''1-^:^

"Oh, really. I thought--" Tuppence paused artistically.

"She asks me only for a direction. I speak German to her because she does not understand muchEnglish."

"I

see. And she was asking the way somewhere?"

; "She asked me if I knew a Mrs. Gottlieb near

□86 ,,^ Agatha Christie -"¥. ^

"here. I do not, and she says she has, perhaps, got the name of the house wrong.'" ;;g» ^ "I see." said Tuppence thoughtfully. Stt g|

Mr. Rosenstein. Mrs. Gottlieb. ll

She stole a swift glance at Carl von Deinim. He was walking beside her with a set stiff face. -S

;: Tuppence felt a definite suspicion of thisgy;

"strange woman. And she felt almost convinced!" that when she had first caught sight of them, thee" woman and Carl had been already talking some^

^ / time together. ||\$||?^\$ ^^^^^^fjr

Carl von Deinim? |

y- Carl and Sheila that morning. "You must be careful...."

Tuppence thought:

"I hope--I hope these young things aren't in

^ Soft, she told herself, middle-aged and soft!|| ^%|That's what she was! The Nazi creed was a youth

ij "creed. Nazi agents would in all probability be

_I young. Carl and Sheila. Tommy said Sheila wasn't in it. Yes, but Tommy was a man, and Sheila was

1111 beautiful with a queer breath-taking beauty.
 Carl and Sheila, and behind them that enigm^tatic figure: Mrs. Perenna. Mrs.
 Perenna, sometimes
 the voluble, commonplace, guest house
 hostess, sometimes, for fleeting minutes, a tragic
 violent personality, l?^ "f^s
 Tuppence went slowly upstairs to her bedroom.
 That evening, when Tuppence went to bed, she
 pulled out the long drawer of her bureau. At one ^a side of it was a small japanned
 box with a flimsy H cheap lock. Tuppence slipped on gloves, unlocked
 the box, and opened it. A pile of letters lay inside.
 On the top was the one received that morning

□NORM? 87
 from "Raymond." Tuppence unfolded it with due
 precautions.

Then her lips set grimly. There had been an
 eyelash in the fold of the paper this morning. The
 eyelash was not there now. ^iis
 She went to the washstand. There was a little
 bottle labelled innocently: "Grey powder" with a
 dose.

Adroitly Tuppence dusted a little of the powder
 onto the letter and onto the surface of the glossy
 japanned enamel of the box.

There were no fingerprints on either of them.
 Again Tuppence nodded her head with a certain
 grim satisfaction.

For there should have been fingerprints--her
 own. . S M^;.: :,^

A servant might have read letters out of curiosity,
 though it seemed unlikely--certainly unlikely
 that she should have gone to the trouble of finding
 a key to fit the box.

But a servant would not think of wiping off-fingerprints.
 -^

Mrs. Perenna? Sheila? Somebody else? Somebody,
 at least, who was interested in the movements
 of British armed forces. ,,,.,,, .

IV

Tuppence's plan of campaign had been simple
 in its outlines. First, a general sizing up of probabilities
 and possibilities. Second, an experiment
 to determine whether there was or was not an inmate
 of Sans Souci who was interested in troop
 movements and anxious to conceal the fact.

□g8 Agatha Christie *

Third--who that person was? »a

It was concerning that third operation that Tuppence
 pondered as she lay in bed the following H
 niorning. Her train of thought was slightly hampered
 by Betty Sprot, who had pranced in at an
 early hour, preceding indeed the cup of somewhat
 tepid inky liquid known as Morning Tea. ,

Betty was both active and voluble. She had j taken a great attachment to Tuppence.
 She

climbed up on the bed and thrust an extremely tat- ,
 tered picture book under Tuppence's nose, corn- j|
 manding with brevity:.,.,; p ,- . *

"wead." US |||^ SS^

Tuppence read obediently: ;^

"Goosey, goosey gander, whither "will you ^ gj
 i wander? |

I Upstairs, downstairs, in my lady's chamber." |

Betty rolled with mirth--repeating in an ecstasy: "Uptares--u'ptares--uptares--" and then with

a sudden climax: "Down--" and proceeded to roll off the bed with a thump. ^

This proceeding was repeated several times until it palled. Then Betty crawled about the floor, playing with Tuppence's shoes and muttering busily to herself in her own particular idiom:

"Ag da--bah pit--soo--soo dah--putch--"

Released to fly back to its own perplexities, Tuppence's mind forgot the child. The words of the nursery rhyme seemed to mock at her.

Goosey, goosey gander, whither shall ye
, wander? w,;, ,,,. ..-.>>>><<i>>>BW,;i. ' ;l": ""':

□' NORM? , 89

whither indeed? Goosey, that was her, dander was Tommy. It was, at any rate, what they appeared to be! Tuppence had the heartiest contempt

for Mrs. Blenkinsop. Mr. Meadows, she thought, was a little better--stolid, British, unit imaginative--quite incredibly stupid. Both of

them, she hoped, fitting nicely into the background of Sans Souci. Both such possible people

sto be there. All the same, one must not relax--a slip was so easy. She had made one the other day--nothing

that mattered, but just a sufficient indication to warn her to be careful. Such an easy approach to intimacy and good relations--an

indifferent knittfeter asking for guidance. But she had forgotten that one evening, her fingers had slipped into their own practised efficiency, the needles clicking busily with the even note of the experienced knitter. And

Mrs. O'Rourke had noticed it. Since then, she had ^ .carefully struck a medium course--not so clumsy as she had been; at first--but not so rapid as she Jcouldbe.

^T?'1^1

"Ag boo bate?" demanded Betty. She reiterated the question: "Ag boo bate?" ^

"Lovely, darling," said Tuppence absently. ^ "Beautiful." ^ Satisfied, Betty relapsed into murmurs again.

Her next step. Tuppence thought, could be managed easily enough. That is to say with the connivance of Tommy. She saw exactly how to do it-- ;

Lying there planning, time slipped by. Mrs. ' Sprout came in, breathless, to seek for Betty.

"Oh, here she is. I couldn't think where she had got to. Oh, Betty, you naughty girl--Oh, dear, Mrs. Blenkinsop, I am so sorry." %

□) @svy Agatha Christie ^ff^ . ^

Tuppence sat up in bed. Betty, with an aagelicta face, w;as contemplating her handiwork. '•[.

She toad removed all the laces from Tuppence's I shoes aind had immersed them in a glass of water.;''?

She w;as prodding them now with a gleeful finger. ^ Tuppence laughed and cut short Mrs. Sprout's^l apologies. ''^H

"Ho'w frightfully funny. Don't worry, Mrs.y,^ sprout, they'll recover all right. It's my fault.

should have noticed what she was doing. Shewasgiglrather quiet." ||| ||| " |

"I know." Mrs. Sproi?sighed. "WhCTiever^ ^ they're quiet, it's a bad sign. I'll get you some" t

N Or M

more laices this morning, Mrs. Blenkinsop." 2
 "Dom't bother," said Tuppence. "They'll dry
 none the worse." .^Nils ;' ' ^ :
 Mrs. Sprout bore Betty away and tuppence got|§|j
 up to piut her plan into execution, sa? W^: %
 lsi": ^1"::A^ Ear
 □Tommy looked rather gingerly at the packet that ^ Tuppence thrust upon him.
 "Is this it?" ^ ? "Yes. Be careful. Don't get it over you."
 Tommy took a delicate sniff at the packet and
 replied with energy:
 "No, indeed. What is this frightful stuff?" - "Asafoetida,"
 replied Tuppence. "A pinch of
 that and you will wonder why your boy friend is
 I no longer attentive, as the advertisements say."
 "Shades of B.O.," murmured Tommy, f shortly after that, various incidents occurred.
 v The first was the smell in Mr. Meadows'
 room.
 Mr. Meadows, not a complaining man-by
 P nature, spoke about it mildly at first, then with in.
 creasing firmness.
 1 Mrs. Perenna was summoned into conclave.
 With all the will in the world to resist, she had to
 admit that there was a smell. A pronounced, unpleasant
 smell. Perhaps, she suggested, the gas tap
 of the fire was leaking.
 Bending down and sniffing dubiously, Tommy
 remarked that he did not think the smell came
 from there. Nor from under the floor. He himself
 thought, definitely--a dead rat.
 I Mrs. Perenna admitted that she had heard of
 such things--but she was sure there were no rats at
 ^a.;'-.!'.
 91
 □92 iy^ Agatha Christie^SS
 Sans Souci. Perhaps a mouse--though she herself
 ^had never seen a mouse there.
 ? Mr. Meadows said with firmness that he
 thought the smell indicated at least a rat--and he
 added, still more firmly, that he was not going to
 sleep another night in the room until the matter
 had been seen to. He would ask Mrs. Perenna to .
 change his room. jga;
 Mrs. Perenna said. Of course, she had just beenSfe
 about to suggest the same thing. She was afraid
 that the only room vacant was rather a small one
 and unfortunately it had no sea view, but if Mr. Hi Meadows did not mind that-- ^
 Mr. Meadows did not. His only wish was to get|§^ away from the smell. Mrs. Perenna
 thereupon ac1® companied him to a small bedroom, the door of ,
 which happened to be just opposite the doOr of
 Mrs. Blenkinsop's room, and summoned the|^ adenoidal, semi-idiotic Beatrice to "move
 Mr.i Meadows' things." She would, she explained, g
 send for "a man" to take up the floor and search
 ^';... ^.^..i'-;',"
 for the origin of the smell. ||sq
 Matters were settled satisfactorily on this basis. M
 The second incident was Mr. Meadows' hay
 fever. That was what he called it at first. Later he
 admitted doubtfully that he might just possibly
 have caught cold. He sneezed a good deal, and his
 eyes ran. If there was a faint elusive suggestion of
 raw onion floating in the breeze in the vicinity of
 Mr. Meadows' large silk handkerchief nobody
 noticed the fact and indeed a pungent amount of

N Or M

eau de cologne masked the more penetrating
 odour.
 Finally, defeated by incessant sneezing and
 noseblowing, Mr. Meadows retired to bed for the
 day.
 ";; It was on the morning of that day that Mrs.
 Blenkinsop received a letter from her son Douglas.
 So excited and thrilled was Mrs. Blenkinsop
 that everybody at Sans Souci heard about it. The
 letter had not been censored at all, she explained,
 because fortunately one of Douglas's friends coming
 on leave had brought it, so for once Douglas
 had been able to write quite fully. N?
 "And it just shows," declared Mrs. Blenkinsop,
 wagging her head sagely, "how little we really
 know of what is going on."
 After breakfast she went upstairs to her room, ; opened the japanned box and put the
 letter away.
 Between the folded pages were some unnoticeable
 grains of rice powder. She closed the box again,
 pressing her fingers firmly on its surface.
 | As she left her room she coughed, and from
 |j opposite came the sound of a highly histrionic
 sneeze. ^^ ' ,g;^;
 Tuppence smiled and proceeded downstairs.
 She had already made known her intention of
 going up to London for the day--to see her lawyer
 on some business and to do a little shopping.
 Now she was given a good send-off by the as|sembled
 boarders and entrusted with various corn- emissions--"only if you have time, of
 course."
 Major Bletchley held himself aloof from this
 female chatter. He was reading his paper and guttering appropriate comments aloud.
 "Damned
 swines of Germans. Machine gunning civilian ref□94 Agatha Christie
 I'll ugees on the roads. Damned brutes
 People--"
 Tuppence left him still outlining ' I iki^ do if he were in charge of operations
 Sft She made a detour through the 1 Betty Sprot what she would like as j
 London. ^v^' H
 Betty, ecstatically clasping a sni
 hands, gurgled appreciatively. In res
 pence's suggestions "A pussy? A
 Some coloured chalks to draw wit
 cided, "Betty dwar." So the coloun
 noted down on Tuppence's list.
 As she passed on, meaning to rejo
 the path at the end of the garden, sl
 pectedly upon Carl von Deinim. He leaning on the wall. His hands were
 as Tuppence approached he turne
 usually impassive face convulsed wit
 Tuppence paused involuntarily an
 "Is anything the matter?"
 "Ach, yes, everything is the matt
 was hoarse and unnatural. "You
 here that a thing is neither fish, fl
 good red herring, have you not?"
 Tuppence nodded.
 Carl went on bitterly: ^ "That is what I am. It cannot ;
 what I say. It cannot go on. It we
 I think, to end everything." ? g ;>? "What do you mean?"
 The young man said:

"You have spoken kindly to me.
 "I think, understand. I fled from my
 because of injustice and cruelty. I
 find freedom. I hated Nazi Germany
 'NORM? -\|'.^'-'^;1 95

am still a German. Nothing can alter that." K Tuppence murmured:

"You must have difficulties, I know--" Ail% HP

"It is not that. I am a German, I tell you. In my ^||

heart--in my feeling. Germany is still my country, ^y, M when I read of German
 cities bombed, of Germanfc ' ^ oldiers dying, of German aeroplanes brought^
 down--they are my people who die. When that§H

old fire-eating Major reads out from his paper,

when he says 'those swine'--I am moved to fury|®j

--I cannot bear it." .',:;; ywss-sye ^^.^'s'awMf1''''' He added quietly: ^ "And so I
 think it would be best, perhaps, .to ^

end it all. Yes, to end it." g^ Hg Tuppence took hold of him firmly by the arm.

"Nonsense," she said robustly. "Of course you

feel as you do. Anyone would. But you've got to
 stick it."

"I wish they would intern me. It would be easier

»o." i- a

"Yes, probably it would. But in the meantime

you're doing useful work--or so I've heard. Useful

not only to England but to humanity. You're ga

working on decontamination problems, aren't,, ..™^4
 you?"

His face lit up slightly. g||

"Ah, yes, and I begin to have much success. A

process very simple, easily made and not complicated
 to apply."

"Well," said Tuppence, "that's worth doing. ^,,^ Anything that mitigates suffering
 is worth while III

--and anything that's constructive and not destructive.

Naturally we've got to call the other side

names. They're doing just the same in Germany.

Hundreds of Major Bletchleys--foaming at the ' , 'nouth. I hate the Germans myself.

'The Ger- 1"

□96 Agatha Christie

mans, I say, and feel waves of loathing. But wnei
 I think of individual Germans, mothers sittin)
 anxiously waiting for news of their sons, and boy
 leaving home to fight, and peasants getting in thi
 harvests, and little shopkeepers and some of thi
 nice kindly German people I know, I feel quite dif
 ferent. I know then they are just human being
 and that we're all feeling alike. That's the rea
 thing. The other is just the war mask that you pu
 on. It's a part of war--probably a necessary par
 -but it's ephemeral."

As she spoke she thought, as Tommy had doni
 not long before, of Nurse Cavell's words: "Patri
 otism is not enough. I must have no hatred in nv
 heart."

That saying of a most truly patriotic wornai

had always seemed to them both the high wate
 mark of sacrifice, ty''* '^''^ '''; a

Carl von Deinim took her hand and kissed it

He said:

"I thank you. What you say is good and true.

will have more fortitude."

I "Oh, dear," thought Tuppence as she walket

down the road into the town. "How very un

fortunate that the person I like best in this placi

should be a German. It makes everything cock-eyed!" ^

Tuppence was nothing if not thorough. Al- though she had no wish to go to London, she judged it wise to do exactly as she had said she was going to do. If she merely made an excursion somewhere for the day, somebody might see her

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and the fact would get round to Sans Souci. No, Mrs. Blenkinsop had said she was going to London and to London she must go.

She purchased a third return and was just leaving the booking office window when she ran into Sheila Perenna. i:

"Hallo," said Sheila. "Where are you off to? I ^ just came to see about a parcel which seems to ^ have gone astray." ;,;, as^-.,,.

Tuppence explained her plans, i^ I&^A;? 'i "Oh, yes, of course," said Sheila carelessly. "I

do remember you saying something about it, but I hadn't realized it was today you were going. I'll come and see you into the train."

- Sheila was more animated than usual. She looked neither bad tempered nor sulky. She

chatted quite amiably about small details of daily life at Sans Souci. She remained talking to Tuppence until the train left the station.

& After waving from the window and watching the girl's figure recede. Tuppence sat down in her corner seat again and gave herself up to serious meditation. ^ '' , ;-^ K^.-'lll!

was it, she wondered, an accident that Sheila had happened to be at the station just at that time?

Or was it a proof of enemy thoroughness? Did ,,, Mrs. Perenna want to make quite sure that the

ugarrulous Mrs. Blenkinsop really had gone to London? ^ It looked very much like it. ^

I It was not until the next day that Tuppence was able to have a conference with Tommy. They had

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agreed never to attempt to communicate with each other under the roof of Sans Souci. |^ gf "'*" Mrs. Blenkinsop met Mr. Meadows as the latter, his hay fever somewhat abated, was taking a y-^ft gentle stroll on the front. They sat down on one of the promenade seats.

"Well?" said Tuppence.

ll&l^ Slowly, Tommy nodded his head." He looked perhaps rather unhappy. &

§|S "Yes," he said. "I got something. But, Lord, what a day. Perpetually with an eye to the crack of the door. I've got quite a stiff neck." |^

"Never mind your neck," said Tuppence unfeelingly. "Tell me."

"Well, the maids went in to do the bed and the wash-room, of course. And Mrs. Perenna went in--but was that was when the maids were there and she was just blowing them up about something. And the

te^ kid ran in once and came out with a woolly dog.'" ^ "Yes, yes. Anyone else?" ^ * 'One person,' said Tommy slowly. |||g| i™»'

i "Whr»9"

I who- 8Bf

"Carl von Deinim." SB

"Oh." Tuppence felt a swift pang. So, after

; "When?" she asked. '^^ ^^k

"Lunch time. He came out from the dining

,, : room early, came up to his room, then sneaked across the passage and into yours. He was there for about a quarter of an hour.'" s€%I

s€%I

He paused. .. ? |B "That settles it, I think?" ^ |||
 r* Tuppence nodded, s-^^.: -:..- ;%*^ ^
 -- Yes, it settled it all right. Carl von Deinim could SSI
 _ have no reason for going into Mrs. Blenkert|
 sop's bedroom and remaining there for a quarter
 □, .., ..., NORM? ..,^ 99
 of an hour save one. His complicity was proved.
 He must be. Tuppence thought, a marvellous
 actor...
 His words to her that morning had rung so very*
 true. Well, perhaps they had been true in a way.
 To know when to use the truth was the essence of
 successful deception. Carl von Deinim was a
 patriot all right, he was an enemy agent working
 for his country. One could respect him for that.
 Yes--but destroy him too.
 "I'm sorry," she said slowly. ^-^^'yuk. |§
 "So am I," said Tommy. "He's a good chap." ^ Tuppence said:
 "You and I might be doing the same thing in
 Germany." ^
 Tommy nodded. Tuppence went on. : ^
 "Well, we know more or less where we are. Carl
 von Deinim working in with Sheila and her
 mother. Probably Mrs. Perenna is the big noise.
 Then there is that foreign woman who was talking
 to Carl yesterday. She's in it somehow."
 "What do we do now?" .^%
 "We must go through Mrs. Perenna's room
 some time. There might be something there that
 would give us a hint. And we must tail her--see
 where she goes and whom she meets. Tommy, let's
 get Albert down here."
 Tommy considered the point. S1^ w-
 Some years ago, Albert, a page boy in a hotel,
 had joined forces with the young Beresfords and
 shared their adventures. Afterwards he had
 entered their service and been the sole domestic
 prop of the establishment. Some six years ago he
 had married and was now the proud proprietor of
 The Duck and Dog pub in South London. ,
 Tuppence continued rapidly: 4^' &□" 100 as^ Agatha Christie I
 |^ "Albert will be thrilled. We'll get him down
 here. He can stay at the pub near the station and
 w he can shadow the Perennas for us--or anyone awi
 ,,,- ? else." ,,,-- , ...Sfe?' S® "What about Mrs. Albert?"|^ISS 3iw'-^ | ;iss "She
 was going to her mother in Wales with the !§g B children last Monday. Because of Air
 Raids. It all | "* fits in perfectly." S
 "Yes, that's a good idea. Tuppence. Either of
 us following the woman about would be rather
 conspicuous. Albert will be perfect. Now another ;U^ thing--I think we ought to
 watch out for that so- j |] % called Czech woman who was talking to Carl and |^ "te
 hanging about here. It seems to me that she prob- |S|| g^,; ably represents the
 other end of the business--and Mgi sb that's what we're anxious to find." ,,,.,
 |j§| "Oh, yes, I do agree. She comes here for orders, |§8
 Kill or to take messages. Next time we see her, one of jtt us must follow her and
 find out more about her." <Bal' "What about looking through Mrs. Perenna's |
 room--and Carol's, too, I suppose?" ypf
 "I don't suppose you'll find anything in his.
 After all, as a German, the police are liable to ^ ^ search it and so he'd be
 careful not to have anything
 suspicious. The Perenna is going to be diffi- |
 .7 cult. When she's out of the house, Sheila is often | h' here, and there's Betty
 and Mrs. Sprot running f-

N Or M

about all over the landings, and Mrs. Q'Rpurke | T§| spends a lot of time in her bedroom.' ' ^ ; ;
 III She paused. . s t?A "Lunch time is the best." ' , , , , , "Master Carol's time?"
 aste^s^is-&
 "Exactly. I could have a headache and go to my room-- No, someone might come up and want to IH minister to me. I know, I'll just come in quietly before lunch and go up to my room without telling ' anyone. Then, after lunch, I can say I had a headache." S|t
 "Hadn't I better do it? My hay fever could recrudescere tomorrow."
 "I think it had better be me. If I'm caught I ^'SS, could always say I was looking for aspirin or I something. One of the gentlemen boarders in Mrs. Perenna's room would cause far more specula- Hi tw^n" Tommy grinned. a^^^S^^-Ng^^g^^^
 "Of a scandalous character." fe issi y^ Then the smile died. He looked grave and anxb!
 "As soon as we can.'old thing. The news is bad ^ today. We must get on to something soon." -g^
 igUWw ".»,>> r^S|t^N
 '^last-. 'i'..' ',: >. ;-'?< «*:'--?&.' wr^t
 ^^y.
 f^: ":w i|@j;|
 Tommy c6htinued his walk and presently entered the post office, where he put through a call to Mr. Grant, and reported "the recent operation was successful and our friend C is definitely involved."
 Then he wrote a letter and posted it. It was ad- §H y. dressed to Mr. Albert Batt, The Duck and Dog, | Glamorgan St., Kensington.
 |^ ., Then he bought himself a weekly paper which professed to inform the English world of what was Sa| I really going to happen and strolled innocently ^ ||?s back in the direction of Sans Souci. 1|| ^ j^fe Presently he was hailed by the hearty voice of K Commander Haydock leaning from his two seater car and shouting, "Hyllo, Meadows, want a
 □"So you reai
 Haydock, glanc
 side Weekly Ne

Mr. Meadowt
 all readers of thi
 lenged.
 "Awful rag,'
 know, they real
 on behind the sc
 "And sometii
 "Oh, quite so
 "Truth of it
 steering rather <
 and narrowly n
 "when the begg,
 when they're wr
 "Do you thin
 about Stalin ha
 "wishful thh
 said Command*
 crooked as Hell
 'em, that's what

weather?"

"Just a touch
time of year."

"Yes, of course
but I had a pal
ularly every June
golf?" ^

Tommy said
"Right. What
I've got to go
business, raising
good idea, if you
to pull our weight

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"Thanks very much. I'd like to."

"Good. Then that's settled."

The Commander drew up abruptly at the gate
of Sans Souci. isyy.-... ,:a,%3,

"How's the fair Sheila?" he asked. sfe-SS^

"Quite well, I think. I haven't seen much of

her." |gg ^ 'm || III ^Haydock gave his loud barking laugh. """"""Not as much as
you'd like to, I bet! Good

looking girl, that, but damned rude. She sees too
much of that German fellow. Damned unpatriotic,
I call it. Daresay she's got no use for old
fogies like you or me, but there are plenty of nice
lads going about in our own services. Why take up
with a bloody German? That sort of thing riles

rM<a "

' vsy. ' ^'f'lSSSS':" ^ Mr. Meadows said: 118 ^"r.'<>'ft^H-fc:a

||g|"Be careful, he's just coming up the hill behind us." 1^ |S |

"Don't care if he does hear! Rather hope he

does. I'd like to kick Master Carol's behind for

I', him. Any decent German's fighting for his coun- ; try--not slinking over here to
get out of it!"

