


breakthrough

An abstract graphic design consisting of several overlapping, angular shapes in purple and black. The shapes are arranged in a way that suggests a burst or a breakthrough, with some shapes pointing towards the center and others pointing outwards. The purple is a deep, rich color, and the black is a solid, dark color. The overall effect is dynamic and modern.

novel by **JOHN IGGULDEN**

The action of this novel takes place in the future, in which present trends are extended, and concerns the successful attempts of one man to subdue another against overwhelming odds, and so to break a system of life that is threatening the freedom of the world.

Martin Green, tough, resolute, courageous, a symbol of peace and individualism; Consul Willy Bronstern, power-crazed and insane, a man who is as brilliant as he is ruthless, as cunning as he is corrupt: these are the main adversaries, and the events of the struggle are played out against a background of fear and personal hatred.

Tersely written, and presented in the form of personal and official records, this book develops a splendid theme: that there exists an essential human quality which will always in the end overcome attempts to condition the human spirit by means of fear.

John Iggulden is a new Australian novelist in whose work we have the greatest confidence. He has something to say and says it extremely well; and he knows where he is going, having planned four novels, of which Breakthrough is the first. The second, The Storms of Summer, will be published in the Autumn of 1960. Mr Colin Wilson has lately deplored the lack of 'Heroes' in modern fiction: Mr Iggulden helps to supply the lack.

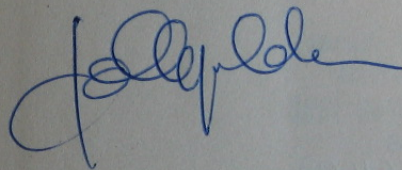
John Iggulden was born in Brighton, Victoria, in 1917. From his early youth he has had two major interests - writing and gliding. The latter has made him Australian National Gliding Champion for 1959; the former has persuaded him to give up his work as general manager of a family engineering company in order to be a full-time writer.

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Breakthrough

JOHN M. IGGULDEN



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The narrative of Martin Watson Green was recorded and edited by Andrew K. Forbes. Originals (where available), or copies, of all other documents have been filed with the National Historical Records Office, Canberra, A.C.T.

I

Martin Green

Start at the beginning you say.

There never is a beginning.

You can find some point, that, for some reason or another, looks a good place to start and somewhere across the track you can draw a line. Things don't begin at this line; it's just a place where it seems logical to start.

Looking back over any sequence of events a starting-point like this is easy enough to find.

That doesn't make it the beginning.

Take the first few seconds of consciousness as I lay on that bed in Charetz - ; I think of that almost as the beginning. Is this because I could not at first remember anything that had gone before? Knowing only that I was sick, and in pain, and afraid; that I only had this to start from in building up the picture of where I was and what had happened?

Whatever the reason - it makes a starting-point.

★

I had enough sense not to open my eyes. That was a good decision under the conditions. Perhaps it made all the difference; it certainly helped when the time came to kill the guard and escape. Not that I actually intended to kill him; there's a pretty narrow margin in that sort of affair - in the end I suppose it comes down to how thick the bone is in a man's head.

Then I was away from the place, out in the open. It was dark by then, of course . . .

★

I

More detail? No of course I don't mind. I thought you'd be keen to get on to the interesting part. You can probably imagine how it would be. You know . . . You lie there . . . dopey and confused. Sick. Hurt. Scared. . . . Angry - most of all, angry.

They've done it to you. You've messed it up. How did you ever get yourself into this? You know how it would be . . .

Turn that thing of yours on again. We'll have another try. Once I find out the sort of thing you want . . .

★

Right? . . . Well, that was the first thing I knew - that I mustn't open my eyes. That wasn't a sixth sense or anything like that. You can understand how enough training will sharpen up the five senses you already have until they can tell you that there's danger in the air even while you're still struggling out of a doped sleep.

All I had to help me, not only then but at many other times in my life, was a machine built up by training. Does that seem a false sort of prop to lean on? Sooner or later there comes a time when you can't rely on yourself, when your own instincts and emotions are ready to betray you; that's when you need this - whatever it is . . .; this machine, I call it; something which out of its long experience in the requirements of survival, will go its own cool way, even when the body is borne down in weakness.

Do you understand? This is the way a man works at the trade for which he has been trained.

While I lay on that bed, scared sick, cursing myself for being wherever I was, not even able to remember at first what I had to be scared about; the business of sorting things out and making decisions had to be carried on.

All right?

So I kept my eyes closed, didn't move on the bed, kept to

the same rhythm of breathing. That was the first simple step to solid ground.

I looked around that room as well as I could without using my eyes. Sounds . . . of a man breathing, very close, the way a man breathes when he has been sitting still for a long time, shallow and quiet, and every now and then a deep breath like a sigh. A background of other sounds; a large building's hollow noises, the unsorted jumble of voices, clatterings, rumblings; muted by doors and corridors and by walls.

The sour stink of sweat and garlic from the man beside me . . . the oily metal smell of the weapon he held on me, that, to feel and sense, I didn't need to see. The air itself, hospital air, disinfected and chemical.

My soreness and pain. A wound under the ribs on my left side, not deep, but sore all around. My aching left arm strapped across me. My right arm sound, but why held out there? I moved it slightly, heard the guard's sudden movement as he tensed, lay dead still until he relaxed. My right arm was in a loose sling with a tube taped inside the bend of the elbow; a nutrient drip, or something like that.

Everything on the left side. Pain on the left side of the head, the pain that comes from a hard knock, hard enough to bring on the temporary forgetfulness of concussion. Whatever had damaged me had hit me on one side . . . as though I had fallen?

I began to remember. Nothing much; nothing more than the feeling of falling through darkness trying to stop something going wrong. I pushed it around for a while but that was all I could get.

That was it, then. I lay on a bed in a hospital room, and I was guarded by one man. The man was armed. I must assume that I lay, every moment, under the threat of this man's nervous finger . . . under the threat of the light pressure of that finger on a firing stud. I had a few minor injuries.

I knew enough to start me moving in the right direction

... in the direction away from helplessness. It's always like that ... a man feels helpless only as long as he forgets that he has the power to see things as they are, without emotion; that he can guide things the way he wants them to go by using that power. This might be a large part of the difference between the people who do things, and the others; the people who have things done to them.

From there on I was confident and calm, it was just a matter of working out the best plan for the situation and carrying it through. There wasn't anything very complicated about that. Requirement; that the total time taken to neutralize the guard be less than his reaction time.

Normally, you can't just get calmly up out of bed and take the gun from the man who's guarding you - he'd blow you open before you could get one leg clear of the blankets. He's expecting that, his finger never leaves the firing stud. He has a reaction time somewhere between a fifth and a half; ... seconds, that is. You just can't move that fast.

Now; if you happen to be unconscious there's quite a healthy change in your favour. You're lying there helpless and injured. One thing for sure, you won't be leaping out of bed at him. Sooner or later you might groan, or open your eyes; something like that. It won't take him very long to get bored waiting for this. He'll start thinking about something else. Reaction time? He hasn't got one. Not until he's had time to work out what's going on - that might take around two or three seconds, well - perhaps not quite that much, but long enough for there to be a chance that by the time he reacts it's got a little too late.

You see why I talk about this little matter of keeping my eyes closed as though it were of the greatest importance? Yet before I could act, or even formulate the most tentative plan, it was essential that I should open them for a moment so that I could see exactly where everything was. This I must do in such a way as not to reveal that I was awake.

Maybe a quarter-hour I waited, there was no way of telling; then, steps outside the door, the noise of the handle of the door and a grunted conversation while the guards changed over.

A bored man will always turn towards a new sound in his environment. It was therefore with almost perfect safety that I opened my eyes in the moment after the rattle of the door handle was heard. It could be predicted just as accurately that the newcomer would first look at me as he entered the room, and I was careful to have my eyes safely closed again as the door swung wide enough open to let him enter. In this swift glance I saw all that I needed to know; exactly where the guard sat, with the ugly snout of his gun pointing at me from his lap, and also - and this was a stroke of fortune - the position of a potential weapon, the heavy earthenware jug which stood within reach of my arm on a small table near the head of the bed.

The guards changed over. The door thudded shut behind the guard who had been relieved and the new guard, with a tired sigh, settled himself to watch me.

For several reasons I lay still for perhaps another hour before I acted. The new guard must be given time to relax completely so that he would accept the normality and harmlessness of my unconsciousness; I should have full opportunity to study any pattern which might develop in his unconscious behaviour, and I must also develop and mentally rehearse the details of whatever action seemed most likely to succeed.

Once the general pattern of an operation of this sort is decided it can be broken down into a series of simple motion patterns. In the case which we are considering we fix first the three main positions or phases - X, the starting position; Y, the intermediate position; and Z, the end point.

At position X, I was lying on my back, covered with the bed clothes, left arm immobile, head turned to the left facing the guard, right arm clear of the bedclothes with this drip tube thing lightly taped inside the elbow.

Position Y required that I be on my feet facing the guard with the jug raised to the striking position over his head. The guard was placed level with my knees and three feet clear of the bed, the jug roughly level with my head and close to the bed.

From this the motion pattern for the X-Y phase will be clear. The legs and lower body lead slightly in a sharp and vigorous swing to the left, the right arm meanwhile taking the bedclothes near the left shoulder and throwing them clear of the body, this movement of the right arm serving as well to wrench clear of the sling and drip-tube. While the feet are reaching the floor the right arm is already taking a return path to grasp the jug. The body straightens and stands, right arm extending upwards. This is position Y, and if this is reached before the guard can react, phase Y-Z, the completion of the action, becomes largely a formality.

I went over this again and again until I was satisfied that the sequence had been set up clearly in my mind.

The guard meanwhile had developed a promising pattern of behaviour. At first his attention seemed to be heavily on me, but after a time his breathing took on regular variations which I did my best to analyse so that I could select the most favourable moment to act.

I was able to establish fairly reliably that there was a critical period lasting forty-five seconds when his concentration seemed to be at a lowest ebb. At this point it is probable that he had fallen deeply into some private daydream.

The onset of this run of minimum attention was signalled by a reflex which coupled a deep sigh with the stretching of his legs. This run lasted less than a minute; roughly forty-five seconds later he would draw a sharp gasping breath, and he could be heard to pull back his legs and sit upright, as though he had suddenly remembered that he was neglecting his duties. Then for a period which varied considerably, he would remain fairly alert, until the next sigh announced the return of the daydream.

As well as I could, I timed this cycle over three runs and, satisfied that the pattern was fairly consistent, decided to act on the next cycle.

While I waited, I rehearsed for the last time the sequence of my attack.

This sequence was almost exactly followed, initiated by a count of fifteen seconds from the daydream signal of the guard, and this, a languorous sigh, was approximately his thirteenth last breath drawn in this life.

The guard fired an instant after I came to my feet, but he had no time to aim. As the weapon let out its vicious cough, and the projectile thudded into the bed where I had been, I brought down the heavy jug on his head with all my strength.

The guard, surrounded by fragments of jug, and drenched with water, sagged back in the chair and rolled to the floor.

2

Records of the High Council for Peace and Security. Conference of the High Council . . . 10/1/09

Members of the Council were summoned by the Consul.

For consideration:

Developments of the Remote Liquidation technique;

Application of RLW to a resistive case for experimental observation.

The Consul: Members of the Council! Hear my first words to you on this glorious day! Is this our greatest moment? Will history say this of our simple meeting, where we gather, as so often we have, as humble fellow workers in the forging of our Mighty State?

What, you might ask . . . what great event do I wish to mark with words and claims like these?

Comrades! . . . no less than this. We have succeeded beyond the most far-reaching and hopeful of our plans in the development of the Remote Liquidation technique. We have made astounding progress . . . progress which I have promised you before this, but which, with some of you, was far outside the boundaries of your experience and of your imagination.

There has been, we have always known, furtive criticism and secret laughter against the modest claims we have made. Yes! We could expect this; for this has always been the lot of the fore-runners; the pioneers; the greatest minds of history . . . this scorn they must endure; this scorn is the burden they must carry, until; at last! . . . Success! Only success quietens the laughter of the fools.

And this point we now reach in the long and chequered history of our patient researches.

Yes . . . it is true, that this story is not yet told to its very end; but we may never again have so great a single measure of success as we are rewarded with at this fateful moment. Though, comrades . . . loyal comrades! . . . I see it hinted in your faces; in the shadows of your eyes . . . these are only words. Is that not what some of you would hide in your minds?

Did I perhaps hope, that after these many years, some sign would be given that words . . . my words!; would be enough? No matter . . . proof is so easy now; and to those who doubt proof will be given.

And what is it that I must prove to you? That these devices, these little miracles, wrested from the inscrutable mysteries of mechanical law and function, merely fulfil the set mechanical considerations of design? That, to put it more simply, they work as mechanisms?

No! To this loyal Council of comrades and heroes of our great Federation even wider proof than that must be given.

We must convince ourselves, and those who doubt, that the technique which now lies ready to our hands, will, as we have claimed, subdue with great certainty and effect every viciousness and savagery of our enemies. This must be demonstrated and agreed.

My thoughts have been much exercised by this requirement. We start from this . . . that we must apply the developments of our technique to a human subject of whose resistance there can be no possible doubt. This consideration leads us by natural logic to choose this subject from those of our enemies who have proved their hatred for us by their actions against us.

The subject of my choice is the Independist spy and saboteur whom we know as Martin Green . . . surely there can be no surprise at this?

Can there be any doubt of the suitability of this choice? The tool which we have now in our hands is the extreme of its kind – is it not logical that we should look for an extreme on which it should be applied?

Examine the threefold reasoning on which I have based this decision. We must agree that, for a first reason, we have the known characteristics of this man Green – this despicable agent who, in himself, displays every viciousness which typifies the resistive peace-hating ways which we observe at work in the cannibalistic jungle of the self-styled Independent Nations; this murderous beast who has developed the quality of independent resistance based on war and murder to the strongest degree. Surely any change which we can achieve in such a creature in the directions of peaceful apathy and true democratic co-operation must be of the greatest significance in the application of the principles of Remote Liquidation to our mighty task of achieving the world objectives of our great Democracies.

For a second reason we have this – that we cannot deny that this murderous jungle beast has gained some slight

measure of success in his efforts to damage the power of our mighty Federation.

What must we learn from this?

We see from this that in a society such as ours, which subscribes in every way to the principles of Peace, which has therefore replaced the anarchy of the past by the subordination of the individual to the all wise and overwhelming power of the State, we see that in a society such as this, that our chief, perhaps our only, danger arises from the unpredictable and senseless violence of the untamed individual.

Therefore; it is clear, that whatever success such an individual may meet with in his efforts against us spring directly from the virtues of our own philosophy. How important it becomes to defend that philosophy by every means in our power!

Do not let us exaggerate these pinpricks – we can study the analogy of the Great and Wise Lion who ensures that peace prevails in the jungle. – I have used this parable to illustrate, before this, the principles of the philosophy of Peaceful Apathy which our great masters, before me, evolved for our guidance over a hundred years of turbulent endeavour and on which I have built. Will the Great and Wise Lion be unduly concerned when he is bitten by a flea? No. There is a proper use for everything, and such a use in this case would be to capture that flea, to infect it with plague bacteria, and to loose it among the enemies of Peace.

So we will capture this agent Green, we will infect him with the terrible fear of imminent dissolution, and having tamed him, we shall send him away to work for us in his own jungle. By these means we take advantage of the qualities which he displays to carry forward our own great work.

And what of the hideous crimes of this creature? His wilful attempts to injure me, for example. This is our third reason – that we shall use him for our investigations; we will use him for our work, and when he is of no further use to us we

will destroy him and have our proper vengeance of him. When I decide that he is ready for this, when he has been broken and used and has lived in terror and despair and disgrace, we will destroy him by remote liquidation.

These decisions I have taken.

The High Council is adjourned.

3

Martin Green

I rested for a few moments, sitting on the edge of the bed, looking down at the body of the guard.

There must be few people who would not be filled with doubt at such a moment. How often the necessity for some action comes into question when the results of that action are seen! These were not novel thoughts to me, but I knew well enough their uselessness – this self-doubt and uncertainty could easily be enough to lead me to destruction. I reminded myself that this guard, had he been helped by the slightest twist of fortune, could well be standing now, looking down at my dead body, not with doubt and regret, but with the simple satisfaction which comes from a job well done.

I took his chair and wedged it as securely as I could under the handle of the door. His weapon was a standard pneumatic of a type I had handled before. It was adjusted to the setting which does not arm the projectile, allowing it to penetrate without exploding, and this I put down to a fortunate carelessness, for the whole place must have been aroused had the projectile exploded.

I reset the weapon to “contact”, and it was while I was doing this, through some chain of association set up by handling the weapon, that my memory returned.

It was immediately clear to me, seemingly with no intermediate process of thought, that I had fallen into a carefully laid trap. I was angry, but not without a feeling of triumph that I had at least succeeded in the first step towards my escape, even though that step was taken with nothing more to guide it than a confused awareness of danger. It is not easy to describe the sudden great relief of knowing where I was and what I faced, or the certainty and determination that this knowledge gave me.

From the window I could see that I was on the first floor of a large L-shaped building several rooms from the end of one wing of the building. Outside, the ground was a wilderness of low bushes and waist-high grass sloping down to a high stone wall topped with a tangle of wire. Beyond the wall was a low hill and open country, a sort of heathland with many small trees.

It hardly seemed possible that I should be so lightly guarded that, having overcome one man, no other real obstacle barred my way. With the guard out of the way, escape was a simple matter of opening the unbarred window, dropping fifteen feet to the ground, and working through quite adequate cover to the wall. Once over the wall it would be quite feasible, with nothing more than caution and reasonable luck, to work down towards Greece and safety. It was not reasonable that it should all be as easy as this, but it would have been foolish to spend any time puzzling about it – it never seems wise to quarrel with good fortune.

After studying the wall I decided that, even with one arm out of action it could be scaled if I could make a rope from the coarse bedding and could pitch one end of this rope up the wall and snag it on the wire. Keeping the weapon handy, and using one arm, both feet and my teeth, I was able to tear the coarse brown material into wide strips and join these together with awkward knots.

I worked with no great haste, balancing the danger of

interruption against the need for daylight to fade sufficiently to hide my attempt on the wall, and when the rope was ready, not feeling very happy about doing it, I stripped the rough uniform overall from the guard, and with even more reluctance dragged this on over the hospital shirt I was wearing.

After that I rested for a while and when I thought that it was dark enough outside, I lowered the weapon on the rope, dropped the rope, tried to hang by one arm from the sill, missed my grip and dropped heavily to the ground.

Stunned by the fall, I found myself staggering noisily about through the bushes, not knowing where I was going or what I was doing, but soon enough, after lying on the ground, managed to clear the dizziness and pain sufficiently to crawl back and find the rope and the weapon.

More quietly I worked my way down to the wall, and, cursing my weakness, lay down again beside it. When I stood up it was quite dark and I could see the lights of the building and, through some of the windows, people moving.

The thought of being trapped here, with freedom so close at the other side of the wall, spurred me on. I felt the itch of impatience to think that surely someone must soon come to the room from which I had escaped, and, finding the guard, raise the alarm.

I bundled the rope, and holding one end in my teeth hurled it as hard as I could at the top of the wall. After several attempts it became firmly entangled and did not pull free when I tested it.

Because I had been giddy, and anxious to cross the wall so that I could find a hiding place where I could safely relax, I had not considered properly how I should climb a rope with one hand. It was now clear that I could not do this without loops tied in the rope. Furious that I had been foolish enough to throw the rope up without thinking of this, I tugged at the rope and found that it came away so easily as to show

that it would not in any case have borne my weight. Hastily I tied loops at intervals, hoping that this would not too much shorten the rope, and then began to throw it again up to the wire. This proved so difficult, and showed so clearly that the first throw had been a lucky one, that I had to stop at one stage and sit down to calm myself, for I was working into a blind rage which put any chance of success beyond my reach, hurling the rope at the wall as though it was an enemy. Gritting my teeth I forced myself into quietness and thrust away the thought that had come into my mind with anger that I should return to the building with the weapon and start shooting.

Once I was calm again I managed to catch the rope after three more attempts, and after I had tested it thoroughly began to climb. Steadying myself on the rope with my good arm I found the first two loops and put my feet in them and then loop by loop, and with considerable difficulty and pain, managed to reach the topmost loop. The whole time I expected that the rope would lose its grip and send me plunging to the ground, and though the fall would have been slight, I found it difficult to control an instinctive flinching from the infliction of more pain on my body. I had to hang on the last loop for some time, for I had tied the loops without being careful enough to have the intervals regular, and I had resented the need for each loop, thinking that the rope would be too short. Reaching up I could not grasp the wire. I would not go back and found that by gripping the rope higher with my arm and pulling myself up to this, I could grip the rope in my teeth long enough to change my grip.

By this means I managed at last to grasp the wire, and could then draw myself up, and finally lay across the wire on top of the wall, gasping and sobbing with pain and exhaustion, and barely conscious of the sharp barbs pressing into my flesh.

When I had recovered I found my clothing caught in the wire and tore myself free in a burst of anger and, sliding over the wire with a great tearing of cloth, I rolled off, managing at the last instant to grab a wire and check my fall. I rolled over and over on the ground and, blindly crawling from where I had fallen, hid myself in a clump of scrub and lay face down on the ground, breathing heavily and almost unconscious.

4

Records of the High Council for Peace and Security. Conference of the Council . . . 18/1/09

Members of the Council were summoned by the Consul.

For consideration:

The arrangements for the decoying and capture of the Independist spy-saboteur Martin Green, for use in RLW experimentation.

The Consul: As I have already explained, this exercise will be a demonstration of our ability to subdue and pacify extremes of individualism by psychological methods. For this reason we must implant in the whole psyche of the individual a feeling of helplessness against the inexorable workings of the Mighty State.

Our whole beliefs and the glorious future of our Great Democracies depend upon this point – that we believe that Man must return to the one-ness of the primeval ooze, that only when Man feels himself at one with all other men – and, with them, still helpless in the grip of resistless powers – only then will the curse of Individualism vanish from the earth.

Individualism is War! The total savagery of history exists because the essence of war comes down to one individual at

grips with another; each clutching the illusion that he will win. Only the resistless power of the Mighty State – the Mighty World Peace State which we are building—can subdue the individual. Only when the individual feels throughout his whole subconscious being the glorious helplessness of mankind against the resistless power of the Mighty State; only then will he lose the illusion that he can win, only then will he sink deep into the primal unity of Peace.

The Vice-Consul: All power to the Mighty Peacemaker! Hail the liquidation of the Individual! A glass of water for the glorious Architect of Peace?

The Consul: In the breaking down of personality which we must achieve before our work in the unification of individuality can succeed we primarily direct our efforts towards a state of receptive helplessness; the all-healing and pacifying condition of the inevitability of the Mighty State.

In our work with the Independist agent Martin Green the condition of inevitability must arise from within his own mind. We are familiar with the primitive jungle thought processes, or should we say, instinctive jungle reactions, of this type of being, and we can be assured that the Vice-Consul will develop an arrangement whereby the jungle-cannibal Green delivers himself helplessly into our resistless hands by the workings of his own decisions. I have recommended my old comrade and colleague, Peace-Comrade Agent "Louis", as a prime mover in this work behind the boundaries of the Independent Nations. Let "Louis" implant the seeds in the mind of our puppet Green. Let Green in all his primitive animal pride and vanity come to us – let him find himself broken by his own stupidity on the racks of our ponderous and inexorable unity and understanding. Let him struggle to escape, as struggle he will, like a snared bird or a fish in the net. Every struggle will but serve to tighten the snare, to wind him deeper into the enmeshment of the net. Broken by our resistless power he will fall easily into our hands, we will

ripen and mould him so that he can go back to his own country and further our glorious and imperishable programme to free the whole world from the curse of war.

The Vice-Consul: The Council may be well assured that the necessary arrangements are in hand and are working well. Information has been received that we may expect results in a matter of hours from this present meeting. I have only to add this – that my part in this affair has been a modest one; it is only proper for me to confess that it has been our Mighty Consul, Doctor Bronstern, whose genius has inspired and guided this experiment.

The Consul: This meeting of Council is adjourned.

5

Martin Green

As I lay beneath the bushes I scabbled with my hand in the mould of leaves and twigs which covered the ground, until I felt dirt in the nails of my fingers. I dug my fingers into this solid earth, and squeezed it hard, putting all my attention on it and using it as an anchor of reality, bracing myself with it against the whirling darkness of the night.

I had not travelled far enough yet to avoid discovery should the alarm be raised; I could not afford to lie there in a faint, so I fought for consciousness in this way and at last succeeded in steadying myself. Backing out of the scrub, and pulling myself upright with the help of a bush, I staggered away, looking back once to the lighted buildings so that I would have a rough course to follow. I walked as far as I could until I crumpled at the knees and sagged to the ground. I was still not satisfied that I was safe, and began to crawl, dragging myself awkwardly through the bushes, but

only until I realized how foolish and useless it was to buy in this way a few pitiful yards of distance with the last of my strength. I found myself another hiding place and crawled in.

Before I slept I told myself with all the certainty I could muster that I would awake in thirty minutes, and I was still saying this over and over in my mind when I collapsed into sleep.

Perhaps I slept past the set time, for I came to with that guilty jerk of the mind that tells you not to sleep any more; and awoke, clearer in the head, but very stiff and sore, and bitterly cold.

When I was on my feet again I stood rather dazed, wondering exactly what it was I had to do, reluctant to start, as though I had given myself a warning against some danger which I could no longer remember. I looked up vaguely from the darkness around, towards the lighter parts of the sky where stars shone through broken clouds. It was from these stars that help came. They gave me all that I needed; an assurance that I could find my way through the night; I moved off slowly towards the west.

There wasn't much clear thought involved in the decision to walk west. It seemed the natural direction to take and I had a rough idea that the country that way was fairly open and unsettled, with enough cover to let me find a safe place to hide through the day. I judged that I would be safely clear of Charetz by then, and in the next night march I could turn to the south.

It seemed pointless to worry about food and water – the solving of that problem would depend largely on luck; and perhaps on the weapon which I carried slung on my shoulder. Deciding not to think at all about what lay ahead I gave all my attention to finding the easiest path through the trees and bushes which I could see dimly in the light of the stars, and perhaps I had travelled half a mile when a sharp noise ahead stopped me in the middle of a step.

I was not immediately alarmed, thinking that it may have been a branch falling, or some animal on the prowl; and then, as I strained to hear, the sound of voices came to me with frightening clearness.

I turned at once towards the south, walking faster but taking great care to move quietly, stopping every fifty paces or so to listen, and each time I stopped I heard voices and other noises fairly close on my right. I thought that this activity was surely connected with my escape until it was clear that the noises came from a line or column of men which was not moving. This did not seem the way in which an escaped prisoner is hunted, and I allowed myself to be reassured by the thought that perhaps I had come across a column of men bedded down on some army manoeuvre, and if this was so I could hope before long to pass by the end of the column. This thin hope failed when, stopping again, I heard noises not only to the west, but ahead of my new track, and even to the east.

Not caring how much noise I made, putting speed before caution, I turned and ran back the way I had come until I could run no more. I stood then, straining to hear above the panting and gasping of my own breath. At first it seemed that the noises came from all around me, but turning my head from side to side to better locate them, I was fairly sure that it was, so far, clear to the north.

This was my only chance. I unslung the weapon, and made sure that it was ready to fire, and stubbornly, but without any real hope that I would keep my freedom much longer with this unseen army encircling me, worked my way slowly and quietly to the north, changing direction as necessary after each halt for listening, working along the sounds as though they were an invisible wall which might eventually disclose a gap and all the time I was conscious with a kind of frustrated urgency that the night was passing.

Records of the High Council for Peace and Security . . .

21/1/09

Report of the Vice-Consul

Subject: The foreign agent, M. Green - RLW experiments

The following actions were taken in accordance with the decisions of the High Council: By the agency of Peace Courier "Isaac" full instructions were delivered to Peace Comrade Agent "Louis" in England. The instructions of the Consul, in brief, were that Green should be advised indirectly by means of an intermediate contact known to "Louis", of certain information concerning the development of the Remote Liquidation Peace Weapons.

In view of material thought to be held by the English Security Bureau (GD-1) concerning RLW experiments, it was considered most likely that the information supplied would be effective in provoking Green, or possibly another agent, into an attempt to penetrate Central Research Apparatus, Charetz.

Confirmation was received from "Louis" that the information had been accepted by Green but the GD-1 Bureau regarded the material as doubtful and was opposed to further action. The possibility of unofficial action on an independent basis by Green was considered to be high.

It was later confirmed that Green would attempt a drop from a Neutral Radar Vehicle east of Charetz on 19/1/09, and that micro tracers on Special Frequency "E" would be secreted as follows: long-distance type 995 in the NR vehicle; medium type sb-995 in the parachute harness. It was advised that the plan to install sub-micro personals in Green's clothing was considered so impractical as to threaten the success of the operation.

Final notification was received that Green's aircraft was cleared for take-off at dusk 19/1/09 and shortly before dusk

on that date Special Frequency "E" was cleared and scanning was set up by Central Control Charetz.

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The Control Centre was honoured on this occasion by the presence of the Consul himself, and other members of the High Council. We were partaking of a simple meal when, at 1900 GD the first signals began to come through. At 1920 the NRV was nearing Charetz at 16 km altitude and two minutes later the signals from the medium sb-995 tracer separated and the NRV signals faded as it turned towards base. A plot was made of the estimated Landing Zone and the security network in that area was alerted and instructed to observe and report back. East Security Network reported that they had a close trace on the signal and would intercept. Following interception, they reported that the enemy agent was lying injured and unconscious at the foot of a small cliff against which he had apparently been swung in the darkness by the oscillation of his parachute.

The instructions of the Consul were then given, that the agent should be taken to Security Hospital 3 and maintained in an unconscious condition until further instructions were given.

It was found that the agent Green was suffering from concussion, simple fracture of the left arm and damage to ribs on the left side. He was treated at Security Hospital 3 under anaesthetic and the opportunity was taken to install surgically in the left thoracic area the following apparatus:

sub-micro remote liquidation capsule type K7I on special frequency with auxiliary anti-interference mechanism type K71a; universal type, DR micro-tracing oscillator on special frequency.

This apparatus was installed under the personal supervision of the Consul. After surgery the patient was returned to an isolation ward and placed under light guard as instructed by the Consul.

Special Security force of Peace Army 19 was moved from Outer West Charetz area and disposed personally by the Consul. A communication network was set up covering all sub-units and this was tied in to the control room at Peace Headquarters. Similarly the scanning unit keyed in on the frequency installed in the agent was tied in to this net, watching shift set up, and, after issuing instructions that no interference of any kind should be made without prior reference to him, the Consul retired to his suite, leaving three officers and one detail of the Consular guard to supervise operations.

During the following day the hourly reports to the Consul indicated that the agent was still unconscious. This was confirmed by the visio-scanners installed in the ward and there was no sign at any time during the day, under the closest supervision, that the agent was not completely unconscious.

However at 1600 hours, about one and a quarter hours after the fourth change of guards, the agent sprang instantly from complete unconsciousness and killed Rossine, J 202073 Peace Warden Class 3, with an earthenware water jug. There was considerable disorganization in the control room following this incident, which occupied the incredibly short time of 1.95 seconds. The PW monitoring the scanner was too astonished to be able to recount clearly what had happened, and it was left to the monitor of the DR micro-tracer to report that the tracer had shown sudden local movement.

The Consul was advised and came immediately to the control room. His first order was that Peace Warden Rossine should be posthumously awarded the Charetz Home Defence Peace Medallion, Third Class, and that his widow, if any, should be advised that he had died bravely defending the Glorious Democracies from the ravages of an independant spy-saboteur. The First Architect of Peace then personally watched the actions of the agent on the scanner with the comment that he had often wished for such a fine opportunity of watching a jungle cannibal pursuing his natural courses, and

he then ordered that the record of the monitor should be developed and run off in the projector.

When this had been done and he had inspected several times the portion of the visio-record covering the murder of the Peace Warden he then ordered that copies of this record should be exhibited to all Security sub-units and leaders as an object lesson. A young officer of the Consular Guard then enquiring "An object lesson in what, sir?", Doctor Bronstern simply replied, "An object lesson in 1.95 seconds, major!" There was considerable laughter at this, in which the Most High Doctor graciously joined and it was difficult to realize that under our very eyes on the scanner screen was the murdered corpse of Peace Warden Rossine, a stupid man perhaps, but none the less a Peace Warden of the Great and Glorious Democracies, and there too we were watching the cannibal peacehater Green as he calmly went about his espionage and subversion, prying into our secrets, preparing to escape.

Perhaps some emotion of this sort showed in my face, for the Consul graciously patted my head and said, "You should not worry about this, Smick! We must break this man down until he sees himself completely subdued by our relentless strength. How better to subdue the savagery of his spirit than to let him think that he has escaped against all the odds, and then to play with him as though he were a mouse, and lead him so that he walks into our hands and knows then that he has spent his strength in vain, that all his cleverness and resolution have been brought to nothing?" I could do nothing but agree with the truth of these words.

The Consul now set up a test on the general disposition panel, and we could see that the genius of our Great Doctor had been in full play. On the panel the tracer units of each subsection of Peace Army 19 glowed in a constellation of green dots. They could be seen to surround the hospital as a sea surrounds an island. He then switched in the red spot from the DR tracer in the spy.

We closely watched the scanner. The saboteur was kneeling on the blankets from his bed and, with one hand, was tearing these into strips. I wondered why he should be doing this and I wondered to see him so calm. He seemed at times to be whistling quietly to himself.

Meanwhile, as we waited, the Consul played with the Disposition Panel, moving a unit here forward, and there a unit back. Our gracious Leader is never so happy as when he is working with his wonderful inventions. We have indeed been blessed in our Leader. The forces of science are at his finger-tips . . . truly we are in good hands.

In our last view of the saboteur as he left the viewfield of the scanner we saw him dropping the torn sheet out of the window and climbing out. We now watched with quickened breath as the red glow moved over the Disposition Panel towards the back wall of Security Hospital 3. The Consul began to manoeuvre the green spots of Peace Army 19. But how slowly the red spot moved away from the hospital; how long it took to pass the dotted line on the Panel which indicated the wall.

Once past the wall it stopped for a few minutes and then crept along for only a short distance before it stopped, and this time did not move again. The Consul was now satisfied with his disposition of Peace Army 19, and for a long time nothing moved on the board. It was difficult to realize that for each of these tiny glowing spots on the Panel a score of men lay quietly waiting for the one red spot to move again. Doctor Bronstern seemed torn between restlessness and satisfaction. He drummed with his fingers on the edge of the control desk in front of him while he gazed steadily at the Panel. Finally, he turned to us and said, "We are breaking him already; the spy is exhausted. He is giving up!" But there was perhaps a question in his voice.

We were relieved and excited when finally the red spot began to move again, after half an hour, slowly towards the west.

The Consul now opened up a lane in the Army for Green to move in, but placed a strong barrier about half a mile ahead of the spy, giving instructions that some noise should be made. Before the spy reached this he swung off to the south. Meanwhile, the Consul had moved up a strong barrier of troops, and after these men were moved the red spot faltered and then stopped.

The Consul again instructed that the troops nearest to the spy should make a certain amount of noise, and this had the effect of moving the spy again, this time towards the north. From then on it was a simple game of cat and mouse, which the Consul played with a skill and enjoyment which, I think, we all shared.

Moving his men like pawns on a board, the Consul shepherded the spy into the trap with the ease of a wise old dog, and finally the red spot travelled through a narrow lane of troops past the gates and into the very grounds of Peace Headquarters itself.

We waited with rising excitement for the spy to appear before us.

7

Martin Green

I was not left long in doubt. Working through this gap, which I first thought left me some chance of getting clear to the north, I was forced to veer more and more back towards the east until I knew that I was beaten. It was as though I walked in the unreasonable helplessness of a nightmare, as though an unseen but positive force controlled me, so that no choice was left to me, and every move I made was a move designed by some other mind.

In the end I sensed what was happening, that I was being led and guided, that in some fantastic way this was true, I was the victim of some cruel game, played on a vast scale. Wearily I walked on with the weapon raised and ready to fire. There was no escape, my future had narrowed down to stark simplicity – to let myself be led and when this reached its end to choose the best target.

Almost unmoved by surprise or fear I saw the grey mass of Peace Headquarters loom ahead. Shadowed figures moved with me on either side as I came towards the open gate. I had the feeling of a hundred weapons trained on my back as I walked through the gate and started across the lighted space, not bothering to even glance towards the guardhouse.

At the end of the drive the great doors stood open. I knew quite clearly what had happened to me. I could feel the mind of Willi Bronstern guiding and leading me; I was content to go towards him; I was even eager. Such hatred and fury as burned between us, at times cancels and overrides all other feelings and instincts, and though I took it to be certain that I was walking to my death; my execution; this hatred drew me on.

Guards now walked close behind me. I heard them but I did not look around. I straightened myself and strode as strongly as I could along the lighted corridors of this building towards my enemy.

As I came to the last door, which stood wide on its hinges, I swung suddenly around and fired a quick burst into the front ranks of the guards who followed me. As I leaped into a run that took me through the door, I heard behind the ear-splitting crashing of the projectiles and an outbreak of screaming and shouting.

Bronstern sat facing the door, surrounded by a group of his stooges and I began firing as soon as I saw him, but, of course, there was some sort of screen between us and the projectiles exploded, seemingly in mid-flight.

I hurled the empty weapon at him, and Bronstern and I glared at each other in a passion of hatred as though we were alone in the world.

Helpless, I stood before this enemy, who had done much to ruin my life. I was blind with hatred, and yet almost relieved that we now seemed near the end of everything that stood between us; the bitterness and the fury which we had directed at each other.

8

Records of the High Council for Peace and Security . . .
21/1/09

Report of the Vice-Consul

Subject: The foreign agent M. Green – RLW experiments

Even with the warning that we had, the spy almost caught us by surprise. It had seemed certain that he would falter, weak as he was, when he realized the nature of the trap into which he had been so brilliantly led, and heard the guards fall in behind him.

Instead of this he moved with great speed, and our first warning that he was not coming to face us as a broken, helpless man was when the explosion of contact projectiles crashed in our ears, and these sounds were followed by an uproar of screaming and shouting from beyond the doorway of the Control Centre.