; "Well," said Tommy. "It's one less German to
invade England at all events.'" §§|

"You mean he's here already? Ha, ha! rather?

Good, Meadows! Not that I believe this Tommy- ;
rot about invasion. We never have been invaded

and never will be. We've got a Navy, thank God!" K; with which patriotic
announcement the Commander

let in his clutch with a jerk and the car

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Tuppence arrived at the gate of Sans Souci at twenty minutes to two. She turned off
from the

drive and went through the garden and into the
house through the open drawing room window. A
smell of Irish stew and the clatter of plates and
murmur of voices came from afar. Sans Souci was
hard at work on its midday meal.

Tuppence waited by the drawing room door
until Martha, the maid, had passed across the hall
and into the dining room, then she ran quickly up
the stairs, shoeless. -^ ^

She went into the room, put on her soft felt bedroom
slippers, and then went along the landing and into Mrs. Perenna's room.
Once inside she looked round her and felt a certain
distaste sweep over her. Not a nice job, this
Quite unpardonable if Mrs. Perenna was simple
Mrs. Perenna. Prying into people's private affairs--

Tuppence shook herself, an impatient terrier

shake that was a reminiscence of her girlhood There was a war on! »§
 She went over to the dressing table, y:
 Quick and deft in her movements, she had soon
 gone through the contents of the drawers there. In
 the tall bureau, one of the drawers was locked
 That seemed more promising.
 Tominy had been entrusted with certain tool;
 and had received some brief instruction on the
 manipulation of them. These indications he had passed on to Tuppence.
 A deft twist or two of the wrist and the drawer
 yielded.

There was a cash box containing twenty pounds

in notes and some piles of silver--also a jewel
 case. And there was a heap of papers. These last
 were what interested Tuppence most. Rapidly she
 went through them; necessarily it was a cursory
 glance. She could not afford time for more.

Papers relating to a mortgage on Sans Souci, a
 bank account, letters. Time flew past. Tuppence
 skimmed through the documents, concentrating
 furiously on anything that might bear a double
 meaning. Two letters from a friend in Italy, rambling
 discursive letters, seemingly quite harmless.
 But possibly not so harmless as they sounded. A
 letter from one Simon Mortimer, of London--a
 dry business-like letter containing so little of
 moment that Tuppence wondered why it had been
 kept. Was Mr. Mortimer not so harmless as he
 seemed? At the bottom of the pile a letter in faded
 ink signed Pat and beginning "This will be the last
 letter I'll be writing you, Eileen my darling--"
 No, not that! Tuppence could not bring herself
 to read that! She refolded it, tidied the letters on
 top of it and then, suddenly alert, pushed the
 drawer to--no time to re-lock it--and when the
 door opened and Mrs. Perenna came in, she was
 searching vaguely amongst the bottles on the
 washstand.

Mrs. Blenkinsop turned a flustered, but foolish
 face towards her hostess.

"Oh, Mrs. Perenna, do forgive me. I came in
 with such a blinding headache, and I thought I
 would lie down on my bed with a little aspirin, and
 I couldn't find mine, so I thought you wouldn't
 mind--I know you must have some because you
 offered it to Miss Minton the other day."

Mrs. Perenna swept into the room. There was a
 sharpness in her voice as she said: " "

^

^ Agatha Christie ' wa's
 in 'Why, of course, Mrs. Blenkinsop, why ever
 >An't you come and ask me?"

clK^/well, of course, yes, I should have done
 ' ily. But I knew you were all at lunch, and I do
 ,e^(hate, you know, making a fuss--"

so /^3ssav> Tuppence, Mrs. Perenna caught up the
 y^tle of aspirin from the washstand. ? hc^y "How many would you like?" she demanded
 ^yy^lrs.

Blenkensop accepted three. Escorted by Mrs. Perenna she crossed to her own room and
 f ^'i _i_-- - ->.*.-- ^.1- --____-_.>--,-^ _-..
 h^tle.

i,^j»i4rs. Perenna used her parting shot as she left 7, room.

^^ 'But you have some aspirin of your own, Mrs. .nkensop. I've seen it." S
 g^jfpuppence cried quickly:

^ 'Oh, I know. I know I've got some somewhere, f,, so stupid of me. I simply
 couldn't Hay my
 ^^dsonit."

^fA^s. Perenna said, with a, flash of her big white
 t^'well, have a good rest until tea time."s||(;»||| ^he went out, closing the door
 behind heir. Tup- ^ce drew a deep breath, lying on her bed rigidly p^ t Mrs. Perenna
 should return.

l^^ad the other suspected anything? Those teeth,
 1111 yig and so white--the better to eat you wiith, my
 s<f ^r. Tuppence always thought of that when she
 "(^iced those teeth. Mrs. Perenna's hands, too,
 ft</ cruel-looking hands.

,_--^Pahe had appeared to accept Tuppence's presi
 ,,f. in her bedroom quite naturally. But latter she ^^Id find the bureau drawer
 unlocked. would

^l' suspect then? Or would she think she hiad left

^ . ,_ ^ . ,
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| it unlocked herself by accident? One did do such
 |g things. Had Tuppence been able to replace the ^f papers in such a way that they
 looked much the
 ? same as before?

' Surely, even if Mrs. Perenna did notice anything
 amiss she would be more likely to suspect
 Hone of the servants than she would "Mrs. Blenl;*kensop."
 And if she did suspect the latter,

I wouldn't it be a mere case of suspecting her of unI
 due curiosity? There were people. Tuppence

| knew, who did poke and pry. Sft.'^ 'l^^ I But then, if Mrs. Perenna were the
 renowned

|; German agent, M, she would be suspicious of
 KF counterespionage.

„ B8;t Had anything in her bearing revealed undue
 H alertness?

ly,. She had seemed natural enough--only that one
 sharply pointed remark about the aspirin.

Suddenly, Tuppence sat up on her bed. She ^mg remembered that her aspirin, together
 with some uS iodine and a bottle of soda mints were all together
 at the back of the writing table drawer where she
 had shoved them when unpacking.

It would seem, therefore, that she was1 not the
 only person to snoop in other people's rooms.

Mrs. Perenna had got there first.

□, ^-w" If '^^^<^

On the following day Mrs. Sprout went up to London.

i

A few tentative remarks on her part had led immediately
 to various offers on the part of the inhabitants
 of Sans Souci to look after Betty. „

^|When Mrs. Sprout, with many final adjurations H
 to Betty to be a very good girl, had departed, Betty
 attached herself to Tuppence, who had elected to
 take morning duty. W^^VW

"Play," said Betty. "Play hide seek."

|g|| She was talking more easily every day and had Is adopted a most fetching habit
 of laying her head ,

on one side, fixing her interlocutor with a bewitching
 smile and murmuring: 8@%; I

"Peese." ^MS',- L

Tuppence had intended taking her for a walk,
 but it was raining hard, so the two of them adjourned

"Oh, yes, three. But two of the in age and I was thinking of the them."

"Ah? I see. Sit down now, M: Make yourself at home."

Tuppence sat down obediently | Mrs. O'Rourke did not always m uncomfortable. She felt now exa< or Gretel accepting the witch's invi

"Tell me now," said Mrs. O'] do you think of Sans Souci?"

Tuppence began a somewhat gu eulogy, but Mrs. O'Rourke cut h(ceremony.

"What I'd be asking you is if sthere's something odd about the pi;

I "Odd? No, I don't think so."

I "Not about Mrs. Perenna? You

□I'll NORM? '^ 111

her, you must allow. I've seen you watching her and watching her."

Tuppence Hushed. "^ %

"She--she's an interesting woman?'"

"She is not then," said Mrs. O'Rourke. "She's a commonplace woman enough--that is if she's ?; what she seems. But perhaps she isn't. Is that your idea?" :'" ^

"Really, Mrs. O'Rourke, I don't know what you mean." ^

"Have you ever stopped to think that many of w||

us are that way--different to what we seem on the itia surface. Mr. Meadows, now. He's a puzzling

kind of man. Sometimes I'd say he was a typical Englishman, stupid to the core, and there's other times I'll catch a look or a word that's not stupid at all. It's odd that. don't you think so?"

Tuppence said firmly: ^

"Oh, I really think Mr. Meadows is very typical"

B n| - H

"There are others. Perhaps you'll know who I'll

be meaning?" ?%CS?|lis ' S^* Tuppence shook her head. *^? Istt »f;"The name," said Mrs. O'Rourke encourag- ,,,,"

ingly, "begins with an S." lift

She nodded her head several times. Njll;®

with a sudden spark of anger and an obscure ^f impulse to spring to the defense of something |f^ young and vulnerable, Tuppence said sharply: ?;: *

"Sheila's just a rebel. One usually is, at that age."

Mrs. O'Rourke nodded her head several times, looking just like an obese china mandarin that Tuppence remembered on her Aunt Gracie's mantelpiece.

A vast smile tilted up the corners of her mouth. She said softly:

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"You mayn't know it, but tian name is Sophia."

"Oh!" Tuppence was ta Miss Minton you meant?"

"It was not," said Mrs. O'

Tuppence turned away to how this old woman could

about her an atmosphere

"Like a mouse between a (

Tuppence. "That's what I fe<

This vast smiling monum<

Two matches, left carelessly crossed on the marble table in the hall, informed Tuppence that Mr. Meadows was spending the afternoon on the trail of Mrs. Perenna. Tuppence betook herself to the drawing room and the company of Mr. and Mrs. Cayley.

Mr. Cayley was in a fretful mood. He had come to Leahampton, he explained, for absolute rest and quiet, and what quiet could there be with a child in the house? All day long it went on, screaming and running about, jumping up and down on the floors--

His wife murmured pacifically that Betty was really a dear little mite, but the remark met with, , : no favour. 'r'^ '^ g||S |j

"No doubt, no doubt," said Mr. Cayley, wriggling his long neck. "But her mother should keep her quiet. There are other people to consider. Invalids, people whose nerves need repose."

Tuppence said: "It's not easy to keep a child of that age quiet. It's not natural--there would be something wrong with the child if she was quiet."

Mr. Cayley gobbled angrily:

"Nonsense--nonsense--this foolish modern spirit. Letting children do exactly as they please. A child should be made to sit down quietly and--and nurse a doll--or read, or something."

"She's not three yet," said Tuppence, smiling.

"You can hardly expect her to be able to read."

"Well, something must be done about it. I shall speak to Mrs. Perenna. The child was singing,

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singing in her bed before seven o'clock this morning.

I had had a bad night and just dropped off towards morning--and it woke me right up."

"It's very important that Mr. Cayley should get as much sleep as possible," said Mrs. Cayley anxiously.

"The doctor said so."

"You should go to a nursing home," said Tuppence.

gg Ili^lll

"My dear lady .""such places are" ruinously expensive and besides it's not the right atmosphere.

There is a suggestion of illness that reacts unfavourably on my subconscious.'

as

"Bright society, the doctor said," Mrs. Cayley |g: explained helpfully. "A normal life. He thought a guest house would be better than just taking a furnished house. Mr. Cayley would not be so likely to brood, and would be stimulated by exchanging ideas with other people."

Mr. Cayley's method of exchanging ideas was, i so far as Tuppence could judge, a mere recital of ' ' his own ailments and symptoms and the exchange

consisted in the sympathetic or unsympathetic reception of them. ^y ., ,^

Adroitly, Tuppence changed the subject.saSfl »^AB

"I wish you would tell me," she said, "of your own views on life in Germany. You told me you had travelled there a good deal in recent years. It . would be interesting to have the point of view of I an experienced man of the world like yourself. I can see you are the kind of man, quite unswayed

by prejudice, who could really give a clear account of conditions there."

Flattery, in Tuppence's opinion, should always be laid on with a trowel where a man was concerned.

Mr. Cayley rose at once to the bait. , , , , . . . , , , , , ,

B BBS BM V-:Λ.

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"As you say, dear lady, I am ca

a clear unprejudiced view. Now ion—"

what followed constituted a m< pence, throwing in an occasiona very interesting," or "what a sl you are," listened with an attentk assumed for the occasion. For Mr. away by the sympathy of his listeni ing himself as a decided admire system. How much better it woulc hinted, if he did not say, for Enj many to have allied themselves ag< Europe.

The return of Miss Minton i celluloid duck duly obtained, bro monologue, which had extended nearly two hours. Looking up, Ti rather a curious expression on Mrs She found it hard to define. It m pardonable wifely jealousy at the ir husband's attention by another wi be alarm at the fact that Mr. Cayle: outspoken in his political views. pressed dissatisfaction.

Tea was the next move and han the return of Mrs. Sprot from Lo ing: 'w •'.', ,••

"I do hope Betty's been good blesome? Have you been a good g which Betty replied laconically by tl "Dam!"

This, however, was not to be reg pression of disapproval at her m but merely as a request for blackbel

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It elicited a deep chuckle from Mrs. O'Rourke and a reproachful:

"Please, Betty, dear," from the young lady's parent.

Mrs. Sprot then sat down, drank several cups of tea, and plunged into a spirited narrative of her purchases in London, the crowd on the train, what a soldier recently returned from France had told the occupants of her carriage, and what a girl behind the stocking counter had told her of a recent air raid in one of the suburbs.

fe The conversation was, in fact, completely normal. It was prolonged afterwards on the terrace outside, for the sun was now shining and the wet day a thing of the past.

Betty rushed happily about, making mysterious expeditions into the bushes and returning with a laurel leaf, or a heap of pebbles which she placed in the lap of one of the grown-ups with a confused and unintelligible explanation of what it

represented. Fortunately she required little cooperation in her game, being satisfied with an occasional "How nice, darling. Is it really?" Never had there been an evening more typical of Sans Souci at its most harmless. Chatter, gossip, speculations as to the course of the war--can France rally? will weygand pull things together? what is Russia likely to do? Could Hitler invade England if he tried? will Paris fall if the "bulge" is not straightened out? was it true that . . . ? It had been said that . . . And it was rumoured that...

Political and military scandal was happily bandied about.

Tuppence thought to herself: "Chatterbugs a

□^ 118 Agatha Christie ^

-^.^ i'-- || danger? Nonsense, they're a safety valve. People s^ en/ov these rumours. It gives them the stimulation

to carry on with their own private worries and anxieties." She contributed a nice tidbit prefixed ,

by, "My son told me--ofcourse.^his is quite lfe private, you understand--" y^S Illi^,te Suddenly, with a start, Mrs. Sprot glanced at |

' her watch.

"Goodness, it's nearly seven. I ought to have r put that child to bed hours ago. Betty--Betty!"

It was some time since Betty had returned to the terrace, though no one had noticed her defection .\$\$\$1^ Mrs. Sprot called her with rising impatience.

"Bett-eeee! where can the child be?"

Mrs. O'Rourke said, with her deep laugh: ^tei!^1 "Up to mischief, I've no doubt of it. Tis

always the way when there's peace."

|%a "Betty! I want you."

--j There was no answer and Mrs; Sprot rose impa- i J^iy- b

?; "I suppose I must go and look for her. I wonder | 'r where she can be?"

Miss Minton suggested that she was hiding somewhere and Tuppence, with memories of her own childhood, suggested the kitchen. But Betty could not be found, either inside or outside the p house. They went round the garden calling; looking all over the bedrooms. There was no Betty anywhere. ^ik '

Mrs. Sprot began to get annoyed, ill "It's very naughty of her--very naughty indeed! Do you think she can have gone out on the ..-_ road?" p

Together she and Tuppence went out to the gate I IggSand looked up and down the hill. There was no '""one in sight except a tradesman's boy with a bicy- f

V --

□''' NORM? 119

cle standing talking to a maid at the door of St. Lucian's opposite, ^i"^-'^ ; '

On Tuppence's suggestion, she and Mrs. Sprot crossed the road and the latter asked if either of them had noticed a little girl. They both shook their heads and then the servant asked, with sudden recollection:

| "A little girl in a green checked gingham dress?" ;'- iv^ -j^ f^'i ^'1 Mrs. Sprot said eagerly: ' ftAMi.. ^fc^.,... :.,., s& "That's right." .^fe^a

"I saw her about half an hour ago--going down

the road with a woman."

Mrs. Sprout said, with astonishment:

"With a woman? What sort of a woman?"

The girl seemed slightly embarrassed.

"Well, what I'd call an odd looking kind of woman. A foreigner she was. Queer clothes. A kind of shawl thing and no hat, and a strange sort of face--queer like, if you know what I mean.--I've | seen her about once or twice lately, and to tell the truth I thought she was a bit wanting-- If you know what I mean," she added helpfully.

In a flash Tuppence remembered the face she had seen that afternoon peering through the bushes and the foreboding that had swept over her. But she had never thought of the woman in connection with the child, could not understand it now.

I She had little time for meditation, however.

Mrs. Sprout almost collapsed against her. p "Oh, Betty, my little girl. She's been kidnapped.

She--what did the woman look like--a gypsy?"

Tuppence shook her head energetically.

"No, she was fair, very fair, a broad face with ,-SSyi

□120 Agatha Christie j

high cheek bones and blue eyes set very far a

'i- '^-^A'A^'iw "

I

She saw Mrs. Sprout staring at her and hastened : to explain. K. |

"I saw the woman this afternoons--peering S through the bushes at the bottom of the garden, f ' And I've noticed her hanging about. Carl von ^ja Deinim was speaking to her one day. It must, be Bft j|f|| the same woman." y:^ j||| / |^^':, ,,'

>>"p^g servant girl chimed in to say:SS|

"That's right. Fair-haired, she was. And want- gs,|

ing, if you ask me. Didn't understand nothing that ";a was said to her." "

|g| "Oh, God," moaned Mrs. Sprout. "What shall I '

, , 'iSSfflA'ia, , i'Aa.S.S.^'St'- S;.k'^^ "

~* Tuppence passed an arm round her. ^:

"Come back to the house, have a little brandy1' gp| | and then we'll ring up the police. It's all right. 3

We'll get her back."

| Mrs. Sprout went with her meekly, murmuring in B a dazed fashion:

"I can't imagine how Betty would go like that with a stranger."

I "She's very young," said Tuppence. "Not old ,s, ^

enough to be shy." ,,^ . ; Mrs. Sprout cried out weakly: It^SlllB'

"Some dreadful German woman, I expect.

__She'll kill my Betty." ^H "Nonsense," said Tuppence robustly. "It will be all right. I expect she's just some woman who's I not quite right in her head."

But she did not.,

believe her own words--did not believe for onei\$\$

' moment that that calm blond woman was an irresSte sponsible lunatic.

Carl! would Carl know? Had Carl something to do with this?

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A few minutes later she was inclined to doubt this. Carl von Deinim, like the rest, seemed amazed, unbelieving, completely surprised. ' ; AS soon as the facts were made plain. Major Bletchley assumed control.

N Or M

"Now then, dear lady," he said to Mrs. Sprot, "sit down here--just drink a little drop of this--brandy--it won't hurt you--and I'll get straight on to the police station."

Mrs. Sprot murmured:

"Wait a minute--there might be something--"

She hurried up the stairs and along the passage to hers and Betty's room. .^

^ A minute or two later they heard her footsteps running wildly along the landing. She rushed down the stairs like a demented woman and clutched Major Bletchley's hand from the telephone receiver, which he was just about to lift.

"No, no," she panted. "You mustn't--you mustn't..."

And sobbing wildly, she collapsed into a chair. They crowded around her. In a minute or two, she recovered her composure. Sitting up, with Mrs. Cayley's arm round her, she held something out for them to see.

"I found this--on the floor of my room. It had been wrapped round a stone and thrown through the window. Look--look what it says."

Tommy took it from her and unfolded it.

It was a note, written in a queer stiff foreign handwriting, big and bold. v ^

WE HAVE GOT YOUR CHILD IN SAFE KEEPING. YOU WILL BE TOLD WHAT TO DO IN DUE COURSE. IF YOU GO TO THE POLICE YOUR CHILD WILL BE KILLED. SAY NOTHING. WAIT FOR INSTRUCTIONS. IF NOT--X.

as

□122 Agatha Christie M ^

Mrs. Sprot was moaning faintly:

"Betty--Betty--"

Everyone was talking at once. "The dirty murdering scoundrels!" from Mrs. O'Rourke.

"Brutes!" from Sheila Perenna. "Fantastic--I

don't believe a word of it. Silly practical K /a J'ke," from Mr. Cayley. "Oh, the dear, wee

13 mite," from Miss Minton. "I do not understand, w 1| It is incredible," from Carl von Deinim. And |

above everyone else the strenuous voice of Major fc

Bletchley: iH g% |

ys's' s-f.i.1 if

"Damned nonsense. Intimidation. We must in- \$ form the police at once. They'll soon get to the

B bottom of it." '

.... Once more he moved toward the telephone. ,

g^~i sf

This time a scream of outraged motherhood from I

Mrs. Sprot stopped him. ©^

He shouted: w-a a--^-1 "*** -j'--" ^

"But, my dear Madam, it's got to be done. This is only a crude device to prevent you getting on the track of these scoundrels."

"They'll kill her." |gg gg

"Nonsense. Theywouldn't^are.'^ljS^ g^lIk:

"I won't have it, I tell you. I'm her mother ^s" for me to say."

^'1 know. I know. That's what they're counting on--your feeling like that. Very natural. But you must take it from me, a soldier and an experienced man of the world, the police are what we need."

- "No!" . m
 Bletchley's eyes went round seeking allies. t<a ' 'Meadowes, you agree with me? "^^
 .;,,_ j|;| slowly, Tommy nodded. ^'iisiM - -'
 gs "Cayley? Look, Mrs. Sprout, both Meadowes
 ,and Cayley agree.'" "s^ I Mrs. Sprout said, with sudden energy^^ s®|
 □"Men! All of you! Ask the women!"
 Tommy's eyes sought Tuppence. Tuppence
 said, her voice low and shaken: ; ,
 "I--IagreewithMrs.Sprot." ?; '^
 She was thinking, "Deborah! Derek! If it were
 them. I'd feel like her. Tommy and the others are
 right, I've no doubt, but all the same I couldn't do
 it. I couldn't risk it."
 Mrs. O'Rourke was saying: ;
 "No mother alive could risk it and that's a
 fact."
 Mrs. Cayley murmured: ^ ^ ^
 "I do think, you know, that--well--" and
 tailed off into incoherence. ;
 Miss Minton said tremulously: "
 "Such awful things happen. We'd never forgive
 ourselves if anything happened to dear little
 Betty." ss!
 Tuppence said sharply: ^
 "You haven't said anything, Mr. von Deinim?"
 Carol's blue eyes were very bright. His face was a
 mask. He said slowly and stiffly:
 "I am a foreigner. I do not know your English
 police. How competent they are--how quick."
 Someone had come into the hall. It was Mrs.
 Perenna; her cheeks were flushed. Evidently she
 had been hurrying up the hill. She said:
 "What's all this?" And her voice was commanding,
 imperious, not the complaisant guest
 house hostess, but a woman of force. :: ^ ^
 They told her--a confused tale told by too
 many people, but she grasped it quickly.
 And with her grasping of it, the whole thing
 seemed, in a way, to be passed up to her for judgment.
 She was the supreme court. ' '- ^;
 She held the hastily scrawled note a minute,
 □124 Agatha Christie
 v -s •
 then she handed it back. Her words came shairp paj ,
 K and authoritative.
 "The police? They'll be no good. You can't rissk
 p;-^ their blundering. Take the law into your ow/n
 ^ hands. Go after the child yourself." m^ ?
 B Bletchley said, shrugging his shoulders: '%;1*
 :^g"Very well, If you won't call in the police, it's
 |i5^B the best thing to be done."
 w| ,^aTommy said: Ce •• |||
 ^a ^'They can't have got much of a^start." J^K:
 sate "Half an hour, the maid said," TuppenceTput |v.|
 in. jg^
 "Haydock," said Bletchley. "Haydock's the EN
 man to help us. He's got a car. The woman's unusual
 looking, you say? And a foreigner? Ought |j :
 to leave a trail that we can follow. Come on, H
 there's no time to be lost. You'll come along, Hf
 • Meadowes?" ,^ , , ^ pi
 Mrs.Sprotgotup. ^' m , 8^ , ,
 "I'm coming, too." ||| B j|:1 , , ,

"Now, my dear lady, leave it to us—" N Or M
' ' "I'm coming, too." i;y;^ s% '^1^ "^^1"
"Oh well—" a.A'i&fc® rfiSfflSS te®.

He gave in—murmuring something about the |
female of the species being deadlier than the male. |
In the end Commander Haydock, taking in the
situation with commendable Naval rapidity, drove
the car. Tommy sat beside him, and behind were
Bletchley, Mrs. Sprot and Tuppence. Not only did
Mrs. Sprot cling to her, but Tuppence was the
only one (with the exception of Carl von Deinim)
who knew the mysterious kidnapper by sight.

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The Commander was a good organizer and a
quick worker. In next to no time, he had filled up
the car with petrol, tossed a map of the district
and a larger scale map of Leahampton itself to
Bletchley and was ready to start off.

Mrs. Sprot had run upstairs again, presumably
to her room to get a coat. But when she got into
the car and they had started down the hill she
disclosed to Tuppence something in her handbag.

It was a small pistol. ^ ^'ifs^ ^"tja*

She said quietly: "I" ' ' "*****" ' "US

"I got it from Major Bletchley's room. I ft1 member his mentioning one day that he
had one."

Tuppence looked a little dubious. ,y , ^

"You don't think that--" ^ ||%j' " .

Mrs. Sprot said, her mouth a thin line: ^ ^

"It may come in useful."

Tuppence sat marvelling at the strange forces
maternity will set loose in an ordinary, commonplace
young woman. She could visualize Mrs.

Sprot, the kind of woman who would normally
declare herself frightened to death of firearms,
coolly shooting down any person who had harmed
her child.

They drove first, on the Commander's suggestion,
to the railway station. A train had left Leahampton
about twenty minutes earlier and it was
possible that the fugitives had gone by it. p'ljj

At the station they separated, the Commander
taking the ticket collector, Tommy the booking
office, and Bletchley the porters outside. Tuppence
and Mrs. Sprot went into the Ladies' Room

on the chance that the woman had gone in there to
change her appearance before taking the train.

One and all drew blank. It was now more difficult
to shape a course. In all probability, as Hay□126 Agatha Christie

dock pointed out, the kidnappers had had a car
waiting, and once Betty had been persuaded to
come away with the woman, they had made their
getaway in that. It was here, as Bletchley pointed
out once more, that the co-operation of the police
was so vital. It needed an organization of that
kind who could send out messages all over the
country, covering the different roads.

Mrs. Sprot merely shook her head, her lips
pressed tightly together.

Tuppence said: S|yh

"We must put ourselves in their places. Where
would they have waited in the car? Somewhere as
near sans souci as possible, but where a car

wouldn't be noticed. Now let's think. The woman and Betty walk down the hill together. At the bottom is the esplanade. The car might have been drawn up there. So long as you don't leave it unattended you can stop there for quite a while. The only other places are the Car Park in James Square, also quite near, or else one of the small streets that lead off from the esplanade."

It was at that moment that a small man, with a diffident manner and pince-nez, stepped up to them and said, stammering a little:

"Excuse me. ... No offense, I hope ... but I c-c-couldn't help overhearing what you were asking the porter just now." (He now directed his remarks to Major Bletchley.)

"I was not listening, 'of course; just came down to see about a parcel

--extraordinary how long things are delayed just now--movements of troops, they say--but really most difficult when it's perishable--the parcel, I mean--and so, you see, I happened to overhear

--and really it did seem the most wonderful coincidence..."__g,g|

____^ |N OR M? 127

Mrs. Sprot sprang forward. She seized him by the arm.

"You've seen her? You've seen my little girl?"

"Oh, really, your little girl, you say? Now fancy that--"

Mrs. Sprot cried: "Tell me." And her fingers bit into the little man's arm so that he winced. ||g

Tuppence said quickly:

"Please tell us anything you have seen as quickly as you can. We shall be most grateful if ^ you will."

B "Oh, well, really, of course, it may be nothing at all. But the description fitted so well--"

ggp.. Tuppence felt the woman beside her trembling, JE^ but she herself strove to keep her manner calm and

"• unhurried. She knew the type with which they were dealing--fussy, muddle-headed, diffident, incapable of going straight to the point and worse if hurried. She said: m ^•S^1^.. j

Hii| "Please tell us." • taa ^;- ,.....-a^' I HBBife "It was only--my name is Robbins, by the way, Edward Robbins--"

• "Yes, Mr. Robbins." •

"I live at Whiteways, in Ernes Cliff Road, one of those new houses on the new road--most | labour saving, and really every convenience, and a ' beautiful view and the downs only a stone's throw away."

|^| With a glance Tuppence quelled Major Bletchley, who she saw was about to break out, and she I said:

"And you saw the little girl we are looking Tor?" ;

"Yes, I really think it must be. A little girl with J a foreign looking woman, you said? It was really the woman I noticed. Because, of course, we are

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all on the lookout nowadays for Fifth Columnists, aren't we? A sharp lookout, that is what they say, and I always try to do so, and so, as I say, I noticed the woman. A nurse, I thought, or a maid--a

lot of spies came over here in that capacity, and this woman was most unusual looking and walking up the road and on to the downs--with a little girl--and the little girl seemed tired and rather lagging, and half past seven, well, most children go to bed then, so I looked at the woman pretty sharply. I think it flustered her. She hurried to the road, pulling the child after her, and finally picked her up and went on up the path out on to the cliff, which I thought strange, you know, because there are no houses there at all--nothing--not until you get to whitehaven--about five miles over the downs--a favourite walk for hikers. But in this case I thought it odd. I wondered if the woman was going to signal, perhaps. One hears of so much enemy activity and she certainly looked uneasy when she saw me staring at her."

Commander Haydock was back in the car and had started the engine. He said:

"Ernes Cliff Road, you say? That's right the other side of the town, isn't it? "

"Yes, you go along the esplanade and past the old town and then up-- "

The others had jumped in, not listening further to Mr. Robbins. k?^ i Tuppence called out:"

"Thank you, Mr. Robbins," and they drove off,; leaving him staring after them with his mouth open.

They drove rapidly through the town, avoiding accidents more by good luck than by skill. But the luck held. They came out at last at a mass of strag-

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gling building development, somewhat marred by proximity to the gas works. A series of little roads led up towards the downs, stopping abruptly a short way up the hill. Ernes Cliff Road was the third of these.

Commander Haydock turned smartly into it and drove up. At the end the road petered out on to bare hillside up which a footpath meandered. %? Bj1

"Better get out and walk here," said BletchleyT Haydock said dubiously: ygs "Could almost take the car up. Ground's firm enough. Bit bumpy but I think she could do it." sb

Mrs. Sprot cried: silsl7""s: ^ ws^ "Oh, yes, please, please. ... We must be quick." ^8'"";''

BThe Commander murmured to himself.*'

"Hope to goodness we're after the right lot.

That little pip-squeak may have seen any woman a^ i- i -j » wte^sp'sswsw ^wsbbs ff^s ^y with a kid. ffs.^'^yif. ' t'^ - a^? us &'?'&,6;te-,il;li3 I ' i.^sssssss ,-"J Sim-.,, ..^.--s

The car groaned uneasily as she ploughed her way up over the rough ground. The gradient was severe, but the turf was short and springy. They g^, came out without mishap on the top of the rise.

Here the view was less interrupted till it rested in Life? the distance on the curve of whitehaven Bay.!^

Bletchley said:

"Not a bad idea. The woman could spend the night up here if need be, drop down into whitehaven tomorrow morning and take a train there.",, ;' Haydock said: ||\$ %% IS K "No signs of them as far as I can see."

He was standing up holding to his eyes some '2vij. field glasses that he had thoughtfully brought with "" him. Suddenly his figure became tense as he fo- ,,

,cussed the glasses on two small moving dots. , ; ¥

"Got 'em, by Jove.... €9S^ fi*

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He dropped into the driveler's seat again and the car bucketed forward. The <? chase was a short one now. Shot up in the air, tos.«ssed from side to side, the occupants of the car gaained rapidly on those two small dots. They could 1 be distinguished now --a tall figure and a shortrt one--nearer still, a woman holding a child by tithe hand--still nearer, yes, a child in a green ginghaiun frock. Betty. ? Mrs. Sprot gave a strangled cry.

"All right now, my dear,'" said Major Bletchley, patting her kindly. "we''ve got 'em."

They went on. Suddenly tithe woman turned and saw the car advancing towardds her.

with a cry she caught up ' the child in her arms and began running. ^

She ran, not forward, butt sideways toward the edge of the cliff.

The car, after a few yards,, could not follow, the ground was too uneven and blocked with big boulders. It stopped and the occurpants tumbled out.

Mrs. Sprot was out first and running wildly .^after the two fugitives. ; i----

.3181 The others followed her. . i

When they were within tw/enty yards, the other woman turned at bay. She wais standing now at the very edge of the cliff. wittth a hoarse cry she clutched the child closer. gg|g apt

Haydock cried out: ^ A(&

"My God, she's going to throw the kid over the cliff...."

The woman stood there, cliatching Betty tightly. Her face was disfigured with 9. frenzy of hate. She uttered a long hoarse sentence that none of them understood. And still she held the child and looked from time to time at the drop below--not a yard from where she stood. _

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It seemed clear that she was threatening to throw the child over the cliff. &

All of them stood there, dazed, terrified, unable ^'S to move for fear of precipitating a catastrophe. ^

Haydock was tugging at his pocket. He pulled ''^ out a service revolver, a^^,,.. ,tc,^,^<,^a-:.^.-^

He shouted:

"Put that child down--or I fire." ?||

The foreign woman laughed. She held the child closer to her breast. The two figures were moulded into one. I ' :-i<-^y. -.^! '.. -"y?:

Haydock muttered: .^."osfe* -^ rii;::,^ .. ,

"I daren't shoot. I'd hit the child."; ^ ;%S

Tommy said: |%|

"The woman's crazy ."She1'!)jump over with the child in another moment.'" ^a(^M(^!K g,. Haydock said again, helplessly: ^^^-S^fe^ |^|

i "I daren't shoot--" KW III tS

But at that moment a shot rang out. The woman swayed and fell, the child still clasped in her arms.

The men ran forward. Mrs. Sprot stood swaying, the smoking pistol in her hand, her eyes ^'^aa

dilated- -^:»^ ss
She took a few stiff steps forward. - ^S^fefe ^ Tommy was kneeling by the bodies. He turned I them gently. He saw the woman's face--noted appreciatively its strange wild beauty. The eyes isfj^ opened, looked at him, then went blank. with a 'S^ little sigh, the woman died, shot through the head. k^, Unhurt, little Betty Sprot wriggled out and ran ;;¥ towards her mother who was standing like a 'T statue. ^.- ^

-:.,A'j' ''i":'.;?',
Then, at last, Mrs. Sprot crumpled. She flung away the pistol and dropped down, clutching the child to her. w--wse <- ^s", ..
She cried: ^:., 'S-^-' ^ ' ^ '

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"She's safe--she's safe-- Oh, Betty-- Betty." And then, in a low, awed whisper: "Did I-- did I-- kill her?"^ Tuppence said firmly: "Don't think about it-- don't think about it. Think about Betty. Just think about Betty."
Mrs. Sprot held the child close against her, sobbing.

I;
Tuppence went forward to join the men. ti " Haydock murmured; "Bloody miracle. I couldn't have brought off a shot like that. Don't believe the woman's ever handled a pistol before either--sheer instinct. A miracle, that's what it is."
Tuppence said: .;^ :. ^ "Thank God! It was a near thing!" And she looked down at the sheer drop to the sea below and shuddered. _ ^ ^ _

□,f^^~ >>>><,
<?
Is;?; ts? ' .
It was not until some days later that Mrs. BIenkinsop and Mr. Meadows were able to meet and compare notes.

The intervening days had been busy. The dead woman had been identified as Vanda Polonska, a Polish refugee who had entered the country soon after the outbreak of war. very little was known about her, but she appeared to have received certain sums of money from an unknown source which pointed to the probability of her being an enemy agent of some kind.;" ;

"And so it's a blank wall as usual," said Tommy gloomily, w^ / g ?;g -y^
Tuppence nodded. sbs Jzfes '
"Yes, they seal up both ends, don't they? No papers, no hints of any kind as to who she had dealings with."

' 'Too damned efficient,' said Tommy.
He added:
"You know, Tuppence, I don't like the look of things." ss
Tuppence assented. The news was indeed far from reassuring.

The French Army was in retreat and it seemed doubtful if the tide could be turned. Evacuation from Dunkerque was in progress. It was clearly a matter of a few days only before Paris fell. There was a general dismay at the revelation of lack of.

,; „<,
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□134&s; Agatha Christie ^^-wb...,
SN

equipment and of material for resisting the Ger-gp;
mans' great mechanized units, w^y ;.,?Tommy

N Or M

said: "Is it only our usual muddling and slowness?
Or has there been deliberate engineering behind
this?"

"The latter, I think, but they'll sever be able to
prove it."

"No. Our adversaries are too darned clever for ife :^' that." & H -^sm ' ' We are
combing out a lot of the rot now." ?gp "Oh, yes, we're rounding up the obvious g
people, but I don't believe we've got at the brains % I
that are behind it all. Brains, organization, ais/ whole carefully thought-out
plan--a plan which ,,,,,, uses our habits of dilatoriness, and our petty
feuds, and our slowness for its own ends." ^fi ? Tuppence said: " "

"That's what we're here for--and we haven't sags, got results." JP* "We've done
something," Tommy reminded her. @6

"Carl von Deinim and Vanda Polonska, yes. 5;
The small fry." !!^ |||

H' "You think they were working together?" ^ "I think they must have been," said
Tuppence ^^ thoughtfully. "Remember, I saw them talking."

"Then Carl von Deinim must have engineered ^^ the kidnapping." ^ 'ff^ ' | "I suppose
so." 'a' " " ^i g|| " '* ' 8 "But why?" ' ' ' vffiv' ' ' "

"I don't know," said Tuppence. "That's what I keep thinking and thinking about. It
doesn't make p sense. "||| ?w||| K

"Why kidnap that particular child? who are
j the Sprots? They've no money--so it isn't ran' som. They're neither of them
employed by the

□I NORM? ,. - 135

| Government in any capacity."

J"I know. Tommy. It just doesn't make any
sense at all." ; %"

"Hasn't Mrs. Sprot any idea herself?" ^3

"That woman," said Tuppence scornfully,
"hasn't got the brains of a hen. She doesn't think
at all. Just says it's the sort of thing the wicked
Germans would do."

"Silly ass," said Tommy. "The Germans are
efficient. If they send one of their agents to kidnap
a brat, it's for some reason."

"I've a feeling, you know," said Tuppence,
"that Mrs. Sprot could get at the reason if only
she'd think about it. There must be something
--some piece of information that she herself has
inadvertently got hold of, perhaps without knowing
what it is exactly."

1; "Say nothing. Wait for instructions." Tommy Quoted from the note found on Mrs.
Sprt's

E bedroom floor. "Damn it all, that means something."

"Of course it does--it must. The only thing I
can think of is that Mrs. Sprot, or her husband,
has been given something to keep by someone else
--given it, perhaps, just because they are such
humdrum ordinary people that no one would ever
suspect they had it--whatever 'it' may be."

"It's an idea, that."

| "I know--but it's awfully like a spy story. It
doesn't seem real somehow."

"Have you asked Mrs. Sprot to rack her brains
a bit?"

"Yes, the trouble is that she isn't really interested.

All she cares about is getting Betty back- that, and having hysterics because she's
shot
someone." ' "

i , -fc^" . ISS

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"Funny creatures, women," mused Tommy.
 | ' 'There was that woman, went out that day like an
 avenging fury, she'd have shot down a regiment in
 ss cold blood without turning a hair just to get her [^]child back, and then, having
 shot the kidnapper
 S%by a perfectly incredible fluke, she breaks down
 Band comes all over squeamish about it."
 "The coroner exonerated her all right," said
 :e*™

Tuppence.
 "Naturally. By Jove, I wouldn't have risked
 ^.'^.'V ' ^ ^a^'ifiSLai'K-ai".^ I,...,
 firing when she did ^ ^ s«.^ -^ |r
 Tuppence said: ^
 g "No more would she, probably, if she'd known
 IHg more about it. It was sheer ignorance of the difIH
 ficulity of the shot that made her bring it off;";
 S^;,-.: 'Tommy nodded. '"" a' "'Quite Biblical," he said. "David and Golf
 ath." ^i
 "T>g"Oh!"

Hi "What is it, old thing?" " ^ ^Lwg
 ^ "I don't quite know. When you said that some- 1SS thing twanged somewhere in my
 brain, and now
 it's gone again!" Sfe 1^'1 Sp^AS
 "Very useful," said Tommy. "^^-^
 "Don't be scathing. That sort of thing does
 happen sometimes."
 "Gentleman who drew a bow at a venture, was
 that it?" '.'s
 "No, it was--wait a minute--I think it was
 something to do with Solomon."
 "Cedars, temples, a lot of wives and concubines?"

"Stop," said Tuppence, putting her hands to
 her ears. "You're making it worse."

— "Jews?" said Tommy hopefully. "Tribes of
 Israel?" ^ vss

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But Tuppence shook her head. After a minute or
 two she said:

"I wish I could remember who it was that
 woman reminded me of."

"The late Vanda Polonska?" ^J "Yes. The first time I saw her her face seemed ^
 vaguely familiar." ^ ||

"Do you think you had come across her somewhere
 else?" |a\$

"No, I'm sure I hadn't." fess

"Mrs-Perenna and Sheila are a totally different
 type."ig '.". s§ cn^

"Oh, yes, it wasn't them. You know. Tommy,
 about those two. I've been thinking. "^^ "To any good purpose?" "*" "I'm not sure.

It's about that note--the one
 Mrs. Sprout found on the floor in her room when
 Betty was kidnapped." '.,("

"Well?"

"All that about its being wrapped round a stone
 and thrown through the window is rubbish. It was
 put there by someone--ready for Mrs. Sprout to
 find--and I think it was Mrs. Perenna who put it
 there-" ' IN

"Mrs. Perenna, Carl, Vanda Polonska--all ;
 working together."

"Yes. Did you notice how Mrs. Perenna came

in just at the critical moment and clinched things --not to ring up the police? She took command of the whole situation."

| "So she's still your selection for M?"

"Yes, isn't she yours?" .^ .

"I suppose so," said Tommy slowly. '^ "why, Tommy, have you got another idea?" ,

"It's probably an awfully dud one." ^ "Tell me." '-. i" --

□138 Agatha Christie %^

, .--^ s,S ^S "No, I'd rather not. I've nothing to go on.

Nothing whatever. But if I'm right, it's not M

we're up against, but N." yssf 'Vg^:'^ . -^ He thought to himself: ^-HS ^ jIB|

"Bletchley. I suppose he's all right. why ? I shouldn't he be? He's a true enough

type--almost ^ too true, and after all, it was he who wanted to y ring up the

police. Yes, but he could have been |

pretty sure that the child's mother wouldn't stand I

^'"-' i-7 for the idea. The threatening note made sure of Ki K

that. He could afford to urge the opposite point of

.,v'ew-" ^r a - SB! I

yS And that brought him back again to the vexing,

| leasing problem to which as yet he could find no gF1"-"'

I answer. . wg ^y;. ^«;.'

^ why kidnap Betty Sprot? ,, ,, ,

; t,, we&s-iv'yMwSXSt. . ,. ... p sisac, . sis-' There was a car standing outside

Sans Souci

bearing the word police on it.

Absorbed in her own thoughts Tuppence took

little notice of that. She turned in at the drive and

entering the front door went straight upstairs to

her own room. ^

She stopped, taken aback, on the threshold, as a

tall figure turned away from the window.

"Dear me," said Tuppence. "Sheila?"

The girl came straight towards her. Now Tuppence

saw her more clearly, saw the blazing eyes

deep set in the white tragic face. ("^ ^|

Sheila said: ^ I' "

"I'm glad you've come. I've been waiting for g, you." as

"What's the matter?" : ;

□NORM? ^ 139

The girl's voice was quiet and devoid of emotion.

She said: %; ^te "They have arrested Carl!" - '.^' "The police?" ™ ;,"Yes."

.<& "Oh, dear," said Tuppence. She felt inadequate

to the situation. Quiet as Sheila's voice had been,

Tuppence was under no misapprehension as to

what lay behind it.

whether they were fellow conspirators or not,

this girl loved Carl von Deinim, and Tuppence felt

her heart aching in sympathy with this tragic

young creature. '. 'A'-tS '' '' '^AS|,

Sheilasaid: ' ^"fl :-a 'vS. .-.y^

» "what shall I do?" fc --" -- SS The simple forlorn question made Tuppence

wince. She said helplessly:

"Oh, my dear." ,f ;

Sheila said, and her voice was like a mourning

harp:

"They've taken him away. I shall never see him

a8ain" ---- ^r- w? .-^ '

She cried out: '>?:'* : ^^ '11'1

"what shall I do? what shall I do?" And Hinging

herself down on her knees by the bed, she wept

her heart out.

Tuppence stroked the dark head. She said presently,

in a weak voice:

N Or M

"It--it may not be true. Perhaps they are only going to intern him. After all, he is an enemy alien, you know."

"That's not what they said. They're searching his room now."

Tuppence said slowly, "well, if they find nothing--"

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"They will find nothing, of course! what te should they find?" ^ " I don' t know. I thought perhaps you might? " ||

Her scorn, her amazement were too real to be g- | feigned. Any suspicions Tuppence had had that ? Sheila Perenna was involved died at this moment. ^^

The girl knew nothing, had never known any-jj|g^ .^ thing.

Vsi Tuppence said: ^.-^' IIN'; ^ B IS^ 5|| "If he is-innocent--^'^^IW'" :

^"" Sheila interrupted he,r^'^^ *^*afee-yA.^ ^ ' "what does that maitter? The police will make a sk ; ^

case agairist him." i^ t - L _ Tuppence said sharplly: B ' ^.R^' B "Nonsense, my deiar child, that really isn't

"true." i||f ^i^^

"The English policce will do anything. My^r Mother says so." ;

"Your Mother may' say so, but she's wrong. I i

assure you that it isn't sso." ie ' ;

Sheila looked at her r doubtfully for a minute or two. Then she said: |gp °a

B" Very well. I f you saay so. I trust you." igci "5 Tuppence felt very^r uncomfortable. She said ^ ;

sharply: J a

"You trust too muuch, Sheila. You may have ^ been unwise to trust Caarl."

g "Are you against him, too? I thought you liked B him. He thinks so, too.)" A

Touching young thhings--with their faith in

one's liking for them.i. And it was true--she had

liked Carl--she did likece him. I'll ||| |g\$

H Rather wearily she sasaid:

"Listen, Sheila, likiring or not liking has nothing to do with facts. This c, country and Germany are at --

Nil NORM? 141

^ war. There are many ways of serving one's coun|^

try. One of them is to get information--and to

II work behind the lines. It is a brave thing to do, for

I; when you are caught, it is"--her voice broke a 8: little--"the end." Bff^^

Sheilasaid: ^^AN^^ <;" ^p^p

"You think Carl-- 3^ ^ "Might be working for his country that way? It His a possibility, isn't it?" ^

"No,"saidSheila. ^'^^nb :^ "It would be his job, you see, to come over here as a refugee, to appear to be violently anti-Nazi

and then to gather information. 'g«^w-w-w.--'.-' . a™

Sheila said quietly:

"It's not true. I know Carl. I know his heart

and his mind. He cares most for science--for his

work--for the truth and the knowledge in it. He is

grateful to England for letting him work here.

Sometimes, when people say cruel things, he feels ,q German and bitter. But he hates the Nazis always :^|

and what they stand for--their denial of freedom."

T'*1-kMA*«AA n««J. '^'sg..^- . ^i..-}: -^'s^i."^"i^^?^^. ;l*:sf;^;;f;fe

tuppence said; ^syii ?% "He would say so, of course." .-^A-a- ^j

Sheila turned reproachful eyes upon her.