The Consul had barely time to actuate the switch of the electro-mesh protective screen before he was on us like a tiger, and projectiles were bursting on the screen, and though we knew that they were bursting harmlessly and that we were all quite safe, we still felt the primitive fear of men facing the wild beasts of the jungle. We flinched inwardly,

and even ducked our heads when he hurled his useless weapon towards us.

Those in this room must have learned a lesson, which would last them for all time, of the terror and danger of Individual anarchy; and I know that I, myself, was strongly confirmed in the rightness of our glorious work towards the Liquidation of the individual. A world in which a single man can turn your blood to water and your knees to jelly is not a good world in which to live. Only the might of the Supreme and All-wise State can handle such powers for the ultimate good of all men.

The spy now stood before us like a wild beast whose last charge has failed. His clothing was in rags, and bloody scratches and wounds showed where he had been torn and injured . . . yet, although he crouched forward as if he had no longer the strength to stand upright, his eyes burned with strength and hatred as he glared at the Consul.

Doctor Bronstern had now recovered himself and, a number of guards having grouped behind the spy, he gestured them into a circle where they stood to cover him with their weapons.

The Doctor then switched off the electro-mesh and spoke to the spy.

"It is clear that you have not yet learned to control your unruly passions, Mr Green."

Surprisingly the spy relaxed and almost smiled. "No? Nor you your fears of me, O Mighty Doctor!"

The Consul's face grew darker, but he did not seem otherwise put out by the insolence of the captive spy.

We who watched were at a loss to understand the changes of tone and expression which these few words brought with them, but it soon became clear that the Great Consul had brought the spy to his own level of clear-mindedness and logic with one sentence. Might our master now face a fiercer will than his own? Such shameful doubts were not to last. With

a few words our Leader and Guide removed from the air the foul and terrifying odour of the jungle, and now the spy seemed immediately, not a wild beast at bay, but a reasoning being who saw himself grasped and held in the resistless power of the Mighty State.

But this attitude was not to last. The passions of the spy had calmed, but a chance remark could throw him into a wild fury of savagery which was quite beyond reason, and one could only be thankful for the guards who clustered about him to hold him in check. These wild changes of mood show clearly in the transcript of this meeting:

The Consul: It is clear that you have not yet learned to control your unruly passions, Mr Green!

Green: No? Nor you your fears of me, O Mighty Doctor!

The Consul: That has always been your error – to confuse logic and reason with emotion; I was never afraid of you. When you would have killed me I protected myself, not because I was afraid, but because I had much to do before I could afford to die; and so I went away where you could not follow. I have done much since then – as you know.

Green: Yes; you have done much. You have coupled fear and terror into a philosophy, and out of that you have spawned a dogma, and this dogma you have grafted on to half the world, and though I know that this half of the world was ready and waiting and prepared for a doctrine of animal fear and terror, and that from somewhere a leader would have come to channel and use it; still I curse you for now being that leader; and I curse myself for having been the instrument which started you on this course!

The Consul: I would have found this course and followed it without you. I was ready when the world was ready. This was a function of Time. A comet plunges across the skies that no living man has seen before, that no history has known, but that comet has always been coming towards our skies. Nothing can stay it. This is a function of Time, that the comet

will be where it should be when it should be there. I am here when I should be, at the right time. We see now that I have always been coming towards history, and history has been preparing for me, without knowing what it was doing. How could you have started or stopped this? You are still being hurled through your life by your animal vanity and pride. You have been brought here to be broken. I need you for a symbol. I have had you led and guided to me from your lair like a vicious and stupid animal and now I will break you!

Green: You might kill me!

The Consul: I will break you first! When your pride breaks you will see yourself for what you are. I think then I will let you live until you are ready to kill yourself. Then perhaps I will kill you. We must wait and see.

Green: I have no doubt that you will kill me. Your fear could not let me live. Do you think it changes anything that they call you now the Mighty Consul? I have not forgotten you, Willi Bronstern! I have seen your knees tremble before this! Genius, you call yourself? Yes! Genius of a micro world! You made that tiny world for yourself.

You could not face the real world.

It was too big for you. Eh? Willi?

You were always meeting big people in it. Eh?

Let's have a special world for Willi with no big people in it! (Here the spy began to shout and walk towards the Consul.)

Here's a big man, Willi!

Get him out of your world! Quick! Before he breaks it over your head! Kill the big man, Willi. He's coming for you.

When the spy began to shout and walk forward, the guards did not at first interfere because of their orders. I, myself; Vice-Consul Smick; with presence of mind for which I was afterwards highly commended, leaned across in front of the Consul, who seemed confused by the shouting of the spy, and pressed the "reminder" button which actuated the pain

circuit of the Remote Liquidation capsule installed in the spy. At the edge of the control table at which the Consul and I were sitting the spy screamed with pain and rage, as the capsule was activated, and launched himself forward towards the Consul - but did not reach him, falling unconscious across the table.

The Consul then gave orders that the spy be secured into an interrogation chair and revived. The Consul then retired to his private suite. In a short time the spy was again conscious, and a messenger was sent for the Consul.

They then sat facing each other, the Consul at the control table with his hand near the reminder button, the spy strapped hand and foot to the interrogation chair. As soon as the Consul was seated he pressed the button once, and the spy jerked against the straps in a spasm of pain. When he had recovered the interview was resumed.

Green: Why, Willi! I nearly got you after all. It's like old times to see the fear in your eyes.

The Consul: You animal . . . you animal . . . you wild beast! Why should I be afraid? What can you do to me now? I told you I am not afraid of you and never have been. I had to go away. I could have stayed and dealt with you as I dealt with my wife after you had corrupted her, but I had my work to do.

Green: You are afraid of me. Look at your eyes! Send for a mirror, if you doubt me!

The Consul: Why should I justify myself by your standards of the jungle? There has not been enough of fear in the world. Here we have learned not to be afraid of being afraid, and this is the lesson we will teach the world. Out of fear will come peace. The whole world will learn to fear the Mighty State, and when the people of the world learn their lesson of fear, fear will keep the peace.

Green: Fear will lead you to death. Without fear, death loses its power. You will kill me, but unless you can make

me afraid, as you are afraid, my death will be no satisfaction to you. It will be nothing but the revenge of a lunatic driven mad by fear. You finally went mad when you poisoned Lida, and realized what you had to fear from me. I drove you mad.

The Consul: I would like your close attention, Mr Green. I have here on this control panel a number of buttons. These buttons are connected to what we may refer to for simplicity as radio transmitting units. If your hands were free you would be able to undo the overall which was once worn by one of our Peace Wardens and which has suffered some damage in your vain efforts to escape from us, and you would find on your left side below the lower rib a surgical opening which would no doubt heal over if you were permitted to live.

This opening was made, Mr Green, by one of my surgeons, and he made it so that you could be installed with a set of interesting micro-radio units.

One of these units is adapted to cause you intense pain when this button is depressed. This we call the warning or reminder circuit. Now, you must realize that it is very easy for me to press this button, but I have a lot to tell you, and if you will be good enough to refrain from interruption until I have finished, then I will have no cause to use it. Let us stop shouting at each other. There are other buttons which I could press, which I might press if you goaded me further. Let us have a demonstration of what could happen if I pressed the wrong one.

Green: You're wasting time; I know all this. It's just another way to die - worse than some ways, better than others. You can leave out your demonstration.

The Consul: You only imagine that you know, which is hardly the same thing as seeing for yourself. We must look after your education in these things. I must ask the Vice-Consul to attend to the details.

The Consul then gave orders that the traitor-saboteur Jardine should be placed behind the test window. The interrogation chair was placed before the window and the test cell lighting was switched on.

The Consul: I believe that you gentlemen know each other? Jardine came to us very well recommended, and we used him in your territory for some time. Do you remember times when in your work you always met Jardine? He was watching you for us; or at least that is what we thought. But there was such a lot which he forgot to tell us that we finally began to feel that we may have made a mistake. I thought it would be so much better if we demonstrated on someone you know, so we have kept him for you. Have you anything to say to each other?

Green: The sooner you blow him up the better - I knew he was one of your boys a year ago. You just pulled him out in time.

Jardine: It's no good, son, they know.

Green: Make a deal with him.

The Consul: Mr Jardine has made a deal. He buys our forgiveness by having himself internally exploded.

Jardine: Whether I like it or not! We really got a maniac here, Mart.

Green: You won't have much of a lead anyway; they'll have me next. Sorry, Jerry! There's nothing I can do. It's just another way to die - he seems to think it's something special.

At this point the traitor was executed by remote liquidation at the hand of the Consul.

The Consul: I am sorry you did not have time to say your farewells to your friend - he was getting on my nerves.

Green: I am quite satisfied to see Jardine die so easily in this place. I imagined that he had already died under torture. It's a pity you can't revive him; he earned your torture when he killed Jaralny. Did you know that?

At this point the Consul pressed the reminder button and

the spy again became unconscious. Seeing that the Consul was now indisposed, I removed his hand from the control panel before the spy was seriously damaged. The Consul's doctor was summoned and the Consul was carried to his suite under heavy sedation.

9

Martin Green

The business with Bronstern was quite soon over. At first as I stood there, helpless, before him, it was as though all resolution and certainty in myself had left me; but when I saw that the old fear had come into his eyes, I knew the flickering hope that I had a chance of using this fear so that I might again escape.

It began at once. He taunted me that my passions were not yet under my control, and I began to emphasize his own fear to him so that his full attention would come on to it and thus he would act, not from reason and logic but from blind emotional reaction. There was, of course, some danger in this, but with so much to fear already this hardly counted.

For a few minutes we exchanged taunts, until I could see in his eyes that he realized that I had again established mastery over him even though I stood completely in his power. But in these matters of force and dominance, I have often found that the sheer physical arrangement – how the appearance of force is arranged, is not always as important as one might think.

When I saw his nerve beginning to break; when I saw that he was doubting even the evidence of his own eyes that I was helpless in his hands, I began to walk towards him raising my voice. I could feel in my back the danger from the guards ringed behind me, but as I had come so far without their

interference I hoped that, if I were restrained, as I must be, this would be done in such a way as to leave me alive.

This, in fact, happened, though the restraint came in a quite unexpected way. As I came towards him Bronstern's nerve failed entirely and he sat like a trapped rabbit watching a fox coming for him. The little man who was sitting beside him was looking at him with utter bewilderment and when he saw that Bronstern was too far gone in fear to do anything, this man leaned across in front of Bronstern and pressed a button.

I had then reached the edge of the table at which they sat and as the button was pressed a jolt of pain ran through me like a fire. I heard a voice scream in pain and rage, and knew dimly that this voice was mine. The speed of my movement towards Bronstern carried me across the table, and, as the fierce pain coursed through my whole body, I lost consciousness.

When I became conscious again I was once more before the table, but now strapped to a chair. As soon as the little man saw that I was back with them he sent a messenger for Bronstern, who then returned and resumed his seat at the table. He seemed to have recovered some of his nerve and stared at me again with rage boiling in his eyes.

I saw his hand go out to the button but this time I was prepared and braced myself, and although, when the pain hit me, I was unable to prevent my body arching up in the straps, at least I made no sound. Now I knew roughly how I was placed. It could be assumed that they had placed in me one of the rumoured remote liquidation capsules which as well had some sort of pain-creating circuit built into it. It was probable that this could be used to bring me to a condition of low resistance, and it was conceivable that Bronstern by this means could at least partly reach his objective and subdue me. Satisfied that I was broken, he had only to press the other button and I would be destroyed.

This was confirmed by what happened next. After I had taunted him further, and at the start he was nearly incoherent with rage, he suddenly pulled himself together and began speaking, pompously and correctly, in his old lecturer's style. This was all the more ludicrous in that we had by then both referred in the wildest and most passionate way to his wife Lida, whom I had loved and who was murdered by him with poison. This was at the beginning of our hatred.

He told me what had been done to me, and I heard him through patiently, for I felt that I must learn as much as I could for my own guidance. When he had finished his lecture, I simply told him that there was nothing I did not already know in what he had said and this goaded him towards further action.

A light was switched on in a room which was closed off by a fine wire screen and a man was brought into this room. I was surprised, and uneasy, to recognize Jerry Jardine. I knew that they must have killed Jardine but I had thought that he would have already been disposed of.

Jardine and I then exchanged a few words and finally a button was pressed and Jardine was killed by one of the remote liquidation capsules which had been placed in his body.

It was not a pretty sight and I found difficulty in hiding my grief and horror, but it was a much quicker way out than Jerry could possibly have hoped for and I told this to Bronstern, and mentioned Jaralny who was killed by Jardine.

Bronstern became so enraged at this that he lost all control of himself. His eyes bulged and he was quite unable to express himself. This had been my aim, that he should be first tossed this way by a wave of fear and then hurled back by a wave of rage, and that this should go on until he began to lose his insecure mental balance. In this way of bending back and forth, the strongest steel can be broken, but I was surprised to see how quickly and easily Bronstern began to break; I

could only conclude that he had moved perceptibly towards madness since I had last seen him.

Now he was falling into helpless insanity before my eyes. He rocked in his seat; his tongue jammed his mouth and froth came to his lips as he tried to shout; his arms flailed as he tried to reach the button which controlled me. Finally his arm fell towards the button and lay across it. It must have been pure chance that he hit the pain button and not the exploder. The pain hit me hard and I went out like a light.

When I regained my senses I could feel that I was again on a bed, this time under heavy guard. The muttering of the guards was the first sound I heard. I reckoned myself to be in pretty poor shape. The pain circuit had reached right through me, and it was more than imagination that made me think that it had found every part of me which had ever been hurt or injured, and that it had livened up the memory of pain in these parts.

I had forgotten that so many things can happen to a body in thirty-six years. I seemed to drift back lazily in time, half asleep, remembering each injury and how it had happened.

How good the first part of my life seemed looked at in this way. There had been some sort of joy and fun in even those things which had hurt me. I looked back over the good years when I had reached out towards my life with excitement and joy and with a great love of the world; when even the wounds which I suffered had some satisfaction, and I knew again the thing which I kept hidden from myself: that there had been a proper time for me to die, and that I was well past this time.

I saw all of these things until I reached the puckered scar on my shoulder which a knife had made on that night when I first saw Lida; before this the wounds and scars of my youth were easy enough to look at and remember; but then a black cloud came down and there was only pain. I was not willing to look past this point.

After a while I decided that I needed more sleep while I could get it, but before I slept I went over all I knew of my present circumstances, and when I had covered this I cleared my mind for sleep, hoping that I would awake with a firm decision on what I should best do to use any chance I had to survive. I was reasonably well pleased with what had been done so far; and with the pain blurred over by fatigue I fell asleep.

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From the Secret Journal of Ewald Smick, Vice-Consul for Peace in the Great Democracies

—Are we to see the results which Bronstern expects from our plan to capture and subdue the English spy? There has been much in this on which to speculate, and I have found myself wondering many things; seeing doubts which have been building up secretly in my mind brought to the surface. I can only survey these doubttings in amazement and discomfort.

The spy was brought to bay like a wild animal. There was no fault or weakness in Bronstern's plans, and Green was delivered by himself into our very hands. But, from the very beginning of his words with Bronstern, Green managed to stir the Consul's hidden weakness, and I soon realized that the spy had set out on a cool plan of campaign, where Bronstern, reacting with his anger against taunting and suggestion, would lose the initiative.

This was a dangerous game to play — and a game which can never be anything but dangerous; but nevertheless, as I have seen before, the first man who falls into a line of action laid down by his emotions is usually the loser in such a battle

of wits. Bronstern is all too prone to fall into this trap, and it will surprise me if I do not see the day when this knowledge is of great use to me.

When Bronstern played his master card by liquidating the agent Jardine, a demonstration which had been expected completely to unnerve Green, the reaction had the opposite effect.

Instead of Green breaking down in terror and despair, he seemed quite calm and relaxed, and spoke quietly to the Consul. What he said had the effect of throwing our great master into an emotional frenzy, and I thought for a time that he would have a stroke, or suffer some form of damage to his brain. It would be inconvenient for this to happen now. But . . . it is useful knowledge. There is yet much to do — much that only the mighty doctor and his genius for miniature tinkering can accomplish. And after that?

It is interesting that I can write so calmly when a turmoil of questioning surrounds me. Something about this Englishman has shaken many of my thoughts. How can I live and keep my balance with reality when we are all immersed and choked with the flood of lunatic logic which pours in a never-ending stream about us from the tormented mind of our "Great Master"; our "Leader"?

But this other man has stormed into our world like the wrath . . . no, no, no! . . . I have settled this years ago — I am happy to believe that this world needs no God. There is no God I settled this once and for all it was just a conditioned reflex a fear put around me by my parents I am well rid of it and of them too but mother was soft and warm. . . .

What am I writing here? That crazy maniac is driving me mad here in this Utopia we are all mad mad and frightened and peace-loving and murderous and tired and half the world. The world has a hunger for madness and we are feeding it madness oh god how tired I am and no sleep eases me!

Twice today I saved the Englishman. Why? Do I know somehow that I will need him or use him when a time comes?

The first time was when the chief threw his fit. He managed to get his hand across the pain circuit button and it would have stayed there until the Englishman was dead, but I pushed his hand away. The Englishman is still unconscious, but there has not been enough to kill him yet. I called doctors, and the Consul was well doped.

When I went to see him he was still in the grip of his fit, he lay on his back and all the nerves of his face were taken over by an orderly pattern of twitching and blinking. It was all I could do not to laugh; though there was something horrible about it – as though his face now ran by clockwork and the clockwork was set so that he would snarl every five seconds and blink every two seconds and move his jaw sideways exactly between snarls and blinks. It was very curious. He was given an injection and the movements in his face became less and less until they stopped. The clockwork had run down. I left him then.

When Bronstern recovered consciousness I saved the English spy again. I was sent for and the chief was sitting up in his bed with a bowl¹ of soup in his hands. He looked sane enough except that his face was grey and the pupils of his eyes were black and huge.

"I want the spy killed at once," he said. "Get the guards right away, and blow him up. He will beat us!"

"Sir," I said, "you must break him first. Remember what you told the Council. This is a demonstration of the power of the RLW! This man was chosen by you and brought here simply for this – that the Council should see a supreme example of the anarchy of the individual brought to his knees by the power of the Mighty and resistless State. These are your own words. You chose this man because he would be hard to break – he was the example which you yourself chose. How will we stand with the Council if we fail now? There are doubters among them! Remember that!"

"The Council need not know. Take away the guards. Let him die anyway you like! Inject him with poison! Let it be

that he was injured in his fall and died of that – but kill him; get rid of him; I want him finished and done with!"

"Sir," I said again, "it would make no difference. We have failed up to now. This demonstration has turned sour on us and the Council know it. What will Rigno and Wilter and Laranaga be saying even now to the others – that the Mighty Doctor was wrong? That the micro weapons are not enough, that Wilter is the man to lead; or Rigno; or Laranaga, whoever they have selected from themselves? We could both die of this! I ask you to consider this. We are at the edge of greatness and success if we do the right thing now. If we fail . . . then we are dead!"

He drank from his bowl and wiped his mouth. "I want him dead!" he repeated. "If I see him again I will kill him. You talk so freely about breaking him, you are free to try. There is some truth in what you say about the Council. We must deal with them. Let us kill Green and let us kill the others. Rigno, Wilter, Laranaga!"

"No," I said, "there is no end to that. We would have to keep on till our half of the world had died. Let me try with the English spy. My neck is on this, too. I will find ways."

I had already decided that I would in some way explain to the Englishman that he must give the appearance of having been subdued and cowed: he would surely do this if it meant that he would get back alive to his own country. I could use the same arguments later with the chief to again avoid his execution, but it would not be easy.

Bronstern has been thrown completely on to his emotions and will act on what they tell him to do.

It was a risk which could not be avoided, and indeed I am quite at a loss to make out my motives. There was some sort of inner voice at work, and I have listened to this with profit before.

The chief agreed that I should take over the task of subduing the Englishman and I have advised the guardleader to

send for me when he awakes. There is some confusion in my mind about all this.

What am I doing?

This is worse than ever! The guardleader sent a messenger for me as I was preparing to lock my journal away. The spy is awake. He awoke weeping and sobbing and cringes before the guards. Now I can see what I was afraid to think during the night as I wrote. Did I think that in the strength of this spy I saw the workings of an indestructible human spirit? There is no such thing. The Mighty Doctor is right. I am ashamed of my doubts. I am unworthy. This is indeed the way of the beasts of the jungle – to roar defiance up to the very last minute and then to submit. Indestructible human spirit! I could weep at my stupidity.

But I behaved well with the Mighty Doctor. I said the right things. He could never have guessed my thoughts. I must learn from this.

Surely when I start my work this sadness and tiredness will disappear.

II

Martin Green

I was surprised at what I found in my mind when I awoke. During my sleep I had fixed upon something which now seemed obvious for the first time – that there was some very potent reason why I had not been killed already; I had skirted death so closely that it seemed incredible that I should still live.

The reason could only be that I was to be used in some way after I had been “broken”, as Bronstern put it. Perhaps I would then be killed; but what if the way in which I was to be used took me out of their hands? I should at least allow myself to “break”. If I could do this, act it out and yet be

still in control of myself, watching for my moment, ready to act? Was there some chance in this? Perhaps it was already too late. When Bronstern recovered he would surely kill me however good the reasons against that were – for I had brought him, wilfully and consciously, down to a level below reason, and at that level he would act.

What if my last actions in this world were those of an animal broken by the whip? Suppose they were? Suppose I were to die in this state? Surely I would have some warning. Bronstern would want me to know; and then I could fling off my acting and let them see that they had failed.

Were these chances good enough to take? At least they were chances. Otherwise there could only be a deadlock ending in my death, perhaps after I had really been subdued and broken. I made the decision.

I thought out a simple pattern of behaviour for my mind. Firstly I must be quite sure that there was an underlying layer of complete certainty and belief in myself to which I could scramble back in an instant. I thought about this until I was satisfied with it. I knew this would remain. Then, the act had to be real. It was no good at all to act out the pattern of being broken. I must really descend into fear; and grief, and self-pity.

These are things which are waiting at everyone's beck and call, they are there to slip into, somewhere beyond the last limits of self-control. I looked again at my certainty, my eventual and basic belief in myself; and I was satisfied. I began to call up everything which I had put away from me and mastered. I stepped out as though over air and fell into the abyss. I remembered Lida. Gladly, I wept. Nothing could have stopped me. The machine had broken down; but deep down in my mind there was a flicker of ironic laughter; a small voice said quietly, “For years you have wanted to do this.” But I wept on, I heard the guards moving and wept on, not caring, and I knew that I would weep until I had covered all my grief, and then I would whimper and scream out all

my fear, and then I would abase myself in self-pity, and then if necessary I would start all over again. I felt quite safe in this because I knew the small cynical voice would still be there.

Voices and footsteps came and went. There was laughter and mockery. Shame and self-consciousness built up in me. I pushed myself down hard into fear and for a while this worked. I found it easiest to weep about Lida, and kept coming back to this, and I suppose it went off very well, but after a while I became bored with the whole business; the desire became overpowering to break into laughter; a great shout of laughter kept building up and I did not know what to do with it. In the end I let it go, exaggerating it into hysteria. I was tired now, and so I opened my eyes and gazed around, and it was easy to make my face go slack and my eyes tired and lifeless.

I lay looking at the guards and the little man who had sat beside Bronstern and now sat staring wide-eyed at me, beside my bed. I sketched out in my mind the most horrible things they could do to me and I let myself shake and tremble. Then I felt that I might be overdoing it, and I lay still, trying to look as sullen as I could, feeling tired yet all the same inwardly quite cheerful and good humoured.

After a while Bronstern himself came in, looking exhausted and worried, but with a look of hope in his eyes which I could not account for. Following him through the door came a guard carrying a control box, and when I saw this, I told myself that they had come to blow me up as Jardine had been destroyed. I felt around mentally below my chest for the thing that they had planted in me and imagined it stretching out and waiting to blow up. I screamed out "No! No!" and tried to throw myself off the bed. There was real fear in that and I looked frantically to see that I was not losing my grip. But the quiet amusement was still there, the amusement of an audience caught up by the play, taking part in the drama, yet knowing as well it was only watching.

I waited to see what Bronstern would do. He was given a chair and then he said, "Bring the others of the Council", and after a while six men came in, men with hard faces, and they stood behind Bronstern. Bronstern pointed at me and assumed his old lecturing stance before them.

He then gave a great lecture describing how and why I had been selected, how I had come to Charetz, what a wild beast I was and how I had been tamed and so forth. I thought it best to lie quietly and sullenly before them with as much fear in my eyes as possible. This was probably quite adequate. I had only to imagine the capsule in my body waiting to be exploded and there was little need for pretence. I had other things on my mind. I thought Bronstern would almost certainly dispose of me when he had finished his lecture, and I was concerned how I should throw off my dramatized fear when the time came, and even about the problem of how I would recognize the right time - the last possible time - when all hope had failed.

As well as this I was becoming very hungry and thirsty.

I2

Records of the High Council for Peace and Security . . . 21/1/09

Members of the Council were summoned by the Consul to examine the Independist spy-saboteur Green during the process of RLW conditioning.

The Consul: Comrades of the High Council. We may well feel that before us we now find the answer to all our questions concerning the tactics, the psychology, the possibilities - in short the general effectiveness and promise of the technique of Remote Liquidation, which I have had the honour of initiating.

We must admit, to ourselves, if not otherwise, that we have known our secret doubts and our times of uncertainty. It has been our faith and our belief that in our Great Democracies we will solve the problems of social life by moulding the adaptability of the individual in such a way that our philosophy will in time spread over the whole world.

We are satisfied that the way of Peace and Apathy is the only way for the world, and we are further reinforced in this belief by our knowledge, and our experience, that we cannot live in the same world, safely and in peace, while the other half of the world subscribes to an opposite belief.

Beyond that line, which is sometimes called "The Curtain", the stifling darkness, the hideous gloom of the jungle is spread like a black pall. What is it out there which most threatens our way of thinking; our very way of living; all our cherished and logical beliefs? Why does this teeming jungle world, which I have studied; where, you will remember, I once lived; why does this other half of the world prevent us from pursuing our peaceful course? You know the answer.

Out there in this primal gloom men struggle and falter beneath a philosophical burden which only we can lift. They believe in a primal fallacy concerning the nature of man; that Individualism is all, that no matter what the price they have to pay – and I say to you; which we would also have to pay if we did not stop them; – no matter what the cost, the selfish and egotistical phenomena of unbridled Individualism must remain.

We have our answer to that. Half of the world, our great and glorious democratic Federation, has built the Mighty State. We have gladly given up the poisonous seed of war. We have submitted ourselves gladly and humbly and with a loyal measure of apathy to the resistless power of the Mighty State. Borne up and supported by your loyalty and help, and the help of those others who have fallen by the road, I have overcome the lovers of War, the haters of Truth, the

murderers of Peace, the assassins, the saboteurs and the traitors, and I have almost completed, in a few short years, the final construction of the Mighty State!

Did we think that we could rest, that we could fall back and enjoy the fruits of our labours, when we had come this far? Some did think this – where are they now? They have been swallowed up by the resistless power of the Mighty State. We should all remember – this could happen again. Here in our own ranks at times we catch the faintest breath of the Pride and Vanity of the unrepentant Individual.

Our work is too great for this. We are destined by History and Fate to see in our time the complete and utter Liquidation of the Individual. We must be ever alert. We must guard and cherish the security of our own ranks. We must be together in this. Remember those who fell!

No! We must not falter now! Steadily we move on towards our glorious destiny! Our task is to embark on the salvation of the other half of the world from the consequences of its own ignorance and madness; and our instrument in this will be the technique of the Remote Liquidation capsule.

We now turn our attention to this cringing object which we find before us, the agent and saboteur Green. Can this be the wild creature of the jungle whom we saw only last night in the full pride and vanity of his independence and anarchy?

Is this the man who caused some of you, my loyal colleagues and comrades, to have secret doubts in your Leader, to doubt my ability?

You now see that this man, this tower and pinnacle of the development of unbridled individualism, you see that he has been broken, and is now my slave and chattel, and will be, until I die, utterly and finally at my disposal. His life is at the ends of my fingers. Nothing can change this. There is no way in which he can escape me. Look at him! Do you perhaps feel pity for him?

Do not waste your pity!

Comrades of the High Council. There is no real cause for alarm in what I have decided now to reveal to you. No great movement towards the emancipation of man from the bonds of savagery can hope to pursue its course free from the danger of traitors in its midst. The secret danger of treachery has been a problem against which the wise men of history have found themselves powerless. Secrecy is the essence of treachery, and that is why, until now, there was no certain defence against it.

This problem has not escaped our attention. For the first time a solution has been found and with resolution and tenacity we have overcome the matters of technique, we have solved this problem; and we have turned our efforts to the widespread application of the remedial measures.

It but remains for me to announce to you that only today was this operation completed.

All officers of the Federation of the rank of Peace Warden and upwards have been installed with RLW capsules of a new and advanced design!

Comrades! I must ask you not all to attempt to speak together! Councillor Trazshay, you have something to say?

Councillor Trazshay: It is not to be supposed that this step was extended to include members of the High Council. You would not do that, I trust, Doctor?

The Consul: Who is to know where the traitor will strike? Who is to know who he is? The High Council has naturally been included in the plan. Stop! Shouting and screaming will not alter this!

I have more to say.

You wonder that it should be possible to install these devices without your knowledge?

The State Council for Health and Welfare has the answer to that! You should need no reminding of your eager

co-operation – your ardent support – of the programme concerning the Universal Geriatric Capsule. “The High Council brings to the People the Gift of Life – the Magic Pill for Longer Life and Positive Health!” – I see that you have not forgotten! Now it will be clear to you why this campaign was made compulsory! Can one perhaps ask that you see a certain wry humour in this?

Fools! Keep back!

Guards! Keep them covered. Fire if they move!

There are other things which you must know. Very well! The Universal Geriatric Capsule has another name—Remote Liquidation Capsule, Residual Digestive type K100.

So much for that!

All capsules of the K100 type are crystal locked to a central control. This control only I can operate.

Only I can operate it! Only I can keep you alive! Every official of this Federation must now work to keep me alive. Do you understand this?

I am leaving you now – we will meet later. At noon you will all receive a low-intensity pain signal. After that we will meet again – and we will talk of this and other matters.

The Council is adjourned.

13

Martin Green

Half-way through his lecture the mighty doctor ran off the rails. While he was speaking a tautness built up in the air, criticism and distrust became evident in the faces of the members of the Council, and if this was visible to me it was surely crystal clear to Bronstern.

Venom crept up in the tones of his voice and coloured his words with hatred and suspicion. It satisfied me to see this evidence of doubting in the ranks and to think that this was perhaps in some part due to me, perhaps in that Bronstern may not have come off as well as he had hoped in our encounters. The very topmost point of the pyramid of power may yield an intoxicating view, but the man who stands on this point must be ever on his guard against those who would dislodge him. He has so little to stand on, how can his footing ever be secure?

I followed the lecture as well as I could, handicapped by the need to give the appearance of being far gone in fear, and it was clear that it was not going as well as Bronstern would have hoped. When his ranting stretched out to include colleagues who had "fallen by the way"; "been swallowed up by the something or other power of the Mighty State" and so forth, and threw out broad hints of the dangers of back-sliding in the ranks, then these hard-looking thugs started to mutter sullenly to each other, and to cast very critical looks on their all-wise and mighty leader.

Bronstern, at this, ended what he had been saying and paused. He glared at the faces of his disciples with arrogance and contempt, and then spoke again – first with a dangerous and biting quietness, and then, as rage swept away his control, he began to shout and rave.

He had perfected a new liquidating capsule, he shouted at them, and this had been fitted to all officers of the Federation. At this they shouted at each other and milled around. For a moment it seemed that they would attack him. The guards closed in on them and watched Bronstern for some sign that they should act in his defence. Bronstern backed away from them, still screaming at them, with his face twisted half-way between fear and triumph, but in a moment they understood what he was shouting and fell back in confusion; as well they might, for he told them that they were keyed in to some

system which would blow them up if anything happened to him; that only he could operate this system. When they had quietened he added that they would receive a pain signal at noon, and without amplifying this he hastily disappeared through the door followed by his personal guards.

Two of the Councillors would have followed after him but they were restrained by the others. I was hard put to it not to burst into laughter when I saw how terribly sick they looked after this disclosure and I closed my eyes and pretended to be asleep. Soon I heard them leave the room and I was left with my guards.

Shortly, orders were shouted through the door and I was awakened and taken to a cell and given a skimpy meal which I ate hungrily. Soon after noon the guards came to my cell and examined the straps which held me to the bench on which I lay, and when they saw that these were in order they ushered in the Vice-Consul and we were left alone in the locked cell.

Had there been any doubts in my mind of the truth of Bronstern's claims they could hardly have survived one glance at the face of this little man. The pain signal must have come to him at noon like a message from hell; he must have realized on the instant that his life was not any more in his own control, that his insane master could blow him apart under the pressure of the slightest whim.

The muscles of his face twitched with the strain of holding his features into a semblance of calm. He was the grey of the walls of the cell and from this muddy face his eyes bulged at me with a desperate and inexpressible longing.

This was too much for me. I burst into laughter.

"You poor fellow," I cried. "How does it feel?"

The act fell to pieces, the tortured screwing of my emotions fell into waste about me. For a time I just lay there and laughed.

*From the Secret Journal of Ewald Smick, Vice-Consul
for Peace in the Great Democracies*

When the pain came exactly at noon I was glad that I was alone in my room. It was not the pain. That was nothing, it was like a needle jabbed for a fleeting instant into the centre of one's being, and then nothing. Nothing? How many thousand loyal servants of the State, at this exact time, must have broken under a burden of despair? They must all know what it was, for as soon as he had left the interrogation centre the Consul prepared a radio speech which was broadcast throughout the Federation a few minutes before noon.

Without time to think about this terrible news they were plunged straight into the proof of their complete subservience to the mad desires of our lunatic master. To feel the seed of a terrible death planted deep in one's very body! Could there be anything worse? And I have supported him and helped him. I have worked towards this end. Can he possibly be right? Will this knowledge bring peace to the whole world? Will it destroy for ever the curse of Individualism? But what is Individuality?

How can I hide what I am thinking from the master? Even to write this, no matter how secretly, is madness; and yet I must somehow resolve the doubts in my mind.

And the Englishman?

Everything which I had thought and dismissed about him has come back and I am now more troubled than ever. I had to talk to him. As soon as I had managed to pull myself together I went to his cell and was admitted by the guards. Even the guards were silent and afraid. As soon as the Englishman saw me he began to laugh. "You poor fellow!" he said, "How does it feel?" At first I thought that his fear had sent him mad, but I saw, as his

laughter continued, that he was really amused by some thought which I could not share. Suddenly he looked into my eyes and stopped laughing. He said, "I'm sorry, you don't look such a bad little chap. Are you really as scared as you look? Fear is a terrible thing. Sit over here and take my hand!" I sat on the stool beside him and took his good hand. "Be calm," he said, quietly, looking into my eyes, "be calm!" and he said it over and over.

After a time I bowed my head and wept, but not for long, for a feeling of calmness and hope came over me. I felt better than at any time that I can remember. Why? I have been wondering ever since. But this man, who was able to give me this comfort was surrounded by his enemies and utterly helpless himself. Perhaps it was to see that he was quite unafraid even so, while I was in terror. No. I do not understand it.

I let go his hand and would have said something but he said, "No. Before you speak. Before you say something that reminds us that we are enemies. You need to know something. You cannot live until you have looked at your own death with calmness and acceptance over and over again. It is better to be dead than to live always in fear. You have much to fear now. Our crazy friend will always have this over you - that your life is in his hands. You are his slave if you cannot face death. Your life will be sour and full of fear. Only when your death happens will you know it for relief. By then you will have died a thousand times. That is enough. Let us go back to being enemies; there is something unhealthy about this!"

But there was nothing I wanted to say to him then. I felt that I would have done anything to save this man - I still feel this; perhaps there is a thought that he may yet save me. I shook my head. "There is nothing to say. Please be afraid again. Please act again that you have been broken, or Bronstern will kill you!"

He laughed. "I have finished with that. It was wearing thin!"

I left him, but my mind was made up that I would save him. I was not even worried that the guards might report that I had visited him.

A new strength ran in me. I went back to my room and thought and thought of what I had best do and then I arranged to see the Doctor in the evening. I have just returned from this visit.

The Doctor was in high good humour when I came into his dining chamber. He looked closely at me and seemed surprised. He was a little tipsy.

"Why! Ewald my boy!" he said. "You seem quite happy. Don't you resent my little liberty with the capsules? All of the others do. Who would have thought it? Comrade Smick doesn't mind!"

"Sir," I said, "surely you have never doubted my wholehearted acceptance of your teachings. This will not affect me in any way that I can see. I believe with all my heart in the necessity for a state of apathy and the acceptance of the resistless power of the Mighty State. Did the others feel that it was only for other people and not for them? No, sir, I congratulate you on the logic of your actions. Had I been so clever I would have realized that this was the thing to do - in fact I feel ashamed; I offer my deep apologies for not having suggested these actions myself. Now, for the first time, our work can proceed in complete safety from the treachery of the weak ones in our midst! But, of course, I did not know of the success of your brilliant researches and experiments which have made this possible."

I thought this might be laid on too heavily, but the mighty doctor looked at me almost with pride.

"Excellent! Excellent!" he said. "You must have a glass of this old Australian brandy which I have had brought to me with great difficulty. Who would have thought when I was a boy that we would turn to the sunny land of the south for the supreme fruits of the vine?"

"Yes, Smick, I am reassured by your attitude. There is hatred and fear in our ranks. Do you think it possible that we can turn these people to your way of thinking? As you have said it is all quite logical, perhaps they can be convinced of this.

"How wonderful it is to feel so safe, so certain, that our great work will not fail. Wait until this happens to our enemies! We must press on with this work. Time is always running past us. I have so many secrets which could be discovered. Can you imagine the triumph of organization which allowed me to have manufactured the tens of thousands of capsules I needed, each one a miracle of complexity; to key these in their thousands into my own control system, without the knowledge of a single member of the council? This was indeed a triumph, the greatest thing I have ever done. Yes! I have many secrets, my boy!"

For some time we talked on these lines, and then the Doctor himself introduced the subject which was at the front of my mind.