" So you believe he is a spy ?" ^\$ ^ .^ "I think it is"--Tuppence hesitated--"a possi^"ty."

p ,;|^

Sheila walked to the door. Bca '^id '! see. I'm sorry I came to ask you to help us." .v|^

"But what did you think I could do, dear ^3

ehild?" ;y:,,, :f;|

"You know people. Your sons are in the Army ; and Navy and I've heard you say more than once that they knew influential people. I thought per- ("aps you could get them to--to do--something?"

□142 Agatha Christie

Tuppence thought of those mythical creatures, Douglas and Raymond and Cyril.

"I'm afraid," she said, "that they couldn't do anything."

Sheila flung her head up. She said passionately:

"Then there's no hope for us. They'll take him away and shut him up, and one day, early in the morning, they'll stand him against a wall and shoot him--and that will be the end."

She went out, shutting the door behind her.

„„„ "Oh, damn, damn, damn the Irish!" thought I Tuppence in a fury of mixed feelings. "Why have they got that terrible power of twisting things until you don't know where you are? If Carl von Deilum's a spy, he deserves to be shot. I must hang on JB to that, not let that girl with her Irish voice II bewitch me into thinking it's the tragedy of a hero J and a martyr!" ft^ 7

II She recalled the voice of a famous actress speak| ing a line from Riders to the Sea. y^ H "It's the fine quiet time they'll be having^."

I Poignant . . . carrying you away on a tide of feeling...

I She thought, "If it weren't true. Oh, if only it (I weren't true...."

Yet, knowing what she did, how could she doubt? a „„„,

The fisherman on the end of the Old Pier cast in his line and then reeled it cautiously in. , ^ "No doubt whatever, I'm afraid," he said.

"You know," said Tommy, "I'm sorry about it. He's--well, he's a nice chap." »

□is norm? a 143

"They are, my dear fellow, they usually are. It ;isn't the skunks and the rats of a land who volunteer to go to the enemy's country. It's the brave Ill-men. We know that well enough. But there it is, ^he case is proved." ^ .^ "No doubt whatever, you say?"

"No doubt at all. Among his chemical formulae

B;was a list of people in the factory to be ap(K^approached, as possible Fascist sympathizers. There

(l|was also a very clever scheme of sabotage and a

|i<:hemical process that, applied to fertilizers, would

Chave devastated large areas of food stocks. All gwell up Master Carol's street."

I Rather unwillingly, Tommy said, secretly ^anathematizing Tuppence who had made him romise to say it:

"I suppose it's not possible that these things ould have been planted on him?"

Mr. Grant smiled, rather a diabolical smile. ^ "Oh," he said. "Your wife's idea, no doubt.y. "Well--er--yes, as a matter of fact it is." |||

"He's an attractive lad," said Mr. Grant tolerantly.

iSy

Then he went on:A5T:'^ i;a- ' " " " " "No, seriously, I don't think we can take that suggestion into account. He'd got a supply of secret ink, you know. That's a pretty good clinching test. And it wasn't obvious as it would have been if planted. It wasn't 'the mixture to be taken when required' on the washstand or anything like

that. In fact, it was damned ingenious. Only come across the method once before and then it was waistcoat buttons. Steeped in the stuff, you know. When the fellow wants to use it, he soaks a button in water. Carl von Deinim's wasn't buttons. It was a shoe-lace. Pretty neat." ^ <^ ay: iaagy-ii

Or L

___'; Agatha Cystic

*,r^d in Tommy's mind144

Something stirre

. .lolly nebulous- ^ ^ as he retailed

" ;ce was quicker. ^ on the salient

vague-wl^^ to her. sHe seized

Tuppen that explains it!" -- the conve^ ^, Tommy.that e P

point. ,, remember that i

:^ ^idlC?.D^^ takin^outmy J

"Betty caking them i^i^'of doing. But. of

laces anc^,^ ^^ Carl i^mg about it and so I

time it w^^n't risk he< ^^ her to be kidcourse.

^ lith that w0"1

himH(' .hat's cleared up." g he arrai...;i "Thenth"1. ...in in fall into

napped It's nice when ""r;-,. . .

T^ou can put them behind you and get on a

Yes ^ s ^needtogeton." ^ fe

Dit i " ' ' ?iis""~

....,ence nodded. , p ", ^times were eloo"^ mdeed- France had -----tlmes[

weres^^^ capitulated-to the

.S^'^'^ Nlvy w" »

bewil

Th, ^, ^. France were entirely in the

---'---*~ ---^<<</>

t10"13,^ Germany and t»N^ remote conting^y-

""Troy said: ^nly a li^ in the c11310lon&ri

von Deiniin w^s,

^erenna's the fou^ ^ on her. But it

's we've got to S^eeasy."

the brains of the whole

,. After all, it ^ be -- w01 one can't expect l11

□"wasMMrs.Perenna?"

Tommy supposed she must be. He said slowly:

"You really think the girl isn't in this at all?"

"I'm quite sure of it." , , ^

Tommy sighed. B^," 'f'," ; ;@]

"Well, you should know. But if so, it's tough

luck on her. First the man she loves--and then her

mother. She's not going to have much left, is

she?" aw... - .t^ "We can't help that." %!]?.: ::'..

"Yes, but supposing we're wrong--that M or N

i rt», ^^ 'I'^^^^^^^y^wiv^^t^S^^

is someone else? g||;

Tuppence said rather coldly: ~ "So you're still harping on that? Are you sure it

isn't a case of wishful thinking?" , , , , , , , , ,

' what do you mean?' , , . , ^ ^ _

"Sheila Perenna--that's what I mean."^;^^g

"Aren't you being rather absurd, Tuppence?"

"No, I'm not. She's got round you. Tommy,

just like any other man--" ySSW!^ 'yvSKts Tommy replied angrily:

"Not at all. It's simply that I've got my own

ideas." . , , it *?%"which are?"

"I think I'll keep them to myself for a bit. we'll

_e which of us is right."

^JB "Well, I think we've got to go all out after Mrs. ^P^ana. Find out where she

goes, whom she

meets--everything. There must be a link somewhere. You'd better put Albert on to her this afternoon." ^
"You can do that. I'm busy." "Bill, . . . ,
I "Why, what are you doing?" l\$a frt \$1
Tommy said: Kgs W ^-^ S& "ARteyinggolf."^ B1..-^ ^
y . ^'Hiill

„, vSM
□_^^rW- ->>->X^
^> -;^-.;?.-^ .-- • ^ • - ^.A--'
Seems quite like old times, doesn't it, Madam?'
said Albert. He beamed happily. Though now, in
his middle years, running somewhat to fat, Alber
had still the romantic boy's heart which had first
led him into associations with Tommy and Jupp
pence in their young and adventurous days.
"Remember how you first came across me?"
demanded Albert. "Cleanin' of the brasses, I was
in those top notch flats. Coo, wasn't that half
porter a nasty bit of goods? Always on to me, hi
was. And the day you come along and strung me in
tale! Pack of lies it was, too, all about a crook
called Ready Rita. Not but what some of it didn'
turn out to be true. And since then, as you might
say, I've never looked back. Many's the adventure
we had afore we all settled down, so to speak."
Albert sighed, and by a natural association of
ideas Tuppence inquired after the health of Mrs
Albert.
"Oh, the Missus is all right--but she doesn't
take to the Welsh much, she says. Thinks the

□,,,,,, . :s^~ N OR M? Mfiw 147
"I don't know," said Tuppence, suddenly struck- ; en, "that we ought to get you
into this, Albert." I "Nonsense, Madam," said Albert. "Didn't I ;try and join up and
they was so haughty they
wouldn't look at me. Wait for my age group to be jitted up, they said. And me in
the pink of health
and only too eager to get at them perishing Ger-
mans--if you'll excuse the language. You just tell
me how I can put a spoke in their wheel and spoil
their goings on--and I'm there. Fifth Column,
E that's what we're up against, so the papers say--
though what's happened to the other four they ^ don't mention. But the long and
short of it is, I'm
ready to assist you and Captain Beresford in any
way you like to indicate."
"Good. Now I'll tell you what we want you to
'aw.-.w's-w "-s&mrs y^^SSSB^SS^
"How well do you know Bletchley?" asked
Tommy, as he stepped off the tee and watched
Bwith approval his ball leaping down the centre of
wk I f "K^-, -."!
^§th^ fsiiru/siv 'y''^'' >i;'iy
j|i"e lairway. Ay ^^ P Commander Haydock who had also done a } good drive had a
pleased expression on his face as,
K he shouldered his clubs and replied:
"Bletchley? Let me see. Oh! About nine months
or so. He came here last Autumn.'" |||j |^, "Friend of friends of yours, I think
you said?"
I Tommy suggested mendaciously. all

"Did I?" The Commander looked a little surprised. "No, I don't tlynk so. Rather fancy I met

- him here at the Club." g^ ^:

"Bit of a mystery man, I gather?"

The Commander was clearly surprised this time.

□148 Agatha Christie

"Mystery man? Old Bletchley?" He sounded frankly incredulous. J^

Tommy sighed inwardly. He supposed he was imagining things, y,

He played his next shot--and topped it. Hays? dock had a good iron shot that stopped just short

of the green. As he rejoined the other, he said:

| "What on earth makes you call Bletchley a mys|g

tery man? I should have said he was a painfully^ prosaic chap--typical Army. Bit set in his ideasp

and all that--narrow life, an Army life--but,

mystery!" ^ -- s^ Tommy said vaguely: ||

"Oh, well, I just got the idea from something" somebody said--"

They got down to the business of putting. The Commander won the hole.

"Three up and two to play," he remarked with satisfaction.

Then, as Tommy had hoped, his mind, free of

the preoccupation of the match, harked back to ,^what Tommy had said.

S|S8 "What sort of mystery do you mean?" he asked. ';'- . . |||.

Tommy shrugged his shoulders, p

"Oh, it was just that nobody seemed to know ' much about him." ^r-ya; ^k

"Hewasintherugbyshires." i^*^?! ["Oh, you know that definitely?" EB BI B

| "Well, I--well, no, I don't know myself. I say,

r Meadows, what's the idea? Nothing wrong about ^Bletchley, is there?'"

i8*"8 "No, no, of course not." Tommy's disclaimer

came hastily. He had started his hare. He could

now sit back and watch the Commander's mind

fidodging after it. ^

□N OR M? 149

"Always struck me as an almost absurdly typical sort of chap," said Haydock. »;

"Just so, just so."

"Ah, yes--see what you mean. Bit too much of a type, perhaps?"

"I'm leading the witness," thought Tommy.

"Still perhaps something may crop up out of the old boy's mind." s|

"Yes, I do see what you mean," the Commander

went on thoughtfully. "And now I come

to think of it I've never actually come across

anyone who knew Bletchley before he came down

here. He doesn't have any old pals to stay- nothing of that kind."

"Ah!" said Tommy--and added, "Shall we

play the bye? Might as well get a bit more exercise.

It's a lovely evening."

They drove off, then separated to play their

next shots. When they met again on the green,

Haydock said abruptly:

"Tell me what you heard about him?i'>*

"Nothing--nothing at all." ' ; "No need to be so cautious with me. Meadows.

I hear all sorts of rumours. You understand?

Everyone comes to me. I'm known to be

pretty keen on the subject. What's the idea--that

i Bletchley isn't what he seems to be?'"

I "It was only the merest suggestion."

"What do they think he is? A Hun? Nonsense, the man's as English as you and I." "

"Oh, yes, I'm sure he's quite all right."

"Why, he's always yelling for more foreigners to be interned. Look how violent he was against that young German chap--and quite right, too, it seems. I heard unofficially from the Chief Constable that they found enough to hang von Deinim

□150 .,:-:: |%|| Agatha Christie

t^ts

a dozen times over. He'd got a scheme to poison || the water supply off the whole country and he was |g, actually working oiut a new gas--working on it in ^ one of our factori»es. My God, the shortsighted- fe ness of our people!! Fancy letting the fellow inside the place to begin with. Believe anything, our Government would! A young fellow has only to| come to this country just before war starts and whine a bit about ipersecution and they shut both' eyes and let him intto all our secrets. They were just

as dense about thatt fellow Hahn--" Sfe

Tommy had no intention of letting the Commander run ahead on the well-grooved track. He ||, deliberately missed a putt. IIS

"Hard lines," (cried Haydock. He played a || careful shot. The bsall rolled into the hole. ^

"My hole. A but off your game today. What

were we talking about?" ,,,^ y^^, y™, -..^;y;|

Tommy said firnnly: .y'SS %IS ' ' "About BIetchle;y being perfectly all right."

"Of course. Of course. I wonder now--I did

hear a rather funnyy story about him--didn't think ^ anything of it at thee time-- "

| Here, to Tommy/'s annoyance, they were hailed |

by two other men. The four returned to the club-H- house together amd had drinks.

After that, the

Commander looked at his watch and remarked |

that he and Meaddowes must be getting along. |

Tommy had acceptted an invitation to supper with the Commander.

Smugglers' Rest; was in its usual condition of»K apple pie order. A^ tall middle-aged manservant |

waited on them wiith the professional deftness of E..

a waiter. Such perrfect service was somewhat unusual

to find outside of a London restaurant. aas

□N OR M? 151

When the man had left the room. Tommy commented on the fact. ' S ?

"Yes, I was lucky to get Appledore."

"How did you get hold of him?"

"He answered an advertisement as a matter of fact. He had excellent references, was clearly far superior to any of the others who applied and asked remarkably low wages. I engaged him on the spot." yyi^~r"^^" ^^ Tommy said with a laugh: ^^^~^^ a^~

"The war has certainly robbed us of most of our good restaurant service. Practically all good waiters were foreigners. It doesn't seem to come naturally to the Englishman." ^

"Bit too servile, that's why. Bowing and scraping doesn't come kindly to the English bulldog."

Sitting outside, sipping coffee, Tommy gently asked:

"What was it you were going to say on-the links? Something about a funny story--apropos

to Blotchley."

"What was it now? Hullo, did you see that?"

Light being shown out at sea. Where's my telescope!"

Tommy sighed. The stars in their courses seemed to be fighting against him. The Commander fussed into the house and out again, swept the horizon with his glass, outlined a whole system of signalling by the enemy to likely spots on shore, most of the evidence for which seemed to be nonexistent, and proceeded to give a gloomy picture of a successful invasion in the near future.

"No organization, no proper coordination.

You're a L.D.V. yourself, Meadows--you know what it's like. With a man like old Andrews in charge--"

H152 ^ Agatha Christie ^

jr&a^; - .~,S'..

This was well-worn ground. It was Commander Haydock's pet grievance. He ought to be the man in command and he was quite determined to oust Col. Andrews if it could possibly be done.

The manservant brought out whisky and liqueurs while the Commander was still holding forth. &

"--and we're still honeycombed with spies-- ^g riddled with 'em. It was the same in the last war-- g

l| hairdressers, waiters--"

MSI Tommy, leaning; back, catching the profile of

Appledore as the latter hovered deft-footed, ' thought--"waiters? You could call that fellow |

Fritz easier than Appledore...." |

well, why not? The fellow spoke perfect En-| ;i glish, true, but then many Germans did. They had |

perfected their English by years in English resi-

taurants. And the racial type was not unlike. } Fair-haired, blue-eyed--often betrayed by the ; shape of the head--yes, the head--where had he

seen a head lately?

He spoke on an impulse. The words fitted in ap- g, appropriately enough with what the Commander | ? was just saying. :\$ |

;^ "All these damned forms to fill in. No good at| y y all, Meadows. Series of idiotic questions--" § ^l'^'' "was Tommy said: | ^ ^B "I know. Such as--'What is your name??"

;^aB Answer Nor M.' '*

l.;; There was a swerve--a crash. Appledore, the|

perfect servant, had blundered. A stream of creme |

de menthe soaked over Tommy's cuff and hand. sin ^e man stammered, "Sorry, sir."

H Haydock blazed out in fury.

"You damned clumsy fool! What the Hell do

p. you think you're doing?" ' ? ^ST"" ""

I; & NORM? 153

His usually red face was quite purple with anger. Tommy thought: "Talk of an Army temper --Navy beats it hollow!" Haydock continued with a stream of abuse. Appledore was abject in apologies.

Tommy felt uncomfortable for the man, but suddenly, as though by magic, the Commander's wrath passed and he was his hearty self again.

"Come along and have a wash. Beastly stuff. It would be the creme de menthe." ^

i Tommy followed him indoors and was soon in the sumptuous bathroom with the innumerable gadgets. He carefully washed off the sticky sweet

stuff. The Commander talked from the bedroom next door. He sounded a little shamefaced.

m

"Afraid I let myself go a bit. Poor old Appledore--he knows I let go a bit more than I mean always."

Tommy turned from the washbasin drying his hands. He did not notice that a cake of soap had slipped onto the floor. His foot stepped on it. The linoleum was highly polished, ^g

A moment later Tommy was doing a wild ballet dancer step. He shot across the bathroom, arms outstretched. One came up heavily against the right hand tap of the bath, the other pushed heavily against the side of a small bathroom cabinet. It was an extravagant gesture never likely to be achieved except by some catastrophe such as had just occurred.

His foot skidded heavily against the end panel of the bath.

The thing happened like a conjuring trick. The bath slid out from the wall, turning on a concealed pivot. Tommy found himself looking into a dim

□154 ' Agatha Christie ^

recess. He had no doubt whatever as to what occurred & that recess. It contained a transmitting

wireless apparatus.

The Commander's voice had ceased. He appeared suddenly in the doorway. And with a click, several things fell into place in Tommy's brain.

Had he been blind up to now? That jovial florid face--the face of a "hearty Englishman"--was "i!> only a mask. Why had he not seen it all along for « what it was--the face of a bad-tempered, over1

bearing Prussian officer. Tommy was helped, no |g| doubt, by the incident that had just happened. For

it recalled to him another incident, a Prussian ||p bully turning on a subordinate and rating him with ^ the Junker's true insolence. So had Commander * Haydock turned on his subordinate that^venuig when the latter had been taken unawares. ||'

And it all fitted in--it fitted in like magic. The ||

double bluff. The enemy agent Hahn, sent first, preparing the place, employing foreign workmen, g^ drawing attention to himself and proceeding fi- a nally to the next stage in the plan, his own unmasking by the gallant British sailor Commander |||

Haydock. And then how natural that the English- fr man should buy the place and tell the story to R

everyone, boring them by constant repetition.

And so M, securely settled in his appointed place y., with sea communications and his secret wireless ||and

his staff officers at Sans Souci close at hand, ||

N is ready to carry out Germany's plan. ^ |||

Tommy was unable to resist a flash of genuine ||| admiration. The whole thing had been so perfectly

planned. He himself had never suspected Haydock

--he had accepted Haydock as the genuine article

--only a completely unforeseen accident had given ::;

the show away. , |^ '

□^ NORM? 155

All this passed through Tommy's mind in a few seconds. He knew, only too well, that he was, that he must necessarily be in deadly peril. If only he could act the part of the credulous thickheaded Englishman well enough.

He turned to Haydock with what he hoped was a natural sounding laugh. '?

"By Jove, one never stops getting surprises at your place. Was this another of Hahn's little gadgets? You didn't show me this the other day."

Haydock was standing very still. There was a tensity about his big body as it stood there blocking the door. :i^ . yS^:

"More than a match for me," tommy thought.

"And there's that confounded servant, too."

For an instant Haydock stood as though moulded in stone, then he relaxed. He said with a laugh:

"Damned funny, Meadows. You went skating over the floor like a ballet dancer! Don't suppose a thing like that would happen once in a thousand times. Dry your hands and come along into the other room."

I; Tommy followed him out of the bathroom. He was alert and tense in every muscle. Somehow or other he must get safely away from this house with his knowledge. Could he succeed in fooling Haydock? The latter's tone sounded natural enough.

With an arm round Tommy's shoulders, a casual arm, perhaps (or perhaps not), Haydock shepherded him into the sitting room. Turning, he shut the door behind them.

"Look here, old boy, I've got something to say to you."

His voice was friendly, natural--just a shade embarrassed. He motioned to Tommy to sit down.

□156 Agatha Christie ;a ; ?

"It's a bit awkward," he said. "Upon my word, it's a bit awkward! Nothing for it, though, but to take you into my confidence. Only you'll have to ^ | keep dark about it, Meadows. You understand ? that?" , Tommy endeavoured to throw an expression of H; || eager interest upon his face. |je|| ® |

Haydock sat down and drew his chair confiden^^K; tially close.

"You see, Meadows, it's like this. Nobody's ^^ supposed to know it but I'm working on Intel- ISl;lt ligence. M.I.42 B.X.-- that's my department. Ever heard of it?"

Tommy shook his head and intensified the eager |; , expression.

"Well, it's pretty secret. Kind of inner ring, if you know what I mean. We transmit certain information from here--but it would be absolutely fatal if that fact got out, you understand?"

"Of course, of course," said Mr. Meadows. ^|'

"Most interesting! Naturally you can count on me |\$| not to say a word.'

"Yes, that's absolutely vital. The whole thing is extremely confidential.'" "I

quite understand. Your work must be most igg^ thrilling. Really most thrilling. I should like so ^' ^ , much to know more about it--but I suppose I I?

^mustn't ask that?" , ,|

|||J "No, I'm afraid not. It's very secret, you see." J|;

III "Oh, yes, I see. I really do apologize--a most |

I extraordinary accident--" k^k^is H^ m He thought to himself: .toa.^.'&N sifc- ^

B "Surely he can't be taken in? He can't imagine ? | I'd fall for this stuff?"

| It seemed incredible to him. Then he reflected ^ that vanity had been the undoing of many men.

□1:* NORM? was ^ Ag|^

N Or M

Commander Haydock was a clever man, a big fellow; low--this miserable chap Meadows was a stupid ? Britisher--the sort of man who would believe anything!

If only Haydock continued to think that. Tommy went on talking. He displayed keen interest and curiosity. He knew he mustn't ask questions but--he supposed Commander Haydock's work must be very dangerous? Had he ever been in Germany, working there?

Haydock replied genially enough. He was interestedly the British sailor now--the Prussian officer had disappeared. But Tommy, watching him with a new vision, wondered how he could ever have been deceived. The shape of the head--the line of the jaw--nothing British about them.

Presently Mr. Meadows rose. It was the supreme test. Would it go off all right?

"I really must be going now--getting quite late--feel terribly apologetic, but can assure you will not say a word to anybody."

("It's now or never. Will he let me go or not? I must be ready--a straight to his jaw would be best--")

Talking amiably and with pleasurable excitement, Mr. Meadows edged towards the door. He was in the hall ... he had opened the front door.

Through a door on the right he caught a glimpse of Appledore setting the breakfast things ready on a tray for the morning. ("The damned fool was going to let him get away with it!")

The two men stood in the porch, chatting--fixing up another match for next Saturday. Tommy thought grimly: "There'll be no next, Saturday for you, my boy."

Voices came from the road outside. Two men returning from a tramp on the headland. They were men that both Tommy and the Commander knew slightly. Tommy hailed them. They stopped. Haydock and he exchanged a few words with them, all standing at the gate, then Tommy waved a genial farewell to his host and stepped off with the two men.

He had got away with it. Haydock, damned fool, had been taken in!

He heard Haydock go back to his house, go in and shut the door. Tommy tramped cheerfully down the hill with his two new-found friends. Weather looked likely to change.

Old Monroe was off his game again. That fellow Ashby refused to join the L.D.V.

Said it was no damned good. Pretty thick, that. Young Marsh, the assistant caddy master, was a conscientious objector. Didn't Meadows think that matter ought to be put up to the committee? There had been a pretty bad raid on Southampton, the night before last--quite a lot of damage done. What did Meadows think about Spain? Were they turning nasty? Of course, ever since the French collapse--

Tommy could have shouted aloud. Such good casual normal talk. A stroke of providence that these two men had turned up just at that moment. He said goodbye to them at the gate of Sans Souci and turned in.

He walked the drive whistling softly to himself.

He had just turned the dark corner by the rho- (| dodendrons when something heavy descended on i& his head. He crashed forward, pitching into blackness and oblivion.

□Did you say three spades, Mrs. Blenkensop?" Yes, Mrs. Blenkensop had said three spades. Mrs. Sprot, returning breathless from the telephone, saying: "And they've changed the time of the A.R.P. exam. again, it's too bad," demanded to have the bidding again. Miss Minton, as usual, delayed things by ceaseless reiterations.

"Was it two clubs I said? Are you sure? I rather thought, you know, that it might have been one no trump-- Oh, yes, of course, I remember now. Mrs. Cayley said one heart, didn't she? I was going to say one no trump, although I hadn't quite got the count, but I do think one should play a plucky game--and then Mrs. Cayley said one heart and so I had to go two clubs. I always think it's so difficult when one has two short suits--" Sometimes, Tuppence thought to herself, it would save time if Miss Minton just put her hand down on the table to show them all. She was quite incapable of not telling exactly what was in it. f(^. "So now we've got it right," said Miss Minton triumphantly. "One heart, two clubs." "Two spades," said Tuppence.

"I passed, didn't I?" said Mrs. Sprot. |^ They looked at Mrs. Cayley, who was leaning ~| forward listening. € .^|^|^i :f;

^ 159 -^Stt^ □160 Agatha Christie

Miss Minton took up the tale. ;^ "Then Mrs. Cayley said two hearts and I said three diamonds."

' 'And I said three spades,' said Tuppence. | "Pass," said Mrs. Sprot. s

Mrs. Cayley sat in silence. At last she seemed to become aware that everyone was looking at her.

"Oh, dear." She flushed. "I'm so sorry. %; thought perhaps Mr. Cayley needed me. I hope he's all right out there on the terrace."

She looked from one to the other of them. ^ "Perhaps, if you don't mind, I'd better just go and see. I heard rather an odd noise. Perhaps he's|] dropped his book." |g^

She fluttered out of the window. Tuppence gavel- an exasperated sigh.

"She ought to have a string tied to her wrist," she said. "Then he could pull it when he wanted * :-- --,--°.--<i .' IK'?'^;.;^".- her." ;,,, ... ^^ ifc|r

"Such a devoted wife," said Miss Minton. "It's very nice to see it, isn't it?"

"Is it?" said Tuppence, who was feeling far from good-tempered.

The three women sat in silence for a minute or two. -1.... ||

"Where's Sheila tonight?" asked Miss Minton. , "She went to the pictures," said Mrs. Sprot. a "Where's Mrs. Perenna?" asked Tuppence.

"She said she was going to do accounts in her room," said Miss Minton. "Poor dear. So tiring,

doing accounts."

"She's not been doing accounts all the evening," said Mrs. Sprout, "because she came in just now when I was telephoning in the hall."

"I wonder where she'd been," said Miss Minton, whose life was taken up with such small won N OR M? 161 Vss, ^

derments. "Not to the pictures, they wouldn't be out yet."

"She hadn't got a hat on," said Mrs. Sprout. ^, H| "Nor a coat. Her hair was all anyhow and I think 8§| she'd been running or something. Quite out of breath. She ran upstairs without a word and she

glared--positively glared at me--and I'm sure / syg hadn't done anything.' ' ; ^ :

Mrs. Cayley reappeared at the window. Ifef S |i "Fancy," she said. "Mr. Cayley has walked all round the garden by himself. He quite enjoyed it, he said. Such a mild night."^^^!™, She sat down again. ^&s'^E&»i ? "Let me see-- Oh, do you think we could have ;, the bidding over again?"

Tuppence suppressed a rebellious sigh. They |_ ".1 had the bidding all over again and she was left to a"" * play three spades. pg Mrs. Perenna came in just as they were cutting Vy' for the next deal.

, -; "Did you enjoy your walk?" asked Miss Min- m m bt"

Mrs. Perenna stared at her. It was a fierce and unpleasant stare. She said: ^AS?^ ^ "I've not been out." "-ais;- " if "Oh--oh--I thought Mrs. Sprout said you'd come in just now."

F Mrs. Perenna said: pH ll "I just went outside to look at the weather?' Her tone was disagreeable. She threw a hostile glance at the meek Mrs. Sprout, who flushed and looked frightened.

tj "Just fancy," said Mrs. Cayley, contributing her item of news, "Mr. Cayley walked all round the garden." :''^':wx'S;'. w Mrs. Perenna said sharply: a ^^Asitl "^\.f"

□162 Agatha Christie ,, ^, ^ " ' ' : - "Why did he do that?" ^ ?%f|gt Mrs. Cayley said: " 'r"

"It is such a mild night. He hasn't even put on his second muffler and he still doesn't want to come in. I do hope he won't get a chill." "to; Mrs. Perenna said:

"There are worse things than chills. A bomb might come any minute and blow us all to bits!" "Oh, dear. I hope it won't." v, ,wy '^ - "Do you? / rather wish it would." {: Mrs. Perenna went out of the window. The four bridge players stared after her.

"She seems very odd tonight," said Mrs. Sprout. Miss Minton leaned forward.

"You don't think, do you--" She looked from side to side. They all leaned nearer together. Miss Minton said in a sibilant whisper:

"You don't suspect, do you, that she drinks?" "Oh, dear." said Mrs. Cayley, "I wonder now. That would explain it. She really is so--so unaccountable sometimes. What do you think, Mrs. Blenkinsop?" !^

"Oh, I don't really think so. I think she's worried about something. Er--it's your call, Mrs.

Sprot."

"Dear me, what shall I say?" asked Mrs. Sprot, surveying her hand.

| Nobody volunteered to tell her, though Miss Minton, who had been gazing with unabashed interest into her hand might have been in a position to advise.

"That isn't Betty, is it?" demanded Mrs. Sprot, her head upraised. ^ "No, it isn't," said Tuppence firmly. ||| She felt that she might scream unless they could get on with the game.

□;^ N OR M? 163

Mrs. Sprot looked at her hand vaguely, her mind still apparently maternal. Then she said:

"Oh, one diamond, I think." ,»,, "'»(

The call went round. Mrs. Cayley led.

"When in doubt lead a trump, they say," she ||| twittered, and laid down the nine of diamonds.

A deep genial voice said: » ?, " 'Tis the curse of Scotland that you've played .sill there!" ||

H Mrs. O'Rourke stood in the window. She was |j\$3 breathing deeply--her eyes were sparkling. She looked sly and malicious. She advanced into the ^ room. '''

Just a nice quiet game of bridge, is it?" y - g "What's that in your hand?" asked Mrs. Sprot, with interest. |||

" 'Tis a hammer," said Mrs. O'Rourke amiably.

"I found it lying in the drive. No doubt someone left it there."

"It's a funny place to leave a hammer," said

Mrs. Sprot doubtfully. ^,, j

II "It is that." agreed Mrs. O'Rourke.

She seemed in a particularly good humour.

Swinging the hammer by its handle she went out into the hall.

"Let me see," said Miss Minton. "What's trumps?" Hi,,,,

The game proceeded for five minutes without ||K further interruption, and then Major Bletchley

came in. He had been to the pictures and proceeded to tell them in detail the plot of wandering

Minstrel, laid in the reign of Richard the First.

The Major, as a military man, criticized at some

length the Crusading battle scenes. ^feiiS;^

The rubber was not finished, for Mrs. Cayley,

looking at her watch, discovered the lateness of ;\$

□164 ' Agatha <

the hour with shrill lit

rushed out to Mr. Cayl

glected invalid, enjoyin;

coughing in a sepulchra

matically and saying seve

"Quite all right, my d

your game. It doesn't ma

if I have caught a severe

matter? There's a war on

At breakfast the next

aware at once of a certi

"•'; sphere. ||®4^ ^ •

Mrs. Perenna, her lip

gether, was distinctly acr

made. She left the room

described as a flounce.

Major Bletchley, sprei
 on his toast, gave vent to
 "Touch of frost in
 "well, well! Only to bee:
 "Why, what has hap
 Minton, leaning forwar
 twitching with pleasurabi
 ,,, "Don't know that I c
 school," replied the Majc
 ga "Oh! Major Bletchley!
 * "Do tell us," said Tup]

Major Bletchley lool
 audience: Miss Minton,
 Cayley and Mrs. O'Rour
 ill had just left. He decided i
 □f ^ N OR M? 165

"It's Meadows," he said. "Been out on the
 tiles all night. Hasn't come home yet."
 "What?" exclaimed TuppenceMajor
 Bletchley threw her a pleased and malicious
 glance. He enjoyed the discomfiture of the
 designing widow. +% '
 "Bit of a gay dog, Meadows," he chortled.
 "The Perenna's annoyed. Naturally."
 "Oh, dear," said Miss Minton, flushing painfully.
 Mrs. Cayley looked shocked. Mrs. O'Rourke
 merely chuckled.
 "Mrs. Perenna told me already," she said.
 "Ah, well, the boys will be boys." 1;,%
 Miss Minton said eagerly:
 "Oh, but surely--perhaps Mr. Meadows has
 met with an accident. In the blackout, you
 know." '^

"Good old blackout," said Major Bletchley.
 "Responsible for a lot. I can tell you, it's been an
 eye-opener being on patrol in the L.D.V. Stopping
 cars and all that. The amount of wives just 'seeing
 their husbands home.' And different names on
 their identity cards! And the wife or the husband
 coming back the other way alone a few hours
 later. Ha ha!" He chuckled, then quickly composed
 his face as he received the full blast of Mrs.
 Blenkinsop's disapproving stare.

"Human nature--a bit humorous, eh?" he said
 appeasingly. .: ^
 "Oh, but Mr. Meadows," bleated Miss Minton.
 "He may really have met with an accident.
 Been knocked down by a car."
 "That'll be his story, I expect," said the Major.
 "Car hit him andJcnocked him out and he came to
 in the morning."

□166 Agatha Christie
 '<< ^ , 'a:'&- "He may have been taken to hospital. "^
 "They'd have let us know. After all, he's carrying
 his identity card, isn't he? " ^
 "Oh, dear," said Mrs. Cayley. "I wonder what
 Mr.Cayleywillsay?" |
 This rhetorical question remained unanswered. I
 Tuppence, rising with an assumption of affronted \$|
 dignity, got up and left the room. |& IS Major Bletchley chuckled when the door
 closed
 'behind her. sis li
 "Poor old Meadows," he said. "The fair wi- |"

dow's annoyed about it. Thought she'd got her hooks into him."

"Oh, Major Bletchley," bleated Miss Minton. ^

Major Bletchley winked. . '\$|||@s:1' I |

"Remember Sam in Dickens . 'Bewardof wd- g ders. Sammy." BBI .1

_ ..."J'-'r-J.1 r , . , rr, SiisB . litB1oi

Tuppence was a little upset by Tommy's unannounced absence, but she tried to reassure herself.

He might possibly have struck some hot trail and "gone off upon it. The difficulties of communication with each other under such circumstances had been foreseen by them both, and they had agreed that the other one was not to be unduly perturbed by; , by unexplained absences.

They had arranged certain contrivances between them for such emergencies. S ^ cies.

||| Mrs. Perenna had, according to Mrs. Sprout, ||, ^been out last night. The vehemence of her own ; denial of the fact only made that absence of hers more interesting to speculate upon.

, . It was possible that Tommy had trailed her on

□N OR M? 167

her secret errand and had found something worth following up.

Doubtless he would communicate with Tuppence in his special way, or else turn up, very shortly.

Nevertheless, Tuppence was unable to avoid a certain feeling of uneasiness. She decided that in her role of Mrs. Blenkinsop it would be perfectly natural to display some curiosity and even anxiety. She went without more, ado in search of Mrs. Perenna. ^SJM

Mrs. Perenna was inclined to be short with her upon the subject. She made it clear that such conduct on the part of one of her lodgers was not to be condoned or glossed over.

Tuppence exclaimed breathlessly:

"Oh, but he may have met with an accident. I'm sure he must have done. He's not at all that

sort of man--not at all loose in his ideas, or anything of that kind. He must have been run down by a car or something."

"We shall probably soon hear one way or another," said Mrs. Perenna.

But the day wore on and there was no sign of Mr. Meadows.

In the evening, Mrs. Perenna, urged on by the pleas of her boarders, agreed extremely reluctantly to ring up the police.

A sergeant called at the house with a notebook and took particulars. Certain facts were then elicited. Mr. Meadows had left Commander Haydock's house at half past ten. From there he had walked with a Mr. Walters and a Dr. Curtis as far | as the gate of Sans Souci, where he had said^ | goodbye to them and turned into the drive. ';f

From that moment, Mr. Meadows seemed to

□^a|168 ' Agatha Christie &^

have disappeared into space. 11^ Hg In Tuppence's mind, two possibilities emerged - it|gfrom this.

i^ when walking up the drive. Tommy may have seen Mrs. Perenna coming towards him, have -- ^slipped into the bushes and then have followed

B| her. Having observed her rendezvous with some

" i^junkown person, he might then have followed the

fflatter, whilst Mrs. Perenna returned to Sans ^
"Souci. In that case, he was probably very much s alive, and busy on a trail. In
which case the well-

K meant endeavours of the police to find him might

,,,,, prove most embarrassing. :-'^ ||,-;

BThe other possibility was not so pleasant. If resolved itself into two
pictures--one that of Mrs.i^ Perenna returning "out of breath and dishev^^;
elled"--the other, one that would not be laidl^li
aside, a picture of Mrs. O'Rourke standing smilt^Igg
ing in the window, holding a heavy hammer.

That hammer had horrible possibilities. ,- T
For what should a hammer be doing lying outside?

ITY

As to who had wielded it, that was most dif-!%6 p

ficult. A good deal depended on the exact time j^ Mrs. Perenna had re-entered the
house. It was certainly

somewhere in the neighbourhood of halfglp past ten, but none of the bridge party
happened to a have noted the time exactly. Mrs. Perenna had ,,,

J declared vehemently that she had not been out ex- II

cept just to look at the weather. But one does not

| get out of breath just looking at the weather. It

s was clearly extremely vexing to her to have been ip

-S seen by Mrs. Sprot. with ordinary luck the four &s It i^: ladies might have been
safely accounted for as^ j busy playing bridge. '^[' , I what had the time been
exactly? Sf

□^ .NORM? 169

'*¥,

Tuppence found everybody extremely vague on
the subject.

If the time agreed, Mrs. Perenna was clearly the roost likely suspect. But there
were other possibil^ies.

Of the inhabitants of Sans Souci, three had
been out at the time of Tommy's return. Major

Bletchley had been out at the cinema--but he had been to it alone, and the way that
he had insisted

°n retailing the whole picture so meticulously
might suggest to a suspicious mind that he was

deliberately establishing an alibi. ^ :^| | | |

Then there was the valetudinarian Mr. Cayley
who had gone for a walk all round the garden. But

t°r the accident of Mrs. Cayley's anxiety over her
spouse, no one might have ever heard of that walk Md might have imagined Mr. Cayley

to have refined

securely encased in rugs like a mummy in

his chair on the terrace. (Rather unlike him, really, §|| to risk the contamination
of the night air so long.) a

And there was Mrs. O'Rourke herself, swinging fhe hammer, and smiling ... ,,,

IT' , IV ^

"What's the matter. Deb? You're looking worried,
my sweet."

Deborah Beresford started and then laughed,

looking frankly into Tony Marsdon's sympathetic

broivn eyes. She liked Tony. He had brains--was ""e of the most brilliant beginners
in the coding department--and was thought likely to go far.

Deborah enjoyed her job, though she found it

made somewhat strenuous demands on her powers

°f concentration. It was tiring, but it was worth ^ile and it gave her a pleasant
feeling of impor-

□170 ^tha christie 11

tance. This was real worl, _^ ^ hanging about ^ a hospital waitmg for a c^nce to
nurse. ., ,,,

She said: m ;^*1% "Oh, nothirig^ust/a^., you know." T "Families are a bit try^g
^at's yours been up

N Or M

"It's my mother. To t^ ^ ^uth I'm just a bit worried about her."

gl "why? what's happei^9" (g . ISI ff.

"well, you see, she we^ ^own toCornwall to a . frightfully trying old aui^ ^ n^e. Seventy-eight K and completely ga ga." |\$

1 "Sounds grim." corn^ad ^e young man| , sympathetically. ^S y il

"Yes. it was really we; ^le of mother. ButBf she was rather hipped ^y^y because nobody C? seemed to want her in i^g war. Of course, nursed and did things in, ^e last one-but it's all || quite different now, an^ ^ don't want middle-aged people. Th. ^ant people who are young and on the spot. ^ ^ j ^ pother got 8ii a bit hipped over it all, a^ ^ ^e went off down ' to Cornwall to stay witt^ ^unt Gracie, and she's , been doing a bit in the, ^en, extra vegetable^ ? growing and all that."

^Quite sound" comm^^ Tony. IK

"Yes, much the best t^ng she could do. She's quite active still, you ^^» said Deborah kindly. „ ^

"well, that sounds all i -^ „ 'ss

"Oh, yes, it isn't that. ^ ^ q^ happy about . her-had a letter only ^ ^ays ago sounding quite cheerful. ; ,

"What's the trouble, tlu „»

"The trouble is that ^ ^ charles. who was □NORM? 171 going down to see his people in that part of the world, to go and look her up. And he did. And she wasn't there." ;;wv

"Wasn't there?" ^ "

"No. And she hadn't been there! Not at all apparently!" ^

Tony looked a little embarrassed.

"Rather odd," he murmured. "Where's--I mean--your father?"

"Carrot Top? Oh, he's in Scotland somewhere. In one of those dreadful Ministries where they file papers in triplicate all day long.'" ^' "&

"Your mother hasn't gone to join him perhaps?"

"She can't. He's in one of those area things where wives can't go." «

"Oh--er--well, I suppose she's just sloped off I somewhere." ^K "'^

Tony was decidedly embarrassed now--especially with Deborah's large worried eyes fixed plaintively upon him.

"Yes, but why? It's so queer. All her letters --talking about Aunt Gracie and the garden and everything."

"I know, I know," said Tony hastily. "Of course, she'd want you to think--I mean--nowadays--well, people do slope off now and again, if you know what I mean--"

Deborah's gaze, from being plaintive, became suddenly wrathful. ?J

"If you think mother's just gone off weekending with someone you're absolutely wrong. Absolutely. Mother and father are devoted to each other--really devoted. It's quite a joke in the family. She'd never--"

My's 172 HHAgafhft Christie >.,.,.,. ^.

Tony said hastily:"

"Of course not. Sorry. I really didn't mean--"
Deborah, her wrath appeased, creased her forehead.
head. S^.

"The odd thing is that someone the other day
said they'd seen mother in Leahampton, of aK;^ y^i.. places, and of course I said
it couldn't be her be-^igj

cause she was in Cornwall, but now I wonder--" Kte ;
Tony, his match held to a cigarette, paused sud^ denly and the match went out.
,^,;Mi "Leahampton?" he said sharply. ^^ ca "Yes. Just the last place you could
imagine! mother going off to. Nothing to do and all old
Colonels and maiden ladies." ' %;::: "Doesn't sound a likely spot, certainly,"
saidfe,,.,.

ywSff He lit his cigarette and asked casually: B k^

"What did your mother do in the last war?"

.. Deborah answered mechanically: sBy^

8% "Oh, nursed a bit and drove a General--army, I ;^ K i:i mean, not a bus. All the
usual sort of things." fe^ '}

"Oh, I thought perhaps she'd been like you--in
the Intelligence." ^

"Oh, mother would never have had the head for ^ this sort of work. I believe,
though, that after the b|

war she and father did do something in the sleuth- y,;;m ing line. Secret papers and
master spies--that sort '?,, of thing. Of course, the darlings exaggerate it all a
ssss good deal and make it all sound as though it had KH been frightfully important.
We don't really en- t^X ., courage them to talk about it much because you 'h''':
know what one's family is--the same old story .yyM over and over again.''

"Oh, rather," said Tony Marsdon heartily. "I
in quite agree." SB It was on the following day that Deborah, re^NORM? 173
turning to her lodging house, was puzzled by
something unfamiliar in the appearance of her
room.

It took her a few minutes to fathom what it was.
Then she rang the bell and demanded angrily of
her landlady what had happened to the big photograph
that always stood on the top of the chest of
drawers. . . ,

|S\$^ Mrs. Rowley was aggrieved and resentful, y.:. i|| She couldn't say, she was
sure. She hadn't
touched it herself. Maybe Gladys--
But Gladys also denied having removed it. The
man had been there about the gas, she said hopefully.

||But Deborah declined to believe that an employee
of the Gas Company would have taken a
fancy to and removed the portrait of a middleaged
lady.

Far more likely, in Deborah's opinion, that
Gladys had smashed the photograph frame and
had hastily removed all traces of the crime to the
dustbin. |\$| ||| g

Deborah didn't make a fuss about it. Sometime
or other she'd get her mother to send her another
photo, y^,

She thought to herself with rising vexation: ^|ST
^"What's the old darling up to? She might tell The . Of course, it's absolute
nonsense to suggest,
as Tony did, that she's gone off with someone, but
all the same it's very queer ..." ..^..a-^,

v^i^w^

^ArX«^ - '99^^

It was Tuppence's turn to talk to the fishermaft on

the end of the pier.

She had hoped against hope that Mr. Grant might have some comfort for her. But her hopes were soon dashed. H^

He stated definitely that no news of any kind had come from Tommy.

Tuppence said, trying her best to make her voice assured and businesslike:

"There's no reason to suppose that anything has--happened to him?" Hip

"None whatever. But let's suppose it has." "Sy what?" ""

"I'm saying--suppsjng it has. what about you?" ?

"Oh, I see--I--carry on, of course." *

"That's the stuff. There is time to weep after the battle. We're in the thick of the battle now.

And time is short. One piece of information you brought us has been proved correct. You overheard a reference to the/our/i. The fourth referred to is the fourth of next month. It's the date fixed for the big attack on this country." ; '

"You're sure?"

"Fairly sure. They're methodical people, our enemies. All their plans neatly made and worked out. Wish we could say the same of ourselves.

Planning isn't our strong point. Yes, the Fourth is

□Ki ^ NORM? ' . 175
The Day. All these raids aren't the real thing-- they're mostly reconnaissance--testing our defences and our reflexes to air attack. On the fourth comes the real thing."

E "But if you know that--" :

"We know The Day is fixed. We know, or think we know, roughly, where . . . (But we may be wrong there.) We're as ready as we can be. But it's the old story of the siege of Troy. They knew, as we know, all about the forces without. It's the forces within we want to know about. The men in the Wooden Horse! For they are the men who can deliver up the keys of the fortress. A dozen men in high places, in command in vital spots, by issuing conflicting orders, can throw the country into just that state of confusion necessary for the German plan to succeed. We've got to have inside informationintime."

. ^ii'' .SJS^ '^Tuppence

said despairingly: ' ''t''M!~f'vs'^ ''''''

y^f"1 feel so futile--so inexperienced." A^ lBK"oh, you needn't worry about that. We've got

' experienced people working, all the experience and talent we've got--but when there's treachery within we can't tell who to trust. You and Beresford are the irregular forces. Nobody knows about you. That's why you've got a chance to succeed-- that's why you have succeeded up to a certain point." m II

| "Can't you put some of your people on to Mrs. Perenna? There must be some of them you can trust absolutely?"

"Oh, we've done that. Working from 'information received that Mrs. Perenna is a member of the I.R.A. with anti-British sympathies.' That's true enough, by the way--but we can't get proof of

i anything further. Not of the vital facts we want.

'^w^:

□So stick t
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JIB pond life
□said Tuppence.

"Where's Captain Beresford, that's what I'd
like to know?"

"So should I," said Tuppence, with a pang.

"Don't seem natural, his disappearing without
a word. He ought to have tipped you the wink by

now. That's why--" f;?^'1^ ''''''''^S^
g, "Yes, Albert?" . ? "What I mean is, if he's come out in the open, ^^ perhaps you
'd better not.'

He paused to arrange his ideas and then went
on. ;':.^;

"I mean, they've blown the gaff on him, but '/^gs
they mayn 't know about you--and so it's up to k* you to keep under cover still."

"I wish I could make up my mind," sighed
Tuppence. J^ g8

"Which way^ere you thinking of managing it, gg|
Madam?" ^ ^ Tuppence murmured thoughtfully: ^ w § "I thought I might lose a letter
I'd written

--make a lot of fuss about it, seem very upset.
Then it would be found in the hall and Beatrice

would probably put it on the hall table. Then the |||
right person would get a look at it." ; ->y ;.iy . "What would be in the letter?"