"We can now dispose of the agent Green," he said. "This has served its purpose. I will have the satisfaction of attending to him myself and no one will be able to say a word. It was almost a mistake to play this game with Green. We must end it."

I told the Doctor that I had visited Green in the afternoon, and played my high card.

"I went to see that he was being securely kept, but when I went in he seemed to want to talk to me, so I sent out the guards. He has passed through the worst of his fear and has now reached a stage where he would be glad to die. He told me, 'There is nothing to live for. The sooner they press the button the better!' I managed to give him some confidence in me and he admitted, after a fashion, that his main fear is that he should be sent back to his own territory to work for us. Then he realized that he had said the wrong thing, but I pretended that I had not understood him properly and asked

that he say what he had said again; but this time he said something quite different. Nevertheless, sir, I think you would be wise to get rid of him."

Bronstern considered this. His eyes, distorted by thick lenses, looked on me with tipsy cunning. "It would be a great triumph to send him back on our work! No; I must think about this. He may be useful to us; and think how much better it would be to let him know that he was going to die and then not kill him, and to do this again and again and then when he thought we weren't going to kill him - boom! End of Mr Green! I will send a message down that he is to be told he will die in the morning. In the morning I will let you know what I have decided. If we are to use him it would be best that I do not see him again. He has a way of annoying me!"

We talked a while longer and then I managed to get away. I came back here and could not sleep. But I feel calm and reassured. In some way or other I will save this man.

Perhaps he will promise to help me.

15

Martin Green

The hatred which these people deserve of me was not proof against the pity which touched me when I looked at Smick. I saw in his eyes nothing but unshielded terror and despair, and I became ashamed of my laughter.

We were alone. I tried to comfort him by words, as one would comfort a hurt and frightened child, and eventually he took a grip on himself. When he left me he was much steadier. Somewhere in himself he had found a reserve of courage which he had forgotten was there.

Strangely, when he realized that my apparent loss of nerve

of the last few hours was mere acting, and that I was, if anything, even further from being broken in spirit than when I had first burst in to confront my enemies, he pleaded with me to take up the act again.

But this I could not do. It was behind me now; I was finished with it. It had not pleased me that I had found it easy to behave in this way, that under the cover of pretence, fear and grief and weakness of spirit stalk like ignoble animals waiting for us to fall into their pits. There had been moments when I had felt that I was losing my hold; these moments worried me as I looked back over them.

It may have been the clever thing to do at the time, still there was enough doubt about that for me to decide, with some firmness, that I was altogether finished with it.

Perhaps death had come closer to me after the events of the morning, but I could not allow myself to believe that this was completely real; I have survived many threats. I had walked far along this tightrope and still held my balance and, though in my mind I knew that I must almost certainly be doomed, I could not grasp this as a real thing. It was only a thought. Even though the door of my cell was opened by one of the guards early in the night, and a voice said grimly - "There is a message for you from the Consul, spy, you are to die in the morning. You hear this, spy? You are to think about it!"; even after this, it did not have the cold reality of a truth.

For a time I slept, and woke before dawn and spent the time of waiting in remembering some of the simplest days of my youth. The days when the innocent and little things in my life grew together into a happiness which I did not then know for happiness, but simply thought that that was how life was, and should be, and thought that this was the same for everyone.

I felt stirring in me a confusion of emotion, that then and there, in those years, perhaps I had taken all that life offers. Had time marked the end of this? Had I moved away from

this in time, leaving my youth behind? Or did it end when I went away?

The warm brown water of the big river running over my bare feet as I sat fishing in the tangled roots of a tree; the violent shock of the ocean as the creaming waves rolled me to the beach; the old, old mountains plastered with snow, and always the warmth and comfort of the sun and the endless blue space of the sky – these things I finished with, and turned from, before I had properly outgrown them.

I remembered that I had felt myself ready to go, but not to leave them for ever – I had never intended that.

As I lay strapped to this cot under the weight of the threat that these were my last hours, I wished that I could have gone back to my land. How else could I know whether it was lost from me in time, vanished in the spent years of my life, or whether it was still there for me, with no change in it, under its special sun and its own limitless sky?

After many years I saw, at last, a good reason why I should live – that I could go back, and find an answer to these questions. To see this now when it seemed too late was nothing but a continuation of the irony that has followed me like a shadow. I have learned to be bitterly amused by this, and I mocked myself and thought of words others would use to taunt me if they knew what I thought. Nevertheless, there was some pleasure in this kind of sadness, as we find there usually is, and this was how I passed what I thought were my last hours.

This was my way of keeping from my mind the image of a finger touching a button, an image which had the power to plunge me into a mindless, soulless fear which could have set my nerves to screaming, but which I defeated in this way.

Day came at last, and a stirring in the corridors and cells. I was given breakfast, and I was hungry enough to hope that I would be allowed time to finish.

By the middle of the morning my stomach was knotted with nervous tension, and when at last the door opened and the Vice-Consul was ushered in I was glad; even though I thought it was the end.

When the guards had closed the door, leaving us alone, the little man came over near me.

"I think that you will be safe for a time," he said. "I spoke to the Doctor last night and put the idea into his head, and he has just now agreed that we will send you back to your own country. Of course you will have some work to do there for us; and if it seems that you are not doing it or that you are deviating in any way from what we want, or intend to betray us or anything at all of that sort, then our agents will know and you will be destroyed. Do you agree to that?"

"I would agree to anything to get safe out of here," I replied. "You know that and you know how much worth to put on that sort of agreement."

"You must agree. You must get away from here. There must be resources open to you in your country which you can use to save yourself. Perhaps you can find some way to help me to get out of this trap I have helped dig for myself. Will you promise me that, to help me if you ever can?"

"I will promise you, or anybody, anything to get out of here," I repeated. "If I can ever help you without harming any of the other things I have a duty towards, then I will do it; but not because I have been forced to give a pledge. Anything I ever do of that sort will be because you have tried to help me. I don't need to give a promise on that, that is something I would do anyway."

"I am far more likely to do something which will harm you. It is only fair to tell you that; but I would be sorry to harm you."

"Yes," he said. "I imagined you would talk in this way."

Perhaps it would have been a disappointment to me, and I would have thought I had been wrong about you, if you had talked otherwise. Very well, we must start you off as soon as we can. There must be no delay, already the Doctor may be changing his mind on this. There will be a surface mobile here for you in ten minutes and I must tell you before then how we will keep control of you. Listen closely."

He gave a quick run-through on their general plans for me and how I was placed concerning the capsule and tracer. There would be an agent moving to England at the same time but I would travel alone, as it was not desirable that I should be able to recognize this man. He would join up with others in their English network and I would be under continual tracing. They would always know where I was and could work out roughly what I was doing. As well as this, he stressed, I must always be on my guard. It would surprise me to know who some of their agents were, and many of these people would be watching me. They would pass instructions to me and on these I must act. One mistake would be my end.

I listened to all he had to say and nodded. A medical attendant was sent in and dealt with my arm. I was dressed in poorly fitting clothes.

When we were alone again the little man took my hand and wished me luck. We smiled at each other. He called for the guards and I was shepherded through gloomy, echoing corridors to the outside world, where a big black mobile was waiting. We reached the coast in five hours, the driver silent throughout the journey. At the coast they locked me up at the local Peace House for half an hour and then walked me to a wharf.

I crossed the channel on a fast two-hull trawler from which a dinghy rowed me ashore. I stepped out on a shingled beach and the dinghy disappeared back into the night.

Walking off the beach, I sat on a low bank listening to the soft washing of the sea and feeling a rush of gratitude and relief that I was at last alone. I did not feel safe – that was a luxury I could give up. I would never feel safe again until I could find some way, if I could, of cancelling out the capsule in my body. Being merely alive, and almost free, that was enough for the time.

Turning away from the velvet whispering of the sea I started to walk. The lights of vehicles swept past not far inland. When I was closer I recognized the Northwest Monorail, and I kept walking along until I came to a hailing station. In a few minutes a single came along and stopped. This took me to High Parrington Junction and from there it was easy enough to get home.

For a moment, as I stood at the door, my mind failed me. I could not scratch up from the depths of memory the simple code and I did not know what to do. Irritated I ran briefly over the last time I had opened this door, saw myself buttoning the code. It eventually came to me and I buzzed the signal on the button. The door opened and I went inside.

I walked through the rooms of my apartment, looking curiously about me as though I had stumbled by chance into the home of a stranger. This is a feeling I knew well – coming back often before, I have waited for minutes to pass until the strangeness wears off and I recognize myself as the man who lives quietly here in safety and peace.

Pouring myself a whisky I settled myself at the desk to write a preliminary report. It could not wait even though my body cried out for a time to rest. I had written half a page when the buzz of the phone interrupted me.

I looked out through the curtains and saw that it was morning, a dull morning with low clouds and rain. Martha K—— was on the phone. I had not told her that I would be away and she now said indignantly that she had been buzzing

my number several times a day, and I told her wearily that I had put off telling her and had then forgotten in the rush of getting away.

She said that she would come around, and at first I tried to put her off, and then thought that at least she would be a useful contact in starting the process of getting my report to Snow, and I agreed that she should come. While I waited for her I finished the report.

I hoped that she would be in her quiet mood; I was unable to imagine myself handling temperament with any patience until I had rested. I was on edge with a dull hopeless fatigue.

When I opened the door for her she followed me into the room where the light was better and she stood staring at me. She raised one hand in a helpless gesture and let it fall again.

"Oh God!" she said. "What's happened to you?"

"It's all right," I told her impatiently. "I've had an accident. What about getting some coffee for us?"

She shook her head and looked sad and then went out and in a moment I heard her busy in the kitchen.

I sat in a chair and thought that it was just as well that we had not allowed ourselves to become too involved with each other. Even this brief visit was a worry to me out of fear that she may become entangled with the GD agents. It was too late to do anything about that, but I was sorry now that I had been stupid enough to let her come. Then I fell asleep in the chair.

She woke me in a few minutes and while we drank coffee we talked for a while and then I said simply that I must have some sleep and would she go and I would get in touch with her in a few days.

This hurt her, her mouth turned down at the corners, but I told her that I was caught up in something big and she would have to help me by staying away and leaving me clear

to deal with what cropped up. I stood and she ran to me and clung to me, weeping, but I thought immediately of the capsule and pushed her away from me. Not knowing why I did this she became very distressed and ran to the door. I shouted to her to wait and she paused, with her back to me and her head bent forward as though she listened to something that I could not hear.

"I can't explain any more of this," I said, putting my hand on her shoulder.

She turned her face to me. "Is this the end, Martin?" she asked. "Is it all over?" For the first time she made no effort to hide herself from me, and my heart turned towards her, reaching out in affection and pity.

"It may be over, there is no way of knowing," I said and wanted to say more but wearily knew that it was beyond me to find the words.

She turned away again. I asked her to ring Snow's mayday code and say my name and the word "Window-cleaner".

This drew her up into anger and she glared at me. "Are you mad?" she cried. "Do it yourself!"

I told her that I must have this help and could not explain further, and she agreed and went away.

I sat in the chair again and managed to keep awake until Reece, dressed in white overalls, started to work on the windows with his rowdy machine. Eventually he began to do the bathroom louvres by hand. I was waiting for him inside and gave him his instructions and slipped the report through to him. No one could possibly have seen. That done I lay on the bed and covered myself, clothes and all, and caring very little about anything I went to sleep.

Secret and Confidential

For Col. J. R. Snow - and to be delivered only into his hands
23/1/09

Sir,

For reasons which will become clear, I beg that this report be kept under *ABSOLUTE SECURITY*.

M. W. Green

The following information was obtained during my recent visit to the political capital of the Eurasian Federation, which extended over the period 19/1/09-22/1/09. This was a private venture receiving official sanction and some official assistance from your bureau. The object was to obtain all available data concerning the development of the Remote Liquidation Weapons (internal capsules) and techniques which previous information had indicated were under development by the GD research apparatus.

This object has been achieved, though not in the manner originally intended.

1. It would appear that the information which led directly to the visit was supplied by GD agents as bait to lead one of our men into a trap. It is fairly clear that this ruse was directed specifically at me. In any case it was successful as I was captured shortly after grounding near Charetz in an injured condition. It can be assumed that micro-tracers were planted in the NR vehicle and also on my person, as I was undoubtedly under close tracing throughout the whole business. For reasons which I am sure are based in the personal hostility between myself and Bronstern, I was "allowed" to escape, but was recaptured within a few hours. I realize now, in fact, that I was not at any time free from observation. In fairness, I should record here that the possibility that the information was intentionally planted by the other side was seriously

considered by you, and that I proceeded on my own initiative, taking this as an accepted risk. The value of the data already gained, to my mind, however, outweighs the disadvantages inherent in the situation outlined below.

2. The RL Weapons are an accomplished fact. The basis common to all variations of the weapon is a capsule containing an explosive and detonator. This is connected to a micro-radio circuit, which is subject to remote operation by a highly selective coding signal. Each capsule is keyed to its own code signal. This is the basic principle. Variations of this theme appear to be as follows:

(a) Most capsules combine a circuit which can generate intense nervous stimulation, in the form of pain. This is subject to remote activation on a separate code. Capsules also include a micro-tracer signal generator.

(b) The largest and most elaborate capsules are implanted surgically.

(c) A sub-micro capsule has been developed which can be introduced by some secret means and there is no doubt that this is the most dangerous and effective type. Such a capsule could be swallowed with food, or under the pretext of medical treatment. It can clearly be implanted without the knowledge of the victim. I believe that this is the means used for the introduction of this type of capsule. The addition of retractable hooks or barbs which would open at some stage of the digestive process would be sufficient to retain the capsule in the body, though the danger of septic irritation could perhaps be anticipated in a proportion of cases.

3. I have been implanted with a capsule of the surgical type (comprising exploder, pain circuit and tracing signal). It is understood that any attempt to investigate or remove this will result in premature detonation. This includes exposure to K- or X-rays.

4. I am under close control and surveillance of GD agents in this country, and the intention is that I shall engage in

work on their behalf. I expect to receive instructions from them very soon.

5. Capsules of the sub-micro type (c) have been implanted in all officials of the Eurasian Federation of the level of Peace Warden upwards. All capsules of this group are keyed to an individual code mechanism which can only be operated by the Consul, W. Bronstern. This mechanism is set to explode this group unless it is reset at frequent intervals by Bronstern. My own capsule is keyed to this group.

6. There is some ground to expect attempts to introduce the sub-micro capsule over here. I expect to receive instructions to carry out some of this work myself. The introduction of these capsules to critically situated personnel would be generally effective, as I can testify that it requires a major effort of will to remain unaffected by the carrying of an explosive charge in one's body.

Summary: I will prepare a more detailed report at the earliest opportunity, any attempt to arrange a personal discussion with you on these matters is out of the question for the time being, as I will be blown apart at the slightest suspicion of an incorrect action. Please obtain a high grade micro-electronic man and arrange for him to move unobtrusively into the next apartment to mine, which is at present unoccupied. I wish to discuss with him what chances we have to blanket the capsule against incoming signals by means of jamming, screening or other means.

If we are successful in this I ask for assistance to return to Australia. It is important that in this case the usual means of entry be avoided and I would suggest that the method used with your agent Bertrand last year be followed. Only the pilot would know the landing area. It is likely that I would be out of range in Australia and would be safe there to explore methods of removing the capsule. My safety would depend on my arriving there *unknown to anyone*.

Meanwhile, should anything happen before I have a chance

to talk with you, I trust that the implications of the present position in the Federation will not escape you. If Bronstern were to be eliminated now the whole Eurasian Federation would collapse at one stroke. Smick should be saved if possible - I think that he may be a useful and reasonable man. There are other solutions, however, which would avoid the measure, and I am giving thought to this.

This position should be placed before higher authorities, though it is most unlikely that such a bloody and drastic act would appeal to them. This should be done circumspectly. I am quite sure, Colonel Snow, that you realize the need for absolute secrecy. If it is at all possible I intend to stay alive - at least until this matter is satisfactorily resolved.

M. W. Green

I7

Security Bureau GD-1

URGENT Operational Memo - Number 5 23/1/09 1245 hours

OFFICERS: *Searl and Garran*

1. Proceed immediately to 3 Claremont Apartments, Parkside East, and detain *Martin Watson Green*, who resides there under that name.

Age: 37

Height: 70"

Weight: 170

Hair: Brown

Eyes: Blue

Complex.: Medium

Marks: Scar on right forehead, slight Australian accent.

2. Take Green to Detention B. for interrogation and

advise me. He is a very dangerous and able man; avoid injuring him if possible, but it is essential and a matter of great importance that he be taken in.

J. R. Snow, Lt.-Col.

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Security Bureau GD-1

Operational report - 24/1/09

Concerning: URGENT ops Memo 5/23109 1245 hours

At 1300 hours 24/1/09 I proceeded to Claremont Apartments, Parkside E. in accordance with instructions and accompanied by Officer Garran.

As no other instructions had been given we approached the buildings openly and buttoned for admission. After some delay the door was opened by a man whose appearance fitted the description of M. W. Green. He was fully dressed but wore an open dressing gown over his clothes. Before anything was said Officer Garran attempted to push past Green who then drew a large, old-type pistol from the pocket of his dressing gown. He then opened the door wide and stepped back sharply so that we were both covered by the pistol. He beckoned with the pistol that we were to enter and to close the door. This was done and the following conversation recorded by the standard outfit carried by Officer Garran:

Green: I am sure that this is all quite unnecessary, gentlemen. It is a great pity that we had to meet at a time when my nerves are so ragged. Please keep your hands up, and stand facing that wall side by side. Closer together please. Thank you. That will do. Now one at a time, the stout gentleman first, would you please remove those military looking rain coats. Thank you; now the thin gentleman; thank you. Now would the stout gentleman remove his jacket; careful

now - I thought you were going to . . . that's right, thought better of it. Now the holster strap - just the waist strap and then lift it over your shoulder and put it gently on the floor. Fine. Now the top buttons of the trousers. Yes, yes. Let them fall. Hands on head. I hope you can keep warm enough in those long fleecy woollies. Very sensible. And now the thin gentleman. Thank you. My word! - those are pretty! I must say, you are a quiet pair. Green's my name. Who are you? Speak up!

Searl: We are police officers. Martin W. Green, I must ask you to hand over that weapon and accompany us to Security Detention Centre B. for questioning. Now that you have been informed that we are police officers, that is, Officers Searl and Garran of the Security Section, and that we are acting in pursuance of our duty, I must remind you that you will be liable for a breach of civil law if you do not put up that pistol and accompany us to the place nominated on the emergency warrant which we have not yet been permitted to produce.

Green: The stupid bastard! The bloody fool! God Almighty!

Searl: This is a serious offence. I must warn you that you will be up on a very stiff charge unless you release us instantly and go with us. So far this can be treated as a misunderstanding, but you must hand over that pistol at once if you are to avoid serious measures being taken.

Green: Sorry, boys. I thought at first you were GD agents. Let's make sure. Where is the warrant? Stand still! Point to it. Yes. Identification? K. W. Searl. Brian Garran. Right! Just stand there where you are for a while and I'll sort this out.

Garran: Better let up now, Green, or it will be too late.

Green: Quiet! I must work this out. I must warn you, both of you, that if I come with you I will be dead within an hour. That is beyond any doubt. Even the fact that you have come here puts me in great danger. I tell you this so you will know that I will kill either of you or both of you if you even blink. Any ambition to be heroes? You'd be dead ones, that's

all. Everyone loves dead heroes. All the real ones are dead anyway.

Searl: That's big talk, Mr Green. You must understand the position. We are police officers and we have received instructions that you are to be taken in for questioning. There is no room for our opinions in this matter. We get orders and we do as we are told. We failed in our duty in not identifying ourselves right at the beginning. You then had a right to treat us with suspicion and to protect yourself in any way you thought best. We have corrected that, and you now know who we are and I must once again ask you to put up your weapon and come peaceably with us. Nothing bad is likely to happen to you!

Green: This has ruined everything. That fat idiot has been stampeded into doing something which has put me in such danger that I am morally entitled to take any action. The only question in my mind is what is the best action to take. I must get out of here. Just keep your hands on your heads and see if you can hobble to the bathroom. Have you handcuffs with you? Bound to have. In your jackets? Here they are. I found them for myself. Now off to the bathroom - this way.

At this point there was a buzz from the phone and Green waved us to stay still, keeping us covered. In answering he simply said "Yes?" and then "Who is that?" After saying this he seemed to suffer from some sort of seizure. His face went grey and screwed up as though he was suffering severe pain. He seemed about to fall and both Officer Garran and I prepared to rush in and disarm him. However, he gestured savagely with the pistol and leaned against the wall.

He then said into the phone: "Very well. I know who you are now. Yes. I know. They are security men but I am dealing with them. Lay off me until I have dealt with them. Call me later. You would be wise to check with the others before you take any drastic action. Check with the Doctor first if

you know what's good for you." He then listened for a few moments and the call was terminated.

Green: I have less time than ever, gentlemen. Into the bathroom.

We were taken to a bathroom and handcuffed to a waste pipe with our own handcuffs. Our ankles were tied together and we were gagged with strips of towel.

Green: I'm sorry about this.

He then disappeared and we did not see him again. We were unable to attract attention until late evening, when Officer Garran managed to dislodge his gag and call for help. It was some time before anyone heard his shouting.

Officer Garran has been reprimanded for attempting to push past Green without instructions, thus warning him of our intentions. However, I suggest that this was not a serious error of judgement and with all due respect I suggest that a stronger warning should have been given concerning the state of mind and determination of the suspect, if such were known to the section.

K. M. Searl

*Security officer attached to
Security Bureau - GD-1*

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Martin Green

I could have no feeling of security, even in my own bed, surrounded by my own familiar walls. Tension would not let me sleep. The morning light crept past the blinds into the room, and the noises of the city kept waking me from the slightest doze, so that I could only stretch out on the bed hoping that what rest I was able to get would be of use to me.

It did not trouble me overmuch to be disturbed an hour or so after noon by the sullen buzzing of the door signal. I dressed hastily and pulled on a dressing gown. The pocket of

this useful garment was large enough to hold my old WS pistol and hide it, and with my hand resting on the gun I opened the door.

There were two official-looking men at the door. As soon as they saw me the larger of the two tried to push through the doorway past me. I stepped back sharply and drew the pistol. When they realized that they were covered I beckoned them inside.

They were rather stupid men, and slow, and they were soon helpless and disarmed. They were not GD agents as I had thought at first but two of Snow's comic policemen whom he had sent along to bring me in.

As usual he must have acted blindly and immediately, instead of giving himself time to think. When I realized that he must have sent these men for me the moment he had read my report, I was for a second almost blind from anger, but I calmed myself, and did not let the men see that I was disturbed.

I could not understand how even Snow could be as irresponsible as this, for the moment that these men walked through the door, any margin of time and safety that had been left to me, was cut down to nothing. Even as I was dealing with them the phone buzzed, and when I answered it a deep voice said in a question, "Martin Green?" and I said, "Yes. Who is that?" The only answer was a fierce jolt of pain from the capsule.

The security men saw my weakness as I wilted under the pain and were ready to spring at me. I waved the pistol at them - if they had moved an inch further on their plans I would have shot them. They must have seen this in my eyes for they moved ever so slightly away from me, and stood looking down at their feet as though ashamed to be so easily subdued.

I leaned against the wall with the sweat of pain on me under my clothes and the voice asked me questions which

I tried to answer calmly - who were the two men? - did I know what would happen to me if there was the slightest sign that I was uncooperative? - did I wish to be destroyed?

I told the voice that I knew all this. I said who the men were, and why they had come, and then with all the authority I could muster said that I must have time to deal with this; that the agents should refer to Bronstern before they acted; and after a minute or so it was over, and I placed down the handset.

The small click of the closing connexion was still in my ears as a warning that my time had run out as I hurried the men into the bathroom and secured them.

I gave myself two minutes to think while I sat with a glass of whisky - and then I acted. I went straight to the next apartment, knowing that I was under close tracing but hoping that there would be some uncertainty as to where my own rooms began and ended. The people were away and I broke in quite easily. It was not likely that their phone would be monitored, and I called Alan Dowd at his factory, hoping that he would still feel willing to go to some trouble to help me.

We talked briefly and he agreed readily to my requests. I asked him to get me a fast cab, and explained how he should brief the driver. After that I went back to my own place and picked up a coat, put the pistol in the pocket, and collected several other things I needed.

When the cab arrived I was watching for it from the window. The driver parked exactly opposite the gate, opened the gate, opened the door opposite the gate, and then went back to his seat and whistled the motor. I opened the door and ran as fast as I could down the path.

The open door of the cab was only a foot or so away when the first shaft of pain ripped into me. I managed to get through the door and slam it after me. As the cab leaped away I sprawled across the back seat.

The last I remembered was a feeling of great doubt that I would ever wake again.

Dowd and Hackling Ltd. Telerecord. Time 1315. Date 23/1/09

Switch: Mr Dowd will you take a call from Mr Martin Green

AD: Yes Miss Richards put him on

Mr Green: Its Martin here Alan I must have some help

AD: Anything I can do old boy you know that

Mr Green: Are you still working on the SUHF welding project and is the special booth working

AD: Yes we are flat out on it it has come good and they are screaming out for it

Mr Green: Can you close it down for a few hours and get everyone out of the section

AD: Not if I can help it why

Mr Green: I cannot explain very easily but try and get this I have not much time I have just come back from the other side and I have been planted with a sort of bomb which can be remote exploded by a SUHF-type signal and it is due to be let off any time I must get some sort of screening and the special booth is my best chance

AD: Are you crazy

Mr Green: Yes bloody near but we can talk about that later just now I am running out of time so just say yes or no I will pay anything or do anything to cover you but just say yes or no

AD: I have to do it you know that so the answer is yes do you want me to do anything else

Mr Green: Clear the section and get everything out of the booth get me a cab to my place here and tell the driver I am a sick man with that phobia about open spaces tell him to open the gate and the door of his cab and have the motor running I may or may not get to the cab if I collapse before I reach the cab he is to load me in the back and drive straight to you

clear everything so that he can drive right to the booth I will be unconscious get me into the booth as soon as you can and then stand back until I come out of it or blow up that depends on whether the booth works or not

AD: Christ Almighty this cannot be true

Mr Green: Can you start working on a portable screen right away if it works I will have to get out as they have a tracer on me and will know where I have gone everything else can wait can I rely on you

AD: Yes even if you are crazy you can rely on me you should have a cab inside ten minutes get off the line and wait

Mr Green: Stand well clear after you put me in the booth

AD: Switch get me Charlie at Turbocabs very urgent

Switch: Charlie who Mr Dowd

AD: Just Charlie print this call I have just had

Martin Green

When I opened my eyes, I was unable to locate myself. A shadow of mesh surrounded me like a cage, and I thought at first that again I was caught in some sort of captivity, and that the man seen dimly through the mesh was my gaoler. This was only for a second, while I struggled numbly out of unconsciousness and the memory of pain, and then I knew where I was and what had happened, and with this I knew a sudden great relief; I savoured for the first time the buoyant hope that if this first perilous step had succeeded, I might yet escape.

Beyond the screen Alan Dowd sat on a bench puffing at his pipe and gazing into space, his wide brown face furrowed in worry and concern.

"Well, Alan?" I said. "Who's crazy now?"

The sound of my voice, harsh and strained, made him jump. Relief cleared the lines from his face and he stood down from the bench and walked towards me.

"Thank Christ for that. I didn't know what to do. Began to wonder if you would ever come out of it. Do you feel all right? God; old boy, how does it feel?"

"Wonderful!" I answered. "You can't imagine how wonderful. I didn't let myself know how scared I was."

He lit a cigarette and passed it to me through the mesh.

"I've been sitting here thinking for more than an hour. I've had enough time to go right over it. I think it could be done - what you say they have done to you. I wanted to come in and help you, get a doctor and so forth, but once the door of the screen was shut and the circuit operating I was afraid to open it again in case it did you some harm."

"I think that's how it would have been," I said. "It's almost certain they have a permanent signal operating by now and that would detonate the exploder if my cover here were broken for an instant. We can also be sure that they know where I went to, though they must be uncertain where I am now. Once they pressed the button they very likely would take it for granted that I blew up. The sooner I get out of here the better. We might have a short time before they start to check up and if I can get away before then they could lose all track of me. That's what I want this mobile screen for; that and transport and somewhere to hide."

He made the old sign with his finger and thumb.

"It's all lined up. I put five men to work on the portable screen and we should have it ready for test in an hour or so. We had all the electricals ready for another booth, so we don't have to start from scratch, we can do a simple conversion on it. I made some sketches and started them off before you arrived. We made some mods in the design of the second set but I thought we could assume that if it will screen off SUHF

welding it should screen off the incoming signals from your apparatus. Do you agree on that? We can make a very quick test. Then when we come to transferring you to the mobile set I thought the best thing was to put in a divider so that we get a sort of airlock setup. We bring the mobile up to this booth and wire it in all around, then cut away the screen so that you can crawl through and then put back the divider and separate the two sets. It should work if we are careful about it."

I agreed with this and he took several deliberate puffs at his pipe.

"Then we come to the possibility of your friends coming around to try and sniff out what's happened to you. That's all fixed up too. We have a couple of the old hands from Istforce 1 working here. I sent back for them a few years ago. Felt lonely without them. They're outside now watching for strangers. Do you think you have anything to worry about?"

"Not if it's the two men I think," I said. "Stapleton and Kidney?"

"You remember them?" he asked curiously.

I nodded . . . I ached to ask him if they remembered me, and whether they believed the things that had been said about me, but I was too proud. I was not sure whether even Alan understood the true position, whether it was only his friendship for me that allowed him to help me so readily, or whether he really understood what had happened. Perhaps the boyish loyalty which was his greatest charm was proof against anything; it was possible that he had never thought much about it. These were not matters we could talk about, being the men we were, and we sat in silence for some time, until Alan went away to inspect the progress of the portable screen.

When he came back he said that everything had been assembled and that in a few minutes they would be testing. He sat down and said, "We get you into this screen and take you away from here. We put you in my partner Hackling's

cottage by the sea. What then? You can't live in an activated screen for the rest of your life!"

I had promised myself that after my experience with Snow no other person would know what I planned; but listening to Alan Dowd and seeing what he was prepared to do for me without question or hesitation, I felt more trustful. I gave him an idea of what I had in mind.

"That's what I would have suggested myself," he said with enthusiasm. "I don't see how they could possibly get an effective range much over a few hundred miles. If you went back to Australia and kept away from the big cities; went to ground for a while, you should be safe enough. They can't have many agents there - old Meddings and his boys are sudden death on them. All you have to do is to get there! Have you thought about that?"

Without thinking I said, "Oh, Kershaw will look after that."

He stared at me in surprise. "You mean the Minister? Sir Rodney Kershaw? How official are you?"

I evaded the question. "It's not really like that. Rod and I knew each other years ago back home. If he helps me it will be because of that. It would be best if you didn't mention this around," I added. "It could be misunderstood. As soon as we are safely away and I am hidden, you can get on to Kershaw and give him a message. We'll see then what he will do."

Soon afterwards two men brought the mobile screen. The tests had gone off well and Alan was satisfied that it would be effective. It was quite small, a sort of stretcher inside a mesh box with a metal box and a small control panel at one end. It was brought up against my booth and wired in. I cut away the mesh with snips. When the opening was large enough I crawled through to the stretcher and closed the divider.

As the two screens were separated the muscles of my stomach tightened nervously; but nothing happened. Alan beamed down at me and gave the old "all clear" signal.

A small closed mobile was backed in and I was loaded aboard. The doors were closed and I was left in darkness.

The mobile lurched slightly and we drove off. Alan called to me that there was no sign that we had been followed and after we had been driving for something over an hour I heard gravel under the wheels and shortly the mobile stopped.

The doors opened to a night which seemed light after the darkness of the closed vehicle. The shadowy figures of Alan and the driver came up and pulled my container towards them. Grunting under the weight, they carried me to the cottage, while I lay helplessly, wondering what would happen should they drop me and break the circuit.

Alan cooked a simple meal which was passed in to me by using the divider. When I had eaten I could hardly keep awake. Alan went out and came back proudly waving an enamel bedpan. This was passed in, and some blankets and pillows. There was hardly room to move, but I made myself comfortable and was soon heavily asleep.

In the morning I came up to wakefulness with great reluctance. At first it was as though I was pushing up my shoulders under a heavy load that I could hardly lift, but knew that I must because it was the right thing to do, and then, suddenly, I remembered that I was safe.

This was a feeling I remembered from my childhood. Waking on a Saturday and not remembering that this was the day of freedom. Waking to the feeling of being braced for the coldness of the shower, the dullness of school; being prepared to face it but not very keen, and then the glorious dawning of the thought that this was Saturday, that today I would be free, with the world opening before me. That was how I felt for a moment of this morning when I knew that at last I was moving towards safety. I only needed to keep cool and I would be right away out of this.

My heart leaped and I called to Alan that I was awake.

"I went down to the village and managed to get on to

Kershaw before he left home," he said, as he came in. He looked at me with humorously narrowed eyes. "What have you got on him? Eh? Must be plenty. Said he'd be down here in an hour."

I laughed. "I used to carry him around on my back when we were boys. He owes me a long ride."

He was not to know that this was a simple version of the truth, and thinking that I was joking, laughed politely.

As we were finishing breakfast there was the whine of a turbo coming down the drive and Alan went out and in a minute returned, with Kershaw behind him.

Kershaw came into the room with a friendly grin, looking around for me and not at first seeing me where I lay on the floor inside the screen. He had an air of importance about him, plumper than when I had last seen him and for a moment, as he looked down at me through the mesh, he sounded very English. "Tut, tut, tut! Good Heavens! What's all this?" he said gruffly.

I looked at him with considerable disgust and he realized who I was and that I knew him of old, and would not accept from him any of this fruity Englishman act, for he then said in a twanging bush voice, "What the bloody hell are you up to now, you crazy bastard?"

"Never mind about that," I told him. "I want you to fly me to Australia no later than tomorrow. Can you do that?"

"Bloody hell! Might be able to get you on a kite next week if they clear you at Canberra."

"Won't do!" I said. "This isn't to go through channels at all. It's just between you and me. A little private thing for old time's sake."

"Can't possibly do it. You don't know what you're asking. The PM would have my skin for a rug in his office if I tried anything like that."

"Rod," I said quietly and seriously, "I don't like to bring this up, but I need your help as badly as you needed

mine out on Square Gin Plains. You just have to do it."

He went very red in the face. "By Christ! I didn't ask you to carry me in. That was your idea. I'd rather have stayed in the tent!" He turned angrily to Alan. "Carried and dragged me for five days, the stubborn bastard! 'Only another five miles!' Kept saying that to me as though I was stupid - every hour, for five days. Thought I'd go crazy! Broken leg hurting like hell, snow coming down night and day, and all he could say was, 'Can't be more than another five miles!' Asked him to leave me in the tent and go for help. Wouldn't listen to me!"

"Be your age," I said. "You just wouldn't have lasted."

"Whose fault was it I broke my leg anyway?" he went on, boyish scorn in his voice. "'Won't need the rope for that one. We can walk up that one.' That's what you said."

"All right, you great big important diplomat!" I said angrily. "Put the plum back in your mouth and go back to your office. Sorry we brought you all this way for nothing."

"That's quite all right, old chap," he said in a pompous voice. "When do you want to leave?"

We looked at each other and began to laugh.

"You bastard," I said. "What about tonight?"

He said that he would let me know later, he would have to work out a good excuse that would take him to Canberra, and after we had worked out the details he left us.

During the afternoon another mobile brought a light wooden case, and Alan went down to the village and rang Kershaw again. Kershaw gave a provisional take-off time for four-thirty a.m. which would allow us to get clear in darkness. I made a rough calculation and saw that we would also be in darkness when I came down at the other end, and, very well satisfied, went off to sleep again.

After midnight Kershaw arrived in a plain mobile and with Alan's help loaded me aboard alongside the wooden case. It took less than an hour to reach the satellite field and we waited nervously, on the road outside, for another hour.

I was loaded into the case and the lid closed. In the solid darkness of the box I tried to connect the sounds I could hear so that I would have some idea of what was happening. The mobile moved for a few minutes and stopped. I heard Kershaw say the magic words, "Clearance papers for diplomatic material Commonwealth of Australia." There was a pause and a respectful voice said, "Everything in order, sir. Your aircraft is at position five on strip two. Good trip, sir."

The mobile moved again and ran smoothly on tarmac. When it stopped I heard the tailboards come down. I was lifted and bumped around and put down and then I heard the rattle of ringbolts as the case was lashed down. There was a murmur of voices outside and the tinny, metallic sound of the door being closed. Kershaw fumbled hurriedly with the wingnuts and lifted the lid off the case. He grinned down at me. "I was tempted to leave the lid on your coffin until after take-off. Thought I'd better check that you're well secured." "You'd better take it easy on the level out at the top," I said. "This stretcher is no G-pad!"

He made the old gesture and walked up to the front. The starters coughed one after the other and the super turbines screamed through their fast-rising song until suddenly there was the shuddering silence above the level of hearing. There was the soft bump of the tail wheel as it sank under the load of the aircraft and then the feeling that my body had been left behind on the ground. In a minute or two the negative G came on as we levelled out in a gradual curve and soon Kershaw came back and sat with me. We talked through most of the trip, Kershaw checking the auto every now and then, and I told him as much as I could.

When he picked up the long beam from Canberra it was nearly time to get out. Kershaw undid the nuts on the divider and when it was clear I told him to clip on a parachute in case I blew up and to stand well clear. I closed my eyes and crawled out of the cage, but I was not greatly worried. I felt far away

from danger, and was not at all surprised when nothing happened. I went up to the front with Kershaw.

He was worried about getting a good pinpoint over the desert from our height.

"That's bad country," he said. "I should do a dummy run and swing back, but it would be best not to. There are probably plots on me now at Woomera and Canberra and someone might start asking questions."

"I'm happy," I said. "I know the desert, it's the best place to come down out of sight. We should see the lights of the river towns a long way off at this height. I can jump when I think that we are the right distance away. Don't worry. I know what I'm doing."

"Don't let's kid ourselves. When did you ever know what you were doing? Why fool ourselves?"

"Anything you say," I said. "But when you pick up those lights start on down. When I think it's right I'll give you the nod and you can stall her off and I'll jump."

The beaded lights of the towns strung on the river came into sight as I finished clipping the parachute and adjusting the harness around the bad arm. I went up to Kershaw and we shook hands. I waited by the nose hatch and when it seemed right made a swooping gesture. Kershaw pulled everything on and the nose came up hard. Just as she trembled on the stall I whipped back the hatch and dropped clear.

I left it rather late. As the parachute bit into the solid air and began to slow me, the jet came spinning down past me quite close.

I watched it anxiously as it spun down but after a few turns it levelled off and streaked away and a second later the noiseless thundering reached me. Now as I sank silently through the air the lights of the towns disappeared. I thought uneasily that this meant that they were a long way away and felt very much alone in the sky with the stars and the vague mass of earth below.

After I had landed I gathered up the parachute and stuffed it in a crevice under the leaning roots of a mallee tree and then started walking with the stars of the Cross on my right. The air was warm and soft after the harsh cold of the sky and for a while I was very happy as I walked steadily on. I was still walking at dawn. When it was light the endless red sandhills and the slate grey tide of mallee scrub rolled away as far as I could see, and I knew that I had dropped too far west and might be in for a long walk.

There was no real danger, the river must stretch across my path somewhere ahead, but if it was too far I was likely to be sorry that I had no water. Taking direction from the sun I walked all morning. The sun for which I had hungered in exile now blazed down on me as though in scorn and contempt. I would have welcomed a cloud or two but the sky was clear and blue and immeasurably vast.

When I reached the river it was the middle of the afternoon. By then I had given up my hopeful watching ahead and was stumbling doggedly forward with my head down. It was a surprise to me when the ground suddenly sloped steeply down in front of me and I saw the timbered green valley of the river. I stumbled as fast as I could across the green slopes between the giant trees, the trees that shouted to me that I was home, and there was the great brown river that had been so often in my thoughts.

I dropped down at its grassy edge and buried my face in the water and drank. Alone at last in my own land, I gave up for a moment the pretence that I was an iron man. I lay on my face in the grass of the bank and dug my fingers deep into the moist earth. I would have stayed there a long time, but a shadow fell across me. I turned my head and looked up from the ground.

A woman stood there staring down at me. I tried to say something but my voice had been lost in the desert.

From the occasional diary of Elizabeth Stevens

February eighth. Why oh why start this up again when I have promised myself never more to moon over these pages; when I have totalled again and again against this vain and introspective practice those many arguments. . . .

As . . . that nobody will ever read what I write
that . . . worse! . . . somebody might
that it nags my thoughts into fever, when I should
be sleeping
that I word myself into gloom as I write
that . . . what happened ever in the life or mind of
that prim historian . . . that self-fancied; self-
doubting; infinitely minor, poet, Lizzie Stevens;
what happened ever to her that was worth record-
ing, worth being clutched for ever to herself in the
cobwebbed stickiness of her own words!

But . . . here is this year's untouched book, blank as the
ninth year of this new second millennium, and something
has happened at last in my life and in my thoughts; nothing
I can do can get me deeper in gloom; nothing I can write will
keep me any more sleepless than I am . . . see all those virtuous
arguments tumble at the change in my life!

Silly little fool . . . wise woman . . . whatever I am between
these states, I achingly resign myself to sit here, all else asleep
in the valley, but for my few night friends . . . the grumpy
owls sneering at each other in the dead trees, and a wake
of curlews saddening the swamp with their mourning
cries.

I found a man for myself, or he found me, and now he has
gone, wilfully gone, seeking out his terrible death. If I would
dare to sleep I would dream his hard body tense as a sleeping
tiger beside me, and his strong hand circled on my breast, but

then, daring to wake, must find him gone, must find myself alone, robbed even of the comfort of a dream.

Ten days ago all that I ever wanted was to be alone.

Ten days ago I sat between the knotted roots of my own tree, that fits me like a chair, looking down on the sweeping curve of the river where it swings around the bluff. I came there to sketch, stayed there to play that compulsive game that masters me, the game of words and rhymes and dreams.

The man was first a movement catching the corner of my eye . . . a figure plunging down from the lip of the desert. Something, even then, caught at my heart. He went quite close past me, his grim face tight with that effort of determination that kept the staggering legs on their true course to the river, his glazed eyes not seeming to see what lay ahead, so that the staggering legs tripped over fallen branches and stumbled over rocks and rough ground, until, breaking through the long grass at the river's edge, he let himself fall at last with his face beside the water. He drank, and lay where he had fallen.

I followed behind and stood beside him where he lay, waiting for him to know I was there. I moved slightly. My shadow passed across his head. He raised his face to me, a face caught unawares, soft and gentle, and full of sadness. I felt my own face stir with pity, and caught myself at this foolishness as I knelt beside him.

"Are you all right?" I asked, and I heard my voice in my ears, as though it was the voice of someone who was out of breath from running.

He tried to answer from a dry mouth, but no words came. He waved a hand and leaned again to drink at the river. I bent to help him as he tried to sit.

"Are you all right?" I asked again.

"Good heavens, yes!" he said. "Didn't mean to leave myself so far to walk . . . clean forgot what the sun could do

to you out there. Dam'fool thing to do. Now then, young woman, no need to look so concerned."

"Is that all?" I asked. "You're not hurt?"

"This bad arm, that's all. Had that for a while. No . . . I was just a bit tired and thirsty. All right now."

"Where are you going?" I asked.

He looked past me to the river, and spoke absently, as though I was not really there beside him. "I'm not too sure," he said. "Don't worry, I can find my way."

He was evading me. He would find his way with no help from me. I heard resentment come sharply into my voice.

"But . . . you must have somewhere to go," I said, as patiently as I could. "You must be going somewhere . . . people don't just . . ."

"No . . ." he said. "People just don't fall out of the sky, do they? Everyone is coming from somewhere, on their way to somewhere else, aren't they?"

"I suppose so," I said. "But sometimes they mightn't want other people to know. . . . I'm sorry."

"Is there a town near here?" asked this strange man. I pointed down the river. He said, "Murray is two miles away, down there."

"Jesus! Right on the nose," he muttered. He seemed pleased. "I might find a friend there . . . a man at the University, Eliot Holmes."

"I know Eliot Holmes!" I said excitedly. "But you mightn't find him . . . it's still the long vac. and he might have gone away . . . I don't live far away, and it's on the way to Murray. Could you walk that far? You could have something to eat."

"That's very kind of you," he said doubtfully. "Are there people there? I don't want to deal with people until I have rested."

I told him that I lived alone, and he said again that it was very kind of me, and if I was really sure it was convenient he would be very grateful.

He rolled over and lifted himself stiffly to his feet, having trouble with his bad arm, and stood rather wobbly waiting for me to move. We walked up the slope, and I gathered up my sketchbook.

As we set off along the high path that led along the cliffs to the town, I was childishly pleased and excited as though I had arranged something clever for myself.

He spoke easily and quietly about the life of the river as a man speaks who has been long away. Though he now and then stumbled and almost fell his expression ignored this. I would have liked to help and steady him over the rough places but something told me that he would be ashamed to show fatigue or weakness and it would have been lacking in courtesy to draw attention to this.

My house is half-way down the fall to the valley, one main room and smaller rooms attached to it. It looks out along the river. I settled him in the chair beside my desk and went to the kitchen to cut him some bread and cheese which would give him something to eat while I cooked a more substantial meal.

When I came in with the bread and cheese he was standing looking at a book which was open in his hand. As he closed it and placed it on the desk I saw that it was Gordon Clarey's *Andean Decision*.

He said stiffly, in a strained voice, "You have a strange taste in books for a young woman!" and gestured to the shelves of books. I began to say - "That's my work; modern history"; but I don't know whether I actually finished the sentence, for I was stunned by sudden knowledge about this man. I picked up the book which he had laid down and looked through the pages until I found the photograph which I had seen in this flash of memory. I looked from this photograph to the man, and back again, and then, helplessly, I cried out, "You are Martin Green!"

"Yes," he said, in a tired voice as though I had in some way

defeated him. "Yes . . . I am Martin Green. It seems a crime to be that. You do not ask me who I am! You accuse me of something. . . . Your voice hides nothing."

Pity swayed me for a moment, but I was held in the grip of all that Gordon Clarey had told me of him. It is true that from what Gordon said I could never have imagined him to be as I now saw him before me, but I could not adjust myself in these few seconds of time. It was as though this man and I were discussing someone else, a third man who was abstract to us both, the legendary figure: Martin Green. I explain this to myself as excuse for what I said, but it is no excuse, for I can see now that no man can be a legend to himself, for how can he separate himself, the person, from the figure of history - the legend? I was cruel and stupid. The woman I am now is not able to forgive the girl who stood there before him and wounded him with poison barbs.

"You were the one who failed," my hard voice cried; "you risked everything the others achieved. It was such a big thing, and you agreed to give yourself up to it, you agreed blindly to the rules, agreed to give up for the time any thought and feelings of your own. You all did that. But you were the one who failed! What could you expect after that?"

"Why, I expect nothing," he said. "I expect nothing. I ask nothing. If there is something I want badly enough I will take it for myself. I have begged nothing of you."

He was not eating and I said more gently, "Let us not talk about it until you have eaten. You are hungry."

"That is no new thing. I have been hungry before. This food would choke in my throat. I will remember that you were kind to me until you found out my name, and I am grateful to you for that. Now this is important," his voice sharpened into a command; "you will not tell anyone that I am here in this country. You must understand that. My own life, and far more than that, depends on your silence. I must ask you to promise this!"

It angered me, the tone of authority.

"But what if my promise is worth no more than yours?" my voice asked in scorn – but, oh, suddenly, these were not the words I was trying to find. Things were running past me out of my control and I could do nothing and say nothing that I wanted to. I reacted blindly against him while my heart cried out to me to help him – cried out that this was not the man of whom I had been told, that I needed time and a chance to know him. Surely this struggle must have been in my eyes, but he was not looking at me – he was only listening to my voice and that was cold and stiff and cruel.

"If your promise was as good as that it would serve," he said calmly, but with a shading of anger. "If you will promise this then I will go."

"I will promise then," I said, and now, too late, tried to retrieve something of the damage. "But there is nowhere you can go. It will soon be dark. What else can you do but stay here?"

"I will do what I would have done if I had not met you." He moved towards the door. "Please understand that I am grateful for what you would have done for me so willingly had names been left out of it. I thank you on behalf of all nameless wanderers who might pass this way. But they should never have names!"

He smiled grimly to me from the door, before he turned away.

"This may be just as well; beautiful women have been the curse of my life!" These words floated on the air, charged with a dry irony which he seemed to direct mainly at himself.

I heard his footsteps, moving on the gravel towards the town in the gathering night and I stood at my desk, cursing myself, weeping inside at my stupidity and at my cruelty and I could not decide what I should do.

ANDEAN DECISION. Gordon F. Clarey.
Hamilton Press, Melbourne (3rd Edition)

page 19 . . . At the time of this incident Martin Green was a lad of fifteen. It is difficult to imagine why this meeting had such a profound effect on the Prime Minister, though it is remembered by many who were close to him at this time that Green was put forward many times by Peter Jirapon as an ideal example of that physical and mental type which Jirapon maintained was emerging from the matrix of this country and which he termed "stabilized social-individualists of the Australian type".

We might, however, now examine the incidents which led up to this meeting. Green and a companion of the same age had embarked on a winter crossing of the Square Gin Plains, an area in the Alps which is entirely snowbound in winter and which, at this time of the year, is swept by blizzards at frequent intervals. For this reason the experienced bushmen, who in summer drive cattle there, leave well before the first snows, and consequently this vast expanse of country is completely deserted for three months of the year. This was the place, and the time, chosen by this foolhardy child to attempt a feat which few grown men would have considered. What happened could have been predicted.

In an attempt to scale, without rope, a rocky cliff, Green's companion slipped and, falling some distance, broke his leg. They were then almost exactly half-way on their journey. The weather, which had been until now deceptively fine, rapidly deteriorated and the next day Antarctic blizzards descended on the mountains.

First carrying and then dragging his companion on a crude sledge which he made from the branches of trees, Green managed, in five days, to cover a considerable distance.

The two boys were finally met by a forestry officer who had seen the smoke of their fire from the foothills of the ranges, and had thought it worthwhile to investigate. Both boys were in very poor condition when rescued, but eventually made a complete recovery.

The affair was taken up by the press, and Green, overnight, became a national hero. The voices of those who thought that he should, perhaps, rather have been treated as a delinquent child were lost in the popular clamour. The demand that some sort of award should be made to Green was sponsored by the popular press and taken up by the public. It was raised in the House and the Prime Minister agreed that Green should come to Canberra and should receive from the hands of the Prime Minister a token of public esteem.

It was in this manner that they met. Peter Jirapon, the child of wildest Arnhem Land, the aboriginal prodigy who had grown old in the service of the white man, and Martin Green – golden-headed, handsome, reckless, and – shall we say it? – spoilt. Is it to be wondered at that the great Prime Minister should take some interest in this boy? In fact they spent many hours together while Green was in Canberra and Jirapon made no secret of his opinion that Green was the prototype of the Australian citizen whom he had said, again and again, was emerging from the Australian nation.

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page 53 . . . Having now formulated these views, it no doubt seemed logical to Jirapon that they should be discussed with the type of individual who he imagined he would need to carry them into effect, and Martin Green, the boy hero of several years ago, was summoned to Canberra. It is known that the theories were discussed in detail with Green before they were broached to Cabinet and, later, to both Houses. It must seem strange to the objective and dispassionate obser-

ver that there has never been widespread criticism of the propriety and wisdom of this action by the Prime Minister. That matters of such moment should be discussed seriously by the head of the State with one who was little more than a schoolboy must surely be a matter of some amazement to the historian.

Green was then eighteen and still a student and, to those subjects which appealed to his fancy, he brought a flashy brilliance which allowed him to gain a lead over his more sober and serious contemporaries. As well as this his other activities in the field of sport and excitement, in which the comfortable wealth of his family allowed him to indulge, brought to him a steady stream of publicity. In the public eye he was gaining something of the reputation of what was known in other days as a "playboy". Whatever he engaged in seemed to end up in drama, or some sort of excitement which was acceptable to the columns of the popular press. When he spent a vacation at the Polar Research Station, a half-track snow vehicle would break through the ice near the ship and a photographer would be at hand to immortalize the set face of the boy explorer as he hauled a less fortunate companion to safety. If he entered a high-speed sailplane race he would manage to cross the finish line ahead of the field, but would be unable to land safely in his rocket-like craft and would end the race in a cloud of dust and wreckage; – once again a photographer would catch this moment for posterity. These and other reckless ventures would not, one would have thought, seem useful qualifications for serious discussion with the Prime Minister of the nation on high affairs of state! But, as only Jirapon knew the business on which Green, at the age of eighteen, had been called to the capital, it is not surprising that no voice was heard in objection.

Shortly after this astonishing conference, the theories which were to change world history were first disclosed to a sceptical and incredulous Cabinet. Totally unprepared as they

were, these serious politicians heard for the first time the radical theory of their aboriginal leader – that only individual action by determined and dedicated individuals could break the threat of the weapons of mass destruction wielded by the big nation power-blocs. They heard their leader tell them that their own small nation of fifteen million should stand alone, should withdraw from the world, and should voluntarily, and unasked, become the police force which would control and restrain and try to turn aside the steady movement towards atomic world destruction. It is not surprising that these serious men were, at first, unable to accept these radical views.

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page 97 . . . And now with the secret battle virtually at an end, his views generally accepted by his supporters and with the dissidents sworn to secrecy and removed on one pretext or other from their positions of power and influence, the Prime Minister could be seen to have won what he had all along maintained was a race against “the inexorable ticking of the clock in the bomb”.

As we would expect, he acted quickly and with great confidence. Enabling legislation was rushed through both Houses and on emergency grounds – which were the subject of considerable protest by the press – little was disclosed of the true objectives of the legislation. A public which had by now become accustomed to the mysterious requirements of “national security” saw nothing against which it could usefully protest.

Inevitably, that paragon of all virtues, Martin Green, was again summoned by the Prime Minister and it is difficult at this distance to say with any certainty what part he played in the setting up of the volunteer group which formed the nucleus of the first Independent Striking Force (Istforce 1). The necessity for secrecy at this stage places impossible

obstacles in the path of the historian, for most of the early negotiation and arrangement, we now know, was carried out by word of mouth and under oath of secrecy, and all records were destroyed immediately they became redundant. We can, however, see the mind of Green at work in the mordant and cynical title adopted for the general plan under which individual nuclear scientists and other responsible persons would be executed by Istforce 1 in any offending country. Why should this plan have become known as Project “Sweet Dreams”? This is, surely, the “playboy” mind at work!

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page 120 . . . At the height of these hopes, when it seemed certain that the mere existence of Istforces 1, 2 and 3 had shown the world the path away from the Gadarene slope down which it had been rushing under the impetus and momentum of nuclear research and primitive fear; when it had clearly been demonstrated that people and politicians alike through the whole world had been wearied and afraid of the path into which they had been led by the scientists and militarists, and were eager and ready to turn back; when, moreover, Australia had won the gratitude, respect, and admiration of the world – at this time a direct threat came from an unexpected quarter. The authoritarian Federation of Republics of the Andes announced that it would continue its nuclear programme regardless of the opinion of other nations. The bluff was called.

We can imagine the consternation and confusion at Canberra. It has been maintained that Martin Green, now the official leader of Istforce 1, had seen the possibility of danger from the FRA and attempts have been made to substantiate this by pointing out that Green had, in fact, paid secret visits to these countries – which were difficult to penetrate – and that he had built up a cover identity under which he could safely operate as an agent. This is no doubt

partly true, and the length of time and preparation necessary to build up the passable background of language and general knowledge essential to taking over a cover identity in a foreign country, indicate that Green must have begun his concentration on the FRA countries at an early stage. In fact, it is likely that Green was chosen – or chose himself – to work in this area by mere chance, in the same way as other Istforce personnel developed preparatory undercover work in other areas. It is not logical to credit Green with any great foresight or prescience in this matter; the workings of chance which, we must admit, had so often favoured Green, are alone responsible, in the eyes of any dispassionate observer.

In any case Green was again summoned to Canberra. His leave, which he was spending living as a native in the company of a tribe of Arnhem Land aboriginals, was rudely interrupted, and it is surely significant that at this vital time of crisis two valuable days were lost before he could be located. The “playboy” outlook was dying hard, if it was dying at all. What part Green played in the discussions at Canberra, and the consequent decision to implement project “Sweet Dreams” (FRA sub-plan) as soon as possible after any nuclear explosion initiated by FRA authorities, will probably never be known.

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page 129 . . . There has never been any official explanation or any satisfactory reason why the explosion took place almost one hour after the scheduled firing time. In many quarters it was at first thought that the nerve of President Mitraya had failed, but these rising hopes were cut down by the news that the explosion had indeed taken place. FRA sub-plan; Project “Sweet Dreams”; was now in force.

Nothing happened. The respect which Australia had won

not only in the free press but in pompous official pronouncements in the propaganda organs of some authoritarian states now changed to ridicule and abuse. The ninety-seven scientists, politicians and militarists who had been indicted and warned by the notice served on the FRA ambassador two months before, returned from the testing grounds in the most advanced and indestructible surface vessel of the FRA navy, and that entire navy shepherded and guarded this valuable ship.

At this stage it seemed clear that the advantage lay on the side of the nation and the men who had been warned. The element of surprise, which alone would have seemed able to carry the day for Istforce 1, seemed to be unattainable. Had it been known then that the two hundred members of Istforce 1, who had been called for in the FRA sub-plan, were already in position, that the FRA had been penetrated, long before any warning had been issued or indictment made, there may have been less mockery and ridicule during the two months of silence.

Even Green had, at this stage, returned and had assumed his cover identity, being the last of the team to take up position. Five weeks after the explosion President Mitraya was found dead in his luxurious palace. There was no public mention of the fact that fifteen members of his staff, who had attempted to defend him, had been cut down by murderous and silent bullets. It seemed to the world that the death of Mitraya was a coincidence, and had no connexion with his position at the head of the Australian indictment. He was smiling when found. His body was cursorily examined by press representatives and there was general agreement that the President seemed to have died of natural causes. The members of his staff who had succumbed in a more spectacular manner had, of course, previously been removed from the scene.

It simultaneously occurred to at least half of the world's

newspapers that "TIME" was Australia's sinister weapon. By waiting long enough, the complete list of indicted men would certainly die of old age, but how could Australia take any credit from this? However, the death of General Ramires two days later in an equally smiling condition, and the subsequent discovery that two other indicted men had passed away just as happily, introduced a new note to world comment. In the absence of any statement from Canberra, opinion was generally hardening that project "Sweet Dreams" was working. A new significance was found in this name.

As the days passed the list of indicted men who still survived grew smaller. The Provisional Government, which had taken control on the death of President Mitraya, announced that nine Australian agents had been captured and executed. It was also found that a number of indicted men had disappeared and it was assumed that these men had either gone to ground or had already been executed.

Among the men who had disappeared was one Bronstern, an obscure micro-scientist, who had been responsible for the timing and trigger circuits of the FRA nuclear weapon. More was to be heard of this man, whose chief claim to fame to this time was the beauty of his wife. Madame Bronstern was generally considered one of the ten most beautiful women in the FRA, and it was natural that her activities were the subject of frequent scrutiny by the cameras of the press. A quaint photograph of this time shows the beautiful Madame Bronstern, with a friend, surprised by the flash of the camera at an Embassy reception. The "friend", a certain "Herr Falk", representative of a Swiss machine-tool combine, would appear to be none other than the boy explorer, Martin Green; if his straggling moustache and old-fashioned rimless spectacles are removed. One can only wonder what connexion there was at this time between the Bronstern family and the chief executioner of project "Sweet Dreams" for, as with so

many other puzzling features, this, too, is hidden from the historian in a cloud of mystery.

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page 151 . . . The survivors of the nuclear team, already living in fear and trembling, and hourly expecting to be visited by the "Smiling Death", now found themselves in an impossible position. The new government, with the Provisional Government and its rule of terror now broken and defeated, had been expected to approach the Australian authorities and appeal for amnesty for the thirty-five survivors, and this may well have been granted, in view of the worldwide acceptance of the successful actions of Istforce 1 up to that time. The demonstration had been a complete success and a complete and wholesale vindication of the policy laid down and unswervingly followed by Peter Jirapon, and by the Australian Government. That the new government should now, itself, proscribe and outlaw the nuclear survivors, previously protected and avenged by the Provisional Government, came as a complete surprise. To these men, these pitiful survivors, the news must have come as a stunning blow.

In the face of the strong body of opinion now rapidly growing in Canberra, the Prime Minister instructed that the operation must be pursued to its bitter end. He gave his reasons for this, and they seemed good reasons. "We have spent freely of our lives, and our consciences, and our peace of mind, to bring about one result - to turn the nations of the world away from destruction, by showing the nations of the world that those who make themselves responsible for nuclear destruction shall themselves be inevitably destroyed. Unless it can be shown that there is no way out, no refuge, no escape from this fate, everything we have spent will be lost. We must go on to the bitter end, unless we are to find ourselves faced with the same dreadful task again!"

Helped now by the new FRA government the task of the men of Istforce 1 who had not been exposed and executed became simple, and with mounting horror the world watched as the survivors of the indictment list were hunted down and killed like rats. At this time there was no further news of Martin Green nor had the Bronsterns appeared again.

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page 160 . . . Modern history shows no parallel of the end of this man, whom many find the noblest and greatest Prime Minister in the history of this land. One must return to the tragedies of ancient Greece to find its equal.

Leaving behind his moving "Testament", the document in which he took on his own shoulders the burden of the executions in the FRA, and which absolved from blame all others who may feel themselves responsible, Peter Jirapon travelled back to the country from which he had been taken as a child. At the very place where the Arnhem Land expedition had pitched its tents so many years before, he farewelled his weeping pilot. With only a grass loin string, and a spear which he had kept near him through all these years - the toy spear of a native child - he disappeared over the red hills into the wild country. His body was found two days later at the foot of a high cliff, by a search party made up of members of Istforce 3, and was buried at this place which has since been proclaimed a Federal monument.

This, more than any other action he had taken throughout his long campaign to free the world from the threat of nuclear destruction, had most effect on the feelings and opinions of the world, and finally cemented the Fifteen Nation Agreement. Except for the rounding up of Bronstern and the mystery surrounding the disappearance of Martin Green, the Andean adventure had virtually ended.

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page 175 . . . One can but wonder at the facility with which the world public, guided by the popular world press, can this week hold up some shattering event as nothing short of a miracle; next week dispose of the same event as something normal, and, the week after, is quite unable to conceive that anything has occurred outside the usual run of events. This phenomenon of the "nine day wonder" now surrounded the dénouement of the Andean affair. In a few weeks, astonishment changed to acceptance, and the world watched, almost with boredom, as the statesmen of the nations which now concerned themselves in this matter argued and negotiated the details of the Fifteen Nation Agreement.

The survivors of Istforce 1 returned to their own country, landed secretly, and dispersed into anonymity; to forget, if they could, their harrowing and perilous adventure. The fate of Martin Green was wondered at, discussed, and finally dismissed as a tantalizing mystery.

It was forgotten, again after some comment and questioning, that the micro-scientist Bronstern, alone of the original list indicted by Istforce 1, had not been accounted for - nor had his beautiful wife. These mysteries were accepted and dismissed. Boredom is the eventual fate of the enigma which will not be resolved. But at this time, when the whole affair seemed to have simmered down to the level of everyday ordinariness, an alert newspaper man in the city of Dublin, his curiosity aroused by a foreigner seen several times in the street near his home, shadowed this man, saw his wife, listened to them speaking together and came to the conclusion that this man was the missing scientist.

This proved to be the case. Bronstern and his wife had by some means been removed from the FRA and taken for safety to the Republic of Eire, which had preserved a strenuous neutrality throughout the whole business, and here they had been living, with their appearance radically changed by cosmetic science, and under assumed names. Following their

exposure the Eirean Minister to the Commonwealth handed in a Note which in moving terms pleaded with the Australian Government to grant amnesty to the sole survivor, and pointed out that as Eire was not prepared to grant extradition, the execution of Bronstern – if that was being considered – could only result in grave embarrassment to both Governments.

The steadiness and common sense of Lewis Houghton, the new Prime Minister, was well demonstrated by his ready agreement to this proposal. Amnesty was promptly announced for Bronstern. This agreed well with general world opinion and, indeed, with Istforce 1 now disbanded, and the Australian voting public feeling that enough had been risked and that a policy of "let well enough alone" should now be followed, it may not have been easy to take another course. This can be taken as a wise and logical decision – regardless of the future career of the micro-scientist.

Hardly had the excitement and furor of these events died down when it was rumoured that Martin Green had appeared in Canberra and had been received by Houghton and the Cabinet for secret discussions. No public statement of the result or the subject of these conferences was announced. Shortly afterwards Green left the country and was reported to be living in the United Kingdom.

It is now possible to raise the curtain behind which these transactions and discussions were carried out. Green had an extraordinary story to tell and an extraordinary proposal to make. He claimed that the late Prime Minister, in his final (and, of course, verbal!) instructions to Green, had instructed him to remove Bronstern's name from the indictment provided that Bronstern would agree to come to Australia and carry out certain specified work for the Australian Government. Green claimed that these instructions had been followed. Bronstern had agreed to the proposal and with his wife had been taken to a place of safety. Green also claimed

that he had then returned and had actually played a leading part in the final phases of Project "Sweet Dreams", and at the conclusion of the project had shipped the Bronsterns to Eire, deciding at the last moment to travel with them to preserve their security. The death of Jirapon had left him uncertain of the new Government's knowledge in this matter of the Bronsterns. He had come to Australia to clear this up and to request that Bronstern be brought to Australia to engage in the work for which he had been required by Jirapon.

This farrago of nonsense and improvisation was listened to patiently by the heads of the Government and then dismissed. This dismissal and Green's abandonment of his claims and readiness to leave his country, can surely be taken as clear evidence that the Government could find no corroborative evidence for his fantastic story – and it now remains, and can properly be regarded only as, an impudent fabrication and an unwarranted and unprincipled slur on the revered memory of the great Peter Jirapon.

The only reasonable conclusion to be drawn from Green's sorry part in the glorious and fearful deeds of Istforce 1 is that the crisis, the great test, found him wanting. The reckless boy, the spoilt "playboy", with his uncanny flair for the public eye, with his head turned and his vanity swollen by the interest of the Prime Minister, finally found that he was face to face with something which was grim beyond his experience and too much for him. And so he failed.

The many others of Istforce 1, the unknown and anonymous heroes, carried through their inhuman task to its bitter end, and returned, sick at heart, with peace of mind for ever beyond their reach, to the obscurity from which they had been called by their duty to their country and the world.

The "playboy", with failure in his heart, and disgrace as his certain reward, trembled to return to his own country until he had evolved his incredible excuses. With these, rightly and properly rejected by his masters, he escapes again and

becomes a man of mystery in another land. And still the press find that he has something they need to titillate the minds and imaginations of their readers. The man of mystery, the failed "playboy", becomes, for the press, a romantic adventurer; that his adventures spring solely from the imagination of feature journalists racing against the hungry presses to feed their empty columns is not realized. With the true story of Martin Green now told for the first time we may perhaps see an end to the effusions and "behind the scenes" fictions which we have, with rising impatience, been unable, until now, to abate.

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page 220 . . . Who better qualified than the historian to look forward into Time and to unravel, if he can, the tangled rovings of future events? At his fingertips he has the knowledge of what men have done in the past, he has discerned patterns and systems in the workings of time which has passed, and this knowledge he can apply, if he will, to time which is yet to come. Men change; nations rise and fall; power groups lock horns in titanic struggle; and still motives remain unchanged. The drive towards power still plagues the world and places for ever beyond the reach of clutching humanity the chimera and illusion of peace, perfect peace. With the power of the atom; the force of the sundered nucleus, which for decades had terrified and subdued the world, finally broken by the Andean experiment, men must surely have hoped that a new age of peace and plenty had arrived. But even though the goodwill and relief of a world which felt that it had been rescued on the brink of irrevocable disaster has for some years kept up the semblance of an uneasy and precarious peace, the historian from his vantage point can detect fresh dangers which must shortly be confronted.

New figures have filled the sinister vacancies which have, from time to time and with dubious and fearful regularity,

occurred in these areas of the world where the iron hand of authoritarian despotism holds sway. In our ears beats the ironic laughter of the gods, for foremost in the ranks of these new leaders we find none other than our old friend, Dr Bronstern, the humble micro-scientist, the innocent savant, spared by a generous fate from the relentless end which overwhelmed his companions.

Having been rescued from this threatened fate by Martin Green - driven by motives which can only be imagined - taken to the safety of neutral Eire, and then pardoned, Bronstern, unmoved by the notoriety and publicity which now descended on him, was appointed to lecture in his special field at the staid Birmingham University; which we must concede he seems to have done in a brilliant manner.

For a few months it seemed that Bronstern would now sink happily back into obscurity, but this was not to be. The calm peace of the University was shattered by the mysterious death of the beautiful Mrs Bronstern. Sensation mounted as the inquest proceeded. The ex-playboy, Martin Green, for the first time a subdued and tragic figure in the public eye, was mercilessly questioned by the authorities but without any real satisfaction to public interest and curiosity or lessening of the screen of mystery which now enveloped him like a fog.

Medical evidence disclosed that Mrs Bronstern had been poisoned. Police witnesses were forced to reveal that Dr Bronstern had fled the country and was thought to have claimed sanctuary in authoritarian Poland, partner in the Eurasian Federation, which at that time loosely linked the authoritarian countries which were adjacent to each other in Eastern Europe and Asia. Hard words from the coroner were lashed on Martin Green for the part which it seemed that he had played in the events leading to the death of Mrs Bronstern, and in the face of some doubt it was found that this unfortunate woman had died from the effects of poison

administered by her husband. Attempts at extradition naturally enough resulted in failure, accompanied by scarcely veiled mockery from the rulers of Poland.

Bronstern was almost immediately catapulted into a position of considerable power. The convenient conjunction of a new found gift for political intrigue and one of the wholesale purges which, with dreary regularity, convulse these unhappy countries, left the way clear for an incredibly rapid advancement by the brilliant doctor. This is where comment by the historical mind can be of some value. It can be expected that if fortune favours this man, and the growing strength and solidarity of the Federation continues at its present accelerating rate, he is destined to play a leading part in the world history of the immediate future. Grudgingly though we may admit it, he has displayed throughout his whole story an unparalleled ability to survive and, even, to turn to advantage forces and events which are turned against him.

As well as this we can sense a political development, the surge of a dormant genius for rhetoric and spellbinding which will surely be acceptable to the circles in which he now moves.

Before proceeding to summarize the likely trend of events on a larger scale let us spare a backward glance for that solitary figure which has played its part on this wide stage of history and has dogged this story of the Andean adventure. As Bronstern rises towards a kind of spurious greatness, Martin Green sinks from our sight. Having betrayed and disappointed the great hopes which were held for him by greater men, having fallen into disgrace and failure, the central figure in a sordid story of intrigue and murder, we can only conclude that from kindness and pity we should be held back from an examination of his motives in saving Bronstern.

We think of him now as a ruined figure, an adventurer living at the dismal fringe of events. Charity demands that we should forget him.

From the occasional diary of Elizabeth Stevens

February ninth. Then the man went. For a long time I stood at the window staring past the reflected room into the night. Even as the night swallowed him, even as the small sounds of his steps on the gravel tapped in my ears in the silence, I knew that I could not end this here.

For I was someone overset by a wave from a calm sea, thrown off my feet in confusion, my quiet life boiling about me in a turbulence beyond reason. I scolded myself into calmness, I wandered from place to place in the house, but calmed myself not enough, settled nowhere. I found myself at last on the path to the town, not aware of any decision or of any action of mind that had put me on this path.

The evening town was empty and quiet.

Dust flavoured the air as I walked under lights clouded with creatures beating themselves to death in a frenzy of wings.

Loneliness flavoured the air for the one who walked outside, as people seen through windows curtained by branches of trees, secured themselves in the haven of the town.

A pressure of stars over the town, as the feel of the desert loomed closer in the night.

After aimless roaming I left the town. I knew myself for a helpless fool walking that she may reach her bed, and there lie and weep.

I went by the rougher track that runs through the flats beside the river, given over to sadness, but sensible enough to watch for snakes on the path in the beam of my tiny pocket light.

Beyond the last houses of the town, where the trees gather together on the river flats, and the grass is firm and short, is a place where fishermen sometimes camp at night.

Here a fire burned and flickered through the white columns

of the trees. Quietly and peacefully beside the fire sprawled three men. Hesitant, I stood at the edge of the light and, in mid-sentence, heard a voice I knew talking about a fish . . . "same fish as soon as I felt it run" I heard this lazy voice finish a sentence. . . . "Now . . . this time, I said to myself, one of us is going to finish out of place. Either that fish is going to come up on the bank, or I'm going to finish in the river. So I wrapped the line around my arm and grabbed a sapling, and I hung on."

I remember every word he said, as he held a mug before him in both hands, and went on in that slurred lazy voice, while I waited with faltering heart in the shadows. . . . "It was a pretty fair match. Weighed up, that fish was eighty-nine pounds against my six stone, but I reckoned that the sapling more than made up for the five pounds he had on me. Only, the sapling wasn't very big, it started to tear out by the roots, and I would have let go then if I could, because I was near losing my arm, but I'd taken a hitch about my wrist. The sapling fell into the river and me with it. I went right under, the fish towed me all over the bottom of the river. Somehow I got free and scrambled out, and grabbed the roots of the sapling, and gradually dragged all but the bushy end ashore. That was being pulled all over the place by the fish. I let him tire himself out, and then I pulled him ashore an inch at a time. Then I threw the sapling into the river and dragged the fish all the way home and never told anyone how I caught him."

While they were still chuckling I walked up to the fire and asked, "Is that you, Martin?"

He placed the mug slowly on the ground and said in a hard voice, "Yes. I'm here. What do you want?"

I was glad the night hid me. I swallowed nervously, and said something about it being time to come home.

He was not ready to forgive me. The men stared embarrassed into the fire.

"I'm sorry, dear." With these words, and the way he said

them, he gave the impression that I was his wife, a nagging wife, who always followed him and would not let him escape. "I thought I'd stay here with my friends. We planned to go fishing in the morning."

I was on the edge of tears. My voice trembled. I pleaded, "Please come!" He was softened by the tears in my voice. He looked from one man to the other and made a helpless gesture with his hand.

"I have to leave you," he said. "I'm sorry . . . I'm afraid I've talked too much . . . it's years since I had the chance to talk fishing."

The men joined in polite chorus . . . "She's right . . . find us here any week-end . . . glad to have you."

They said good night, and he took my arm with a vicious grip and hurried me off into the darkness. Away from the fire, trying not to be noisy about it, I began to weep. Blind with tears I took a false step and stumbled off the rising track into the scrub. "Shine the light!" he muttered, but I had dropped it. He raised me with his good arm and brought me back to the track.

"Blast and damn you for a stupid bitch!" he grunted savagely. Then I cried noisily. At this he laughed, but somehow a laugh that forgave and apologized. His arm was still around me and drew me to him. His lips brushed my cheek, and then, astounding me, he kissed me savagely on the mouth, straining me to him.

I broke away from him, but not before I had sampled the instant fire that leaped in my blood. Vainly, I feared, I hoped that he had not noticed that, caught by surprise, I came eagerly to his lips.

I ran away from him along the dark path, reckless of snakes, and, reaching the house, ran inside, not caring whether he had followed or not. I hid myself in my room, struggling to control myself, wondering what unbelievable foolishness had swept me.

Looking up at last, I saw that he stood in the doorway with the light of the other room behind him. He came to me with a glass of water and told me to blow my nose and then drink. Was he that accustomed to all the foolishness of silly women?

I turned from him and snuffed into my handkerchief, and without looking at him reached for the drink and gulped it down.

He fumbled for the switch at the head of my bed. With my hand on his arm I would have stayed him, to let him know that I was so ashamed that I must have darkness to hide me.

He ignored my pleading hand, and the light flooded around us as he turned my face gently to his with a hand under my chin. He was smiling, but a smile free of mockery or malice.

"Now then . . . that's over, isn't it?" he said in his strangely warm voice. I knew I had been forgiven for my foolishness.