^''li& th? '¥:'

3 "Oh, roughly--that I'd been successful in
discovering the identity of the person in question

and that I was to make a full report personally s?H
tomorrow. Then, you see, Albert, N or M would
have to come out in the open and have a shot at

eliminating me." .; ^^

N Or M

"Yes, and maybe they'd manage it, too." w.i
 "Not if I was on my guard. They'd have, I
 think, to decoy me away somewhere--some lonely
 □"I
 1 .-'s
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 spot. That's where you'd come in--because they
 don't know about you."
 "I'd follow them up and catch them redhanded,
 so to speak?" ips ^v^*^ .-' '
 Tuppence nodded. aw ; .< - "That's the idea. I must think it out carefully--I'll
 meet you tomorrow,"
 :...,' ;1...,' ,
 Tuppence was just emerging from the local
 lending library with what had been recommended
 to her as a "nice book" clasped under her arm
 when she was startled by a voice saying:
 "Mrs. Beresford." kill
 She turned abruptly to see a tall, dark young
 man with an agreeable but slightly embarrassed
 smile, f^
 He said: (|| A'!%^ §|| '^^' "Er--I'm afraid you don't remember me?"
 Tuppence was thoroughly used to the formula.
 She could have predicted with accuracy the words
 that were coming next.
 "I--er--came to the flat with Deborah one
 day." §||| ^
 Deborah's friends! So many of them, and all, to
 Tuppence, looking singularly alike! Some dark
 like this young man, some fair, an occasional redhaired
 one--but all cast in the same mould- pleasant, well-mannered, their hair, in
 Tuppence's
 view, just slightly too long. (But when this was
 hinted, Deborah would say, "Oh, mother, don't
 be so terribly 1916.1 can't stand short hair.")
 Annoying to have run across and been recognized
 by one of Deborah's young men just now.
 □"-* - w
 n or m? h|a| 179
 However, she could probably soon shake him off.
 "I'm Antony Marsdon," explained the young
 man. r
 |S Tuppence murmured mendaciously, "Oh, of
 "course," and shook hands, ^ff^.'^ .tjtiaj^^
 Tony Marsdon went on: ; ' .>'-. , , , ttaM-
 "I'm awfully glad to have found you, Mrs.
 Beresford. You see, I'm working at the same job
 as Deborah, and as a matter of fact something
 rather awkward has happened.' ' |||1 M
 "Yes?" said Tuppence. "What is it?" I to
 "well, you see, Deborah's found out that
 you're not down in Cornwall as she thought, and
 that makes it a bit awkward, doesn't it, for you?"
 "Oh, bother," said Tuppence, concerned.
 "How did she find out?" -
 Tony Marsdon explained. He went on rather
 diffidently:
 "Deborah, of course, has no idea of what
 you're really doing."
 He paused discreetly, and then went on:
 "It's important, I imagine, that she shouldn't
 know. My job, actually, is rather the same line.
 I'm supposed to be just a beginner in the Coding

Department. Really my instructions are to express views that are mildly Fascist--admiration of the German system, insinuations that a working alliance with Hitler wouldn't be a bad thing--all that sort of thing--just to see what response I get. There's a good deal of rot going on, you see, and we want to find out who's at the bottom of it." ,»,,

AK'Λ

"Not everywhere," thought Tuppence, it ||S\$ "But as soon as Deb told me about you," continued

the young man, "I thought I'd better come straight down and warn you so that you could cook up a likely story. You see, I happen to know

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what you are doing and that it's of vital importance.

It would be fatal if any hint of who you

are got about. I thought perhaps you could make it seem as though you'd joined Captain Beresford in Scotland or wherever he is. You might say that you'd been allowed to work with him there."

"I might do that, certainly," said Tuppence thoughtfully. |te^ .lAa"*

^ Tony Marsdon said anxiously: "*" ?? j ^ "You don't think I'm butting in?" ^sf'-Λ v,:^-' "No, no, I'm very grateful to you." ^^ "

Tony said rather inconsequentially: aSS

"I'm--well--you see--I'm rather fond of

|p Deborah." " yS '--^ bn Tuppence flashed him an amused quick glance.

How far away it seemed, that world of attentive

young men and Deb with her rudeness to them

that never seemed to put them off. This young

man was, she thought, quite an attractive specimen.

She put aside what she called to herself "peace time thoughts" and concentrated on the present situation. ,,,

After a moment or two she said slowly: uk "My husband isn't in Scotland." ; ^ "Isn't he?" ;

"No, he's down here with me. At least he was! ^Now--he's disappeared."

Illfi "I say, that's bad--or isn't it? Was he on to something?" - Is^^sh Tuppence nodded.

"I think so. That's why I don't think that his^ - disappearing like this is really a bad sign. I think,

sooner or later, he'll communicate with me--in his own way.'" She smiled a little.

Tony said, with some slight embarrassment:

□NORM? 181

"Of course, you know the game well, I expect.

But you ought to be careful.'" %w | Tuppence nodded, "i

E;. "I know what you mean. Beautiful heroines R in books are always easily decoyed away. But

Tommy and I have our methods. We've got a sloB

gan." She smiled. "Penny plain and tuppence

coloured." H^ ||:g ^Siyy^^ S^%' "what?" The young man stared at her as

R though she had gone mad.

"I ought to explain that my family nickname is

, Tuppence."

^<"Oh, I see." The young man's brow cleared.

""Ingenious--what?" -.yy.y^ gfe "Ihopeso."

|| "I don't want to butt in--but couldn't I help in Ste'" anyway?"

"Yes," said Tuppence thoughtfully, "I think perhaps you might." ^^

□7l><<<< ?>>>xr.

-?v "asw;-:: ?'?: ^".

r> ,, .«.';" : ,i':i'" . . . , ..-«.Λ; ,» . , %.

After long aeons of unconsciousness, Tommy began to be aware of a fiery ball swimming in ; y^, space. In the centre of the fiery ball was a core of | || pain, the universe shrank, the fiery ball swung |S ..^:- more slowly--he discovered suddenly that the III nucleus of it was his own aching head.

Slowly he became aware of other things--of cold cramped limbs, of hunger, of an inability to move his lips.

Slower and slower swung the fiery ball ... It Sit was now Thomas Beresford's head and it was rest-

{'s^v''s~, i

ing on solid ground. Very solid ground. In fact on something suspiciously like stone.

Bgg' Yes, he was lying on hard stones, and he was in | pain, unable to move, extremely hungry, cold and jiti uncomfortable.

i^ Surely, although Mrs. Perenna's beds had never been unduly soft, this could not be--

Of course--Haydock! The wireless! The German waiter! Turning in at the gates of Sans

Souci...

|Sg| Someone, creeping up behind him, had struck | him down. That was the reason of his aching | --| And he'd thought he'd got away with it all right! So Haydock, after all, hadn't been quite such a fool?

Haydock? Haydock had gone back into Smug□..^v-' . : NORM? ;;^ ^L; 183

glers' Rest and closed the door. How had he managed to get down the hill and be waiting for Tommy in the grounds of Sans Souci?

It couldn't be done. Not without Tommy seeing him.

The manservant, then? Had he been sent ahead to lie in wait? But surely, as Tommy had crossed the hall, he had seen Appledore in the kitchen of which the door was slightly ajar. Or did he only fancy he had seen him? Perhaps that was the explanation.

Anyway it didn't matter. The thing to do was to find out where he was now. a.

His eyes, becoming accustomed to the darkness, picked out a small rectangle of dim light. A window or small grating. The air smelled chill and musty. He was, he fancied, lying in a cellar. His hands and feet were tied and a gag in his mouth was secured by a bandage.

"Seems rather as though I'm for it," thought Tommy.

He tried gingerly to move his limbs or body, but he could not succeed.

At that moment, there was a faint creaking sound and a door somewhere behind him was pushed open. A man with a candle came in. He set down the candle on the floor. Tommy recognized Appledore. The latter disappeared again and then returned carrying a tray on which were a jug of water, a glass and some bread and cheese.

Stooping down he first tested the cords binding the other's limbs. He then touched the gag.

He said in a quiet level voice:

"I am about to take this off. You will then be able to eat and drink. If, however, you make the slightest sound, I shall replace it immediately."

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Tommy tried to nod his head, which proved impossible, so he opened and shut his eyes several times instead. ^

Appledore, taking this for consent, carefully unknotted the bandage.

IIH His mouth freed. Tommy spent some few iH| minutes easing his jaw. Appledore held the glass s ' of water to his lips. He swallowed at first with dif- ficulty, then more easily. The water did him a &: world of good. pi.^^^y?--;^^'^-1^?^^''''''''

He murmured stiffly:

s^ * "That's better. I'm not quite so young as I was.

Now for the eats, Fritz--or is it Franz?

The man said quietly:

, ,; , "My name here is Appledore1."

NS3 He held the slice of bread and cheese up and

Tommy bit at it hungrily. ''

The meal washed down with some more water, ||.^ he then asked: %^| ^^.^Ijs ' §§1 II

"And what's the next part of the programme?" t vvySiliI I501" answer, Appledore

picked up the gag again. | ^B|^ Tommy said quickly: p^ *"

"I want to see Commander Haydock." SSIS*

Appledore shook his head. Deftly he replaced ^ the gag and went out. v"^\;' ^a H V

S"" Tommy was left to meditate in darkness. He | was awakened from a confused sleep by the sound *

of the door reopening. This time Haydock and

|S|| Appledore came in together. The gag was removed

and the cords that held his arms were loosened so yHSSK ^st he could sit up and

stretch his arms. 'BSBs Haydock had an automatic pistol with him. K:

Tommy, without much inward confidence, be- Sa

|gan to play his part. ;..,^y.,.,. ^ - gigm^'- E J'1' He said indignantly: i^^^"*'^^

H.^ ^^te4??.^ "Look here, Haydock, what's the meaning of it

□N OR M? 185

all this? I've been set upon--kidnapped--"

The Commander was gently shaking his head.

He said:

"Don't waste your breath. It's not worth it."

"Just because you're a member of our Secret

Service, you think you can--"

Again the other shook his head.

"No, no, Meadows. You weren't taken in by

that story. No need to keep up the pretense."

But Tommy showed no signs of discomfiture.

He argued to himself that the other could not

really be sure. If he continued to play his part--

. "Who the devil do you think you are?" he demanded.

"However great your powers you've no

right to behave like this. I'm perfectly capable of

holding my tongue about any of our vital secrets!"

The other said coldly:

"You do your stuff very well, but I may tell you

that it's immaterial to me whether you're a member

of the British Intelligence, or merely a muddling

amateur--"

"Of all the damned cheek--" ^ , "Cut it out, Meadows. "mb *»,

"I tell you--" ^ " ;?:

Haydock thrust a ferocious face forwards.

"Be quiet, damn you. Earlier on it would have

mattered to find out who you were and who sent

you. Now it doesn't matter. The time's short, you

see. And you didn't have the chance to report to anyone what you 'd found out."

"The police will be looking for me as soon as I'm reported missing." ; e; ^-i; >^i^^ gEH Haydock showed his teeth in a sudden gleam.

K "I've had the police here this evening. Good fellows--both friends of mine. They asked me all about Mr. Meadowes. Very concerned about his
□il86 "w: Agatha Christie

m
disappearance. How he seemed that evening-- what he said. They never dreamed, how should they, that the man they were talking about was practically underneath their feet where they were | sitting. It's quite clear, you see, that you left this ; house well and alive. They'd never dream of look. |J|| ing for you here." ^ y^

"You can't keep trite here forever," Tommy said ^ g|g vehemently. Haydock said with .a, resumption of his most

British manner: It-; 'w
^-\a- i ! ^.f. ,^".^

"It won't be necessary, my dear fellow. Only until tomorrow night. There's a boat due in at my little cove--and we're thinking of sending you on b| a voyage for your health--though actually I don't * think you'll be alive, or even on board, when they ^L-, . arrive at their destination."

"I wonder you didn't knock me'on^the head straightaway."

"It's such hot weather, my dear fellow. Just occasionally our sea communications are interrupted, and if that were to be so--well, a dead
®8 body on the premises has a way of announcing its presence." . ^.^tes

B "I see." said Tommy;- " B|.

He did see. The issue was perfectly clear. He His. was to be kept alive until the boat arrived. Then he would be killed--or drugged--and taken out to [sea. Nothing would ever connect his body, when found, with Smugglers' Rest.

Sj "I just came along," continued Haydock, speaking in the most natural manner, "to ask whether there is anything we could-- er--do for you--afterwards?" ^^ §|-- Tommy reflected. Then he said: "Thanks--but I won't ask you to take a lock of

□T

NORM?

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my hair to the little woman in St. John's wood, or anything of that kind. She'll nmiss me when pay day comes along--but I daresay she'll soon find a friend elsewhere."

At all costs, he felt, he must create the impression that he was playing a lone hand. So long as no suspicion attached itself to Tuppence then the game might still be won through, though he was not there to play it.

"As you please," said Haydock. "If you did care to send a message to--your friend--we would . see that it was delivered." *S^ .^ ~a ;

I So he was, after all, anxious to get a little information

about this unknown Mr. Meadows?

Very well, then. Tommy would keep him guessing. He shook his head. "Nothing doing," he said.

"Very well." with an appearance of the utmost indifference Haydock nodded to Appledore. The latter replaced the bonds and the gag. The two men went out, locking the door behind them. Left to his reflections, Toiamy felt anything but cheerful. Not only was he faced with the prospect of rapidly approaching death but he had no means of leaving any clue behind him as to the information he had discovered.

His body was completely helpless. His brain felt singularly inactive. Could he, he wondered, have utilized Haydock's suggestion of a message? Perhaps if his brain had been working better . . . But he could think of nothing helpful.

There was, of course, still Tuppence. But what could Tuppence do? As Haydock had just pointed out. Tommy's disappearance would not be connected with him. Tommy had left Smugglers' Rest alive and well. The evidence of two independent

S-'.'- w9 ^ste ^tjpi 188 Agatha Christie

witnesses would confirm that. Whoever Tuppence might suspect, it would not be Haydock. And she might not suspect at all. She might think that he was merely following up a trail.

Damn it all, if only he had been more on his guard-- There was a little light in the cellar. It came through the grating which was high up in one corner. If only he could get his mouth free, could shout for help. Somebody might hear, though it was very unlikely.

For the next half hour he busied himself straining at the cords that bound him and trying to bite through the gag. It was all in vain, however. The people who had adjusted those things knew their business.

It was, he judged, late afternoon. Haydock, he fancied, had gone out; he had heard no sounds from overhead.

^RConfound it all, he was probably playing golf, "speculating at the clubhouse over what could have happened to Meadows!

"Dined with me night before last--seemed quite normal then. Just vanished into the blue." '-Tommy writhed with fury. That hearty English

manner! was everyone blind not to see that bulletheaded Prussian skull? He himself hadn't seen it.

wonderful what a first class actor could get away with.

So here he was--a failure--an ignominious failure--trussed up like a chicken, with no one to guess where he was. w'0.

If only Tuppence could have second sight! She might suspect. She had, sometimes, an uncanny insight... ^

what was that? H 1

□'tii-S N OR M? .- 189 ?8|

^&^5

He strained his ears listening to a far-off sound.

Only some man humming a tune. aM:. ^M ;f;

And here he was, unable to make a sound to attract anyone's attention, gsj

The humming came nearer. A most untuneful "w noise. But the tune, though mangled, was recognizable. It dated from the last war--had been revived for this one. ;,

' 'If you were the only girl in the world and I was the only boy." m^ - ? How often he had hummed that in 1917. ^fe«s Dash this fellow. why couldn't he sing in tune? H Suddenly Tommy's body grew taut and rigid. |y Those particular lapses were strangely familiar. Surely there was only one person who always went wrong in that one particular place and in that one particular way! .,

' 'Albert, by Gosh!' thought Tommy. i|| | Albert prowling round Smugglers' Rest. Albert quite close at hand, and here was he, trussed up, unable to move hand or foot, unable to make a| &ouna "f^sy-iy'i^*^'?'^'''' ''y'' ' ?'''»''''''''''

wait a minute. was he?

There was just one sound--not so easy with the mouth shut as with the mouth open, but it could be done. %t@

Desperately Tommy began to snore. He kept' *' his eyes closed, ready to feign a deep sleep ;f

Appledore^should come down, and he snored, he c®| snored ..

Short snore, short snore, short snore- pause--long snore, long snore, long snore--pause

--short snore, short snore, short snore ... BH W''' sbs r'''^ "":' I Bis»r- ! ...Jlll fe^

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Albert, when Tuppence had left him, was deeply perturbed. '

with the advance of years he had become a person of slow mental processes, but those processes were tenacious. ^

The state of affairs in general seemed to him quite wrong. '-^^^fg~

The war was all wrong to begin with. » %^^»ss "Those Germans," thought Albert gloomily

and almost without rancour. Heiling Hitler and goose-stepping and over-running the world and bombing and machine-gunning and generally making pestilential nuisances of themselves. '

They'd got to be stopped, no two ways about it % --and so far it seemed as though nobody hadjbeen |

able to stop them. ^'^Is| |||S ^

And now here was Mrs. Beresford, a nice lady if there ever was one, getting herself mixed up in trouble and looking out for more trouble, and how was he going to stop her? Didn't look as though he could. Up against this Fifth Column and a nasty lot they must be. Some of 'em English born, too! A disgrace, that was!

And the master who was always the one to hold the missus back from her impetuous ways--the master was missing. ,..

Albert didn't like that at all. It looked to him as I though "those Germans" might be at the bottom of that. m

Yes, it looked bad, it did. Looked as though he** might have copped one. sps. | Albert was not given to the exercise of deep rea-K soning. Like most Englishmen, he felt something strongly and proceeded to muddle around until he

□% ^ NORM? ,^

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tune. Took him a long time to get hold of a tune, it did. His lips shapod themselves into a tentative whistle. Begun playing the old tunes again lately, y they had. 'S' ' ' . ^

"If you were t^ only 8irl in the world and I was the only boy--"

Albert paused to survey the neat white painted gate of Smuggle" ' ^est- That was it, that was where the master had gone to dinner.

He went up the hill a little further and came out on the downs. *%

Nothing here. Nothing but grass and a few 8 sheep.

The gate of Srpugglers' Rest swung open and a y car passed out. A big man in P1115 fours with g0^ § clubs drove out a"d down the hill. ^ ^t|| ' ^

"That would be Commander Haydock, that would," Albert deduced.

He wandered down again and stared at Smugglers' Rest. A tidy Uttle place. Nice bit of garden.

Njceview. ^ , :'^He eyed it benignly.^ Sf'1^

"/ would say sU^ wonderful things to you," he hummed.

, Through a sid<2 door of the house a man came out with a hoe apd passed out of sight through a little gate.

Albert, who gi'^ nasturtiums and a bit of let- ; tuce in his back garden, was instantly interested.

He edged near?!"to Smugglers' Rest and passed through the open gate. Yes, tidy little place. „

He circled slo^Y round it. Some way below .!

I him, reached by steps, was a flat plateau planted as a vegetable garden. The man who had come out of the house was P"sy down there.

Albert watched him with interest for some min□..^'aggNORM? ''^ 1..- ip^ 193

utes. Then he turned to contemplate the house. Tidy little place, he thought for the third tinte:"" ^ Just the sort of place a retired Naval gentleman g^a would like to have. This was where the master had US, dined that night.

Slowly Albert circled round and round the house. He looked at it much as he had looked at the gate of Sans Souci--hopefully, as though asking

it to tell him something.

And as he went he hummed softly to himself, a twentieth century Blondel in search of his master.

"There would be such wonderful things to do,"

hummed Albert. "I would say such wonderful

things to you. There would be such wonderfulssm things to do--" Gone wrong somewhere, hadn't

he? He'd hummed that bit before. (I Hullo! Funny. So the Commander kept pigs, did

he? A long drawn grunt came to him. Funny ^\$

--seemed almost as though it were underground.

Funny place to keep pigs.

Couldn't be pigs. No, it was someone having a

bit of shut-eye. Bit of shut-eye in the cellar, so it

Right kind ofday ror a snooze, but funny place

to go for it. Humming like a bumble bee, Albert

approached nearer.

That's where it was coming from--through that s® little grating. Grunt, grunt,

grunt. Snoooooore.

Snoooooore. Snoooooore--grunt, grunt, grunt.

Funny sort of snore--reminded him of some-'^""^ thing...

"Coo!" said Albert. "That's what it is--S.O.S. ^

--Dot, dot, dot, dash, dash, dash, dot, dot, dot." ^ He looked round him with a quick glance. wf^^

Then, kneeling down, he tapped a soft message

on the iron grille of the little window of the cellar. !ws

□,,><<<<< >>>>><<

^ "a "

Although Tuppence went to bed in an optimistic

frame of mind, she suffered a severe reaction in

* those waking hours of early dawn when human morale sinks to its lowest. Sy

, On descending to breakfast, however, her

Spirits were raised by the sight of a letter on her

plate addressed in a painfully backhanded script.

This was no communication from Douglas,

Raymond or Cyril, or any other of the camouflaged

correspondence that arrived punctually for

her, and which included this morning a brightly

coloured Bonzo postcard with a scrawled "Sorry I

haven't written before. All well, Maudie" on it.

Tuppence thrust this aside and opened the

letter. n^>^€p-' .- .

dear patricia [it ran], ^ te ^ . Auntie Grace is, I am afraid, much worse <s today.

The doctors do not actually say she is

sinking, but I am afraid that there cannot be

much hope. If you want to see her before the ^ end I think it would be well to come

today. If X I'll you will take the 10:20 train to Yarrow, a |||

|tf friend will meet you with his car. 8k* III Shall look forward to seeing you

again,

dear, in spite of the melancholy reason.

Yours ever, ^ IN|

'""""' US? penelope playne.

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s It was all Tuppence could do to restrain her

jubilation. ,^ ^ ^ Good old Penny Playne. "^ v.y- g

With some difficulty she assumed a mourning ^expression--and sighed heavily as she

laid the letliter

down.

To the two sympathetic listeners present, Mrs.

O'Rourke and Miss Minton, she imparted the contents

of the letter, and enlarged freely on the personality

of Aunt Gracie, her indomitable spirit,

her indifference to air raids and danger, and her

vanquishment by illness. Miss Minton tended to ^be curious as to the exact nature of

Aunt Grade's sufferings and compared them interestedly with the diseases of her own cousin Selina. Tuppence, hovering slightly between dropsy and diabetes, ground herself slightly confused, but compromised on complications with the kidneys. Mrs. fco'Rourke displayed an avid interest as to whether

Tuppence would benefit pecuniarily by the old lady's death and learned that dear Cyril had always been Aunt Grade's favourite grandnephew
|^ as well as being her godson.

|K After breakfast Tuppence rang up the tailor's ||;and cancelled a fitting of a coat and skirt for that 1||afternoon, and then sought out Mrs. Perenna and explained that she might be away from home for a night or two. ^i^

Mrs. Perenna expressed the usuaFconventional sentiments. She looked tired this morning, and had an anxious harassed expression.

II "Still no news of Mr. Meadows," she said. "It really is/was/odd. is it not?" ^^^

"I'm sure he must have met with an accident,"' sighed Mrs. Blenkinsop. "I always said so."

"Oh, but surely, Mrs. Blenkinsop, the accident
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would have been reported by this time.'" f^

"Well, what do you think?" asked Tuppence.

Mrs. Perenna shook her head.

"I really don't know what to say. I quite agree that he can't have gone away of his own free will. He would have sent word by now."

"It was always a most unjustified suggestion," said Mrs. Blenkinsop warmly. "That horrid Major Bletchley started it. No, if it isn't an accident,;^ it must be loss of memory. I believe that is far.

more common than is generally known, especially at times of stress like those we are living through now." H^a'.-- B i|fe%s

Mrs. Perenna nodded her head. She pursed up her lips with rather a doubtful expression. She shot a quick look at Tuppence.

"You know, Mrs. Blenkinsop," she said, "we don't know very much about Mr-^Meadows, do we?" |

Tuppence said sharply: "What do you mean?"

"Oh, please don't take me up so sharply. I don't believe it--not for a minute." wy p
"Don't believe what?" i|^, &

"This story that's going around." iH w "What story? I haven't heard anything."

"No--well--perhaps people wouldn't tell you.

I don't really know how it started. I've an idea that Mr. Cayley mentioned it first. Of course he's rather a suspicious man, if you know what !,, mean?" |

| Tuppence contained herself with as much patience as possible. ^ '^^9^ } "Please tell me," she said. "A - "well, it was just a suggestion, you know, that

Mr. Meadows might be an enemy agent--one of, these dreadful Fifth Column people.'" |1

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Tuppence put all she could of an outraged Mrs. Blenkinsop into her indignant:

"I never heard of such an absurd idea!"

"No. I don't think there's anything in it. But, of course, Mr. Meadows was seen about a good

deal with that German boy--and I believe he asked a lot of questions about the chemical processes at the factory--and so people think that ^a perhaps the two of them might have been working together." ---;^.%s« .,», <"» .'-^ k,. Tuppence said: "°ioA'a&aS ^-.. was" i~.i" 1§ "You don't think there's any doubt about Carl, do you, Mrs. Perenna?" a tMN 'y |? She saw a quick spasm distort the other woman's face. ^> "I wish I could think it was not true." Tuppence said gently: ,,,",, , "PoorSheila..." iV » ^ Mrs. Perenna's eyes flashed. Ki^^ "Her heart's broken, the poor child. why should it be that way? why couldn't it be someone else she set her heart upon?" s^sy , ? ; ;y, saw Tuppence shook her head. w^'ly^ 'A "Things don't happen that way." «% . "You're right." The other spoke in a deep, bitter voice. "It's got to be the way things tear you to pieces . . . It's got to be sorrow and bitterness and dust and ashes. I'm sick of the cruelty--the unfairness of this world. I'd like to smash it and break it--and let us all start again near to the earth and without these rules and laws and the tyranny of nation over nation .I'd like--' A cough interrupted her. A deep, throaty cough. Mrs. O'Rourke was standing in the doorway, her vast bulk filling the aperture completely. "Am I interrupting now?" she demanded. □198 <°fA@ Agatha Christie ^ ^ Like a sponge across a slate, all evidence of *-.. Mrs. Perenna's outburst vanished from her face-- leaving in its wake only the mild worried face of the proprietress of a guest house whose guests 1|§ were causing trouble. H| "No, indeed, Mrs. O'Rourke." she said. "We Vj& '^were just talking about what had become of Mr. Meadows. It's amazing the police can find no ^'''e™ trace of him." IS, "Ah, the police!" said Mrs. O'Rourke in tones of easy contempt. "What good would they be? No good at all, at all! Only fit for finding motor cars, ^^^iand dropping on poor wretches who haven't taken j|j out their dog licenses.'" "What's your theory, Mrs. O'Rourke?" asked B'''''' g|Tuppence. ^', "You'll have been hearing the story that's going g^about?" . • ^ "About his being a Fascist, and an enliiny "agent -yes," said Tuppence coldly. "It might be true now," said Mrs. O'Rourke thoughtfully, "for there's been something about ,§§ifttthe man that's intrigued me from the beginning. tali I've watched him, you know." She smiled directly »,, a ^ Tuppence--and like all Mrs. O'Rourke's smiles it had a vaguely terrifying quality--the smile of an ogress. "He'd not the look of a man who'd retired from business and had nothing to do with himself. I If I was backing my judgment, I'd say he came "here with a purpose." as "And when the police got on his track he disapi peared, is that it?" demanded Tuppence. j "It might be so," said Mrs. Q'J|ourke. l "What's your opinion, Mrs. Perenna?"H§i w "I don't know," sighed Mrs. Perenna. "It's a

y^.'^v^j^s'.s.s^ss. --.'v---

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most vexing thing to happen. It makes so much talk"
 "Ah! talk won't hurt you. They're happy now
 out there on the terrace wondering and surmising.
 They'll have it in the end th?--; r,s quiet inoffensive
 man was going to blow us all ^'p in our beds with
 bombs."

"You haven't told us what you think," said
 Tuppence.

Mrs. O'Rourke smiled, that same slow ferocious
 smile. ^i,. ^.)%jss '.: '&;:!' '1?- 'v'1 j&'Tm thinking that the man is safe
 somewhere fillS;

'---quite safe..." te^Ass;,*; ^% a^ Tuppence thought: Ae'^*< te« ^ "She might say
 that if she knew . . . But he isn't
 where she thinks he is!"

She went up to her room to get ready. Betty
 | Sprot came running out of the Cayleys' bedroom ;
 te with a smile of mischievous and impish glee on her
 face. 1

"What have you been up to, minx?" demanded I

^| Tuppence. ^

Betty gurgled, iti .' ^-^

y i: "Goosey, goosey gander..." ^ g» Tuppence chanted:

^"Whither will you wander? l/pstairs!" She

snatched up Betty high over her head."Z?pw- stairs!" She rolled her on the floor--
 ri^llS!

At this minute Mrs. Sprot appeared and Betty J was led off to be attired for her
 walk. "Hide?" said Betty hopefully. "Hide?"

r; "You can't play hide and seek now," said Mrs.
 Sprot.

Tuppence went into her room and donned her
 hat. (A nuisance having to wear a hat--Tuppence fe% M

□,.,., 200 IB?!: ^ Agatha Christie %ft

®';< Beresford never did-but Patricia Blenkinsop
 would certainly wear one. Tuppence felt.)

;;;; Somebody, she noted, had altered the position

|||| of the hats in her hat cupboard. Had someone

^ been searching her room? well, let them. They

wouldn't find anything to cast doubt on blameless

Mrs. Blenkinsop.

She left Penelope Playne's letter artistically on
 the dressing table and went downstairs and out of |

| the house. .' . |

It was ten o'clock as she turned out of the gate.
 Plenty of time. She looked up at the sky and in do-
 •'wS ;ng so stepped into a dark puddle by the gatepost,

,, but without apparently noticing it she went on. |

f^3j. Her heart was dancing wildly. Success-success |

^'.'.^ -they were going to succeed.

Yarrow was a small country station where the

|||| village was some distance from the railway. " ^

t^ Outside the station a car was waiting. A good gl

looking young man was driving it. He touched his

»M peaked cap to Tuppence, but the gesture seemed

^ hardly natural. ;',',',

Tuppence kicked the off side tire dubiously.lHs

"Isn't this rather nat?''^gl|||||%| |

:: :• "We haven't far to go, Madam:"||||'''^M

I She nodded and got in. i^^ » ^

I They drove, not towards the village, but |

'•• towards the downs. After winding up over a hill, ''•

1%, they took a side track that dropped sharply into a

deep cleft. From the shadow of a small copse of | trees a figure stepped out to meet them. |
 4 The car stopped and Tuppence, getting it but, I EBHt went to meet Antony Marsdon. •ss^—

□;^ NORM?^' 201

"Beresford's all right," he said quickly. "We located him yesterday. He's a prisoner--the other side got him--and for good reasons he's remaining put for another twelve hours. You see, there's a small boat due in at a certain spot--and we want to catch her badly. That's why Beresford's lying low--we don't want to give the show away until the last minute." 9^^' '. ^.^

He looked at her anxiously. "^ ' ; agj ' ; "You do understand, don't you?" ^

"Oh, yes!" Tuppence was staring at a curious, tangled mass of canvas material half hidden by the < ; " . ° my ' ^"si- ' 7-- trees. g||| . ,gg - .^,y

"He'll be absolutely all right," continued the ; young man earnestly.

"Of course Tommy will be all right," said Tuppence impatiently. "You needn't talk to me as though I were a child of two. We're both ready to run a few risks. What's that thing over there?"

"Well--" the young man hesitated. "That's j just it. I've been ordered to put a certain proposi-gg^ tion before you. But--but, well, frankly, I don't t! like doing it. You see--' ' ,,,

Tuppence treated him to a cold stare, i^f

"Why don't you like doing it?" ^ |||

"Well--dash it--you're Deborah's mother.

And I mean--what would Deb say to me if--if--"

"If I got it in the neck?" inquired Tuppence.

"Personally, if I were you, I shouldn't mention it to her. The man who said explanations were a mistake was quite right." ^J^g

Then she smiled kindly at him. ^ ^

"My dear boy, I know exactly how you feel.

That it's all very well for you and Deborah and the young generally to run risks, but that the mere middle-aged must be shielded. All complete non-

:C M .

□202 Agatha Christie

sense, because if anyone is going to be liquidated it is much better it should be the middle-aged who have had the best part of their lives. Anyway, stopS looking upon me as that sacred object, Deborah's mother, and just tell me what dangerous and unpleasant job there is for me to do."

"You know," said the young man with enthusiasm,

"I think you're splendid, simply splendid."

n'

"Cut out the compliments," said Tuppence.

"I'm admiring myself a good deal, so there's no; need for you to chime in. What exactly is the big.^ idea?" ^

Tony indicated the mass of crumpled material:^;

with a gesture. |g| |gg

"That," he said, "is the remains of a para?. chute." ^

"Aha," said Tuppence. Her eyes sparkled. "S

"There was just an isolated parachutist," went

on Marsdon. "Fortunately the L.D.V.'s around

here are quite a bright lot. The descent was

spotted, and they got her."gg|

"Her9" a" BBB -WS^Ma

"Yes, her! woman dressed as a hospital nurse."
 "I'm sorry she wasn't a nun," said Tuppence. "There have been so many good stories going j| around about nuns paying their fares in buses with hairy muscular arms." *~K
 "Well, she wasn't a nun and she wasn't a man y in disguise. She was a woman of medium height, | middle-aged, with dark hair and of slight build." jK
 B'^In fact," said Tuppence, "a woman not unlike e?" ^ ^ "You've hit it exactly," said Tony. ,,,<>- '&&.....^ "well?'" said Tuppence.

<i&
 []lg'NORM? ^ 203
 Marsdon said slowly: .^; <agil.iyp;
 "The next part of it is up to you." ;
 Tuppence smiled. She said:
 "I'm on all right. where do I go and what do I do?"
 "I say, Mrs. Beresford, you really ^e a sport. Magnificent nerve you've got." ^i
 "where do I go and what do I do?" repeated Tuppence impatiently.
 "The instructions are very meagre, unfortu- wu nately. In the woman's pocket there was a piece of '.;ag paper with these words on it in German: 'walk to US Leatherbarrow--due east from the stone cross. 14 St. Asalph's Road. Dr. Binion.' " ;*%
 Tuppence looked up. On the hill top hear by w^ was a stone cross.
 "That's it," said Tony. "Signposts have been removed, of course. But Leatherbarrow's a biggish place and walking due east from the cross | you're bound to strike it." ..;* p
 "How far?" ^ ^ "'li''t''l"
 "Five miles at least." ' y^
 Tuppence made a slight grimace. ;
 "Healthy walking exercise before lunch," she commented. "I hope Dr. Binion offers me lunch when I get there."
 "Do you know German, Mrs. Beresford?"
 "Hotel variety only. I shall have to be firm about speaking English--say my instructions were to do so."
 I' "It's an awful risk,"said Marsdon. [s;
 "Nonsense. who's to imagine there's been a substitution? Or does everyone know for miles round that there's been a parachutist brought down?"
 "The two L.D.V. men who reported it are being
 ^r '.'^
 []204 ^Agatha Christie »*»
 kept by the Chief Constable. Don't want to risk.
 \$<; 'g^Sitheir telling their friends how clever they have,. ^Mbeen!" '!.
 "Somebody else may have seen it--or heard about it?" ,.'||| I'''''''' Tony smiled, |gf ' ^ "My dear Mrs. Beresford, every single day, word goes round that one, two, three, four, up to ;^; a hundred parachutists have been seen!" iss? "That's probably quite true," agreed Tup- K^: pence. "well. lead me to it." %; 'SK. [,,,,, A"-1: _ . , B,.t>> -'' B''s' a'''' ;,,,: pounds Tony said: ^ ' "We've got the kit herH^and a policewoman who's an expert in the art of makeup. Come with Just inside the copse there was a tumbledown lit shed. At the door of it was a competent looking , middle-aged woman.

^a She looked at Tuppence and nodded approvingly, .,ingly.
 ? Inside the shed, seated on an upturned packing case. Tuppence submitted herself to expert ministrations.
 Finally the operator stood back, nodded approvingly and remarked:
 ><>>^ "There now, I think we've made a very nice job of it. What do you think, sir?" s^^amis^-. US "Very good indeed," said Tony.
 Tuppence stretched out her hand and took the 8 mirror the other woman held. She surveyed her own face earnestly and could hardly repress a cry g@ of surprise.
 The eyebrows had been trimmed to an entirely different shape, altering the whole expression. IS, small pieces of adhesive plaster hidden by curls
 |H pulled forward over the ears had tightened the skin of the face and altered its contours. A small
 □ " N OR M?^% 205

aS%S
 H amount of nose putty had altered the shape of the | nose, giving Tuppence an unexpectedly beaklike gj profile. Skillful makeup had added several years E to her age, with heavy lines running down each i,,^ | side of the mouth. The whole face had a complasy^Si | cent, rather foolish look. IS! i "It's frightfully clever," said Tuppence admiringly.
 She touched her nose gingerly.
 "You must be careful," the other*"woman warned her. She produced two slices of thin indiarubber.
 "Do you think you could bear to wear these in your cheeks?"

"I suppose I shall have to," said Tuppence gloomily, j
 She slipped them in and worked her jaws carefully.
 "It's not really too uncomfortable," she had to IB iis&i'll' '?'^'ys" 'fi'?'^'^ ' -''''', '~ ''''~j
 |admit.|||| l^gg . 1:^ s^I' I is
 Tony then discreetly left the shed and Tuppence shed her own clothing and got into the nurse's kit. It was not too bad a fit, though inclined to strain a little over the shoulders. The dark blue bonnet put the final touch to her new personality. She rejected, however, the stout square-toed shoes. |^%
 "If I've got to walk five miles," she said I decidedly, "I'll do it in my own shoes."
 They both agreed that this was reasonable-- particularly as Tuppence's own shoes were dark »,y, blue brogues that went well with the uniform. Ill
 She looked with interest into the dark blue handbag--powder--no lipstick--two pounds fourteen and sixpence in English money, a handkerchief and an identity card in the name of Freda ^Itton, 4 Manchester Road, Sheffield.
 Tuppence transferred her own powder and jlipstick and stood up, prepared to set out.

□>
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 Tony Marsdon turned h his head away. He said gruffly:
 "I feel a swine letting you do this."
 ;,,,,"! know just how you feeeel."
 ""But, you see, it's absolutely vital--that we should get some idea of justst where and how the attack will come."

Tuppence patted him on h the arm. /
 "Don't worry, my childd. Believe it or not, I'm enjoying myself." ';;5yA:^ K

Tony Marsdon said again: "I think you're simply wonderful!" H
 Somewhat weary, Tuppence stood outside 14 M St. Asalph's Road and noted that Dr. Binion was "I
 a dental surgeon and not a doctor. ,^
 From the corner of her eye she noted Tony Marsdon. He was sitting in a racy looking car outside a house further down the street.
 It had been judged necessary for Tuppence to walk to Leatherbarrow exactly as instructed, since if she had been driven there in a car the fact might have been noted.
 It was certainly true that the two enemy aircraft had passed over the downs, circled low before making off, and they could have noted the nurse's lonely figure walking across country.
 Tony, with the expert policewoman, had driven off in the opposite direction and had made a big detour before approaching Leatherbarrow and taking up his position in St. Asalph's Road. Everything was now set.
 "The arena doors open," murmured Tuppence.
 "Enter one Christian en route for the lions. Oh, ; N OR M? 207
 well, nobody can say I'm not seeing life."
 She crossed the road and rang the bell, wondering as she did so, exactly how much Deborah liked that young man. ^fs>
 The door was opened by an elderly woman with a stolid peasant face--not an English face.
 "Dr. Binion?" said Tuppence.
 The woman looked her slowly up and down.
 "You will be Nurse Eiton, I suppose?"
 "Yes." III.
 "Then you will come up to the doctor's surgery." 'svg
 She stood back, the door closed behind Tuppence, who found herself standing in a narrow linoleum lined hall.
 The maid preceded her upstairs and opened a door on the next floor. th
 "Please to wait. The doctor will come to you."
 She went out, shutting the door behind her.
 A very ordinary dentist's surgery--the appointments somewhat old and shabby.
 Tuppence looked at the dentist's chair and smiled to think that for once it held none of the usual terrors. She had the "dentist feeling" all right--but from quite different causes.
 Presently the door would open and "Dr. Binion" would come in. Who would Dr. Binion be? A stranger? Or someone she had seen before? If it was the person she was half expecting to see--
 The door opened.
 The man who entered was not at all the person Tuppence had half fancied she might see! It was someone she had never considered as a likely starter.
 It was Commander Haydock. jp|%|
 A flood of wild surmises as to the part Commander Haydock had played in Tommy's disappearance surged through Tuppence's brain, but she thrust them resolutely aside. This was a moment for keeping all her wits about her. ?;" I

would or would not the Commander recognize her? It was an interesting question. ; She had so steeled herself beforehand to display ; no recognition or surprise herself, no matter whom she might see, that she felt reasonably sure that she herself had displayed no signs untoward to the situation.

She rose now to her feet and stood there, standing in a respectful attitude, as befitted a mere German woman in the presence of a Lord of creation.

"So you have arrived," said the Commander. ! He spoke in English and his manner was precisely the same as usual.

"Yes," said Tuppence, and added, as though presenting her credentials: "Nurse Eiton." Haydock smiled as though at a joke.

"Nurse Eiton! Excellent." ||| ,v gg He looked at her approvingly.

"You look absolutely right," he said kindly. Tuppence inclined her head, but said nothing. She was leaving the initiative to him.

,4 "You know, I suppose, what you have to do?" went on Haydock. "Sit down, please."

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Tuppence sat down obediently. She replied: "I was to take detailed instructions from you."

"Very proper," said Haydock. There was a faint suggestion of mockery in his voice. "I He said: ,';^ . ^ | "You know the day?" ^ " S Tuppence made a rapid decision.fe^ ^PH "The fourth!" fe--.^

Haydock looked startled. A heavy frown creased his forehead.

"So you know that, do you?" he muttered.lH There was a pause, then Tuppence said:

"You will tell me, please, what I have to do?" Haydock said: s?

"All in good time, my dear."^2

He paused a minute and then asked: ^S-^fe "You have heard, no doubt, of Sans Souci?"

l^ "No," said Tuppence.

f^- "You haven't?" ^'^^9 "No," said Tuppence firmly.11*^"

"Let's see how you, 4§aj, with that one!" she thought, s%®:<" ;3;;

There was a queer smile on the Commander's face. He said:

"So you haven't heard of Sans Souci? That surprises me very much--since I was under the impression, you know, that you'd been living there for the last month ..." There was a dead silence. The Commander said:

"What about that, Mrs. Blenkinsop?"

™"I don't know what you mean. Dr. Binion. I landed by parachute this morning."

Again Haydock smiled--definitely an unpleasant smile. ^W-y egS1

He said: ' ' .-'^" ' '*"" ' ": "A few yards of canvas thrust into a bush create □;^ ^

, " a^;"'^^

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a wonderful illusion. And I am not Dr. Binion, dear lady. Dr. Binion is, officially, my dentist--he is good enough to lend me his surgery now and again." v "Indeed?" said Tuppence, s^

"Indeed, Mrs. Blenkinsop! Or perhaps you would prefer me to address you by your real name

y^ ofBeresford?"

Again there was a poignant silence. Tuppence drew a deep breath.

Haydock nodded. , - : ' ^ ; ; ^ | |

"The game's up, you see. 'You've walked into my parlour,' said the spider to the fly."

There was a faint click and a gleam of blue steel showed in his hand. His voice took on a grim note as he said: JSJJJ K" ^

"And I shouldn't advise you to make any noise or try to arouse the neighbourhood! You'd be dead before you got so much as a yelp out, and even if you did manage to scream it wouldn't arouse attention. Patients under gas, you know, often cry out." ^ a*,. ;

Tuppence said composedly: S|

"You seem to have thought of everything. Has

, , it occurred to you that I have friends who know % where I am?"

"Ah! Still harping on the blue-eyed boy--actually

brown eyed! Young Antony Marsdon. I'm

sorry, Mrs. Beresford, but young Antony happens

»a to be one of our most stalwart supporters in this

l||i country. As I said just now, a few yards of canvas

'S creates a wonderful effect. You swallowed the

HH parachute idea quite easily."

"I don't see the point of all this rigmarole!" ^ M "Don't you? We don't want your friends to "H" trace you too easily, you see. // they pick up your

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trail it will lead to Yarrow and to a man in a car.

The fact that a hospital nurse, of quite different

facial appearance, walked into Leatherbarrow

between one and two will hardly be connected

with your disappearance." ^ ^'^1

"Very elaborate," said Tuppence. % | ,Rg;Haydock said:

Hi." I admire your nerve, you know. I admire it

very much. I'm sorry to have to coerce you--but

it's vital that we should know just exactly how

much you did discover at Sans Souci."

Tuppence did not answer.

Haydock said quietly: a&S

"I'd advise you, you know, to come clean.

There are certain--possibilities--in a dentist's

- ^Ay" ^' "y'*--' .'^^"t" vy.r ^'s'vv-,

chair and instruments.'" K£AS

Tuppence merely threw turn a scornful look.

Haydock leaned back in his chair. He said

slowly:

"Yes--I daresay you've got a lot of fortitude--

your type often has. But what about the other half

of the picture?' ^

"What do you mean?" fc'" "" "

"I'm talking about Thomas Beresford, your

husband, who has lately been living at Sans Souci

under the name of Mr. Meadowes, and who is now very conveniently trussed up in the

cellar of

my house." ^

Tuppence said sharply:

, "I don't believe it."

I "Because of the Penny Playne letter? Don't you

realize that that was just a smart bit of work on

the part of young Antony. You played into his

hands nicely when you gave him the code.'"^^!^

Tuppence's voice trembled. Ill^

a "Then Tommy--then Tommy--" ^

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"Tommy," said Commander Haydock, "is where he has been all along--completely in my power! It's up to you now. If you answer my questions satisfactorily, there's a chance for him. If you don't--well, the original plan holds. He'll be knocked on the head, taken out to sea and put overboard."

Tuppence was silent for a minute or two--then she said:

"What do you want to know?"

"I want to know who employed you, what your means of communication with that person or persons are, what you have reported so far, and exactly what you know?" gl| ||/'

Tuppence shrugged her shoulders. "r

"I could tell you what lies I chose," she pointed out.

"No, because I shall proceed to test what you say." He drew his chair a little nearer. His manner was now definitely appealing--"My dear woman --I know just what you feel about it all, but do believe me when I say I really do admire both you and your husband immensely. You've got grit and pluck. It's people like you who will be needed in the new State--the State that will arise in this country when your present imbecile Government is vanquished. We want to turn some of our enemies into friends--those that are worth while. If I have to give the order that ends your husband's life, I shall do it--it's my duty--but I shall feel really badly about having to do it! He's a fine fellow---quiet, unassuming and clever. Let me impress upon you what so few people in this country seem to understand. Our Leader does not intend to conquer this country in the sense that you all think. He aims at creating a new Britain--a Bri-

□NORM? 213

tain strong in its own power--ruled over, not by Germans, but by Englishmen. And the best type of Englishmen--Englishmen with brains and breeding and courage. A brave new world, as Shakespeare puts it."

He leaned forward, 'w-

"We want to do away with muddle and inefficiency. with bribery and corruption. with selfseeking and money-grubbing-- and in this new

state we want people like you and your husband-- brave and resourceful--enemies that have been,

friends to be. You would be surprised if you knew how many there are in this country, as in others, who have sympathy with and belief in our aims.

Among us all we will create a new Europe--a Europe of peace and progress. Try and see it that way--because, I assure you--it is that way..."

His voice was compelling, magnetic. Leaning forward, he looked the embodiment of a straightforward British sailor, ^'s

Tuppence looked at him and searched her mind for a telling phrase. She was only able to find one that was both childish and rude.

"Goosey, goosey gander!" said Tuppence.. ^.

II

The effect was so magical that she was quite taken aback.

Haydock jumped to his feet, his face went dark purple with rage, and in a second all likeness to a hearty British sailor had vanished. She saw what Tommy had once seen--an infuriated Prussian.