"What does it matter," he went on, "what you think of me or I of you? We are in that delightful condition of being strangers . . . and so it doesn't matter what we think of each other. Only with strangers, and perhaps people who know each other very, very well, are two people quite natural with each other. Dry your eyes. This is sometimes almost the best part of a friendship, while two people are still strangers, while they don't bother to hide themselves."

Though I guessed that this was said to let me down gracefully from the ledge of self-consciousness where I had climbed and tried painfully to balance myself, I knew the truth that was in it.

I could never have behaved in this brazen, erratic way with other than a stranger, or with someone so close and known that there could be no hiding of emotion between. He had stumbled, a stranger, into my life, yet what confused me, and left me with no knowledge of how I should act, was that I had been overwhelmed by a feeling that I knew this stranger immediately, I knew him fully and utterly.

Did this show in my face? For he leaned forward and kissed my cheek in a kindly way, and said, "We may not always be strangers!" With this I was content, I was calm, my heart left me at peace. I was secure enough to be afraid that I had thrown myself before him too easily, that his promised friendship might be endangered by this.

I remembered conveniently that he must be almost overcome by hunger and tiredness, and gestured him away. We returned to the big room, and I offered him food, but he said that he had eaten with the fishermen. I made a bed for him on the divan, and turned to leave him. He put a hand on my shoulder and smiled with a glint of mocking laughter in those clear blue eyes, but my own answering smile was sobered by sudden shyness. We said nothing, and I went to my room.

I slept very badly. When there was the faintest light of dawn in the sky, I was shocked awake by a groaning voice that broke into a despairing shout. I went to the other room and turned on the light, and saw him lying naked on the floor. He had rolled from the divan, and was tearing at the side of his body with his fingers and shouting . . . "Get it out! Oh God! I must get it out! Oh Christ Jesus . . . why don't they help me?"

His face was a frightening mask of pain and fear, and I shuddered, not from the chill air of dawn but from deadly fear. Cautiously, I touched his arm to prevent him tearing further at himself. He awoke instantly, and knew at once where he was. His face relaxed.

"What happened?" he asked. "I'm terribly sorry."

He seemed quite at his ease sitting naked on the floor, and looked at me calmly as though we might be fully dressed. He asked for a cigarette, and when I walked across the room, I felt nervously sure that he must be measuring my body in its filmy covering, and though I walked with pride I felt that my face must be the brightest of pinks when I faced him again.

He did not seem to pay any attention to my embarrassment.

"When I woke you . . ." he asked, "was I saying anything? Did you hear anything I said?"

I repeated his words as well as I could. He looked at me with concern.

"I'm very sorry," he said. "It's an old nightmare . . . it doesn't mean anything."

"No," I said firmly. "Something is wrong . . . I was terribly frightened for you."

He laughed at me. "I'm sorry I disturbed you," he said, the way a person used to authority speaks when they close a conversation, kindly, but with intimidating firmness.

I was very conscious of his hard thin body, and I thought it best to say good night again, and return to my room. I heard creakings as he settled himself on the divan; I heard him laugh quietly to himself, and found that I was secretly smiling in the darkness. I knew that he must be laughing at the frivolous garment I wore, which barely came to my knees. I smiled because I knew that it looked far better on me than it did on the model. I was brave enough to admit to myself that I was not sorry he had seen it.

Greatly disturbed by the sound of his cries, and the pitiful sight of his wild fingers tearing at his body, I could not sleep again. There had been blood on his fingers and on his body when I woke him.

He was still asleep when I put on my robe and brewed coffee in the kitchen. The eager sun was working up another blazing summer day, and the valley was alive with the glad voices of birds.

When I came from the kitchen with the coffee he was awake, leaning on his elbow looking through the glass wall at the valley.

"I'm sorry I woke you last night," he apologized again to greet me.

I said that it didn't matter, dreams and nightmares are beyond our control.

"None the less I don't like it," he said. "It's a bad time to be getting nervy. There are other things I should be sorry about, and apologize for, but, perhaps least said, soonest mended."

"There is nothing to be mended," I said. "Please . . . don't say anything. You were quite right . . . I am a stupid bitch, and more than that I was a cruel one, and thoughtless too."

"Well, then . . ." said this Martin Green, looking up from under his brows, teasing me, "perhaps we know each other well enough for me to ask your name!"

We laughed wildly, to realize that so much had happened between us, and my name had been overlooked. I had felt my name overshadowed by his. I said my name, feeling like a child, who answers this question looking on the ground with shy finger gripped in white teeth.

My name surprised him, and softly he said over the best lines of "A Time of Flood". "That Elizabeth Stevens?" he asked, with respect in his eyes. He said my verse well as though he had lived with it, and understood. But the lines mean little to me, they are not for me, for I have worked on them until they have lost their meaning . . . how can I measure them? They are poor and bare to me, but I was proud that they had a flicker of life for him.

"But . . . I'm not really a poet," I said, with that panic urge to hide which is often taken wrongly for false and annoying modesty. I told him of my work at Murray, my history job, which explained, I added hesitantly, why I knew so much of his own story.

"Is Clarey still there?" he asked roughly, almost rudely. "Of course he is!" he answered himself. . . . "I suppose you work for him!"

A strange loyalty to Gordon Clarey goaded me. Professor

Clarey is a close friend, I told him angrily, and I added spitefully that he wanted me to marry him, he did not approve of me living by myself on a lonely part of the river.

At this, he looked completely outraged. "Good God!" he cried. "What a horribly small world it is!"

Though the nasty contempt of his voice was directed at Gordon, much of it swept over me. I didn't want to talk any more, and neither did he.

We passed through a long silence, and then I went back to the kitchen and he found his way to the bathroom, as soon as I was out of the way. When he came back he was in a better temper.

He looked different with wet hair combed to lie flat on his head. He said that today he would have to buy clothes and pyjamas and things like that. He said that he was sorry if he seemed rude about Professor Clarey, and I was in a better mood, too, and said, if we were to apologize for all the silly things we said and did to each other, we wouldn't have much time to talk about anything else, perhaps we shouldn't pretend too strenuously that I was a perfect lady, and he a gentleman, and we might as well face it that I didn't mind overmuch if he swore at me, and rolled about naked on the floor in the middle of the night, but, any time, if I thought he was going too far I would slap his face for him, but we didn't have to talk about being sorry all the time when most of the time we weren't sorry at all.

When I had come to the end of this monologue, he looked at me amazed, and said quietly, in an exaggerated back-of-beyond voice, "Well . . . stone the bloody crows!"

Our glances drifted together and locked. His eyes were blue and clear and dancing with laughter. Laughing, we sat with the table between us and ate breakfast. For the first time since he had come into my day I was really happy and sure of myself. I was savagely glad that men seemed to find me attractive; some men, even beautiful. Though this had often

pleased me, there is something of a liability in this accidental asset, and I had never valued it so highly, so gladly, as I did then, on that golden morning.

25

Martin Green

I was quite considerably startled when a shadow fell across my face as I lay exhausted by that great brown river, and looking up saw a young woman practically standing over me studying me with what seemed to me a most peculiar expression of pity and anxiety on her face.

My immediate intention, while I parried her tiresome curiosity as well as I could, was to get rid of her in the shortest possible time, but then I sat up, and saw her clearly with the sun no longer glaring in my eyes, and the need to be rid of her seemed instantly less urgent.

These sudden changes of intention we often manage to justify by astonishing feats of rationalization. We grasp eagerly some impromptu delusion, which, indeed, rarely fools us, but makes some wilful act that has no place in a logical plan, seem sensible, or even, when this state is at its worst condition, unavoidable.

My first clear sight of this young woman, then, coincided exactly with the immediate realization that she would be most useful to my plans. She could perhaps harbour me for whatever short time I might need to find my feet in this place. For sure, she would also be a ready source of information that I might need.

That she was not only most beautifully formed of body, but, as well, vital, pleasing and expressive of face, was no more than a pleasant accident. I was quite sure of that, and

in this, it is barely possible that I was being honest with myself.

I was not honest, if I took no count of what drew me to her in the spell of that fascination which I had sometimes thought forgotten and finished in me . . . there was a rare and provocative contradiction in her which, in their natures, few women display. This woman's ripe body, her passionate and sensitive face, were at war with cooler but no less ardent longings: those of the soul and the mind.

How can I know how much of this I saw then?

We talked for a while. Finding that this town close by that I had come to was Murray, the very place which had been my aim, I asked for news of Eliot Holmes. This woman knew him, said that he might be there. I was glad at this, though at this stage I hardly knew what it was I wanted of Holmes. Soon, she offered me the chance to eat and rest at her home close by.

The path to her house seemed endless to my weary legs. At last I sat in a chair angled between shelves of books. With my eyes closed I waited for her to prepare some food. Tiredly, I opened my eyes and glanced idly at the rows of books, without the words on the covers having any meaning for me. Caught by a word here and there, names put together unconsciously in my mind, it came to me, as a shock comes, that they were all there. The books of my youth, that I had lived with and devoured, and the books written afterwards, after the legend had been lived out in action.

I reached for Clarey's book, the pompous assortment of lies and half-truths, that had served its purpose so well, keeping me in exile, in all appearances, a ruined man.

The book fell open at a photograph and I looked at myself, young and confident and smiling; old Peter beside me with the stamp of greatness on him, black and serious. I remembered that Canberra day. "This will be the testing time," Peter had said. "Now that it is too late, I know that too

much is being asked of you." When I answered I knew that I was wrong as I answered, "No. The threat will be enough."

The quiet man in the grey suit had come up and asked Peter, "Should we have a photograph now?" and Peter Jirapon had nodded, had said, "Unless Mr Green thinks it unlucky?" and now, years away from my youth, it was as though I looked through the lens of the camera.

While I was caught up in these memories the woman came back with food. I closed the book and said something to her about it. Her eyes widened as she picked up the book and opened it at the photograph.

"You are Martin Green!" she cried. Her eyes flashed with scornful recognition and I felt that I no longer had energy enough to face her. Though rage gripped me, I was tired beyond caring. I answered her somehow, and she threw more words at me, but I barely listened. I waited for my chance and demanded her silence about me. I left her and walked as quickly as I could from the house, in a fog of rage and shame and resentment, not caring where I went, but aching to find a sheltered corner where I could lie down and sleep.

I started towards the town but I could not face anything more until I had rested, and, breaking away from the track, stumbled down towards the river. On the flat I lay in the grass and rested, but did not sleep. Soon I heard voices. A light moved among the trees. I rose to my feet and would have moved away to hide myself better, but I was drawn towards the voices and the light, for I guessed that men were fishing on the river. I had been lonely too long for men like these.

I sat beside the men on the bank and was glad to be back in this simplicity, where words and talk do not go far past fish and weather and the river. I shared their flagon of dry red wine, and their food and fire and they did not ask who I was

or what I did on the river, and that was one way I could have known that I was with my own people again.

Lazily we talked around the fire, and while I told an old story I saw a light move towards us through the trees and then go out, and knew that someone was standing beyond the firelight watching. Then on a breath of air came the faintest hint of some perfume, and I relaxed and was not surprised when the woman from the house on the cliff came to the fire and asked for me by name, but I was so angry that I could have choked her and thrown her in the river, for I was settled comfortably with these men, and she had come to interfere and to give them something to talk about, which was something I felt I could not afford.

That was why I had to go with her, for I could see that their eyes were standing out on stalks, looking at her – and there was reason enough, for the dusky light of the fire made her seem unreal, as though she were some vision of the night, an image born in the flames of a fire to flicker in the minds of lonely men. But this did not soften my anger. I gripped her arm so that she would know my rage as I went with her, but we had not gone far when she began to snuffle and fell away from the track.

When we reached the house she ran past me to another room and I could hear her sobbing and my anger went cold on me. I poured her a drink and took it to her and when she had steadied down she made me up a bed and at last I could get the sleep which I was beginning to despair I would ever be allowed to have.

There was some business of me shouting in the night. She came to me and woke me and I was worried to find that I had been dreaming and had scratched at the capsule wound until I was bleeding. When she had gone back to her bed it struck me as funny that I did not know her name and yet we had been sitting talking quite naturally and she had worn some fantastic, almost invisible wisp of fabric which barely covered

her thighs. As I closed my eyes to sleep again, a dazzling picture flashed in my mind of those thighs, and the full rich body and her serious face as she knelt before me, and for a pleasurable vital moment the disturbing hunger of the male body leaped in me, and, savouring this, I fell asleep.

The next day she drove me to the place where Eliot Holmes lived.

26

From the occasional diary of Elizabeth Stevens

February tenth. Was it, perhaps a better day today? Busy around my own little house, my hut, my primeval cave, going through my day as though it was a bright tunnel with a night at each end, did I leave less time to think and feel?

In the bright singing day it seems that nothing can happen to him, but . . . oh God!, then it is night there, I had forgotten that. What terrible things could be happening to him in the night at the other end of the world. Now it is night here and day there; early morning, that time when fearful things can happen write faster stupid girl write faster where had you come to, what happened next? That morning? The first morning? . . . when there was that tension between us while we still laughed in each other's eyes over breakfast?

That tension between us like a tightening wire that finds strain buried in its length and suddenly rings like a stretched out bell . . . the quick tension between man and woman, knowing themselves on the very edge of some change fateful to them, and while there is still time, while they are still strangers, they draw back and study themselves, and each other, appraising, weighing, as though there is something which must be checked and settled before it is too late.

This happened while we talked and laughed, and then, our eyes meeting steadily and in silence, we were no longer strangers.

I thought that he would rest. That day had dawned and grown into full day for nothing but easiness and being lazy, but something drove him on, something that would not let him settle or rest, but I did not know then what that something was. He said that he must be off to see old Doctor Holmes as soon as we rose from the table, but I said what if the cantankerous old creature won't see you? He will see me all right he said he remembers me from a long way back. What will you see him about? I asked, leaning hard on my new certainty about this man, this Martin, but he would tell me nothing except that it was very important and that when it was over he could perhaps relax.

Hating this mystery, but not him, though annoyed with him, and surprised to find myself hurt and indignant, I said in a cool voice which I made as cool as I could that we could go at this very minute.

Caught up in his plans he did not notice in the slightest that I was so foolishly offended though I had done my best to make it clear to him by using this horrible voice that cost my parents plenty; when I was of the age for school and for the learning and using of a snooty voice. I went out, letting the door slam behind, but wasting this angry gesture, for I forgot my keys on the shelf and had to go back.

Even my precious Farabine was just another old surface vehicle to him and in my growing temper I handled the fuelfeed roughly and there were two noisy flashouts before it spun evenly and smoothly.

Past the ruts of the first mile of track we swung on to the River Highway and I could lie back and let the dear old thing whistle smoothly along in the clear morning air. My spirits rose again and I was ashamed of my tantrums. As though he had noticed anything! He sat beside me staring up the

unwinding road that rushed towards us and I felt that I was alone.

We passed the town on the bypass and were running around the bend of the river towards Holmes' outlet when he turned towards me and smiled at my sideways glance. He put his hand on my thigh and squeezed gently and said, "Please be patient with me, there is an awful lot on my mind. I promise that later I'll . . ." but what he would do later he did not say.

Before I could stop myself I struck his hand away. I thought that this would hurt him and began to regret it, but he smiled at me with a flash of wickedness and knowingness which it was not possible to resist, and I found myself laughing again, and again the day was charged with brightness.

Driving down the rough outlet was a noisy business but nobody came from the house to see who had come visiting. There was no answer to our knocking and calling, though smoke floated from a chimney, and it was not until we walked past the house to the river frontage that we saw a punt not far from the bank, and in it two men, back to back, fishing intently from each end of the punt.

One was the eccentric old doctor, dressed only in shorts, with a clustering of flies basking on his naked back, and the other, the squat native with the large head who is often seen with him at the university.

Martin called loudly, but though less than a hundred yards away, they pretended deafness, hoping that we would go away, gazing into the brown water with serious and ludicrous concentration.

Martin would not give up, and eventually Holmes turned to the native and he gruffly asked an annoyed question, "What do they want?" Instead of asking us the native seemed to ignore the question except to bow his head forward and close his eyes. He then spoke rapidly to Holmes, gesturing vigorously, but we could not understand what he said.

Holmes nodded and slacked off the rope that held them against the lazy current of the river, and with a few skilful strokes sculled the punt to the bank. Heavy and flabby and old, with baggy shorts hanging on his legs, he climbed out.

"Good morning, young woman," he grunted to me, and then ignoring me further, turned to Martin.

"Now, my boy. Have you kept up those exercises?" he asked. "Why haven't you been back? You can't imagine how much we have learned. We were only playing with it then. What was your name again, boy?"

"Green, sir. Martin Green."

"Oh yes, yes, yes. Young Green. Very promising. Very promising. Should have kept on with us y'know, pity. Great pity. Extraordinary good reality balance," he said, turning to me as though to a colleague. "Remarkable reaction index. Quite exceptional. Could have done something with him. I say, we could have done something with you, my boy. Could have made something out of you. Nice to have seen you. Now I must get back to my fishing." He took a step towards the punt.

The native plucked the slack bottom of Holmes' shorts and whispered fiercely to him, looking at Martin around the doctor's belly. Holmes shook his head sharply and pointed firmly to the boat, but the native still kept up his urgent whispering.

Martin stepped forward and said, "I'm sorry, Doctor. I must talk with you." Holmes shook his head and said, "Not now. No. I don't care. I have more fishing to do. Some other time."

Martin followed to the boat and stepped in as they pushed off from the bank. The small punt lurched and sat low in the water as Holmes sculled it away.

I sat myself patiently on a clump of grass and watched.

Martin talked in a low voice to Holmes, who kept his back turned and resumed his fishing. Several times he half lifted his head as though listening to what Martin was saying. The

native, behind Martin's back, kept trying to interrupt, and then losing patience, shouted so loudly that I could hear him clearly from the bank. "Is true, Doc! Is true! Man has this thing in him for death and pain! Is true! Must hear the man, Doc. Look near heart for little machine. Here is killing and hurting if little jiggers pushed together!"

Holmes turned and bellowed angrily, "Rubbish! Get on with your fishing. We are having a holiday from this stuff."

The native leaned forward and spoke briefly to Martin who listened closely, paused for a moment as if in doubt and then nodded. He hunched his shoulders as though bracing himself, while the native bowed his head and closed his eyes. Suddenly, I found myself standing with my hands to my mouth, a scream choking in my throat. I thought that Martin had fallen into a fit. He writhed and flung himself about the boat and then collapsed in a heap.

Holmes turned in dismay and screamed, "Stop, you fool! Stop!"

The native said calmly in his clear high voice, "Have stopped, Doc. Man is okeydoke. Pain jigger pushed together by me. Have seen this, Doc? Now listening to man?"

Holmes did not answer. He cast off the rope and sculled hurriedly to the bank. Between them they lifted Martin from the boat. As they placed him on the ground he groaned and raised himself stiffly. Holmes glanced at me with a stern and worried face. "I suggest that you go home, young woman. I don't see how you can be of any assistance in this."

I ignored him and went to Martin who sat with his head bent forward between his knees. "What will I do, Martin?" I asked. "I can't leave you with these lunatics."

He raised his face. Out of a face drawn tight with pain his clear blue eyes were steady and confident. "This is nothing. Nothing at all," he said. "If you only knew how well things are turning out. I hadn't dared to hope for as much. I may be even now near the end of my troubles. Please be patient,

I am sure that everything will go well. I will come to you as soon as I can. A day, maybe two. Will I come?"

"You want me to leave you here?" I asked. "I would rather stay."

"It would be best if you went."

"But this mystery?" I cried. "What is this all about? I will go mad with worry!"

He reached up to me and I bent forward to him, and with his arm around me he pushed his face against the hollow of my neck, turning his head from side to side, shaking his head in a sort of baffled desperation. "You must go," he said. "It can't be helped. You should never have become involved in this. God knows I didn't intend that. You must go. I will come to you at the first moment I can."

He kissed my cheek and without looking at him again I went away and drove home, back to my house, my lonely house, that had never been lonely before but had always been my pride and had always satisfied me until this day.

27

Martin Green

Holmes was very difficult. I had time to wonder whether he had always been like this and the years had smoothed out my memory of him, or whether those years had simply made him worse.

I was not so easily put off that I could be diverted by the ordinary rudeness of an old man. This was too critical a moment for me. I had the feeling of the gambler who puts down his last chip, on which all depends, and watches in a fury of impatience for the wheel to stop and leave his fate revealed.

When we found him, Holmes and a small native were

fishing from a punt on the river. At first he would not come ashore, but the native said something to him and he reluctantly paddled to the bank and spoke briefly to me. He remembered me, but it was clear that he was not to be weaned from his fishing. I went in the boat with them and tried to explain what I wanted, but he would not listen.

The native tugged at my sleeve from behind. "Can do things with thinking," he said proudly. "Seeing things inside men."

"Doc!" he shouted. "Thing in this man for death and pain. Hear the man, Doc!" He shouted out in a spate of battered English to Holmes, but I was not listening. Excitement to find that my flimsy hopes were becoming real in what this man had sensed made me deaf to what was happening.

I heard Holmes shout, "Rubbish! We are having a holiday." He still would not be taken from his fishing.

The native muttered beside me, "Let Doc see how pain thing does it, eh? Pushing jiggers together no trouble. Do this eh?"

"Well for God's sake, I hope you can tell one from the other!" I grunted. I braced myself against the expectation of pain, closing my mind as far as I could to the chance that the native might hit the wrong contact, but with a flicker of amusement, before the pain hit me and straightened me out, at what Holmes would look like if he found the bottom blown out of the boat and him swimming in the river.

Lying on the bank, with no remembered interval of time between, I found Holmes standing over me. One glance told me that he was convinced.

Elizabeth knelt beside me, white faced and afraid. As kindly as I could I sent her away, and the three of us went up to the house.

"You rude old bastard," I said to Holmes. "Are you satisfied now?"

"I'm just an old fool, Green," he grunted, "just a silly old fool, playing a sort of game with people. Now it's a habit." His face was serious and apologetic.

I explained what was in my mind and when I had come to the end he fired questions at the native. He was answered with a welter of singsong words and they both nodded solemnly.

"You came at the right time, Green," said Holmes. "This boy here is by far the most gifted Class 5 subject we have ever had. Ali Japong. He is sure that he can hold the mechanism open while we operate. I can't see any reason why I can't get a surgeon now and do it here so that there will be no talking about the business. Is that what you want?"

The dentist, I thought, that's what this reminds me of. This hollow sickness comes straight out of childhood. "The sooner the better," I said.

Holmes drove off to pick up the surgeon. Ali and I went back to the river.

"You like fishing?" I asked.

"Bloody oath! Catching one any day now, Doc saying. Happy sitting in boat all day. Ali happy too. Never catching fish but sun warm and not working."

I let the punt run down the river a bit and tried a more likely place downstream of a log. I pulled in a small callop and Ali's dark eyes gleamed with excitement.

"God Jesus, Green!" he cried. "Fishing for fish more better than fishing for fishing. Fish really in this dirty old river! God Jesus!"

Well! I thought; Holmes, the silly old cow, doesn't want to catch fish, just wants a pleasant loaf in the sun. When I hooked something a bit bigger I handed the line to Ali and he was playing this fish clumsily and eagerly when Holmes returned. He looked for us on the river and walked along the bank and saw what was happening. He let out a roar.

"Damn it all, Green!" he shouted. "You'll spoil the bloody boy!"

"You're ruined now all right," I cried happily. "No more sitting in the sun now, you bloody old fraud. He'll have you out on the river at dawn!"

He had the grace to grin shyly like a boy caught in mischief. I helped Ali with the fish and we pulled back against the current.

The long nosed man with Holmes was laughing. "This is Carter, Green," said the old man. "I've explained everything to him and he wants to give it a go!"

We shook hands. I tried to tell him that there was a good deal of danger in it for him but he would not listen.

There was some delay while we went thoroughly over everything and then I climbed up on a bare table and lay flat. Holmes stood beside me with a thin rubber mask. Carter smiled down his sharp nose and asked how I felt.

"I'm scared stiff!" I said, "but it's not a bad feeling to know that this will be the end of it one way or the other."

Holmes placed the mask over my face, and I began to count. I had a moment of panic, at the last instant and then sight faded and sounds tapered off into an echoing silence.

28

Journal of Psiatrics and Parapsychology. Vol. XXIV.
No. 11 Eliot Holmes (Murray University)

"An unusual example of the practical use of a Class 5 (Tkf) psi subject"

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The following account of a practical experiment in the use of Tkf to neutralize an explosive mechanism has unfortunately been hitherto suspended from publication by the exigencies of "Security" and is now, at this late date, presented as a matter of general interest to specialists in this field.)

The problem in the case under review, while in some ways

most unorthodox; and in some respects, rather spectacular; can be clearly and simply summarized. The subject (some may prefer the use of the word "victim"), a man in his middle thirties, was in the unfortunate position of having been implanted by surgical means with an elaborate micro-mechanism which was subject to remote activation by SUHF radio waves in such a way that he would be subjected to varying degrees of inconvenience ranging from severe physical discomfort sufficient to bring about unconsciousness, to the explosion of the mechanism and consequent death by this means. These physical manifestations of the mechanism were primarily arranged to be set off by the closing of micro-relays which were sensitive not only to remote radio activation but had also been pre-set to react to any form of surgical interference, including exposure to X-rays, K-radiation, etc.

The mechanism having been installed in Europe, M.G., the subject, devised and applied an effective electrical screening device, and, protected by this, immediately travelled to Australia on the assumption that the radio waves which could have actuated the mechanism were probably of rather short range. This assumption proved to be well-founded. He then, having a general knowledge of the progress of psychiatric research, approached the writer and it was fortunate that I was approached at a time when the exploration, isolation and examination of Tkf abilities of primitive peoples was my main preoccupation.

At this time I was engaged in an exhaustive programme covering the telekinetic ability of Ali J., a native of Sumatra, with whom I had had consistent and unprecedented results when engaged in field work in that area (see "Distribution of Psi Ability Factors in a Primitive Racial Sub-group", *Jour. Psi. and Ppsy.*, XXIII, No. 2). For further study I had arranged that Ali J. accompanied me to Australia and lived with me under my constant care and supervision. (This was, of course, the official intention - in practice the care and supervision

were largely exercised by Ali J. by means of his paranormal abilities.)

When first approached by M.G. I admit that I was completely sceptical of the existence of the mechanism, which he claimed exposed him to considerable danger, and I considered that a simple solution to his trouble may well be found in the fields of normal psycho-analysis and mental therapy. Ali J., who was present at the time, disagreed strongly with this view and, in fact, attempted to describe to me the nature of the alleged mechanism which he had explored by suprasensory means. Failing in this, he took the drastic step of applying strong Tkf to the micro-relay of the pain-actuating circuit and the effects of this were such as to convince me that the case was as stated by the subject. M.G. was immediately thrown into severe muscular spasm which was accompanied by considerable generalized pain and resulted in brief unconsciousness.

The case was then discussed with M.G., whose view was that an attempt should be made to remove the mechanism surgically, provided that a surgeon could be found who was prepared to take the risk of the mechanism exploding, as it was his view that the explosive charge was sufficiently powerful to cause considerable injury and possibly death to persons within six feet of the explosion. He pointed out that the Tkf necessary to hold open the relay of the exploder circuit would probably be less than that applied by Ali J. in actuating the pain circuit, but that this force would have to be applied over the whole period of the operation without the slightest relaxation. He suggested that if Ali J. had any reason to suspect that his control over the relay was slipping he should immediately warn the surgeon who should then remove himself to a safe distance with the minimum delay. This distance, he added, should be at least ten feet.

The Tkf details were then discussed with Ali J. and after he had agreed that he could exert sustained Tkf over a

considerable time, but one which he could not specify, I then agreed that the operation should be carried out with the least possible delay.

It was then found that J. Carter (Demonstrator of Thoracic Surgery, Murray University) would be available immediately.

As a preliminary step I placed Ali J. under light hypnotic sleep to improve his powers of concentration, and implanted a sub-conscious command that he would not be in any way distracted from his task.

At midday a conference was held with Dr Carter and the personal danger to him was fully explained by M.G. and, as one would expect, Carter agreed, without any hesitation, to operate. Ali J. was then instructed to make a suprasensory examination of the mechanism, but considerable difficulty arose when he was asked to sketch the object which he was sensing. I then employed a device which has been used before in my work with primitive subjects and which can be generally recommended in a case where visualization and manual depictive ability of a subject do not correspond.

The subject is asked to describe in terms of known objects what he sees or senses, these known objects are assembled into a sketch by the interrogator and the resultant sketch is with ease corrected at the direction of the subject. This process was carried out and after reference to various sized "oranges", "thin legs" and so forth, and subsequent correction, we received a fairly accurate picture of the object and its location.

The mechanism appeared to consist of a line of three merging spheres on a common axis with from each sphere four thin wires or leads, two wires from each sphere in the horizontal plane, opposed, and two opposed wires vertically. The twelve wires or leads each being connected to adjacent body tissue, probably by the use of plastocol or similar type of surgical adhesive. The size of the spheres varied from eight mm. (the central sphere) to five mm. M.G. suggested that it seemed probable that the central sphere was the exploding

device and the smaller end spheres were pain-actuating circuit and tracer signal generator respectively. The wires, he suggested, were multi-functional, acting variously as radio signal generators and receivers, connexions to the nervous system to allow activation by the pain-circuit, shock absorbing mountings, and most important in the present case, as the means by which the device was protected against interference. It would probably be found, he ventured, that the breaking of the continuity of any wire would detonate the exploder. It was agreed that this was indeed the probable nature of the device.

Dr Carter then decided that, in order to reduce the surgery period to a minimum an attempt should be made to sever the wires and remove the mechanism intact while the relays were held open by Tkf. This seemed preferable to any attempt to excise the terminates of the wires at their attachments to body tissue. This being agreeable to all concerned, I thought it as well to test out the Tkf ability of Ali J. by closing the pain relay for a very short period, in order to test for PR fluctuation. The result of this test being satisfactory and all preparations having been made I administered Authenene timed for twenty minutes. Ali J. was then instructed to hold open the exploder relay and when he signalled that this was being done Carter incised the original surgical opening and quickly located the mechanism.

Difficulty was then found in severing the wires, which were made of a stainless alloy of considerable hardness. I was not satisfied with the condition of Ali J. At eight minutes he was perspiring freely and breathing very rapidly and I suggested that Carter quicken his efforts. At this stage only two wires had been severed by working to and fro until they fractured.

At ten minutes Ali J. showed signs of considerable distress and shortly after that cried out "Slipping!", or something to that effect. With remarkable speed Carter then seized the

body of the mechanism with forceps and dragged it brutally from the opening, at the same time hurling it to the corner of the room, where it immediately exploded. The surgical area was quickly covered and further anaesthetic administered, and the dust having subsided, the damaged areas to which the wires had been attached, were treated and the opening closed by adhesive.

On examination the explosive was seen to have damaged the wooden flooring, joists, etc., over an area of four feet square and some damage was done to the stonework of the walls, several large stones having been reduced to powder and rubble. The four persons in the room suffered from temporary blast effect. M.G. seemed greatly relieved on recovering consciousness, and apart from some soreness in the surgical area was in quite fair condition.

29

From the occasional diary of Elizabeth Stevens

February eleventh. Three days now; three aching empty worrying frightened days, and three nights so infinitely endless that I might well wonder . . . has the sun plunged to a standstill, does it now hang in stillness, burning for ever in those skies at the other side of the world; has something gone wrong with the road of the sun about our world? Ah . . . he would be welcome to my sun, if it would help him to have it there.

But nothing can help him, no world or sun or stars, bright day or black night; I know that; for I sat before him while he told me where he must go, and I sat with my heart shrinking until it was a heart of dust, a cold dry pebble of fear.

That was on the day when he made me leave him.

How I tried to make that day pass, after I drove home,

leaving him with that rude old man, not knowing then how terrible the mystery that he faced.

I cleaned my house until there was nothing left undone. I faced my desk and cudgelled my poor mind for the sober words suitable to students of history. I took out those words, those thin words, not real, racked and filed in dull books, and dropped them on paper before me and when I read them they meant nothing.

And then . . . Gordon Clarey came. How I hated him! To hear in the dusk a vehicle whining and bouncing on the track; to rush to the door and wait with beating heart; and then to see Gordon!

Oh . . . how studied and careful Gordon Clarey is! A man who seems to know that he has put himself together by his own careful efforts to a design worked out in his own calculating mind. You feel that he stands aside somehow, to watch himself, trying to share with you the delight you must have in the perfection of this creation. With great care he is old-fashioned; as carefully casual; as careful to seem hearty or brilliant as occasion demands. . . . Oh, Lizzie Stevens, you are a cat, you are a turncoat! Will you say that you never noticed any of this before? Did I never notice before how possessive he is, how everything is taken for granted? For granted that I will be glad of the chance to prepare a meal for him, to listen to his interminable opinions with proper respect, to have all I say dealt with promptly and firmly and academically as though I am a child who has everything to learn?

I was unfair . . . there was no change in Gordon Clarey, and in the slow course of years I had grown used to these things, perhaps had even come to have some slight approval for them.

But . . . poor Gordon! . . . as soon as he walked in I began to measure him against this other man, and that was hardly fair to Gordon; to place him against someone simple and

vital and with no need of props and trappings and carefully worked out pieces of business and habits and ways of talking. I began to search for a real Gordon Clarey, buried under all this stuff and I could not find him.

Could it ever have possibly happened to me that he might have worn me down into a kind of tired approval of him, that I might even have come to marry him . . . to find myself surprised one morning to be Mrs Professor Clarey? Oh dear!

After we had eaten, Gordon teetered his chair back on its hind legs and watched me tidy up, outlining for me the hidden character and motives of every acquaintance we shared at Murray, making every point with a shake of the stem of his rough pipe that would never stay alight for more than the time it takes a match to burn.

How I wished that he would go away and leave me to my lonely waiting, to do my worrying in peace and silence. I wondered hysterically whether there wasn't something about the house that I could slip into his coffee that would make him sleep, or would even make him sick, and would bring this penetrating monologue to a sudden stop. That was just a wild thought; not to be acted on, and in any case I could think of nothing that would suit this vicious purpose. I could only hope that this melodious, odious voice would run down and that he would go home soon enough of his own accord, but this was a slim hope, for he had the manner of a man who has settled in, and I knew that there was a battle ahead, first the battle of words, more or less honourable proposals of marriage, then, finding it late, the thought that he might perhaps stay the night, and the battle after this. I waited for the confident smile, that would hint that all my secret thoughts were known to him, that he had humoured me enough, that, surely, I could resist him no longer.

"Elizabeth . . . I think we've waited long enough!" he said at last with an honest smile, teasing and serious at the same time. "We should be married."

I never liked him more than at this moment, but poor Gordon had left his moment a few days too late. I could not even be kind to him.

"Please don't start that again," I said tiredly.

Gordon blundered then. "Please don't talk like a little fool," he said confidently. "You know we would make a wonderful team . . . we have the same interests and the same friends. We find each other attractive. I can't see how you can possibly feel that you can put up one good argument against it."

"Oh . . . but I can!" I said, turning against him. "I have no intention of ever marrying you . . . that seems a good argument to me."

"Oh nonsense! Utter nonsense!" he said angrily. "You just don't know your own mind. You need someone to lead you."

I was too discouraged and tired and worried to answer, and he went on and on in this strain.

I wanted to say to him . . . you stupid hateful man why don't you go home? but I knew that it served me right, for in a way I had kept him up my sleeve, in reserve, by not discouraging him right at the beginning. Some loyalty he deserved from me, so I let it go on without protesting, hardly answering, and it became worse and worse as it went on, and I had at last to speak in my own defence. I parried all of his suggestions with my need for freedom, which I made much of, I said . . . I could not bring myself to be tied to any man and I thought at last he might go this time without any fuss, for he became quiet. But he soon made it clear that there was something else in his mind. He began to develop this new theme, that I could still have my freedom if that was what I wanted, but a woman of my age and temperament should have dealings with men for her peace of mind and body, and I was thinking, here it comes, now he starts to make himself sound like a sovereign medical remedy for the sexual problems of spinsters, but I stopped listening to him for I heard

the whine of another vehicle on the track, and as soon as I was sure, leaving him buried in a torrent of improper proposals, ran to the door.

I waited, staring into the night, until the vehicle stopped, but saw only vague shadows in the light thrown back by the trees. There were quiet voices and a quiet laugh, and the slamming of a door. The vehicle turned in the narrow track and bumped away. A shadow walked towards me, and a voice greeted me, and at last I was sure. I ran across the gravel and clung to him and sobbed, until I realized that he was flinching in the grip of my arms.

"You're hurt!" I cried.

"No, it's all right. Don't be a damn' fool," he said, and reached for me and kissed me.

But we could not stand there for ever – I remembered Gordon waiting inside, waiting and wondering and listening, and I could have wept at this blight on the wonderful moment.

He followed me into the light. Gordon had poured himself a drink and stood by the cabinet, lighting his pipe, with a ridiculous air of ownership, as though he lived here and who was this battered man the Little Woman was bringing in, with his empty sleeve and face pale under the tan?

I looked from one man to the other and then wearily I asked . . . "Have you two met each other?" and straight away began to introduce them.

"Professor Clarey – Mr . . ." I broke off in confusion and looked at Martin.

He smiled. "Yes. It's all right now."

He swung on Gordon. "I'm Green, Clarey – Martin Green. Wrote all about me in a book, shouldn't need an introduction after that, should we?"

The smile had left his mouth and it was a tight line, his eyes hard and vicious, and there was a meagre satisfaction for me, seeing his contempt about this not turned on me. I was

too ready with my satisfaction. He spoke softly to me. "Perhaps I should ask Miss Stevens if I am still welcome here?" He asked this, quite unsmiling and with a questioning look.

"Please!" I cried, but I could not explain to them how complex the plea contained in this single word, with Gordon standing there. That he should separate me from Gordon in his mind, that he should never doubt his welcome in my house, that he would let this incident run out a quiet course and die a natural death, this was my plea. That Gordon should have the grace to go. Gordon was not the man who could receive a silent message of this sort.

"You might care to explain some time what this fellow is doing here," he said. "I thought that you would know better than most people the grubby, dirty, ineffectual history behind him." This was said as though to a class of ignorant students, with a supercilious edge to each word.

It was impossible for them both to stay in this room. It was for me to make an open choice and there was no hesitation in my heart.

"Mr Green is my guest, Gordon. You must forgive me if I do not ask you to stay here any longer. It is late and you have a long drive home."

He could not believe that, faced with this choice, I had not chosen him. His eyes bulged as though a great pressure had built up in him and would in a moment force them out of his head. He spluttered on the edge of spiteful anger and then plunged headlong into waspish speech.

"That's quite preposterous, you silly girl – you don't know what you are saying!" His voice was pitched high in indignation. "I have a duty towards you, if not as a close friend then at least as your professional superior, and that duty would not let me leave you here with this man. He should be safely locked away, driven out of society as a criminal, and not allowed to parade his corruption as an insult to decency

and integrity!" The glass trembled in his hand. "Only my position as your guest holds me from throwing him out of your house!"

With these words he seemed to realize that he had placed one foot irrevocably over the edge of a dangerous precipice, for he trailed off into silence and studied his glass intently as though afraid to see the effect of what he had said.

I stole a worried glance at Martin. There was no expression on his face. He might almost not have heard or understood what had been said. When he spoke his voice was as neutral as his face, flat and without expression.

"This must be very embarrassing for Miss Stevens. We should consider that, Clarey. We should both leave, I think. Perhaps you could give me a ride down the road. This would give me a chance to have a little talk with you that I have promised myself."

The words of this last sentence fell quietly in the room with the shock of pebbles dropped one by one into the cold silence of a well.

Neither the words, nor Martin's soft dead voice, could have so charged the air with violence – something came from his deadly stillness, the calmness of his face, but some frightening power was in the room as if a tiger snake had uncoiled itself lazily and was poised in the moment of stillness before striking.

This was not lost on Gordon. He put down his glass with a shaking hand and turned his face, suddenly pale, towards me. "Perhaps I should go," he muttered. He received no answer, and a flicker of spirit came into his eyes. "Your friend can walk, if he goes. I do not want him with me."

He was further encouraged by the silence that greeted this statement, or perhaps, as many people do when confronted by silence, he felt that he must desperately end it regardless of the wisdom of further speech, and it was clear that in a moment he would do himself further damage by blundering

into more useless words. These words surged up in his eyes, but before he could speak Martin stepped towards him and spoke so suddenly that Gordon jumped away nervously, brushing the glass to the floor with his elbow.

"Well then, get the hell out of here, you educated bloody ferret!" cried Martin savagely, at the end of his patience. "Get out! and take your ferret stink and your ferret talk with you!"

Pinching his lower lip between his teeth, hesitating in indecision, Gordon broke before the iron face that looked into his. He flounced past me to the door, saying like a child, "Don't think that I'm staying here any longer to be insulted!"

I would have said something to him, perhaps to fix some blame on him, or to soften his defeat. I wonder what I would have said; which of the words tumbling in my mind would have come out; but there was not time. The door slammed, an engine whined savagely, and he was gone.

Martin leaned against the window and turned his head slightly in a sidelong glance at my face. "I'm afraid that was pretty bad form." This had the flavour of a tentative question, but not a question I was ready to answer.

"Please pour me a drink," I asked stiffly. The violence that had been in the room had left me with a hollow feeling and the thought that I would be sick. I had been so heavily and emotionally on Martin's side against Gordon that I felt ashamed of myself and did not know what to say and yet I ached to find some way of easing the tension which was again between us.

Raising the glass to him as though drinking a toast, I managed to say calmly, "To the end of your troubles, whatever they are!" and drank deeply so that the fire of the wine ran through me and burned away the hollowness that weakened me.

I looked sternly at him, catching him in a fleeting

expression of guilt and uncertainty, for all his confidence and outward calmness. But the stern scolding of my eyes was betrayed by the twitching of my lips in their need to smile, and he saw the fake for what it was, met me with the unashamed grin of a boy and reached out towards me with his arm.

Pulling away from him, I was caught up in a whirl of doubting and confusion. Around me was the invisible and impenetrable barrier which Gordon had conjured up against himself, a barrier made of all the resistance I had ever used against men in all the years since a man first looked at me with that hunger in his eyes I have come to know. But there was no lustful pride or savagery in those eyes which then met mine, no greed or hunger, nothing but gentleness and the loneliness of a man alone in himself, and seeing this my own eyes brimmed with tears, my armour of resistance fell away and on that instant left me for all time and in coming to him I knew that I offered myself and thought that he would know this.

Perhaps it was this drawing away before I moved towards him that led him to fancy some uncertainty in my mind, for he did not kiss me but hugged me in a brotherly way with his one arm and looked questioningly at my face which was so close to his. I felt that I had been forward enough and told him to be comfortable in a chair and I would get him some food. I wanted to dance to the kitchen and sing with delight, for I knew him to be my chosen victim with whom I now played, so that I might better enjoy it when the time came to devour him.

It was after this meal that I sat before him on the floor, while he lay on the divan looking down at me, and told me of his feud with Bronstern, of what had happened in Charetz, of Bronstern's plans, and of how Holmes had put an end to his own immediate danger.

This was a long story, a sober story of horror and violence

and fear and there was such sweeping reality in it; words and phrases brought a tingling to my spine so that I shivered in fear, as I would in a wind blowing on me from a graveyard, carrying the breath of marble slabs, and rank unkempt weeds, and cruel tidings of eternity and death.

We sat in this quiet room, as safe a place as one could find in the whole wide world, and I felt that, if I could, I would pull this room tight around me, and fix it, and have no part, ever, or in any way, of this other horrible world.

When the last word had come I said, "That's the end of it? It's all over now?" and the question trembled in my voice.

He was silent, I watched his face anxiously and his eyes met mine. Calmness and resolution looked out at me.

"I'm sorry, girl," he said. "It's not over."

He paused, and I thought that he was trying to find the kindest words with which to let me down, and I waited, with sick fear close to my heart, for what he would say.

"I have to go back. A few days here if you will have me, a short rest, and a chance to get this arm working again, and then I must go. If I could, I would get someone else to do the job, but this time all the cards are mine, and I can't trust anyone else to play them."

"There must be someone else!" I cried. "Have you tried to find someone else? Why must it be you? Even if you must go you need more time to rest. Stay here with me!"

"It's this business of the capsules that Bronstern has planted in his people. Just in time he has brought them under control so that it is quite impossible for them to get rid of him. Revolution was in the air and some of the group were getting restive, deciding for a change. They must keep Bronstern alive now, for only he can prevent them from blowing up. Don't you see what that means? If someone can control Bronstern he can control all Bronstern's men, and through

them the whole Federation. I can do that, I know that with any luck I can sit behind Bronstern and play on his fear of me until he breaks. There is another sort of button planted deep in Bronstern which only I can press, a primitive unreasoning fear which only I understand. Remember that I have known him for many years. Lived with him and watched him. That is why it must be me."

"But why must it be done at all?" I questioned frenziedly: "What does it matter to us what they do to each other over there? What business is it of ours? We are on the other side of the world!"

"Heavens, girl! That is no question to come from a historian. Why do you think they are making these weapons? Look back over a couple of centuries. . . . Napoleon, Bismarck, Wilhelm, Hitler, Stalin, the Cold War, the Space Weapons, the Hot Peace, the first Atom ban, Bilanski, Bluff Bombing - it's a long unbroken story of the same crazy chunk of the world wanting ownership, leadership, wanting one great man to tell them what to do. Wanting to terrorize and be terrorized. Then Istforce 1 and the Fifteen Nation Agreement, the first break in this ancient tradition of death and slavery. For the first time the Eurasian tradition, that might is right, was challenged.

"But this dreary, shabby Federation of Eurasia breeds itself a new leader and hides itself from a world which now looks in another direction - towards peace and self-determinism. Under Bronstern and the man he replaced, it separated itself from the rest of the world and behind a wall of silence and mystery they make plans to get the world back to the old ways and at the centre of this is Bronstern; it all hangs on him. Let me get hold of Bronstern and I'll fix this Federation and they'll stay fixed. If they want terror then by God! they'll get it! Perhaps they have had enough of that! It would be even better if that were so."

I could not bring myself to protest further. The scale of

these things was too vast for me to grasp, I felt small and unimportant and of no account.

He went on in a quieter voice, lazily talking as though to himself.

"When that's been done I'll come back here and grow oranges, and fish on the river, and grow up to be an old old man. If for some reason I don't get back you can write a big fat book about it that nobody will ever read."

His voice trailed off and I thought that he was asleep and I would have tiptoed away but he muttered, "For God's sake don't let that pompous bastard Clarey write it!"

I brought some blankets and covered him and then I went to my bed. Miserably I dozed off to sleep, to awake later in the darkness in the grip of all the fears that had been in my mind, the fears that had not slept when I did. I knew that I had been calling out; my voice still rang in my ears, "Martin! Martin!"; a cry of terror and longing.

I thought that he would have been too deep in sleep to hear this, but I heard him stir and he asked, "What's the matter?" in a choked, sleepy voice as though his tongue was too big for his mouth.

"It's nothing," I said. "A dream. Go back to sleep."

He muttered something else; I thought in annoyance at being disturbed; and then I heard him in the kitchen running a glass of water. I switched on my light to see the time, and saw that he stood in my doorway with a blanket around him, hair tousled and eyes half closed, and swaying slightly as if he was drunk.

"What's the matter?" he asked again.

I could not think what to say. "I wondered whether your bed was comfortable," I said nervously.

His eyes opened and in an instant he had come to life.

"Oh!" he said, a long drawn out suggestive sound. Raised eyebrows and a wicked flash of blue eyes. ". . . and, what are we to do if my bed is not comfortable?"

"Well, never mind," I said in confusion. "It's quite comfortable. I know it is!"

"Don't dodge around so with your words," he reproved. "You know that my bed is far too narrow, and you have this great wide bed all to yourself."

"We could change beds then," I said, and I could not keep from smiling.

"At this time of the night?" He threw his blanket to the corner of the room and said softly. "Move over, my girl!"

Oh God! that my love was here and he in my arms again.

Pretty poetry I once thought, but not that now! A sad cry, a cry from life, reaching me in simple words across an endless row of years.

How I wish that I knew more of men. How strange these things are! That there should be tears on this ravaged face so close to mine at that moment, when unbearable life burned in my every vein. That agony of joy and fulfilment.

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COMSECCANBERRA. Telerecord—02/2/09. Inward -
Clarey Scurrey

Switch: Mr Scurrey a Professor Clarey is calling from Murray S A

J.S.: I will take it on this line

Caller: Its Gordon here Joe

J.S.: Full name please for record

Caller: This is Professor Gordon Farell Clarey of Murray University

J.S.: What can we do for you Gordon

Caller: Joe I ran across Martin Green yesterday he is staying near here at the house of a Miss Stevens

J.S.: Martin Green so what

Caller: What do you mean so what I thought you should know I thought it was my duty to let you know

J.S.: Well now you have told me I know now do I not

Caller: What are you going to do about it

J.S.: What do you think I should do about it

Caller: Was he not put under deport warrant when he left

J.S.: Not to my knowledge

Caller: He has been in another country for more than five years and that says that he has to reapply for entry

J.S.: Do you know that he has not done that from your own knowledge or are you acting on assumption

Caller: I am assuming that he would not have been granted reentry permit

J.S.: Why

Caller: Because of his past record

J.S.: What record

Caller: You should know what record I am getting the impression that you are being obstructive

J.S.: You mean the record as per your wonderful book

Caller: Have you forgotten that you yourself and your department supplied data on which part of that book is based

J.S.: Firstly we only let you have unclassified data what we let you have was only part of the story and what you got you would not have got at all but for your respected uncle Senator Farrell and his friends and secondly had we known how you would twist the whole thing around to work off personal spite against Green we would have clamped down hard on you and on your uncle and everything would have been classified absolute security

Caller: This has gone far enough if this is what happens when people pass on information to your department in the

foolish belief that they are carrying out their duty to the country

J.S.: Do not give me that line you think that you can use this department as a stalking horse my suggestion is you have another think coming.

Caller: My last word you have another think coming when the papers get hold of this

J.S.: My last word switch witness required

Switch: This conversation is being recorded and witnessed by Faith Maria Teargarten secretary of nineteen Broome Avenue Canberra full names of parties please

J.S.: Joseph Harry Scurrey Commonwealth Officer

Switch: Your full name please sir

Caller: This has gone far enough I am about to hang up

J.S.: Hang up and I will have two men knocking at your door inside an hour play this any way you like professor

Caller: Gordon Farrell Clarey assistant professor of history Murray University

J.S.: I Joseph Harry Scurrey an officer of the Australian Commonwealth under powers vested in me under the Defence Secrets Act 1983 now declare that the subject of this conversation and in particular the presence in Australia of Martin Watson Green Commonwealth agent is an official secret and is not to be disclosed to any other party by Gordon Farrell Clarey and that the punishment for any such disclosure will be not more than a fine of one thousand pounds or imprisonment for five years or both and I direct that this communication be now acknowledged

Caller: I hear you if you have no further objection I will now terminate this conversation

J.S.: Thank you professor now that our friend has gone Miss Teargarten will you please rearrange my appointments for today as I will be away for several hours ask Mr Hunt to come to my office right away and get hangar one to run a chopper out for me

With the capsule safely out it would have been easy to give way to the temptation to loaf around pleasantly for quite a while as Elizabeth Steven's guest and it was, perhaps, just as well that things started to move of their own accord and the decision was taken out of my hands.

Though I was still sore where the capsule had been wrenched from my body and I was so tired that I found it difficult to relax, these handicaps could easily be cured in a short period. My left arm was recovering well, it was in any case slight enough to allow some reasonable use of this limb. It would need pampering for a while longer but in a few days it should not hamper me unduly.

These minor annoyances were so much overshadowed by the feelings of relief and gratitude which had leaped in me, when I came out of the anaesthetic and saw the grinning faces of Holmes and Ali and Carter close to mine, in a cloud of dust, that they seemed of little importance.

When I left these three good men, feeling myself so deeply in their debt that I could never repay them, and was driven to Elizabeth by Carter late in the evening, lightheartedness rode with me and I was not much dampened at finding Clarey there, strutting as though he owned the house and all that was in it. This could have turned out unpleasantly but I was carefully polite to Clarey and he soon left.

A few days later, after having spent most of the morning in bed, I was sitting sleepily outside the house, soaking up the warmth of the sun and quiet peace of the valley. Over the town a chopper circled lazily, a shimmering speck, the noise of its awkward threshing reaching me in small waves of sound. Without curiosity I watched it steady on a course which would bring it over the house. When it was close and

low it slowly circled the house and the two men in the transparent nose looked down towards me. One waved to me and I raised a half-hearted arm in answer. It passed over the house. Throttled back, and whistling quietly, it slipped off the last thirty feet and settled on the track.

I strolled around to where the chopper sat with that look of utter exhaustion, vanes sagging as though they could never again lift this ungainly thing into the air. Two men climbed from it and walked towards me. Without any great surprise I recognized the tall thin man in the lead and shook hands with him.

"Joe Scurrey!" I said with pretended disgust. "The original Bastard from the Bush!"

He turned to his offsider. "This is Martin Green. Mart, this man's name is Hunt. One of our promising young men."

"If Mr Hunt has come all this way to promise me something," I said, "I'm sorry to say he's wasting his time!"

Scurrey glanced at Hunt. "There you are, sharpest man in the trade. What did I tell you?"

Hunt smiled, sheepishly, and without any enthusiasm at all.

"Why didn't you let us know you were coming in?" asked Scurrey.

"Well, of course, I would have," I answered. "That is, if I'd wanted you to know or thought that it was any of your damn' business!"

I thought back, and muttered angrily, "Clarey! Of course. Clarey!"

Scurrey rubbed his hands together as though he had just sold something. He grinned at the other. "Sharp, eh? Sharp. Just like I told you. Picks up the long beam right out there and homes in like a rocket!"

Hunt said sourly, "I know it is not my place, sir, but I imagine that could be construed as a breach of confidence."

"So what?" said Scurrey. "Plenty more where that came from. I've got all the confidence in the world."

"Joe," I broke in, "stuff the comic dialogue. Send the young fellow for a walk by the river and we'll have a talk."

Hunt looked uncomfortable. Scurrey jerked a thumb at the chopper and said, "Haven't you got some notes to write up or something? We'll just walk up and down here in the sun." Hunt nodded curtly and walked away. When he had gone Scurrey became serious.

"What's the matter, Mart? Are you playing this right through on your own? If you want it like that I'll put up all the cover I can for you. But something should be done to keep the chief from blowing up. There was a red hot signal from Snow and the liaison man from SEC.U.K. is right on us for news every day. They want to blow you out of the sky!"

"How much do you know?" I asked. "Have they sent you a fac. on my report to Snow?"

"That's all we've had. That and this blast from Snow. Nothing else. Just a great big handful of nothing. A hole in the air where Green ought to be."

"What more can you expect?" I growled, and I made no effort to hide my anger. "I tried to play it right with Snow. I tried to tell him - Look! I'm a human bomb. I'm walking around trying not to blow up. Snow only has to look at me, dial my code, turn over in bed, anything! Then bang! blood and guts all over the place. What then? Snow tugging at his moustache muttering, 'Gad! Fancy this colonial feller doin' a messy thing like that! Then the tallow-brained galah tries to bring me in with two of his comic operators! We wouldn't have got outside the front gate!"

"Calm down, boy. I'm with you. No need to shout, makes young Hunt nervous. The chief has had a big piece of Snow over that. Don't be too hard on the dear Colonel. In the first place he didn't believe the stuff you got on the RLW. He was against giving any help to get you over to Chartz because he claimed that you were being fed a bait. You must give him that."

"I give him full marks for that," I admitted. "Where he was wrong was in assuming that because it was a bait it was all faked. It wasn't. It's ten times worse than we thought. The thing's perfect, not just some crude experiment, and it works. God! I should know that! I manage to get back and tell Snow in the simplest words what it's all about. I tell him, one move from you and they'll blow me up; and what does he do? The one thing that's guaranteed to make them press the button! What am I supposed to make out of that?"

Scurrey frowned. "It's not that simple. You have to try and see it from Snow's angle. He says that either your report is true or it isn't. If it isn't true it does no harm to pull you in and ask a few questions."

"And if it is true?" I asked angrily.

"He says that he had a hard decision to make. If it's true then the GD boys have such a hold over you that with your inside knowledge you endanger the whole network. It was his duty, he says, to consider you expendable."

I chewed that over and then I agreed. "It's not easy for me to take an objective view of it. I can see that, sitting on Snow's fat bum in Snow's well padded chair, with all the dubious stuff that you cows have fed him about me, I might be glad of a nice clearcut chance of getting rid of this shady colonial feller. Look, Joe. I've had nearly enough of this black sheep business!"

"That needn't have much to do with it, excepting that Snow may have felt better able to trust you if he had known the whole story. You agreed that the number of people who knew that this 'disgrace to his country' and all that stuff was a cover, would be strictly limited. Wasn't it your idea in the first place?"

"That doesn't make me any less tired of it. I just want to get clear of it all. It's not even much practical use any more. There was some reason in it when I had to do things on an

unofficial basis that the Government needed to disclaim. But that must be over by now!"

"Wait until we get this capsule thing out of you," said Scurrey. "You'll probably feel different about it then."

I stared in amazement. "Oh yes! You have to get that out of me. How are you going to do that?"

"Don't know yet - haven't had enough time to think about it. Have you any ideas on it?"

"What do you know about psi factors?" I enjoyed leading him on.

"That stuff about ghosts you mean? Poltergeists, telepathy, that stuff?"

"That's the stuff," I said. "You really keep up with things, don't you?"

"Background," he said smugly. "Read a lot of stuff. Never know when it might come in handy. But what's that got to do with it?"

"You know all about it. I thought you would have guessed. Tfk," I said; "telekinetic force. Mental ability to move objects at a distance."

He looked puzzled. "Are you crazy? That wouldn't work. All you'd get would be Green with a bloody great hole in him and a surgeon without any arms. Come on, son. This is something we have to be practical about. Never mind all this ghost stuff!"

I stood there laughing at him.

"What's so funny?" he wanted to know.

"Joe; you walked right in to that," I said. "It's out. Ghost stuff and all!"

I pulled up my shirt and traced the scar.

He thumped me on the back. "Jesus, Mart! That's terrific!" It was his turn to laugh, he kept thumping me on the back, and I was curiously moved by his delight, for he is one of the tough boys, the really tough ones.

"Now it's time to talk," I said.

I roughed out a plan for him and he listened closely and took notes, and when I had finished he stood in the sun silently reading his notes, and then lit them and watched them burn.

"It's all laid on. I'll be back here midday of the seventh." He seemed ill at ease. He was ready to go, but there was still something he wanted to say.

"Look, Mart. Why don't you make up your mind to get out of the game if you manage to pull this off. You can't go on for ever. Haven't you had enough?"

"Jesus! Have I had enough? Joe - if I could get out of this one, I would, I'd let one of the young fellers have it. I've played with that way of doing it in my mind but it won't do. I'm holding this one, it's all there worked out in my mind. I'll push it through somehow. There's just one thing. It's the longest shot I've ever played. Supposing I don't get through it. Will you try and straighten up the record a bit? I never meant it to go so far."

"You needn't worry about that - it's all lined up. The chief would have mentioned it before but it was a bit embarrassing. Like telling a chap you'll see he gets a wonderful funeral."

"Righto," I said. "Righto. That's enough about it. I just thought that I'd mention it."

We shook hands and he went over to the chopper. The jets whistled and the drooping vanes straightened and disappeared in a disc of dancing light. I watched it rise and nose down into flying trim and come threshing over the house.

I went inside. Elizabeth had dressed and was standing at the window watching the chopper go away over the river. She looked nervously at me.

"Who were those men?" she asked.

"Old friends," I said cheerfully. "Comsecurity. They'll be back for me in a couple of days."

She gave me a haunted look and began to weep.

"God damn it!" I said. "I thought we'd settled all that."

From the Secret Journal of Ewald Smick, Vice-Consul for Peace in the Great Democracies

I will write in my journal again.

I have something to think about, a faint ray of hope, and the writing clears my mind. Things become plainer to me, and while I write the mortal fear of a terrible end, which is constantly with me, does not press so heavily. There are no pages missing in my journal. I have not written since the Englishman was sent away.

I must find a place to start but there is a whole night before me. One can live without sleep. This surprises me. There is something to be said for the dull fatigue which is the result of not sleeping, for when reality is unbearable, when the truth and purpose of life disappear in an impenetrable cloud of fear, then it is better that reality should become less real if one is to hold to sanity. But for how long? How long can one buy a dimming of fear with lack of sleep as the price?

I am falling into the trap which this act of writing is designed to avoid. The trap of thinking, of making reality real. How easy it would be to write endlessly in the same circling pattern looking for the answer that is not there! I must be cold and dispassionate and write plainly what has been happening.

It is quite clear now that Bronstern is mad. We are all caught up in the vicious circles of his madness. It was the Englishman who pushed him over the edge. Bronstern may have recovered himself after the Englishman was sent away. He seemed quieter and saner for a day or so and then came the news that Green had disappeared.

As we had the news at first it seemed that Green had been destroyed. We believed it, and the Doctor rubbed his hands, and was happy, and lectured me in a pitying way that my

plan to use the Englishman in our work had failed. I stood before him trying to hide my terror and despair at finding this last hope gone. He preened himself and was in good spirits, saying that this proved beyond doubt the certainty with which our powerful weapon would work.

Following the first report came the real story, from our second degree of agents, those who report on the actions and attitudes of the others. The message was that Green had escaped in some way, by screening himself from their signals. The first report, that he was destroyed, had been sent out of the fear of the agents that they would be punished. This fear was well founded. It seemed foolish to me that so many useful agents should be so wantonly destroyed over what, after all, was a simple error of judgement.

As for me, again I had difficulty in hiding my emotions. But this time with what silent and inward joy I heard the news! That this man can so brilliantly escape from his impossible captivity shows me that in pinning my hopes on him, all the hopes I have, I am choosing wisely. What else would there be to hold to without him?

At times a wild hysteria threatens to overwhelm me. I long to burst into a frenzy of laughter and screaming that would have no end, and I tremble with the effort to hold myself in check - to so restrain myself into a seeming calmness that the Doctor will continue to believe that, even though the whole State shall crumble into drolling fear and madness, he can still rely on Smick!!

There is an irony at which the gods must surely laugh. The weapon of supreme terror has limits, beyond which it defeats itself, and Bronstern has pushed things far past those limits. The apathy, which he had glorified and held up to the world as the ideal end of human progress, leads only to despair and through despair to utter desperation. Could he have judged this better, and applied the deadly pressure more cunningly and sensibly, if he had remained sane? I do not know. It is an

interesting matter for speculation. No matter how it had been applied I am inclined to think that the end would have been the same. The seeds of destruction lie dormant in this concept of applying an ultimate terror to human beings.

I have thought much about this of late; I have summoned up my memory of history to find those nations which have used fear as the cement by which the structure of the State is built and maintained. They have all worked; for a time, for a generation, for a few empty years, and then - seemingly by accident, by some external force - they have failed. An accident which happens over and over, and runs through the whole thread of recorded history is surely worth attention.

One learns to suspect the cause of accidents which follow a pattern!

Here, all around me, in the space of a few days, I have seen the ferment of fear work and grow in us like a cancer. Like a cancer, by its very growth, killing the thing on which it feeds, and so dying itself. Sooner or later, one of us, driven downward through fear towards complete despair, will succeed in putting an end to Bronstern.

Here is the strange thing, the unsuspected factor, the flaw in the theory. The death of Bronstern will be my death; it will be the death of ten thousand others, it will be the death of our tortured Federation, these "Great Democracies" which, in one form or another, have staggered through history for almost a hundred years. And this death will satisfy a primal urge in all of us, a deep and hidden yearning for disaster; beyond reason.

To have done with it all! That is our greatest and most secret desire. Already, in these few days, the process is well started. In Charetz alone, more than fifty men have died. Each one of these was suspected to have designs on the life of our crazed leader and master. An incautious word, the merest sign of plotting and intrigue; these have filtered through the network to Bronstern and he has acted with vicious and

inexorable certainty to remove them. Not more than half of them were destroyed by RLW. The others were shot or hanged. This is curious.

I broached it to Bronstern as though it were some sort of joke; a morbid one, for I was sick at heart. "Variety, dear Smick," he said. "We must never lose our taste for variety." He seemed ill at ease at my question; I sensed that there was great danger in it for me and I did not pursue it. Does he feel, perhaps, that he cannot always rely on the RLW to act?

Perhaps I should try to sleep for a few hours tonight so that I will be clear-minded tomorrow. Perhaps there is nothing at all in this Greek matter. On the surface it is quite ordinary. The top man of the Greece Trade Delegation came to me today and in the roundabout way of diplomats hinted at an early solution to our trade problems with his country. He suggested that a Federation official on the level where decisions are made, preferably myself, should pay a brief visit to Greece.

My first reaction was that this was too small a matter in which I should dabble when there is so much to absorb me here. I replied that one of our trade men should go and if it developed, then perhaps I could make this visit at a later stage. The Greek looked cautiously around my office and came close to me.

"My instructions are to tell you that there are other reasons for this visit," he whispered. "There may be a solution to some problems which are worrying you - personal problems."

He would say no more than this. A faint hope stirred in me. I told him that I would do as he suggested provided that the Doctor was agreeable to me leaving the country at this time.

When I approached Bronstern he, at first, hesitated. I said that I was only putting forward the suggestions of the Greeks and as far as I was concerned I would prefer not to go though

I would be ready to go if those were his instructions. This was enough to tip him in the right direction.

"It would be a very good thing to get this matter straightened out," he said. "This is the first sign we have had that they are at all inclined to our proposals. Go, Smick. You are the one man I trust. Even if I did not trust you there will still be agents with you to shield you from error."

It is all arranged. Soon I will breathe the air of a country where fear is a matter of accident, and can be avoided by the man of courage. The air I am breathing now is surely different. Fear - arranged, organized, calculated fear - fear has made this air heavy and sour.

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Martin Green

Through I acted tough about it I was disturbed by Elizabeth's tears, a crack formed in the iron resolution I had made to go ahead with this thing right through to the end. I was in a mood of sullen reluctance. I felt that not my own decision but that of someone else, was tearing me away, against my will; from her, and from this country which I had joyfully found again.

As soon as I could, when she busied herself in the kitchen, and I could make some pretence that I was in the way, I told her that I had some thinking to do and I would take a walk by the river. Perhaps she thought that I should stay with her for all the last fleeting minutes of our time together, for she did not answer me, and I went gloomily out of the house and down to the river.

Across the flats, birds prepared for the night. The water birds skittered off the speed of their homeward dives across the golden mirror of the water, leaving rippling spears of

tiny waves. Lonely cries came from the banks where the river grass hid these birds' nests. The land birds flew from tip to tip of ancient trees, calling to each other in liquid notes.

There would be a northerly tomorrow. Thin clouds rode high in a pale evening sky of the blue that lies right against green. The low sun had lost its strength in a thousand miles of haze.

Walking through this, the very heart of my bright country, I knew, without thinking, or having to remember, what bargain it was I had made with my life. What I had thought myself in danger of forgetting was made clear to me. I saw every detail of the way I must travel. New hope assured me that I would not fail.

This would be the last payment of the price I had put on the privilege of my youth. This payment made, I would return here, and never leave again, and I would know that everything here was mine; that I had paid for it.

I waited by the river for the brief blaze of sunset to spend itself and walked slowly back to Elizabeth. Easy in my own mind again, it proved not beyond her to share this certainty that I would succeed and return in safety. Such optimism and vigour as now uplifted me can hardly fail to be infectious. Though she may have had some misgivings after I left, she was a cheerful and absorbing companion to me until that very moment, several days later, when we heard the throbbing whistle of a chopper on the air, and knowing that this was the last minute of our time, looked steadily at each other for a long moment.

As we surged up out of the narrow clearing I caught a glimpse of her at the window, and then all that I could see was the roof of the house, and then the river, and then at last, past the narrow strip of irrigation, the rolling red desert.

I had hardly spoken a word to Scurry when he picked me up, and now he looked at me and grinned. "The show is on the road again. Feel better?"

"Yes," I said, with some surprise. "Funny, isn't it."

When we were well on course, lifting and dropping on the hot northerly gusts, I went over the opening moves briefly in my mind.

"I think we'll have to open this up a bit, Joe," I said. "I want to go to the very top so that, if it breaks the best way, we won't lose any time consolidating."

"The chief is waiting for you. I told you that."

"Never mind the chief," I answered. "Where's the P.M.?"

"McKinnon? He was there this week, probably still in Canberra somewhere. You sure you want him in it? You think it's his sort of game?"

"Maybe I don't need him," I said. "That's if you know any way of getting Istforce 9 without him."

Scurry stared at me. "Hey, Jesus, Mart! It isn't that big?" He thought for a moment and added thoughtfully, "Or is it? Anyway, it's Istforce 10 now. Nine was disbanded last year."

"Never mind what number it is, we might need it if it goes well. Now how do I line up a meeting with the P.M.? Eh?"

Scurry shrugged and pointed to the RT panel. "Help yourself."

I pressed the button marked "SEC-ONE; Direct." and listened to the buzzer at the other end.

A clipped voice said, "Security One."

Scurry leaned over and pressed the scrambler button and the note in the little speaker rose very slightly.

"Sir Charles," I said into the grille; "Green. I am on my way with Scurry."

"Ah yes," said the clipped voice. "How are you, Green?"

"I want a meeting with McKinnon tonight. Can you fix it?"

"McKinnon? The P.M.? What for?"

"We might want help right from the top."

"I think we'd better have a talk first. We can decide later whether it needs to be taken further."

"Won't do. Not enough time. Timing might turn out to be important," I tried to keep impatience out of my voice. I like old Meddings but we always manage to raise a few sparks when our furs rub together.

"Don't agree." Rising impatience in the clipped voice. First spark to Green.

"You know I don't have to do all this, old boy."

A grunt in the speaker. "That's no way to talk, Green."

"Get this, big chief. Suppose old Smick drops his bundle and Bronstern blows him up. Where are we then? Smick is my way in. If Smick goes we've had it. Can you imagine the sort of tightrope Smick is balancing himself on? Do you know how long he can stay there? I don't! We can't waste any time at all. Get McKinnon to stick around. Let's you and me have our talk first but make sure you can get McKinnon tonight. Did you get that stuff through to Greece?"

"Hood acknowledged it. I suppose it's through to Smick by now. What makes you think Smick will come out?"

"He'll come out if they feed it to him right. Never mind about that. What about McKinnon?"

"He won't be very pleased. He was going off to Perth tonight."

"But you'll do it," I insisted.

"All right, Green. I'll do it."

"You won't regret it," I said. I looked down at the ground. We were fairly high and in every direction the country was covered in the yellow of dried grass and crops, with here and there a lingering patch of green.

"We won't be more than half an hour, Sir Charles. We're coming over the Riverina, now."

The big mountains were far ahead on our right, but it was too late in summer, no whiteness sparkled over their misty blueness. All the snow had melted away and washed itself down the brown river to the sea.

Department of the Prime Minister

Transcript-record of Conference J McK/07209

Subject: *Foreign Policy (Eurasian Federation)*

Present: *The Rt. Hon. James McKinnon; Sir Charles Meddings; Mr J. H. Scurry; Mr M. W. Green*

J. McK.: Well, Mr Green. Before we get down to our business and so on, I feel that I should convey to you our appreciation of your services. If I may make a confession I must admit until very recently, that is until our friend, Sir Charles here, informed me of your true position today, as I say until very recently, had I been asked what I knew about Martin Green I would have been obliged to answer, "I know very little about the gentleman concerned and what I do know is not very much in his favour." However, I understand that there have been various rumours spread abroad in recent years and that those rumours hardly reflect the true position concerning Mr Green. As I understand it these rumours had the object of providing what is, I believe, known as "cover" for Mr Green's activities. Mr Green is perhaps a sheep in wolf's clothing after all.

Mr Scurry: Perhaps we might say that he is a wolf in wolf's clothing!

Mr Green: Or a sheep in sheep's clothing.

J. McK.: As I was about to say the Government will I am sure wish to recognize Mr Green's services in a tangible way at some suitable time. And now, gentlemen, we have wasted enough time, I am ready to hear what you have to say and I can assure you that I will listen to you with very great attention and interest. The matter of our policy towards the Eurasian Federation has been the subject of considerable concern to my Government, and I might say that our general policy has been to let sleeping dogs lie, in so far as we can.

Mr Green: Sleeping dogs in dog's clothing?

J. McK.: As I was saying, I am now prepared to listen with great interest to what you may have to say, though I must confess, at this moment, I am quite unable to see that we would have any excuse to take any open or definite steps in relation to our attitude to the Eurasian Federation. We must at all times remember our duties and obligations to our colleagues, our partner nations in the Fifteen Nation Agreement. Now, perhaps Sir Charles you may care to initiate the discussion and so forth.

Sir C. Meddings: I am sure that we all agree in general terms with what the Prime Minister has said, though I must add that having had lengthy discussion with Green here, I feel that the Government may be fully justified in taking quite a strong line in this matter. We may have an opportunity in front of us now which will never recur. I think the time factor is very important. Rather than have me go over the thing at second hand I suggest that we ask Mr Green to repeat for the Prime Minister the substance of what he has already told Mr Scurry and me.

Mr Green: I am afraid that I have been rather disappointed in what the Prime Minister has had to say. He seems to share the prevailing attitude that we can afford to sit back, isolated from the rest of the world as we appear to be. This isolation is largely an illusion. I would have thought that a very great deal would have been learned, by the gentlemen who make up our government, from our experiences in the recent past. Peter Jirapon once said to me, and I quote him as closely as memory allows: "It is essential to understand our true position in this country, for in our position is our advantage over the whole world. We are not entangled and confused by tradition; more than any other nation, we are isolated in historical time; we are not entangled and confused by our relations with neighbouring nations, for more than any other nation, we are isolated by space; we are

not confused by the internal struggles of groups and sects, for more than any other nation, we are unified by our common interests. These factors, it would be true to say, could be used as an argument in favour of isolating ourselves from the world, and living our own national life, but this is only part of the lesson to be drawn.

"These factors lead equally to this - that our position in the world cannot be misread or misunderstood by others and therefore our impartiality in any action which we take is always likely to be accepted. We can therefore properly act, in a very true sense, as an impartial judge in many world affairs. We must remember that our jury will always be drawn from other nations, for we cannot be both judge and jury. But we can make the judgement, and we can apply the sanctions of law, and we must be always ready and willing to sacrifice ourselves in the cause of justice."

These were the words of the man whom I accepted as my teacher. I took these words to heart. Accepting what he had to say I prepared myself as a sacrifice in the cause of justice. I offered my life. I gave up my reputation. For much of my adult life I have stayed away from the country of my birth. I did these things because I believed that what Peter Jirapon had said was true. Very many others of my countrymen also offered themselves because they too believed this.

And I might say that the award of a little coloured ribbon of some sort, to pay me for what I have given up, was never in my mind. What was always in my mind, what carried me through every difficulty and hazard that has piled upon me during the years, was the belief that at last one country in the world had shaken off all fear and uncertainty, and that country was my own.

As well as this belief was the knowledge that this process was infectious, that throughout the world other countries had thrown off their burden of fear; with what results we have seen. I refuse to believe that this Government has thrown

away the ground that we won. I refuse to believe that any Australian feels that the new order of the day should be one of retreating from the position which we have won and which we have enjoyed with such sober pride.

J. McK.: You have not said anything of what you think we should do, or of what special knowledge you have which we might have some right to share before you criticize us. It may be of some satisfaction to you to know that I am moved by what you have said. Jirapon and Houghton, who preceded me in my office, were my teachers too. I learned much from them, and it does not hurt us to be reminded of what they said. Perhaps you feel that I talk too much as a politician and not enough as a man. You may be right, yet it is not easy to bear the final responsibility for everything. How can I explain to anyone, how different it is to be really responsible, how everything changes? Every word and action must be weighed in the light of being finally responsible for what happens. How easy it is then to talk, as much as one can, in platitudes, for no one was ever held responsible or pinned down by that!