He swore at her fluently in German. Then, changing to English, he shouted:

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w.s ,jiite "You infernal little fool! Don't you realize you ^ give yourself away completely answering like that?

You've done for yourself now--you and your precious husband.'" AS ;.,. Raising his voice he called: ^ ^ "Anna!" - - -?;Mf ll

The woman who had admitted Tuppence came

into the room. Haydock thrust the pistol into her ill hand. : ,^

'"" "watch her. shoot if necessary." is\$|f'''' c,:4, He stormed out of the room.

-u All Tuppence looked appealingly at Anna, who stood in front of her with an impassive face.

gui "would you really shoot me?" said Tuppence. ||

Anna answered quietly: ^ S" "You need not try to get round me. In the las? war my son was killed, my Otto. I was thirtyeight, then--I^am sixty-two now--but I have not forgotten." ^

Tuppence looked at the broad, impassive face.

It reminded her of the Polish woman, Vanda Polonska. That same frightening ferocity and singleness of purpose. Motherhood--unrelenting!

So, no doubt, felt many a quiet Mrs. Jones and

Mrs. Smith all over England. There was no arguyfsjging with the female of the species--the mother ""^deprived of her young, ftga^

g^p Something stirred in the recesses of Tuppence's

l^lbrain--some nagging recollection--something ^-that she had always known but had never suchB

ceeded in getting into the forefront of her mind.;;

Solomon--Solomon came into it somewhere...

The door opened. Commander Haydock came ;back into the room.

. He howled out, beside himself with rage:

| "Where is it? where have you hidden it? "

□* N OR M? 215

Tuppence stared at him. She was completely taken aback. what he was saying did not make sense to her.

She had taken nothing and hidden nothing. :

Haydock said to Anna: ^ r

"Get out."

The woman handed the pistol to him and left the room promptly.

Haydock dropped into a chair and seemed to be striving to pull himself together. He said:

I "You can't get away with it, you know. I've got you--and I've got ways of making people speak--not pretty ways. You'll have to tell the truth in the end. Now then, what have you done with it?"

Tuppence was quick to see that here, at least, was something that gave her the possibility of bargaining. If only she could find out what it was she was supposed to have in her possession.

She said cautiously: t"

"How do you know I've got it?" %

B "From what you said, you damned little fool. You haven't got it on you--that we know, since

you changed completely into this kit." N Or M
"Suppose I posted it to someone?" said Tuppence.

"Don't be a fool. Everything you posted since yesterday has been examined. You didn't post it. No, there's only one thing you could have done. Hidden it in Sans Souci before you left this morning. I give you just three minutes to tell me where that hiding place is."
„ He put his watch down on the table. k^ I "Three minutes, Mrs. Thomas Beresford." The clock on the mantelpiece ticked. Tuppence sat quite still with a blank impassive face.

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It revealed nothing of the racing thoughts behind it.]

In a flash of bewildering light she saw every-1^, thing--saw the whole business revealed in terms ofJ^U blinding clarity and realized at last who was the|lg|| centre and pivot of the whole organization.

It came quite as a shock to her when Haydock " said: ^ ^ :""

"Ten seconds more ..." B SS

Like one in a dream she watched him, saw the;,,^ pistol arm rise, heard him count: 1|»

"One, two, three, four, five--"

He had reached eight when the shot rang out and he collapsed forward on his chair, an expression of bewilderment on his broad red face. So intent had he been on watching his victim that he||- had been unaware of the door behind him slowly ,j opening. ^ tIn

a flash Tuppence was on her feet. She pushed4 | her way past the uniformed men in the doorway, fe and seized on a tweed clad arm. |:

"Mr. Grant." ^ ^, . - ^|^;

"Yes, yes, my dear, it's all right now--you've | been wonderful--" ® ^

Tuppence brushed aside these reassurances. BBS y,

"Quick! There's nojime to lose. You've got a^, car here?" Hit |

g "Yes. "He stared." g!| |

"A fast one? We must get to Sans Souci a/\$ once. If only we're in time. Before they telephone p:

here, and get no answer." .,, Is

Two minutes later they were in the car, and itIS^'fc was threading its way through the streets of Leatherbarrow. Then they were out in the open country and the needle of the speedometer was ris-a ?

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Mr. Grant asked no questions. He was content to sit quietly whilst Tuppence watched the speedometer in an agony of apprehension. The chauffeur had been given his orders and he drove with all the speed of which the car was capable. yQ, g Tuppence spoke only once.

.;.,;,,^, "Tommy?" ' :

"Quite all right. Released half an hour ago."

She nodded.

Now, at last, they were nearing Leahampton. They darted and twisted through the town, up the hill.

Tuppence jumped out and she and Mr. Grant ran up the drive. The hall door, as usual, was open. There was no one in sight. Tuppence ran lightly up the stairs. ;^ ^ r^.

She just glanced inside her own room in passing,

and noted the confusion of open drawers and disordered bed. She nodded and passed on, along the corridor and into the room occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Cayley. --,

The room was empty. It looked peaceful and smelled slightly of medicines.

Tuppence ran across to the bed and pulled at the coverings.

They fell to the ground and Tuppence ran her hand under the mattress. She turned triumphantly to Mr. Grant with a tattered child's picture book in her hand.

"Here you are. It's all in here--"

"What on--"

They turned. Mrs. Sprout was standing in the doorway staring.

"And now," said Tuppence, "let me introduce you to M! Yes. Mrs. Sprout! I ought to have known it all along."

□^Wr^r k ->>->><r.

"- ?"! "»,, ' '""'SV -^"' 'fy'-w..-

^- ,,,,. %i ^ -^%a, ,^^,

i^ .,,'^?' -T ^ J'-1-3 ^a*.,... „ ^ .''': "Λ:4,' ^' "'.' ^^ "'.'-;" ^'''N:'' ^' ' ' ' ifi^^

'^; A-^ ' - ' A]-^IS's

"I ought to have known it all along," said Tuppence.

She was reviving her shattered nerves by a generous tot of old brandy, and was beaming alternately at Tommy and at Mr. Grant--and at» Albert, who was sitting in front of a pint of beer^S and grinning from ear to ear. "Tell us all about it. Tuppence," urged Tommy. ^ ^

"You first," said Tuppence.

"There's not much for me to tell," said Tommy. "Sheer accident let me into the secret of the wireless transmitter. I thought I'd got away with it, but Haydock was too smart for me."

Tuppence nodded and said: %^ ^

"He telephoned to Mrs. Sprout at once. And she ran out into the drive and lay in wait for you with the hammer. She was only away from the bridge table for about three minutes. I did notice she was a little out of breath--but I never suspected her." "After that," said Tommy, "the credit belongs entirely to Albert. He came sniffing round like a faithful dog. I did some impassioned Morse snoring and he cottoned on to it. He went off to Mr. Grant with the news and the two of them came back late that night. More snoring! Result was, I agreed to remain put so as to catch the sea forces when they arrived."

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| g Mr. Grant added his quota.

I ' "A "When Haydock went off this morning, our

| people took charge at Smugglers' ^Rest. We

I ^ ' nabbed the boat this evening." :--^

|^ "And now, Tuppence," said Tommy. "Your

^ story."

,, "Well, to begin with, I've been the most

j 'frightful fool all along! I suspected everybody

j here except Mrs. Sprout! I did once have a terrible

N Or M

j feeling of menace, as though I was in danger|||
-that was after I overheard that telephone^
message about the 4t.h of the month. There were3
^ ^ three people there at the time-1 put down my^
^ feeling of apprehension to either Mrs. Perenna orls?
Mrs. O'Rourke. Quite wrong-it was the col-it,"
ourless Mrs. Sprout who was the really dangerous^
personality. |

j "I went muddling on, as Tommy knows, until
after he disappeared. Then I was just cooking up a^
plan with Albert when suddenly, out of the blue,
Antony Marsdon turned up. It seemed all right to
begin with-the usual sort of young man that Deb
often has in tow. But two things made me think a
bit. First, I became more and more sure as I talked
to him that I hadn't seen him before and that he,
never had been to the Hat. The second was that, S^
|[though he seemed to know all about my working
at Leahampton, he assumed that Tommy was in|g
Scotland. Now that seemed all wrong. If he knew""
I - about anyone, it wou(d be Tommy he knew about,
since I was more or less unofficial. That struck me
as very odd.

^ "Mr. Grant had told me that Fifth Columnists
were everywhere-in the most unlikely places. So
why shouldn't one of them be working in
Deborah's show? I wasn't convinced, but I was
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R-

^suspicious enough to lay a trap for him. I told him
that Tommy and I had fixed up a code for communicating
with each other. Our real one, of
course, was a Bonzo postcard, but I told Antony a :
fairy tale about the Penny Plain, Twopence
Coloured saying.

"As I hoped, he rose to it beautifully! I got a
letter this morning which gave him away completely.

"The arrangements had been all worked out
beforehand. All I had to do was to ring up a tailor
and cancel a fitting. That was an intimation that
the fish had risen."

"Coo-er!" said Albert. "It didn't half give me a
turn. I drove up with a baker's van and we
dumped a pool of stuff just outside the gate.
Aniseed, it was--or smelled like it."

"And then"--Tuppence took up the tale--"I
came out and walked in it. Of course it was easy
for the baker's van to follow me to the station and
someone came up behind me and heard me book
to Yarrow. It was after that that it might have
been difficult." US

"The dogs followed the scent well," said Mr"®"" Grant. "They picked it up at Yarrow
station and

again on the track the tire had made after you
rubbed your shoe on it. It led us down to the copse
and up again to the stone cross and after you
where you had walked over the downs. The enemy
had no idea we could follow you easily after they
themselves had seen you start and driven off
themselves."

"All the same," said Albert, "it gives me a
turn. Knowing you were in that house and not

knowing what might come to you. Got in a back window, we did, and nabbed the foreign woman

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as she came down the stairs. Come in just in the nick of time, we did."

"I knew you'd come," said Tuppence. "That thing was for me to spin things out as long as I could. I'd have pretended to tell if I hadn't seen the door opening. What was really exciting was the way I suddenly saw the whole thing and what a fool I'd been." ". "How did you see it?" asked Tommy. ^K;^ "Goosey, goosey gander," said Tuppence promptly. "When I said that to Commander

Haydock he went absolutely livid. And not just because it was silly and crude. No, I saw at once that it meant something to him. And then then

was the expression on that woman's face--it was like the Polish woman's, and then

of course, I thought of Solomon and I saw the whole thing." m

Tommy gave a sigh of exasperation. ^ "Tuppence, if you say that once again, I'll shoot you myself. So what? And what on earth has Solomon got to do with it? " |s|

"Do you remember that two women came to Solomon with a baby and both said it was hers but Solomon said, 'Very well, cut it in two.' And the false mother said, 'All right.' But the real

mother said, 'No, let the other woman have it.

You see, she couldn't face her child being killed well,' that night that Mrs. Sprout shot the other;

woman, you all said what a miracle it was and how easily she might have shot the child. Of course, I

ought to have been quite plain then! If it had been her child, she couldn't have risked that shot for a minute. It meant that Betty wasn't her child. And that's why she absolutely had to shoot the other

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'^ - ^', ^ '^'^''^i

"Why?" "!"*3!" iaBK

"Because, of course, the other woman was the child's real mother." Tuppence's voice shook a little. '^ ||| ^

"Poor thing--poor hunted thing. She came over a penniless refugee and gratefully agreed to let Mrs. Sprout adopt her baby."

"Why did Mrs. Sprout want to adopt the child?"

"Camouflage? Supreme psychological camouflage.

You just can't conceive of a master spy dragging her kid into the business. That's the main reason why I never considered Mrs. Sprout seriously.

Simply because of the child. But Betty's real mother had a terrible hankering for her baby and she found out Mrs. Sprout's address and came down here. She hung about waiting for her chance, and at last she got it and went off with the child.

"Mrs. Sprout, of course, was frantic. At all costs she didn't want the police. So she wrote that message and pretended she found it in her bedroom, and roped in Commander Haydock to help. Then, when we'd tracked down the wretched woman, she was taking no chances and shot her. ... Far from not knowing anything about firearms, she was a very fine shot! Yes, she killed that wretched woman--and because of that I've no pity for her. She was bad through and through.' 'fed |ft

Tuppence paused, then she went on:
 ; "Another thing that ought to have given me a
 I hint was the likeness between Vanda Polonska and
 Betty. It was Betty the woman reminded me of all
 ; along. And then the child's absurd play with my
 shoe-laces. How much more likely that she'd seen
 her so-called mother do that--not Carl von
 Deinim! But as soon as Mrs. Sprout saw what the
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m
 M child was doing, she planted a lot of evidence in Carol's room for us to find and
 added the master

touch of a shoe-lace dipped in secret ink."
 a "I'm glad that Carl wasn't in it," said Tommy.
 "I liked him." |

"He's not been shot, has he?" asked Tuppence
 anxiously, noting the past tense, a^
 Mr. Grant shook his head. ** ^ i^l; "He's all right," he said. "As a matter of fact
 ^'.∴ I've got a little surprise for you there." ^ |^ Tuppence's face lit up as she
 said: r w

"I'm terribly glad--for Sheila's sake! Of course" . we were idiots to go on barking
 up the wrong tree
 after Mrs. Perenna.''

^ "She was mixed up in some I.R.A. activities,
 nothing more," said Mr. Grant. ^

"I suspected Mrs. O'Rourke a little--and some- b times the Cayleys--" ^» ia- , "And
 I suspected Bletchley," put in Tommy.

l^, "And all the time," said Tuppence, "it was that
 milk and water creature we just thought of as-- 'pi Betty'smother." ||g |

"Hardly milk and wafer," said Mr. Grant. "A
 very dangerous woman and a very clever actress.

And, I'm sorry to say, English by birth." ',',',

Tuppence said: s;-% "Then I've no pity or admiration for her--it
 wasn't even her country she was working for."

m She looked with fresh curiosity at Mr. Grant.

"You found what you wanted?" ?; ;-. ;

Mr. Grant nodded.

"It was all in that battered set of duplicate
 children's books." ; sMg zg "The ones that Betty said were nasty," Tup!'' pence
 exclaimed.

□m

^Ss KOBdyfI? 225

'They were nasty," said Mr. Grant drily. "Little Jack Horner contMained very full
 details of

our naval dispositions. ^Johnny Head in Air did
 the same for the AirFoice. Military matters were
 appropriately embodied in There Was a Little
 Man and He Had a Little Gun."

"And Goosey, Gwsej^y Gander?" asked Tuppence.

,«,,^ ^

Mr. Grant said: sil INI "Treated with the appropriate reagent, that
 book contains, writteiin invisible ink, a full list of

all prominent personages who are pledged to assist
 an invasion of this count-try. Amongst them were
 two Chief Constables, a--i Air Vice-Marshal, two
 Generals, the Head of a-an Armaments Works, a
 Cabinet Minister, many Police Superintendents,
 Commanders of Local Vcolunteer Defense Organizations,
 and various nilitary and naval lesser fry,

as well as members orf our own Intelligence Force." ^ , , . Tommy and Tuppence
 stared. ^ ;'' Incredible!'' said the tformer. ' ^ Grant shook his head. w^, "You do
 not know tt±ie force of the German
 propaganda. It appeals to something in man,

some desire or lust for power. These people were ready to betray their country not for money, but in a kind of megalomaniacal pride in what they, they themselves, were going to achieve for that country. In every land it has been the same. It is the Cult of Lucifer-- Lucifer, Son of the Morning. Pride and a desire for personal glory!" He added: "You can realize that, with such persons to issue contradictory orders and confuse operations, "

<llp
16

Darling," said Deborah. "Do you know I almost thought the most terrible things about you?" "Did you?" said Tuppence. "When?" Her eyes rested affectionately on her daughter's dark head. "That time when you sloped off to Scotland to join father and I thought you were with Aunt Gracie. I almost thought you were having an affair with someone." "Oh, Deb, did you?" "Not really, of course. Not at your age. And, of course, I know you and Carrot Top are devoted to each other. It was really an idiot called Tony Marsdon who put it into my head. Do you know, mother--I think I might tell you--he was found afterwards to be a Fifth Columnist. He always did talk rather oddly--how things would be just the same, perhaps better, if Hitler did win." "Did you--er--like him at all?" "Tony? Oh, no--he was always rather a bore. I must dance this." She floated away in the arms of a fair-haired young man, smiling up at him sweetly. Tuppence followed their revolutions for a few minutes, then her eyes shifted to where a tall young man in Air Force uniform was dancing with a fair-haired slender girl.

"I do think. Tommy," said Tuppence, "that

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our children are rather nice." "Here's Sheila," said Tommy. He got up as Sheila Perenna came towards their table- She was dressed in an emerald evening dress which showed up her dark beauty. It was a sullen beauty tonight and she greeted her host and hostess somewhat ungraciously.

"I've come, you see," she said, "as I promised. But I can't think why you wanted to ask me."

"Because we like you," said Tommy, smiling.

"po you really?" said Sheila. "I can't think why. I've been perfectly foul to you both." She paused and murmured:

"put I am grateful."

Tuppence said: "We must find a nice partner to dance with you." "I don't want to dance. I loathe dancing. I came just to see you two."

"You will like the partner we've asked to meet you," said Tuppence, smiling.

"I--" Sheila began. Then stopped--for Carl von Deinim was walking across the floor. Sheila looked at him like one dazed. She muttered: " ' AWIB'*'A-"!A.A'-1 "you--" . ^'f-<'AA;<l ;:-.',,, 'M-y'l, myself," said Carl. ^^"'A j*^"' There was something a little different about Carl von Deinim this evening. Sheila stared at him, a trifle perplexed. The colour had come up in her cheeks, turning them a deep glowing red. -- She said a little breathlessly: w ^ ¥' "I knew that you would be all right now--but I s thought they would still keep you interned?" ---- ^^aCarl shook his head. A IST^ □NORM? 229

"There is no reason to intern me." 'A He went on. "You have got to forgive me, Sheila, for deceivt^ing you. I am not, you see, Carl von Deinim at all. |§I took his name for reasons of my own." / He looked questioningly at Tuppence, who 'said: I ,;: ^^A11®!!^' a "Go ahead. Tell her." ^.^-^(ita.&'a.-- "Carl von Deinim was my friend. I knew him in 'England some years ago. I renewed acquaintanceship with him in Germany just before the war. I was there then on special business for this country." J ^ "You were in the Intelligence?" asked Shellac ^ ^ "Yes. when I was there, queer things began to : happen. Once or twice I had some very near escapes. My plans were known when they should^ gl not have been known. I realized that there was something very wrong and that 'the rot,' to ex- j press it in their terms, had penetrated actually into 1 the service in which I was. I had been let down by my own people. Carl and I had a certain superficial likeness (my Grandmother was a German), hence my suitability for work in Germany. Carl was not a Nazi. He was interested solely in his job--a job I myself had also practised--research ^^ chemistry. He decided, shortly before war brokel® out, to escape to England. His brothers had been sent to concentration camps. There would, he ;^ thought, be great difficulties in the way of his own escape, but in an almost miraculous fashion all these difficulties smoothed themselves out. The fact, when he mentioned it to me, made me somewhat suspicious. Why were the authorities making it so easy for von Deinim to leave Germany when his brothers and other relations were in concentra- □230 Agatha Christie tion camps and he himself was suspected because of his anti-Nazi sympathies? It seemed as though they wanted him in England for some reason. Myj own position was becoming increasingly precarious. Carol's lodgings were in the same house as mine and one day I found him, to my sorrow, lying dead on his bed. He had succumbed to depression and taken his own life, leaving a letter behind 1 1 t -1 _1 i^'y-s. ^.^AS&.V'rt which I read and pocketed. siSS "I decided then to effect a substitution. I wanted to get out (,f Germany--and I wanted to know why Carl was being encouraged to do so. I dressed his body in my clothes and laid it on my

bed. It was disfigured by the shot he had fired into his head. My landlady, I knew, was semi-blind. §|| "With Carl von JDeinim's papers I travelled to England and went to the address to which he had been recommended to go. That address was Sans^ Souci. |

g "whilst I was there I played the part of Carl J }on Deinim and never relaxed. I found arrangements had been made for me to work in the chem-j ical factory there. At first I thought that the idea1' was I should be compelled to do work for the Nazis. I realized later that the part for which my poor friend had been cast was that of scapegoat.

"When I was arrested and faked evidence. I said nothing. I wanted to leave the revelation of my own identity as late as possible. I wanted to see what would happen.

| "It was only a few days ago that I was recognized by one of our people and the truth came out." :^~^ffi

.-. ' r,.;.^^^

p Sheila said reproachfully: : * '4 "You should have told me." w ^ ^

;- .NORM? ^... , 231

I He said gently:

|" . "If you feel like that--I am sorry.'" ° E His eyes looked into hers. She looked at him

angrily and proudly--then the anger melted. She

"I suppose you had to do what you did...."

"Darling--"

He caught himself up.

"Come and dance...." ^^ it. They moved off together. ;@%

Tuppence sighed. K.^'AS-1' ' :^'.

"What's the matter?" "'said Tommy.

"I do hope Sheila will go on caring for him now that he isn't a German outcast with everyone against him."

"She looks as though she cared all right."

"Yes, but the Irish are terribly perverse. And Sheila is a born rebel."

"Why did he search your room that day? That's what led us up the garden path so terribly." ^,;

Tommy gave a laugh. Sg§

| "I gather he thought Mrs. Blenkinsop wasn't a very convincing person. In fact--while we were suspecting him he was suspecting us."

"Hullo, you two," said Derek Beresford as he and his partner danced past his parents' table.

"Why don't you come and dance?"

He smiled encouragingly at them. ^

"They are so kind to us, bless 'em," said Tuppence.

Presently the twins and their partners returned and sat down.

Derek said to his father: H| ^

"Glad you got a job all right. Not very interesting

I suppose?" iSI' " UST

«|ig3232;Eift ^yig^Agatha Christie . ' ' i:~i^i'

y-w^ ;As;t 'tessS

^ "Mainly routine," said Tommy, Ip|

I' "Never mind, you're doing something; That's 3 the great thing."

"And I'm glad mother was allowed to go and work, too," said Deborah. "She looks ever so

| much happier. It wasn't too dull, was it, mother?" ^

B "I didn't find it at all dull," said Tuppence'.**^ "Good," said Deborah. She added,
 "When the war's over, I'll be able to tell you something about
 ? my job. It's really frightfully interesting, but very
 | confidential." ||T i^^; 't|j'<' ' |
 4g "How thrilling,"* said Tuppence. ^ p "Oh, it is! Of course, it's not so thrilling
 as flyShe
 looked enviously at Derek.
 ||S| She said, "He's going to be recommended
 for--"

^^ Derek said quicklyr"l%%^;"'""'""'!a* ^ "Shut up. Deb. "^^ISi ^y--.....-
 Tommy said: * ^ ^M "Hullo, Derek, what have you been up to?"
 "Oh, nothing much--sort of show all of us are
 doing. Don't know why they pitched on me,"
 murmured the young airman, his face scarlet. He
 looked as embarrassed as though he had been ac_
 cused of the most deadly of sins.
 He got up and the fair-haired girl got up, too.
 Derek said: ISft ^ a]
 "Mustn't miss any of this--last night of my
 leave."
 1 "Come on, Charley," said Deborah. ^ ' The two of them floated away with their
 partners.

Tuppence prayed inwardly:
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"Oh, let thel" be safe--don't let anything happen
 to them. . ."
 She looked up to meet Tommy's eyes. He said,
 "About that child--shall we?"
 . "Betty? Oh, Tommy, I'm so glad you've
 thought of it, too! I thought it was just me being
 maternal. You really mean it?"
 "That we should adopt her? why not? She's
 had a raw deal, and it w^ be fun for us to have
 something young growing up." ^^ ' "Oh, Tommy!" H
 She stretched out her hand and squeezed his. "i They looked at each other.
 i "We always do want the same things," said
 I Tuppence happily-
 Deborah, passing Derek on the floor,- murmured
 to him: SS '^SQ '..J
 : "Just look at those two--actually holding s£ hands! They're rather sweet, aren't
 they. We must
 do all we can to make up to them for having such a
 dull time in this war...."
 ill
 □