Mr Green: There are all kinds and degrees of responsibility. It is a common error to feel that one is the only one accepting responsibility about something. I could say that I am responsible for anything that happens in the matter which we are discussing. I have given up my reputation. All I have to offer now as a token of responsibility is my life. What stake are you putting on the game? Your office? Your reputation? I have lost these already. I have a right to talk about this at your level. Do you see that?

J. McK.: Yes of course. I think we understand each other.

Mr Green: I am sure that you will forgive me for wanting to clear the air. Now let me summarize the present state of the Eurasian Federation. I went to Charetz not quite three weeks ago, what has happened since then I do not know. What I found there was this: Bronstern has perfected this

Remote Liquidation Weapon which I must assume you already know about. You realize the power that this gives him. It is fairly clear that his objective is firstly to stabilize control over the Federation, and he has attempted to do this by implanting RLW capsules in all important GD officials. This brings the sanction of instant execution to his very finger tips. Any disobedience or insurrection, real or imaginary, can be ended, instantly, by pressing a button. All the more reason why his men should rebel against him and remove his power over them. But he has thought of that. He has set up some secret mechanism which only he can operate. If he dies or is killed, then, after a short period, the mechanism takes over and executes every one of his officers.

Now, before we examine the implications of this state of affairs, I might mention briefly his secondary objective, and that is to expand the limits of his power to other countries by means of this device. This alone is enough excuse for us to interfere. It is a danger, though not necessarily as great a danger as Bronstern may think, and for the moment we may safely disregard it, for if we deal with Bronstern we automatically deal with this secondary problem. How are we to deal with Bronstern? I have come to hold the view that Bronstern has over-reached himself. If he had been completely sane he must surely have seen this himself.

How much fear can a human being tolerate and still wish to live? This is something we do not know. It is enough for us to assume that there is a limit. Bronstern has used fear as an engineer uses electricity, to drive and control his nations. What happens when electricity is over-used? This we know. The system breaks down, wires fuse, the switchboard blows up. As there is a limit in this, so there is a limit in what Bronstern is doing. At some point control will be lost, the whole system will blow up in his face.

Perhaps you might say, very well, let us wait until it does. Let us wait until Bronstern dies, or until one of his victims,

driven to madness, kills him. But this is too big a risk to take. It means that we ignore the opportunity which Fate has presented to us.

For Bronstern has overlooked this – that the first one of his victims who finds a way of escape, some means of neutralizing the capsule which holds him in bondage, not only escapes from Bronstern's control, but becomes his potential executioner and his certain successor in his position at the centre of power. This will surely happen, for what the mind of one man can devise, the mind of some other man can set aside.

The man who can reach that position can command the whole Eurasian Federation. To control the Federation one need only control Bronstern. I was implanted with this vile device. By getting rid of it I have some chance of carrying into effect this procedure I have described. It is my intention, whether it is your wish to help me or not, to apply myself to this task. I intend to enter Bronstern's territory alone. But what if I am successful? What then?

Then Sir, if you, as Prime Minister, agree, we can introduce Istforce 10, invited there by some kind of provisional administration and we can end at one stroke, without war or bloodshed, the power which this group of nations has used, against their own people and against the rest of the world. Knowing what we know now we can then ensure that government by naked force and terror is never again allowed to raise itself.

This is what I ask of you, an assurance that this force will be available without the slightest delay should the opportunity arise.

What other help I need in details, will normally come from Sir Charles and the people of his section. I have some standing there which I will not abuse. They have already made a move to help me in regard to Smick, the Vice-Consul. I can come to terms with Smick, for I talked with him before I

escaped. Almost surely, Smick is the factor on which all else depends, for he is the man whom we can move into Bronstern's empty place. This is a lesson we learn from history, that one way to end despotism is to replace the despot with his trusted lieutenant.

I rely on Smick to be the official voice which will ask you to help the affairs of his Federation by making Istforce 10 available. But I have now said enough. From this you should be able to decide.

J. McK.: If you could bring things to the stage where we are invited to send a force in to maintain law and order until a stable government, and one closer to our own ideas, is functioning, I think I can safely say that we would agree to that. I had the impression that you may have had a more reckless scheme in mind.

Mr Green: You can take my word for it that the scheme I have is any amount reckless enough for my tastes. The more that you are in favour of it, the more help that you can have ready, the less reckless it becomes. The first assistance I want is fast transport to Greece. I propose that I should rest until midnight and take off shortly after. I have had Sir Charles take some immediate action, aimed at getting Smick out. This does not commit us. Smick will have only the slightest hint that anything out of the ordinary can be expected. If nothing transpires he will be disappointed but not surprised.

Meanwhile I suggest that you may care to run over the summary that has been prepared with Sir Charles. You have time to reflect on what decision is the right one for you to make. Apart from what I have already said I do not wish to influence you further. I know what I have to do and once I land in Greece my plans will be carried into effect until either I am stopped or I succeed. This I will do regardless of your decision.

There has been some talk about responsibility. It is only proper that your responsibility should be a serious and heavy

one in all things. Even if you did not realize this when you were competing for your office; at least you realize it now. The more I try to convince you that you should act in a certain way, then the more responsibility I take from your shoulders on to mine, for the decision you take is then largely made by me, and the responsibility is, similarly, largely mine. I have made my decisions. When the time comes you make yours!

Sir C. Meddings: Look here, Green. I hardly think that it's proper for you to adopt that arrogant tone with the Prime Minister.

J. McK.: It is not always easy to distinguish between arrogance and honesty when simple men search for the truth. Mr Green and I understand each other. He understands my position, and I understand his. This is, after all, the object of all meetings and discussions. Mr Green has left us with nothing more to discuss.

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Martin Green

There were solid hours of discussion and planning after we touched down at Canberra and when that was over it was around ten o'clock and I was quite ready for the short rest I had promised myself. The meeting with the Prime Minister turned out very well after an unpromising beginning, and it was to this meeting that my thoughts returned with an inward and slightly ashamed smile, as I lay comfortably awaiting sleep.

Scurrey and I had, in some strange way, infected each other with a mood of high spirits, in which we saw all things from the irreverent and disrespectful point of view of two wild

lads about the town, quite ignoring the fact that we were both years past the age for this behaviour.

This youthful wildness lurks always in the background, and gives colour to the way in which things are said, whenever chance throws together men who have shared wild deeds in their youth.

This attitude was a reckless and foolish one for us to take on, for much depended on McKinnon, who was, perhaps, partly responsible by first presenting himself to us as a pompous self-caricature. Nothing could have been better calculated to set us off, but this could easily have ended very badly.

As it happened, McKinnon soon turned from his role of stage politician, and Scurrey and I sobered up, but later I was lost in wonder to think of the influence that the passing moods of individuals must exercise on the most fateful events, and I was glad that I had been rescued by common sense from the position where I could have been, even now, bitterly reproaching myself for having been irresponsible when very serious matters were at stake. Though, when you think about it, recklessness is a difficult quality to measure against itself, its very nature puts it beyond the coldness of calculation and control. If it is accepted as an advantage in some circumstances, then it must be also accepted, however reluctantly, when it is out of its proper place. I thought back over my years to remember this mood of senseless high spirits at the time when nothing ever went seriously wrong. It is a wonderfully pleasant mood, and thinking about it with enjoyment, I fell asleep.

Scurrey's hearty voice roused me very early in the morning when it was still dark. I was lost in an amorous dream, and wished myself back in the house on the river, and it was with some reluctance that I wrenched myself away from the softness of the dream. While I dressed I braced myself, and put softness away from me, for softness must be replaced by a

hardness as of steel for what lay ahead. In a few hours softness would be a thing which could lead me to death.

I shared a hasty meal with Scurry and we drove quickly to the take-off area. It was well organized. I caught a fleeting glimpse of the power and concentration which was directed to help me where it could. For these few minutes the take-off area was isolated. We were hurried through checkpoints to the aircraft. I shook hands with Scurry and settled myself in the close-fitting seat, pulling myself back hard with the straps.

Nodding to the pilot, an anonymous head and shoulders seen dimly in the faint light of his screened panels, I waited for the surge of power which would project me on the first stage of my journey.

His hand moved the feed lever gently past the gate, and unleashed power screamed for a moment in my ears, then, past the range of hearing, trembled deep in my bones. The tail-wheel scraped violently, squealing in protest for a yard or so, and we rocketed upward, for endless seconds squeezed hard into the pads.

A wall of clouds whirled past. Ahead, the stars were revealed. Curving through the black night we levelled out. Sealed off by frail metal walls from the hungry, empty air, we turned north, leaving behind a tail of tortured gas which screamed thinly to the ground.

I could have slept again, but instead looked down on the smooth lake of cloud, so far below, and upwards at the stars, hard and bright and unwinking in the frozen air. There was a long night ahead. When we picked up the easterly stream and turned west above the equator, we would be racing away from the sun, time would stretch out for us into a longer night. Even now, as we homed on the Manila long beam, the clocks below – if there were clocks somewhere below the blanket of cloud – would already show an earlier hour.

Pushing away the constant temptation to probe at the problems that lay ahead, for hours I rested in the seat in unsleeping relaxation, calming myself in preparation for the tension and strain which I must expect.

We had planned to drop down to Athens at 2300 local, but it was nearer midnight, it was the beginning of a new day before we were clear of the aircraft. The eastern stream was in one of its erratic phases and on most of the western track we had punched through uncharted adverse winds.

At this time of night the main Athens field was fairly quiet. There was enough traffic to leave us inconspicuous as we left the area in the shabby vehicle which had been modestly waiting. We picked up Hood at a street corner and by the time we had smuggled ourselves through a back entrance of the Trade Commission of Greece buildings, I was quite satisfied that we had not been picked up or observed.

We waited through the night in a small room, and I had had enough of all these unsought chances to rest and pamper myself, that crop up when you move about the world faster than the sun, so I spent these hours talking with Hood, ignoring his fits of yawning.

Though I had run across him briefly before this, I had never had much chance to know him, and I was very impressed with his wide knowledge and quick brain. It was due to Hood that the Greeks had come firmly over to our side, this in itself would have satisfied most men, but he had the sense to see that they would be of far greater value as a neutral sounding board than as an open ally, and the cleverness to make them see this and agree to act in this way. Without this I would have had great trouble in making a safe contact with Smick.

Smick was heard from earlier than we had expected. One of the Greeks came in to us to say that he had advised them that he wanted the conference put forward several hours, and knowing that I was safely in position, Papagos of course agreed.

I accepted this as a good sign, that Smick had understood our cautious message and was eager to make contact. Scanners had been set up covering the conference room and when, in the middle of the morning, the time came, Hood and I sat over the visio-telltales and watched a serious Smick, followed by his men, enter the room and shake hands with the Greeks.

Smick, as soon as he had settled himself at the table, stared eagerly about the room, as though expecting that I would be idiot enough to tip my hand by appearing before his colleagues. It was obvious that these men with him, whatever their other duties might be, were also agents sent to watch him. They hardly raised their eyes from his face, as though they half thought to see him vanish away in the air. To loosen him from these guards was the first problem. In this I had not allowed for the easy skill of Papagos, the chairman of the conference.

Papagos opened the meeting and words flowed from him in abundance, at a speed which left me floundering, with my fifty words of Greek. Without waiting for the interpreter, Hood offered a running translation:

"He is saying - 'I know that your Vice-Consul is a busy man. We have given great thought to ways in which we can save him the trouble of having to bother with the details which must be first dealt with before principles which could lead to an agreement are established. The matters which are to be discussed fall into four main categories: general policy, which I suggest the Vice-Consul and I should discuss between us at the highest level, then we have grain, fodder and primary products and here I suggest that our specialist in these matters . . .'" Hood broke off for breath. "He seems to be pairing them off. This should be worth watching. Let's see how these GD boys deal with three thousand years of talking practice!"

By now, Papagos had finished his speech. Each Greek had grabbed a handful of papers, which was being waved under

the nose of the man opposite and they were talking without pausing for breath. Smick's followers were sullenly listening in discomfort.

This babble continued for a few minutes, and Papagos had the irritated expression of the man unable to concentrate on what he is saying. He took Smick's elbow and pointed to the door. Hood said, "He is saying that there is too much noise in there and is asking Smick to come with him to another room. This looks like business."

Smick nodded and began to walk with Papagos to the door. The guards started to their feet as one man, and exchanged dubious and uncomfortable glances, but the Greeks kept waving papers at them, pounding at them with streams of words, and pulling at their sleeves to get their attention.

One of them shrugged and the others took this as permission to resume their seats, and uneasily they sat back, listening to the Greeks, but keeping one eye on the door.

Hood opened our door in answer to a quiet knock, and stood back to let Smick and Papagos enter. I rose to my feet. Smick, as though sleep-walking, crossed the room with dazed eyes, staring at me as though I could not possibly be real. Tension pulled the skin tight over his face like a mask, but when I held out my hand to his, the mask crumpled, his mouth opened, but no words came, and the dazed eyes flooded with tears.

"Why, Smick!" I said in English. "I didn't know you cared."

Hood gave a muffled snort, and I thought, this won't do, why must I always act like this? Smick is no man to tease.

"You will forgive me," he said in his own language. "We live under a terrible strain. Though I hoped that the message was from you, there was no way that I could think of that would have allowed you to escape and live."

He still clutched my hand. "Whether it will help us to have you here alive, I do not know. This is not in my mind when I say from my heart that I am glad to see you, Martin Green."

I was properly ashamed, but this was no time for a sentimental reunion. "Smick. You must pull yourself together. We have only a few minutes. Look! Your friends are becoming restless." I pointed to the telltale, where in miniature, his guards and colleagues were staring hungrily at the door like dogs that have been shut away from their food. Tired Greek papers still fanned the air, but the voices were becoming hoarse.

"If I am to do anything, I must come to Charetz," I went on. "I must have opportunity to approach Bronstern when he is unguarded. How far can I trust you?"

"You must trust me as I trust you," he said with dignity. "I have shown my trust in you and your friends in this room, for one word from you would destroy me. But, Mr Green, I must know more of your plans. What can you do to Bronstern without killing us all? How can I know that your aim is not to kill Bronstern, and by that to kill us all, so that our nation collapses? This would suit you; surely, it seems that it must be the best thing for you?"

"It is possible that some of you may die," I answered. I left a pause in the air, so that some of his hope would leave him and he would find what straws of comfort I offered more attractive.

"Look at me, Smick! Do you remember when you saw me last?" He did not answer and I repeated, "Do you remember? Would you have had any thought then that I could possibly escape, that I could free myself from Bronstern? That I could save myself from the capsule? Yet I have! You may escape in the same way if you help me."

"Take me away now. You could help me to escape, you know a way, you have said so! Then I would help you. I promise this! You must! Remember that I saved you in Charetz!"

"Don't be a fool," I said harshly. "You would not pass out of this building. How could you hope to move a hundred yards in the streets of Athens? Waste no more time! You must do exactly what I say, or there will never be any peace

or hope for you in this life, and this life will be very short for you. You must agree to do exactly what I say! Do you agree?"

"If you will promise to save me, then I will agree."

"I hope that I can save you. I promise to try. That must be enough for you."

Smick stared desperately at me as I said this, and then, beaten in his private hopes, said, "Very well. I believe you. What do you want me to do?"

"Time's up, Smick." Again I pointed to the telltale screen. One of his men had risen from his chair and was angrily brushing away the restraining hand of the Greek who was beside him. "I will write out what you have to do. This will be among the papers which Mr Papagos will discuss with you. Remember everything! Do not carry any paper with you. Now go. I will see you in Charetz."

Hurriedly he pressed my hand and rushed from the room, followed by Papagos. Hood closed the door and said, "You're a hard boy, aren't you, Green?"

"Not really," I answered slowly.

36

From the Secret Journal of Ewald Smick, Vice-Consul for Peace in the Great Democracies

I have been mad to write so many fatal secrets in this journal but I am not mad enough to place on this white paper anything which could damage the man who will save me. It is enough for me to play in my mind with this newfound strength and courage. For I am no longer alone.

Already somewhere in this gloomy citadel of fear . . . no, that is enough. I must write nothing.

I have not been long back from Greece. The stretching

of my nerves, swinging wildly between hope and fear, was too much for me, I could not enjoy this breath of free air, though I felt it. How can freedom pervade the very air? It is no figure of speech.

When the sun shines here, and white clouds button the sky, the air is still sour. It is as though fear leaves one crippled in some vital faculty.

Nothing is seen clear and sharp in the world but all things blurred and dimmed. A world seen always through drab brown glass. Taking on fear is as though one wears dark glasses. Can fear be put off as easily as that? Do we wear fear all the time as though we wore dark glasses and never any curiosity about how the world looks without them? Without fear?

Guilty. How guilty and afraid I feel when harsh footsteps ring past my door. I always think that they have come for

TRAITOR
TRAITOR
SPY!

37

Records of the High Council for Peace and Security . . .
09/2/09

Members of the Council were summoned by the Consul to consider the position of Vice-Consul Smick, accused of treachery and Independist Action.

The Consul: Comrades of the High Council. Comrades? Comrades? How many of you can be called that?

Snivelling spies; and cheats; and traitors! How soon must I kill you all!

First Smick will die, and then – who will be next? First our modest little friend Smick will on an instant of time see his narrow body blossom out in a cloud of flame and fire.

Smick! The errand boy of our glorious revolution! Who would have looked for treachery, for evil thoughts, in humble Smick? But let us leave him. We must give him time to make peace with his soul.

Who else has a soul? Arons! Have you a soul?

And Kahn? What about you? Have you a soul?

Answer me! It is your Mighty Consul who asks.

Send for a guard to pick them up. How sensitive you have all become to pain. It was nothing; a flick of the finger. But of course if they will not give me answers what else can I do?

This is a serious question. Who else among you lays claim to a soul? Smick has a soul – he writes about it in a little black book. He writes about many things, in his book, but nothing so important as this soul of his, for this leads him on to question our great work, it leads him on to treachery, to thoughts of murder and betrayal, it leads him on to aiding and abetting the murderous arch spy Green in his efforts to subvert and overturn our glorious state!

These are the dangerous things which a soul will lead a man to do. This wild fancy, this imagined soul, this arrogant superstition, is but a device which our enemies have created in order to destroy us. In the clash of philosophies in which we are engaged we must strike first at this primeval myth that men have souls!

The earliest prophets of our Mighty State made this tribal delusion the target at which they aimed their most forceful blows. This was a drug, they said, poured into the hungry minds of men to bewilder them and make them arrogant. Opium! they cried, this is opium! the stuff on which dreams are made. But life is real to us. When was a problem of the real world ever solved by dreams?

This is something which it has always been our danger and disadvantage to ignore and we must never underrate it. What happens in the minds of men when they are given

souls? They cease to care what happens to their bodies – and what happens then? The man who does not care what happens to his body is for ever beyond our reach! He is the very fount of arrogance, of independence and of war. He is the enemy of peaceful apathy. He is the slave of his own wild passions, for he believes that he risks nothing, when he risks his body.

We have framed our philosophy of peace around the creation of universal apathy and happiness. We are creating apathy and through apathy we will achieve peace and happiness. Stern measures have faced us and we have not hesitated to apply ourselves with dedicated self-sacrifice to the creation of the Mighty State where peace and apathy reign. Success is within our grasp, the children of our States have grown to maturity in a proper environment and one day, as our prophets and forerunners have said, the State itself will wither away, leaving behind it a legacy of universal calm and peace.

Now, let us turn back to Smick. Straighten your shoulders, Smick. Let us see how a man who has a soul faces up to despair and punishment. Smick, you will observe, does not care what happens to his body, for this soul of his is what really matters. Eh, Smick?

Pick him up! Put him back on his chair! We must make allowances for Smick, he has not had this soul of his very long. It is quite a new one! He is not used to it, not quite sure of it. His little screams? Sheer habit!

This has always been the problem of the neophyte – to equate what he believes to be so, with what actually happens! For a moment he seemed to be worrying about his body, no one could deny that. But I am confident in our old comrade Smick. Very soon we will be separating his soul from his body. We can be sure that his new found faith will stand him in good stead.

There are some interesting experiments which I can

promise for Smick, for he has much to tell us. He has dreamed a dream, that the cannibal spy and assassin Green will be shortly in our midst. We must decide whether this is merely another of his pathetic delusions.

If it is true? Then much as I would like to have Green in my hands alive, I must bow before the interests of the State. We must ever be prepared to sacrifice selfish interests for the good of all.

If Green is found he must die at that moment! He must be killed!

But Smick will tell us all when he has gathered his scattered wits. Rather, his body will tell us, while this new-found soul of his soars gracefully to and fro over our heads.

The Council is adjourned.

38

Martin Green

I entered Charetz as a substitute Greek Trade Commissioner, which was a gross breach of diplomatic privilege, but a good measure of Hood's amazing liaison with the Greeks. Though my face had picked up some tan in the desert sun, this was strengthened to an authentic olive shade, and my hair was dyed black, waved, and oiled, by a hairdresser in Athens, who took it naturally that a friend of Hood's should require this treatment. Dressed in the colourful clothes common in Athens, and with a pair of contact lenses which changed my eyes to a lustrous brown, I felt confident that I could pass any reasonable inspection.

My small knowledge of Greek did not worry me over-much, for it seemed improbable that GD officials would try

their Greek on me, and if they did I was ready to protest in their own language that I preferred to speak no Greek, while in their country, in order to perfect my accent.

It was surprisingly easy to get in, and I wondered at the dangerous and troublesome means I had employed before. We passed through several controls, arriving in Charetz at noon on the day following my talk with Smick; the two Greeks who shepherded me through each control, obviously felt relieved when we entered their building in Charetz, and walked to the room which had been set aside for my use.

There was no pause for reflection. Within five minutes of arriving the bottom was knocked out of my plans. The chief of the delegation came to me, and laughing, spoke several sentences in Greek, holding as he spoke, an open notebook before my eyes. I read the words, written in English, on the page. "Strong rumour Smick arrested. Now laugh, scanner in room."

While I laughed and brushed his hand playfully away, and shook my head, an icy calmness steadied the first thoughts of disaster which raced through my mind. There was no time for planning - I must now work from minute to minute. I made a curving, enclosing gesture with both hands, so that the unseen eyes that overlooked us would see that we were discussing women. With wary, intelligent eyes the Greek watched me. Raising his eyebrows in the hint of a question, he walked away from me, shaking his head in mock disgust. Following him, I took the notebook, and wrote, "If true Smick probably talking now. Act woman talk with me. Come to street." He looked at the page and laughed and made an obscene gesture. Talking and laughing, he put an arm around my shoulders and walked with me, to the door, down the stairs, and out into the street.

A few yards along the street we felt free of eavesdropping. Still smiling he said, "If Smick talks you are in trouble, we are in trouble, too!"

"They can't do much to you," I answered. "I will keep right clear of you, and you can deny everything. They can only send you home. If that happens will you try and keep someone here for a while? It may be very important for me to have some sort of line of communication reaching back to Hood."

"We can try that. Perhaps nothing will come of it. Do not believe me worried about what happens to us. You are the one who is worried about. Look at your plans, fallen into nothing!"

"Who is to say what is the best plan until the end is reached?" I asked. "This may be a bad thing or it may be the opposite. Who knows? At least I can get clear, I have entered Charetz. We are that much to the good. I must go now. I am very grateful to you."

He patted me on the shoulder. "That is a good Greek attitude. It is worthy of your adopted ancestors! May the Gods on high Olympus smile down and prosper your bold adventures!"

As I walked away I realized that he was not joking. My God! I thought, that man pushed me into one of his myths! Some Ulysses! I looked grimly around the streets of this hostile city and thought, Yes, and my God! some bloody Cyclops' cave!

Strangely at ease, I walked along staring around me, not bothering to hide my curiosity, for my bright clothing marked me as a foreigner. On my own at last, I thought, and it feels pretty good. Should have come in all the way on my own, would have taken longer, but there wouldn't have been anything to nail the finger down on poor old Smick. Why fool yourself? There are no easy ways to do something like this, no half measures. You're either right on your own with all plans and secrets locked away safely in your mind, or else you have one or two people in the know, then your secrets ripple out like waves on water and your safety leaks away.

Now at last I was on my own, with a feeling of power and confidence I knew of old, a feeling of having my resources wrapped around me like a cloak. The first thing to do was to identify the GD man who would be following me. I turned the corner sharply, stopped at the gutter and faced about to see who came by the corner, pretending to read directions printed high on the wall. There were two of them. They stumbled around the corner, faltered as they saw me so close, and then catching themselves, walked slowly past. They both had broad stolid faces as though this was part of their uniform, and they were dressed in the drab, mechanic's overall thing, made of strong cloth, which most men on the street were wearing.

It was difficult to know what to do with them. To shake them off would have been madness. A report of a foreigner floating around Charetz unaccounted for would have raised the whole city, and I would most likely be picked up over it. It was necessary that I wait for the night before I could do much, and there were still several hours of winter day to pass.

Crossing the road, I stood on the opposite pavement as though unable to decide which way to go. The two men dawdled behind me across the road, and moved closer. Embarrassed by my loitering, they developed an unconvincing act of pointing and arguing about the building opposite.

I turned towards them at the sound of their voices and smiled apologetically. "I am visiting, gentleman," I said, taking a few steps closer to them, and speaking as I thought a Greek may speak their language. "Greek man here for the talking of trades and commercials," I lowered my voice and moved even closer. "Where are little places for drinking and special ladies, eh? You tell me that?" I drew a roll of notes half from my pocket and winked. "Plenty of money. Plenty of money. Government business, eh?"

One of them scratched his head and started to give a few

words of vague directions, but the other elbowed him furtively in the ribs, and suggested, "Perhaps the man could come with us, Rinkel?" He explained to me, "We have nothing to do with our afternoon. We were talking of a little place where they know us, we would have gone there. But we are not rich men on Government business . . ." his voice fell away into a hopeful question. His companion regarded him as though he were a genius, now revealed for the first time on this street corner.

Gratefully I swallowed the bait, which I had first held out to them, and which they now dangled back in front of me.

"Would be pleasing to me having guests when you are showing me the ways of your city. There is much money - even for three. Government expenses, eh? Needing to say more? Lonely man, stranger in foreign place, has money! Men in city being friends, showing city to stranger, but no money. Arrangement to be made for pleasure of both parties. Agreed?"

They exchanged questioning glances. They nodded seriously to each other, and both broad faces turned to me with happy and expectant grins. We set off along the street, a guard, transformed into a guide, at either side, and threaded our way through the city.

Quite openly, for this would be expected of me, I studied the city with great interest, feeling perfectly secure as long as these two men walked with me. Thickset, broad men, they clearly belonged here, with their drab clothes, and to all eyes I was vouched and accounted for, in my foreigner's attire, by their mere presence.

On my other ventures to this place I had worked in darkness, and though I had closely studied what plans and maps we had, and knew generally how things were disposed, and could find my way, I had not managed to get a proper picture of Charetz. As we walked now, we were crossing the city from one side to the other. Behind us, the massive block of

buildings which made up Bronstern's private citadel, Peace Headquarters, squatted grimly behind its walls. This was a little apart from the other buildings, and between it and the edge of the city was an area of bare ground, and beyond it the open country which surrounds Charetz, low rolling hills covered in scrub.

The administration section, the greater part of the city – for the central administration of the entire Federation is based here, starts at the edge nearest Peace House and extends to the centre of the city, concrete lumps of buildings two or three floors high, grouped in a drab huddle over a great area.

This was the area through which we walked, to reach, gradually, a litter of stores and shops and offices, where the things people need to carry on their lives – food, clothing and so forth – are doled sparingly to those whose work for the State entitled them to coupons. In other cities, this would be called the commercial section, and it would be a bright gaudy place, with a cheerful clamour of salesmanship and bustle crowding the air, but not here. Here things tended towards a uniform grimness and utility that discouraged frivolity.

Beyond this section, the people live, or rather, spend their nights, in a sprawling shanty town, dotted with the raw grey of blocks of communal flats thrown up, and never quite finished, by the Constructions Trust in one of its flurries of activity.

Surrounded by this gloomy ant-heap, is the old village of Charetz, which sat on this plain, peaceful and remote, for centuries, until the famous "accidental" blast flattened the other capital, and caused this new centre of government to spring up here and proliferate over thirty years.

Here, crouching beside crooked lanes, a group of ancient buildings leaned together. Reaching this place, my guides halted for a moment, to find whether, by any chance, we were followed. Watching closely the few people who moved

in the lanes, they satisfied themselves that all was clear, and beckoning me to follow, led along an alley that ran between two crumbling houses, to a door, which hung half open on one hinge, revealing dim steps leading down to a cellar.

The cellar was a pleasant surprise. Clean sawdust covered the floor. The walls were whitewashed, and radiant strips on the ceiling threw a comfortable light on the tables and plain chairs which were grouped on the floor.

As we settled ourselves at a table, and Rinkel, and Kolza, his companion, rapped confidently on the table for service, several customers, who had eyed my guides uncomfortably when we walked in, hurriedly finished their drinks and, studiously casual, walked out. Other groups examined us once with cold eyes and did not after that look directly at us.

The afternoon took a long time to drag past. Rinkel and Kolza were men with few ideas but many words. Though this made safe conversation easy, and ensured that no taint of suspicion sullied our brief acquaintance, it did little to support me in my pretence that I was enjoying the time of my life.

The tumblers of raw white spirit that came hour by hour to our table in an unending and expensive stream ate gradually into their wits. Words were let drop, brief phrases and conspiratorial winks aimed at me, which it would have been suspicious to ignore. I allowed myself to slowly understand that they had been following me, that they had expected a dreary afternoon waiting around for me in the coldness of the streets, and that they had cleverly brought us together in this place so that they could do their work in comfort and pleasure.

This became a great joke we shared, that we were so happy together, guards and guarded. What men of the world we were to take this for granted, this novel arrangement. I was tempted to question them delicately, after first making clear my admiration that they should be the safe custodians of

many interesting secrets, and then leading to my own supposed work.

How important this task was, to promote trade between our countries, how important my chief was, talking even with their great vice-consul, though I had never met him myself I confessed, but my chief thought Smick a clever man. . . .

"Smick!" blurted Kolza. "Lucky if he ever sees him again! Smick is caught as a spy!"

Rinkel raised his lip in a snarl. "Always talking, always talking!" he muttered.

Kolza was temporarily abashed, but recovered himself and smiled sheepishly. "The world will know this soon enough, Rinkel, old bear. It does not hurt to tell our friend these things which are secrets today, everyone's news tomorrow, and forgotten the day after. These Greeks are wise men." He raised his glass. "Come! Jonas and Rinkel - eternal friendship!"

Our group was, by this time, noisy and happy. The inside of my thighs stung with the spirit I had let dribble on my lap to evaporate, whenever my two friends became distracted in one of their perpetual arguments.

More people had drifted in and the place was filling up, and some attention and notice came our way. This made me uneasy, and when we had eaten a meal of red soup, and stewed goat and cabbage, I decided that the time had come to act.

Throwing an arm lovingly about Rinkel, owlishly swaying in his chair, I said, "Time soon for special young ladies, eh?"

I judged as well as I could how much to give him without killing him, for I was squeamish about this, thinking that, in our queer way, we had broken bread together.

Pricked by the needle, he jumped and cried out. Scratching his side and scowling he said that I must have a pin in my clothes. Pretending to examine my sleeve, I shook my head, but he had already lost interest. Slumped in his chair, his eyes

glazed, and his hard face slowly relaxed into a tender smile. I nudged Kolza. "Rinkel, our friend. Look! He sleeps. Not drinking often?"

Kolza blinked. "Rinkel drunk? How could that be? Playing the hog with all this free booze. That's what it is!"

"Some people not holding drink like us eh, comrade?" I said, and nudged again. "You and me! Old hands, eh?"

He beamed proudly, but an itch of worry gnawed at the pride in his eyes. "Can't leave him snoozing here. Someone might see him," he complained.

These words, almost exactly, had already formed in my mind, and I looked at him in grateful surprise. With this part of the dialogue taken away from me, I went on the next.

"Drink man having place for sure, bed, or some such. Place for sleeping where Rinkel can go."

Kolza beckoned to the man who had been serving us. It was agreed that there was a bed we could hire for a few hours. It was expensive. It was used for other things in the evening. There would be annoyance about it. But it was all solved with two notes peeled from my thinning roll.

We shouldered the dead weight of Rinkel, after I had cynically watched Kolza trying in vain to arouse him. We went up back steps to a dark passage and along this to a small room with a bed and straw mattress.

While Kolza busied himself arranging Rinkel comfortably on the bed, I pushed the ampule up a notch in the needle, and bending forward to help him staggered against him. "Oh comrade," he said, "there is a pin in your clothes."

I was unable to hold back a slight smile. Suspicion dawned in his eyes, but it was too late. He slumped down on the bed and I rolled him cosily beside Rinkel.

The only weapons on them were leather coshes weighted with lead, which caused me a moment of surprise. I stripped Rinkel's overall from him and dragged it on over my clothes.

Closing the door behind me, I went along the passage to the next door. Opening this I found a plump, half-dressed woman sitting on a stool, before a lit mirror, doing things to her face. She was not at all surprised to see me in the door.

"Is this the right place?" I asked anxiously before she could speak.

"What for?" she drawled, looking upwards to me with a foxy smile. "Never mind. You're early. Sit on the bed."

I reached inside the overall and counted three notes and put them in front of her. Her eyes widened. "I can do a lot for that!" she said warmly as she stood up. She stepped close and glued herself to me.

It was as though I had been hit over the head with a hammer. This tawdry blowsy peasant, smelling of sweat, and covered with a padding of fat that rolled under my hand like gelatine, quivered with an animal lure that made my head reel, and set my knees trembling, so that for a moment I forgot what I was about.

Thoughts raced furiously through my mind that there was no hurry for what I had to do, there was nothing to stop me using this woman as she expected and hoped to be used, but even while this sudden lust formed itself into words and reasons, I was pushing the needle against her.

She moaned, rubbed herself against me like an animal, and then her weight dragged down on me. I swung her to the bed, and stood staring down at her, while I rubbed the sweat from my brow with my sleeve.

Standing there bemused, I told myself, I can come back here some time, when it's all over. She will never recognize me, she hardly saw me. Yes. You'll come back here, the hell you will! What's the matter with you? Drunk? Crazy? Both probably, coming in here and going on like that just to get hold of a pair of scissors! What makes you think she even has a pair of scissors? Not making much sense are you, Green?

Things don't need to make sense; not ordinary everyday common sense, anyway, once you start to move. The thing then is to keep moving - how and why largely cease to matter. This can't be explained. Unless you know it for yourself, it can't be explained to you.

When we were boys, we had a game of running for miles down a small river which flowed down a steep gully from the mountains. Spaced out unevenly in the river were boulders of all shapes and sizes. If you ran as fast as you could down the river, dealing with each leap from one boulder to the next as a separate thing, not worrying about the countless leaps still ahead, summing up each step in a flash of insight and natural judgement, then you could run safely for minutes at a stretch.

The boys who always fell into the river were the cautious ones, the boys who balanced on one leg on a slippery rock while they wondered which way to jump for their next step.

The scissors were buried in a wooden tray under a lot of woman's junk. Before the mirror, as carefully as I could, I cut the oily waves from my head leaving a bare half inch of wiry stubble. Removing the contact lenses, I examined myself closely in the mirror, and saw that my first disguise was gone, the cover that had accounted for me logically, and preserved my safety in Charetz throughout the day, but in the night, alone in the city, would have betrayed me. Anonymous in the common overall, with the cropped hair usual in Charetz, I had some chance of passing safely in the night.

Finding my way along the passage, past noises and voices behind the other doors, expecting each moment to be seen sneaking away, I at last found myself in the lane.

It was quite dark outside, and skirting a group of men who walked towards the cellar, I set off to walk across the dark city.

Daily Security Report

Security Area: Charetz central
Shift: Night period 10/2/09
Duty officer: Stabolsky. K. 708471, Assistant Director,
 Class 1.

1900 hours: Reported to Duty Officer (SCHAUB, Assistant Director) in conformity with Duty Roster CCZ9.

1912 hours: Accepted admin. responsibility P & S from A/D Schaub after standard advisement of undischarged items as per Duty folio.

1920 hours: Instruction received to report to Consul. Administration turned over to TERKON, Senior Peace Warden.

1923 hours: Received by Consul Bronstern and the following instructions recorded:

The Consul: We are now certain that the independist agent Green is in Charetz. You are to turn over routine work in your Zone to someone else, alert your men and find him. He must be found by morning or it will be the worse for you. I am surrounded by fools and traitors. How can we succeed when we lean on so much weakness for our strength? I will tell you how! By making fools pay for their mistakes, and traitors for their treachery. What of you, Stabolsky? I have never felt sure of you, with your shifty eyes. Are you a fool or a traitor? We will know this by morning.

A/D Stabolsky: I try to do my duty, Doctor, you can rely on me, but perhaps what if it is not right that Green is here, what if I cannot find him? I cannot find him if he is not here, and then what happens to me? Please, Consul, I have always done my best for you.

The Consul: Cowards and weak men will pay too. There will be no escape. I have strained my patience all these years and now I will be satisfied by what you all do. When I am not satisfied you will know it! Green is here in Charetz. Smick screamed a few words before he fainted again. I heard him myself, I have just come from Interrogation Section. Another place, full of fools and traitors! Again and again it seems that he must answer, and then they let him faint. He has fainted a hundred times today and we have five words from him. "He is with the Greeks," he screamed. What Greeks? We have it in his journal that he hoped to see Green in Athens when he went to talk trade with the Greeks. It's all too vague, but I know in my bones that Green is near. He must be found.

A/D Stabolsky: May I question the Greeks?

The Consul: Not yet. I do not want the Fifteen Nations buzzing around my head like wasps. This is your task, I do not tell you how to do it.

1930 hours: Mobile sections alerted under urgent search procedure. Sub-zones allotted. Description of spy issued.

1943 hours: Foreign Surveillance instructed to forward immediate report covering individual movements all Greek nationals in Charetz.

1950 hours: Report received. Interview with section head F.S. section recorded as follows:

A/D Stabolsky: Put your man on and when we have more time you can explain to the Consul why this was not reported earlier. Go ahead, Warden.

Peace Warden F.S. Section: We watch what the Greeks are doing in a scanner we have in a room below them. Three new Greeks arrived about midday and we watched them carefully. One of them asked the chief Greek about women and they laughed and walked outside. The chief came back in and I instructed Peace Wardens Rinkel and Kolza to follow the other according to standing instruction. The Greek they were

following was medium build, black crinkled hair, brown eyes. Dressed, blue trousers, light brown tunic, bright green neck-scarf. Rinkel and Kolza should have reported by 1730 hours but have not yet reported. Is there anything else, sir?

1953 hours: New description of spy issued and instructions to all mobile squads to set search concentration on all locations listed on permitted non-state sexual lists. Descriptions of P/Ws Kolza and Rinkel issued under urgent search procedure.

1954 hours: General Alert announcement from Department of the Consul. Additional guards detached for guard duty Peace Headquarters.

2000 hours: Routine hourly reports. Negative reports received from all sections.

2020 hours: Mobile Section Black 3 reported Kolza and Rinkel found drunk or doped. Location - old village cellar. Owner listed as Katrina Mieller.

2021 hours: Mobile Sections Black and Green concentrated on old village area for detailed search.

2030 hours: Mobile Section Brown 1 reported two unidentified Peace Wardens found killed by stabbing in entrance arch Radio Trust admin. building.

2033 hours: General alert repeated from Department of the Consul. Further wardens detached for guard duty Peace Headquarters.

2034 hours: Peace Wardens found stabbed identified as P/Ws Bode and Karosch attached to Brown Sector for routine night patrol.

Martin Green

I made good progress across the old section of Charetz, and passed through to the other side of the commercial section in reasonable confidence.

Though not crowded, the streets carried a good number of people, many of whom were dressed as I was. I did not feel that there was anything to set me apart from other people, unless I was stopped and searched, and there seemed no more than normal danger that this would happen.

I accepted this as a sign that Smick had either been killed outright, or else had not yet broken under torture, and with a feeling of responsibility and remorse, hoped that he had met a quick death and had avoided torture. Had he talked, it was beyond any doubt that I would now be dodging road-blocks and patrols, and there was no sign of that, though I imagined a tortured Smick gasping out at any moment a few words that would send raiding parties converging on the city, and I watched anxiously for any sign of this.

More than half-way across the city, I moved into the administration section, and here the streets were almost deserted. Though lights still showed, here and there in the blocks of offices, the section had hurriedly emptied itself at the end of the day. In the quiet streets I felt conspicuous. My progress so far, without interference, seemed too good to last, and I felt uncertain, for in these streets were no places to hide, and a solitary individual would show up clearly should a proper search begin.

I came to a short street which was quite deserted, and this decided me. I leaned against a post while I thought it out. It might be safer to turn from here at right angles across the city, and swing around through the open country to approach

Peace Headquarters from the other side. It would mean a long walk, and I tried to decide whether it would be too long for the time that remained of the night. The alarm could be sounded at any moment.

That danger lies in indecision was now proved. Two peace wardens turned the corner. I had not heard their rubber heels, and had no warning. I slouched against the post with my face sunk in my arm, and when I sensed that they had stopped, pushed a finger far down my throat and vomited at the foot of the post. They laughed coarsely, but did not move on. When I was sure that they did not intend to leave me, I staggered away from them across the pavement, and let myself fall forward into the dark entrance of a building. As I went down I fumbled inside the overall and drew the thin durasteel blade from its sheath, and lay with this in my hand.

I grunted and snored, while I listened to the conversation which would determine whether these men would live or die.

"Come on. Leave him. You been like that plenty of times yourself."

"We got our job to do. We ain't strolling here for fun. He's got no right to go spewing all over the admin. section. Admin. section? What's he doing here?"

"That's right. What's he doing here? He should be down in the village with a load like that."

"What do we do? Call a mobile?"

"Maybe. Not yet. Let's drag him out and have a look at him. Costs money to get as full as that. Maybe he didn't spend it all!"

A light played over me. I stirred and hid the knife. They dragged at my feet, but I kicked free and staggered to my feet and lurched against the bigger man.

The thin blade went right in, bending around the ribs, and he grunted and sagged away from me. The other man

wrenched frenziedly at his weapon and tried to shield himself with his other arm, but he had left it too late.

I dragged them one at a time into the entrance, and laid them together in the shadow. They were not very well hidden, where any passing light would reveal them, but it was the best I could do. Feeling that I was now leaving a trail behind me, I delayed only to take one of the round-visored caps and a wide uniform belt. Stuffing these in the front of my overall I moved along the streets in the most direct line towards Peace Headquarters.

I moved now in short bursts, from corner to corner, from one dark shadow to the next, and only moved when I was reasonably sure that I could not be observed.

4I

Daily Security Report

Security Area: Charetz central
Shift: Night period 10/2/09
Duty officer: Stabolsky. K. 708471, Assistant Director,
Class 1.

2012 hours: Received report from Senior Warden, Main Gate, Peace Headquarters, that Independent spy "Martin Green" identified during attempt to enter HQ area as disguised member of guard reinforcement. Spy shot and killed while attempting escape.

2013 hours: Instructions issued that full alert be maintained, all guards remain in position.

2014 hours: Proceeded to Peace Headquarters to undertake personal investigation.

On plans of the city of Charetz, a noble avenue is drawn, running as straight as an arrow from the centre of the city to the gates of Peace Headquarters, a distance of something over three miles. In reality, this road exists only for the last mile, and here it cuts imperiously through jumbled blocks of offices sprawling in a maze of narrow streets over a considerable area. This last mile of the main route to Peace Headquarters, I had intended to skirt, because of its exposure and the possibility of the sort of traffic which would be dangerous to me.

Moving as fast as I could away from the guards I had left barely hidden in the shadow, but slowed by the need for caution, it was about twenty minutes before, on turning a corner, I found myself on this dangerous road. For a short distance, I gave way to the temptation to follow it and thus avoid the chance of losing my way in the dark streets nearby, for the wide road seemed deserted, and traffic could, in any case, be seen while it was a safe distance away.

I had not allowed for the speed of vehicles which used this straight road. Hearing behind the heavy mutter and squeal of tracked vehicles, and seeing, when I turned, twin driving lights bearing down on me at high speed, I had barely time to seek cover in the nearest lane.

Sheltering in the vertical shadow of a wall pier, I watched three troop carriers hurtle past the end of the lane, and in each of these vehicles at least a dozen wardens, their weapons held upright beside them glinting in the dim light. As the rubber growling of pneumatic tracks faded into the distance, the urgency of this sinister convoy, seen for a moment at the end of the lane rushing onwards into the night, convinced me that the city had been alerted and my presence in Charetz

realized. This meant that Smick had talked and was probably dead. The uncertain hopes that I had cherished, that I would reach Bronstern before the city was aroused, and that, despite rumour, Smick would be there to play his part in my plans to wrest control from Bronstern; these hopes died at that moment. This drew a line through all my plans and half-formed schemes, and left me, standing in the uncertain safety of my shadow, frantically framing new plans.

Soon realizing that these distracted thoughts robbed me of the concentration needed for the task in hand, I told myself that my only goal was to reach Bronstern through his barrier of guards, and not worry further until then, what steps should next be taken.

That increasing traffic would be encountered along the main route seemed beyond doubt, and while I must follow this general line, I must do so by finding my way through side-streets. It was an easy matter to take a diverging course, and by taking first one right turn followed by two consecutive turns to the left, and repeating this as far as the tangled nature of the streets would allow, I could reasonably hope that I would keep meeting the main route and would not stray very far from the line to my objective.

This simple plan I followed, but the streets were bare of cover, apart from that provided by shadows, which would vanish at the first flash of a probing light. The few people who moved on these streets, and the lighted windows, seen here and there in blocks of offices, did not worry me overmuch, for these hazards could be seen and avoided. The lack of cover was my chief concern, I may not escape so easily if I should meet another patrol, and even worse, with the city fully alerted, mobiles would comb these streets with spotlights and body radar.

As often happens, a problem which seems insoluble when taken at leisure, proved to have a simple answer under the spur of urgent necessity. I was several turnings away from

the main road when light flickered behind me in the street I had left, and the low noise of a mobile came to my ears. I ran along the street away from the noise, and glancing behind saw that the light would in a moment sweep my street. Acting without any plan, I jumped to the ledge of a window and reaching up managed to pull myself up to the heavy concrete canopy which hooded the window so that I was able to lie hidden on this.

I was delighted to find myself so easily made safe, for body radar, which I feared most, would be sweeping at ground level and lights pointing upwards would only throw me into deeper shadow. My safety was confirmed when the mobile moved slowly along the street past me, with spotlights sweeping every crevice and shadow and leaving no inch of street level unexplored.

Lying flat on my back I could not watch what happened, but there was no pause in the sullen mutter of the machine, the creaking tracks carried it past my hiding place, light flared for a moment below me, and when I thought it safe to raise my head it was already turning into the next street.

Down on the ground again I recovered my full confidence and was filled with a new assurance. Where before I had crept from one shadow to the next, I now looked ahead for suitable canopies, and did not move from one place of safety until I had established another one within reach.

Twice more I had to resort to this device, once for another mobile prowling through the streets, and once for a street patrol of two wardens, who were in the street which I entered, while they were briefly hidden in a doorway. This was a very close thing, and I thought myself lucky to get clear of a near encounter of this sort. I had come to within twenty or thirty yards of them, when I saw the flare of a lighter in the doorway where they lurked, and seeing the two heads bent over the light, the two visored caps almost meeting, I retreated as

quietly and quickly as I could, hoping to disappear around the corner before they resumed their patrol.

Almost to the corner, I drew back hastily when I heard the noise of a mobile in the next street, and knew that I was trapped between them.

Cut off from the place of safety I had left by the mobile, and with the warden patrol between me and the next safe canopy I had little choice as to where I would hide myself. Fortunately there was a tall window nearby with its base about five feet from the ground, and round bars caging it. Dragging myself up to the narrow sill I managed to gain another four feet of height by pulling myself up with the bars, placing my feet on the horizontal bar which held the round bars in place near the top of the window. I now stood precariously, after a climb verging on the impossible, with my feet on a bar nine feet from the ground and my fingernails scratching for a grip on the smooth concrete which bulged over the top of the window. This position left me openly exposed, but I assured myself that I was in a most unlikely position, where no searcher would expect to find me, though the slightest noise, or accidental glance, would instantly reveal me. I was no sooner placed than the two wardens walked slowly under my feet, arguing bitterly. Their voices carried to me clearly while they were still some distance away.

“. . . and I still say we do what we are told and blast him on sight if we see him even if it turns out to be someone else.”

“How long are you and all the other stupid bastards going to believe all they tell you? Maybe this man has come here to fix everything up and I want everything fixed up like I never wanted anything before in my life! They stuff this thing into you and expect this to fill you full to the brim with joy! You go home and the wife won't come within twenty feet of you in case you blow up and sends the kids next door every time you come home, and you feel like some diseased

old wreck eaten away with pox. What sort of life is that for a man?"

"I still say blast him! Cut him open with a shell! You give out with much more of this crazy talk, someone's going to turn you in to the senior, then we'll see who blows up and when!"

"Better not be you! We been on too many patrols together for that. What about that woman in the village? Watch what you say, you fat bastard, I got plenty I could spill on you!"

The angry voices passed close under me and moved towards the corner out of hearing. My fingers slipped a millimetre at a time on the smooth rendering. Before they reached me I had a horrible moment when I thought that I would fall at their feet, but with aching fingers I managed to check myself. The mobile turned the corner before they did and lit them in a glaring beam of light, then seeing that they had searched this street pointed the lights straight forward and raced past me to start searching again further on. As soon as the patrol had turned the corner, and the mobile was well away, I jumped down and, landing heavily, sat on the pavement while I massaged my fingers and the muscles of my weak arm.

This was the last time I needed to hide myself in this way and within a few minutes I came to the end of the streets and buildings and saw across the bare ground the looming mass of Peace Headquarters.

This square of open ground which surrounds Peace House like a moat, was flooded with the blinding beams of searchlights. Peering against the glare I saw that a row of guards, closely spaced, looked outwards from behind the lights.

It was not easy to imagine the barest possibility that this guarded area could be crossed, and no plan which showed the slightest chance of success occurred to me. I was tempted to move back well into the cover of the buildings, and work around, coming forward from time to time to examine the

defences, around their whole periphery, but I recognized this for what it was – a natural desire to retreat from a seemingly insoluble and fatal problem. I decided that though I would have to make a wider examination, the less I moved around, the less I would be tempting the kindly fate which had allowed me to travel this far with no real danger or trouble.

Moving very slowly in the shadow, I came before long to a slight rise which overlooked the main gate, and the bare straight road which led to it across the lighted plain.

A score of guards patrolled this road. They were placed at intervals of some fifty yards, and continually marched to and fro along the edges of the road, marching towards each other until they were face to face, turning about, and marching back to meet the next guard.

This process puzzled me, I could see no sensible reason to it, but watched patiently until a mobile growled along the road from the city. At the edge of the open area, the occupants of the vehicle dismounted and formed into a line, and after inspection by a squad of men stationed at this point, they trooped aboard again and were allowed to proceed towards the main gate. While the mobile drove on the exposed road the guards ceased their marching and, turning inwards, covered it with their weapons until it reached the gate. Here the vehicle again stopped, its crew dismounted for another examination, until, the guards at the gate satisfied at last, it was permitted to enter the citadel.

I deduced from this that the wardens I had disposed of had been discovered, and that it was expected that I might attempt to gain entrance under disguise as a warden.

Deciding to examine the first checkpoint, I managed to move towards it in reasonable safety by crawling, very flat and very slowly, in the shadows cast on the uneven ground by the harsh beams of the searchlights. This was a work of infinite stealth and care, forty minutes had passed before I

had moved the several hundred yards, and lay close to the checkpoint in a heavy shadow.

It is a common error to assume that strong lighting is the proper solution of guarding and interception problems of this nature. As often quite the reverse is the case. Where even and shadowless lighting cannot be achieved, the best arrangement is to superimpose bright lighting sweeping on a random pattern over natural lighting, or even darkness. The uncertainty introduced by the lack of pattern to the sweeping light is a strong deterrent and an almost insuperable problem in crossing areas of open ground. Steady bright beams of light, as well as throwing hard shadows which make reliable cover, also have a harmful effect in dimming the night vision of guards. Over a very flat area, where shadows are not thrown of any depth, general lighting is quite effective, but the defensive effect of sweeping beams along the edges of the lighted areas through which I worked at Charetz would have made the method of approach used quite impossible.

Lying flat in shadow, with my face raised only slightly from the ground, I studied the movements of the guards in the hope that some pattern of behaviour would emerge. As always, this seemed at first to be non-existent, the fifteen guards sauntering generally about in the area with their attention mainly concentrated on the road.

The first pattern of any sort to become obvious showed in the behaviour of a guard on the opposite side of the road. This man was plainly nervous, at regular intervals he stepped a few paces away from his fellows and, shading his eyes, peered anxiously into the glaring pattern of light and shade which stretched away from the road.

He did not move far enough from the others to have any use for me, and as well as this, any idea of crossing the road could not be entertained. I confined my study to the eight guards who were on my side of the road. These men strolled about casually, talking and spitting and stretching

themselves and I was losing hope that they would ever do more than stand in a close group exercising themselves in this way, when one man walked away from the others and moved into a shadow where he could be seen to be relieving himself. Curious at his modesty, I watched closely. After glancing all around, and buttoning his trousers, he stooped quickly, and fumbling in the shadow, lifted a bottle to his mouth and drank for several seconds.

Wiping his mouth and replacing the bottle he walked slowly back to the other guards. This was the pattern which rewarded my long and patient study. On these small weaknesses and variations of temperament the plans of mighty men can founder. The time taken in searching them out seldom goes unrewarded, for sooner or later the pattern emerges, and the opportunity is found which rewards the patient observer.

Whether this bottle was jointly owned, or was the selfish possession of one man nothing seemed surer than that a guard would, after an interval, return to it, unless the last drinker had emptied it.

Inching my way, flat on the ground, I moved to the shadows. There were several lighted areas to cross and though they were narrow, they were quite exposed. These I crossed when I could be reasonably sure that the guards were looking away. Men doing dull tasks are easily and unconsciously distracted, as these men were. The slightest noise was enough to absorb their full attention. The sound of a vehicle in the city, a shouted order at the gate, and all heads would turn towards the noise as though connected by a wire. At these moments I rolled or crawled quickly across the gaps in the shadows.

The bottle, when I found it, was heavy, and at least half full. I drew the durasteel knife and held it before me, lying flat with my face turned from the light. While I waited for one of the guards to become conscious of a thirst which

would lead him to death, I carefully buckled the uniform belt around my overall and pulled the cap down over my eyes, and then relaxed, waiting as calmly as I could, running over and over in my mind the series of actions I had decided on, and using this to force out of my mind the thought of the man I was about to kill, not daring to wonder whether he was a reluctant pawn in Bronstern's schemes, or whether he may even wish me well, as did the man whom I had heard talking while I hid myself on the window.

These thoughts were dangerous. I could not afford to be weakened by fancies of this sort and I reminded myself that few of these men, who now peered over glinting weapons around me, would feel an instant of compunction or sorrow if I should be hunted down and killed before their eyes.

When the moment came to strike there was no weakness or faltering behind my hand. Footsteps at last led me to cautiously turn my head. The guard who approached was dressed very much as I was in overalls, belt and cap, and this finally condemned him.

He bent down at the edge of the shadow and fumbled for the bottle. As he looked right at me, it was incredible to me that he did not see me, but the glare of the lights had partly blinded his vision for shadows. I caught the groping hand and jerked him so that he fell on the knife, moving the knife at the last moment to meet him squarely. When he was still, I picked up his weapon and the bottle and stood in his place making a pretence of drinking, at the same time pushing him further into the shadow with my foot. Satisfied that he would not be readily seen, I walked towards the guards, but after two or three steps a violent retching caught me by surprise and nearly doubled me up, and though I continued to walk, I was sure that at any moment I would vomit.

With an effort I brought sweat out on me I controlled the horror and nausea which had caused the retching, and had recovered by the time I neared the guards. I kept as far as

I dared from them, strolling about as they did, staring along the road, so that my face could not be clearly seen. One of them edged towards me and thinking him suspicious of me, I turned my face further away, but he came closer and spoke.

"You were a long time, you selfish bastard. Did you leave some for me?"

To drown my voice I hawked deep in my throat, and spat, and grunted in a phlegmy voice, "Go and see for yourself!" He drifted away, and walked towards the bottle. This was the most dangerous phase of my attempt, while I stood around among these men waiting for another mobile to come into sight in the distance, and yet I was comforted by the weapon held in my hand. With this I could wreak some damage and confusion if things went wrong. Nevertheless, the minutes as they passed seemed like days, until, as I was abandoning hope of this plan, and toying with other ideas, I caught the lights of a vehicle moving towards us on the road. As it groaned to a stop, I stood well back and watched the soldiers dismount and fall into a straggled line. The leader of our section scanned each face intently as he passed slowly along the line. When he had passed several men I approached the first man of the row.

"What have you fellows done?" I muttered to him. "It's terrible to stand here and listen to the screaming when they finish you off!"

His jaw dropped down, his mouth and eyes popped open as if the muscles of his face had been severed with a knife.

"Mmmmmmmistake. Must be a mistake," the poor wretch stammered. "We are here to guard against the spy!"

"What spy?" I hissed scornfully. "There is no spy! The other crews had that story. We laughed at them. Inside they go. Bang! Bang! Bang! And screaming, and the mobiles come out - empty! They wouldn't catch me! A smart man could get away from here in the shadows."

It was easy for him to believe me, for fear and mystery had been part of his life. From the corner of my eye I saw the section leader come to the last man. This was the end of my time.

"Run for it!" I snarled. "I'll shield you. You have no time to think. Run! Run! Run!"

Caught up in an agony of indecision his eyes darted from side to side like the eyes of a cornered rabbit. Leaping away, he dropped his weapon and bolted across the shadows.

"The spy! The spy!" I shouted. Startled faces swung to me. I threw up the weapon and pulling the trigger over and over, fired into the shadows to one side of where he had gone. The weapon hissed venomously and thudded back into my shoulder. Bright stars of light bit into the shadows as the tiny shells exploded. Dust rose up into the light.

The small figure could be seen running madly across patches of light, and the others started firing at him, and in a second weapons were hissing on all sides. A broken uproar of shouting and whistling, and the deafening cracking bursts of dozens of explosive shells, brought to full pitch the confusion which I had hoped to produce.

Ducking under the hissing mouth of a weapon, I ran to the driver of the mobile, and shouted, "Take me to the gate, comrade, we must have more men. The spy is escaping!"

Bewildered by this violent commotion, he stood at the step of his vehicle wondering what he should be doing, and he seized on my order with relief. I pushed him urgently into his seat and stood on the step beside him, while he reached for the controls and made the vehicle leap forward.

There was more noise behind than ever, and the guards along the road leaned forward peering across the bright ground towards the noise, pointing indecisively with their weapons.

Leaning far out as we passed them I shouted, "Shoot! Shoot! The spy has escaped!", and repeated this to each guard

until they were all shooting wildly towards the men we had left. As I dismounted at the gate, I hurriedly looked behind, though my ears told me all that I needed to know.

The guards were kneeling, and firing shell after shell in all directions, and angry shouts and screams from the guards at the road block and the continuous cracking of shells made such furious confusion of the night that I could hardly refrain from rubbing my hands together in satisfaction as I faced the anxious section leader at the gate, who ran across to meet me.

"Send your men down the road," I panted at him. "The spy has escaped! Let me through the gate. It must be reported. Every man is needed. There is not a moment to lose!"

I used the accent of command, and he was quite taken in by my antics, not even glancing at my makeshift uniform. He shouted orders and made a signal to the guard on the gate. Men began to double along the road. The gate swung open, and I swung myself aboard with the handrail and shouted "Drive on!" The tracks bit into the gravel and carried me into Bronstern's fortress.

Through the gate the road skirted around buildings and widened into an open area where mobiles and smaller vehicles were standing in rows.

"Pull in here and wait," I said to the driver. "I must report to the chief."

I had thought to leave him there waiting, but a man sitting in boredom has little to do but think, and I was not yet out of the reach of suspicions which could readily pass across his mind. A short sleep would not harm him. Leaning against him as he reached for the brake, I pushed the needle gently through his sleeve. There was something sharp sticking out of my uniform he told me, with the usual complaint, but before his reaching hand touched the switch he was asleep. I turned the switch and jumped down.

As I ran to the door, which was clustered with wardens gazing towards the sounds of firing and shouting, and the

clouds of dust, which rose into the light from the battleground which I had created and deserted, I was tempted to push my success even further, but realizing that I had got this far with my makeshift uniform, only because of the situation of noise and emergency which caught each man for a vital second off balance, I contented myself with shouting to these men, who had now transferred their excited gaze to me, that they should inform the officers that the spy had escaped and that more men were needed. I turned from them and, calling back over my shoulder, "Have to report to my section!" I ran until I turned the corner of an outbuilding and was hidden from them. Slowing to a smart military walk, I fumbled inside the overall to the opening in the tunic beneath, where my old pistol rested in its straps against my body.

Placing the pistol close to hand in the sidepocket of the overall I marched beside the building until I came to the next doorway which was barred by a guard who stood before it in dim light.

As I passed I called to him softly, "They have found the spy!" and went to walk on. Curiosity undermined his caution.

Looking behind him, he saw that we were alone and, annoyed to see me walking away, leaving mystery behind me, he called impatiently, "Hey. Come back. What else?" I turned towards him, and he added, "Is that what all the commotion is about?"

"He tried to come in on a mobile," I said, moving closer. "Made a break for it, everyone started shooting."

Close enough now, I jammed the pistol into his ribs so hard that he grunted and the weapon, which he was holding before him with butt resting on the ground, clattered out of his hands.

"Don't move or talk or I'll kill you!" I snarled. I pointed to the ground. "Pick it up!"

Followed down by the pistol, he bent, and grasping the barrel, lifted his weapon from the ground.

"Do you believe I will kill you if you do not obey me?" I questioned him savagely.

He could not speak, but nodded seriously, eyes wide with fright.

"I have already killed three of you animals tonight and another one won't worry me!"

"Who are you?" he gasped.

"You have been waiting for me," I said. "I am this terrible spy. The spy you have been standing here hoping to kill with your weapon." I set my face in a fierce scowl of anger, and hissed through my teeth, "You would have killed me, you dog!"

This savagery, acted so closely to him, broke him completely and made him malleable enough for my purpose.

"Oh no, sir! Not me! No, sir! I would not kill anyone," he sobbed.

"I will spare you if you help me," I said, a trifle more gently.

"I will do anything!"

"Then lead me safely through the building to the Consul. If anything goes wrong. I will kill you."

"Oh no, sir! We will never get through and then you will kill me. Please, can you get another man for this? I am sick."

"You are right," I said. "I will get another man."

"Oh thank you! Thank you! I will never forget your kindness."

"There will be no chance for you to forget anything," I said regretfully. "I have to kill you. You understand that I cannot leave you here to raise the alarm."

While I was speaking I moved the pistol very slowly towards his head. Staring along his nose, eyes straining in terror until they were white balls popping from his face, he moved his head away from the muzzle, stretching back on his neck and raising his chin until he could stretch no further and the barrel rested beside his eyes.

"Don't! Don't!" he squealed. "I will do it!"

I lowered the pistol and his head came back and bent forward so that he was looking down at his legs.

"You made me piss myself!" he sobbed.

I was ashamed to cause him so much terror, but there was no choice for me in this, for I had to make sure of him.

"Pull yourself together," I said sternly, to keep out the pity which would have entered my voice. "We will be very careful, and I will not kill you unless I have to." But I knew that this poor wretch in one pitiful sentence had made himself safe from me.

"Lead on," I told him. "Guide me through the building to the Consul and you can go free. If we meet anyone, if we are stopped, it will be for you to see that there is no interference. If I have to hide this pistol, do not think that this will save you! Whatever happens I will leave myself enough time to kill you if you make any move to betray me. Now start! And find a way which will be safe."

He slouched nervously ahead of me, through the doorway, leading me along a corridor. I nudged him with the pistol. "Smarten yourself up as though we were marching together on an errand!" I hissed.

With our heels thudding, we marched past doors and openings to the end of the corridor, where we turned towards the centre of the building.

I stopped him. "Is this the best way?" I asked.

"I don't know," he muttered in dull resignation. "They will catch us whichever way we go. We have to go up the stairs to the next floor, and they always have guards on the stairs."

"Isn't there a back way? A kitchen? How do they get meals up there?"

His face brightened. "Yes, of course. That would be the best way. I am too frightened to think!"

He turned back, and we marched through dim passages,

turning and twisting, and several times meeting wardens, but they took little notice of us as we marched stolidly by. Whatever orders may have been given, it was clear that in Peace House, the men themselves could conceive no danger or need for great precaution.

The greatest danger was that the deception outside may be discovered at any time and an alarm sounded within the building, and at this thought I quickened my steps, forcing my guide along faster with the pistol. We turned a corner and my guide faltered, but I pushed him ahead and hissed, "Go ahead. I will deal with it."

There was a guard at the foot of the stairs. We walked up to him and he pushed his weapon across and blocked our way.

"No one goes up here tonight," he growled curtly. "Special orders. Why do you want to go up?"

I pushed past my guide, hoping that he would not be tempted to get his weapon up and shoot me in the back. With the pistol hidden at my side I leaned forward as though to explain matters to the guard. "This is the man who shot the spy," I said. "They want him sent up."

His lips curled. "What spy?" he asked scornfully. "I heard nothing of them catching a spy!"

"You deaf?" I said unbelievably. "All that noise?"

His interest was caught and he lowered the weapon. I leaned forward as though to say something more and rammed the pistol into his belly. "Don't move!" I said savagely.

He grunted and doubled forward with pain, for I had tried to knock out his wind for a moment with the pistol, and as he gasped for breath I saw that this had succeeded.

There was time for a quick glance at my faithful guide. With dropped jaw and eyes hanging out, he was standing with the weapon drooping before him. "Cover him with your weapon!" I snarled and watched like a hawk as he brought the muzzle up.

I glanced at the needle strapped to my wrist and thought that there would be enough for another shot. I jabbed it at the wrist of the guard, and he leapt back so suddenly at the sting that my nervous guide pressed the firing stud from sheer panic.

A wicked hiss from the squat barrel beside me and a shell thudded into the guard, exploding with a cracking grunt that echoed along the corridors. The guard fell back on the stairs.

Tearing the weapon from the nerveless hands of this useless fool whom, I had, of all the guards in Charetz, chosen to guide me, I grabbed his arm and hissed "Run!" and we started up the stairs, two at a time, while doors crashed open and running feet pounded in the corridors.

"Which way?" I cried as we neared the top. He pointed to the left, and as we came to the top step he dragged at my arm as though to stop me.

"No use!" he cried despairingly. "Give up!"

"Bloody idiot!" I shouted in temper and pushed him backwards down the stairs. Without waiting to see who followed, I ran as fast as I could along the corridor towards the front of the building.

I raged angrily at myself that right near the end I had endangered everything in a fit of squeamishness, for I should have drawn my knife and silently killed the guard on the stairs.

It infuriated me that so close to Bronstern, failure seemed certain, for I could not hope to go much further with this shouting pack of guards so close behind. The corridor opened out before me into the luxury of marbled walls and inlaid floor.

Before a massive door, three guards stood at attention. As I ran towards them, the noise of shouting behind me alarmed them. They brought down their weapons and fired.

The suddenness of my entry saved me. I stopped the instant I saw them and threw up my pistol, and the moment I was steady began firing. I placed two shots into the man nearest

to me, paused, and fired two aimed shots at the next man. When he went down the survivor was firing wildly with the lack of aim that goes with panic.

The shells cracked on the marble behind me, but it was as though this did not concern me. I aimed and fired once more and the last man went down against the door.

I raced to the door before it could be locked and pressing the button pushed hard against it and dropped down flat in the open doorway, behind the dead guard and with my pistol already pointing ahead and up.

Shells whistled over my head through the doorway and crashed into the other side of the corridor. There was only one man firing, and before he could correct his aim I had him. The pistol thundered and bucked in my hand and the uniformed figure went down in a heap. A thrill of primitive joy ran up my arm at the delight of firing this old weapon. There is little satisfaction in the empty hissing of modern weapons and it was pleasing to have an honest firearm jumping in my hand again. I stood up and cautiously entered the room, kicking the door shut behind and moving so that the solid wall was at my back.

Bronstern and two other men were seated at a heavy table. There was nothing I wanted to say. I waved the pistol at the men and leaned against the wall wondering whether I could now afford to feel tired and satisfied. Not yet, I told myself, not yet, there are still many things to do.

This is the moment of greatest danger, when success seems sure, and the body cries out for relief from tension, and will not believe that more will be asked of it, that more dangers still wait to be endured. I stood against the wall almost bemused, but the sound of rushing feet outside brought me back to alertness.

"Lock the door!" I shouted, pointing the pistol at one of the men seated beside Bronstern. But the three of them crouched down in terror at the table. I shouted again, and the

man looked at Bronstern for guidance. The Consul sat as though paralysed. This was no moment for mercy, my finger tightened on the trigger and in another moment a heavy bullet would have torn into this man's shoulder, but he saw this on my face, and bounded out of his chair as though I had, in fact, shot him.

He ran to the locking button which I had been unable to locate, and pressed this as the handle was already turning. The magnetic lock rattled the handle. Muffled by the heavy door, a new uproar of shouting broke out.

"Tell them to go away. They are not to attempt to break in, or Bronstern will be killed. Tell them that. Tell the chief of the guard to do nothing until he receives further instructions." I gave these orders and accented them with a sharp wave of the pistol.

He spoke into the annunciator on the table and I heard his voice, mechanically repeated through the building: "The guards who are at the Consul's door are to report to the chief warden for further orders. Any attempt to enter will endanger the life of our Consul. These orders given by Trazshay, Acting Vice-Consul. The chief warden is to do nothing until further orders are given."

A stolid, unimaginative man, he now glowered at me. His fear was giving way to anger and resentment, and this could not be afforded.

"Vice-Consul," I said, "I see what is going through your mind. Is your loyalty to this madman so great that you will die for him? For you will! Your mind is working you towards your death!"

"I am not like these other rats!" he barked. "I do not fawn on a man today and betray him tomorrow! I have stood up against Doctor Bronstern when I have known myself to be in the right, and I will stand against you! If this means that I am to die, then get it over with! I was caught unprepared by the shooting for a moment, but I am not afraid now!"

"These words do you much credit," I said dryly, but I was caught in a passing admiration for the dignity of this man. "You are soon likely to see yourself tested. You realize my position, that any thought that this weapon in my hand is an empty bluff cannot be allowed? We will have this out now. Take your chair and put it there in the corner."

He glowered up at me from the table, and did not move.

"It makes little difference to me whether you do this or not," I went on. "I am sure that your friend here will do what I say after he has seen you, sitting beside him, shot in the face. Why choose this martyrdom for yourself? Could you not live a little longer, if only from curiosity? Perhaps you may discover that there is a place for you in the new arrangements." I aimed the pistol at his face. "Now pick up the chair or die!"

His mouth closed like a trap, and he picked up his chair and placed it as I directed.

"Now, Willi, your turn," I said to Bronstern. "Take your chair and place it in front of the other."

Bronstern raised his head from the table and jumped up, screaming, "Do something! Do something! He is only one man!"

Aiming with a certain delicate care I put a heavy bullet into his shoulder near the top left corner of his tunic. The force of the bullet spun him sideways and he fell awkwardly into the chair. Blood started to run down his sleeve from the ripped tunic. Bronstern saw the blood and moaned. He collapsed forward on to the table with his head on his arms.

"There is not much time," I said to the others. "Carry your Consul and his chair across to the corner."

With this violence their hesitation disappeared. They lifted the chair, with Bronstern slouched down between its arms, and staggered across the room. When it was properly positioned I waved them back to the table and went over and sat in the chair behind.

When the pistol was rested on the back of the chair the muzzle came against Bronstern's neck. I made myself comfortable and knew at last that I could relax. At last I was impregnable. Sitting in this corner, shielded from behind by walls of solid concrete, and from the front by the body on which depended, as though by a hair, the life of every man in this land who might wish me dead, I was as safe as I could be anywhere in the world. This pistol, which now rested lightly against the short hairs of Bronstern's neck, controlled an empire.

"The position should be very clear to you," I said mildly to the two men, standing at the table with fear and despair shared between them like a bitter meal. "If anything goes wrong I will kill your master. If he dies, so will you die, so will every man who counts for anything in your Federation. Remember this! I have friends who would take advantage of these deaths which would leave your nations wide open and defenceless. You will gain nothing by my death. I lose nothing but my life if Bronstern dies, and there are far greater things than my life involved in this. If necessary I will take the way which leads to the death of Bronstern and I will take it without hesitation."

"Now," I continued, "what has happened to Smick? Is he still alive? You, Trazshay, answer me."

"He was alive when I last heard. He was under interrogation, but I do not think that they were satisfied with what he told them. They wished for more, I think that they would be careful to keep him alive."

"Have him brought here. Bring a doctor with him to attend to him and also to your Consul." I leaned back luxuriously in the chair, feeling a pleasant weariness. "Bring me a cushion to put behind me. I have to lean too far forward to reach Bronstern. Then call a meeting of the High Council, to meet here inside an hour."

"Meetings of the Council are summoned only by the

Consul," said Trazshay sullenly, while the other man brought me a cushion.

"That is in order," I said. "The Mighty Consul summons a meeting of his council! Don't we, Willi?" I hacked Bronstern lightly behind the ear with the sharp fore-sight of the pistol. He let out a deep groan.

"Hear the voice of your Mighty Consul!" I said. "He calls for an urgent meeting of the High Council."

43

Records of the High Council for Peace and Security . . .

11/2/09

Members of the Council were summoned by the Consul to consider future policy and administration procedures, and to consider suggestions on these matters put forward by Comrade M. W. Green.

Comrade Green: As you can see, gentlemen, we meet here today under unusual circumstances. Your esteemed and respected leader has at last reached a position where, under the pressure of failing health and an uncertain future, he finds himself unable to handle the responsibilities which fall to the head of a mighty association of nations such as yours.

This matter he has talked over with me, and he rightly feels that it is his duty, which he now finds inescapable, to make way for a younger man. He has looked on me, I am pleased to say, as an impartial observer and adviser, and I have given it as my opinion that this powerful office should now descend to Ewald Smick, whose years of faithful service to your Federation have surely prepared him for this task. You are asked to ratify this change of office, in which your Consul has concurred.

Is that not so, Doctor Bronstern?

This hearing deficiency which has so suddenly overtaken your unfortunate leader must surely offer proof that the suggested step is a wise one.

Bronstern, you do agree with my suggestion that Smick should succeed you now as Consul?

The Consul: Yes.

Councillor Trazshay: I suppose that you are trying to make this look good on the records. There should be some mention that the Consul's adviser hits him over the head with the barrel of a revolver when he wants an answer.

Comrade Green: Surely the Councillor would not wish it to be recorded that the Consul has reached such a depth of lunacy that he must be restrained physically from violence. I think we should deal with this matter as men of the world. It is important in these circumstances that things should be done according to the rules.

Councillor Trazshay: We should deal with this as it really is. The people should know that we are listening to the dictates and pronouncements of a conqueror. This cynical farce which the foreign agent Green is trying to play out should be exposed for what it is.

Comrade Green: What nonsense is this? Does the Councillor claim that one man could conquer a group of nations which covers half of the world?

Where is my army? Gentlemen, it would be best if you accepted my position here as that of an honest and impartial adviser. There is much that I can do to help you. Do you understand the inner meaning of these words? There is much that I can do to help you! Surely you know in your hearts that there must be some changes if you are to be saved! What have you been offered before this but terror and despair and a death which is enough to make the bravest man shake in his inmost being? I can advise you of the way out of this trap. Surely your own self-interest and common sense compel you to see this!

Vice-Consul Smick: I must say something about this now. Members of the Council will excuse me if I do not say much, and I ask them to listen carefully to me. I have had experiences lately which have exhausted me physically so that to utter even one word is an effort. Nevertheless, I must try to convince you that it would be wise to listen to Mr Green, to do what he suggests should be done. I do not say this out of an ambition to be Consul. I seem to remember that I had ambition once, it is difficult to remember.

So many things float in the air beyond me out of the reach of my mind. This whole meeting for me has the texture and feeling of a dream.

I was awakened to come to this place from my cell. Yes, I can remember that. Is that memory or is it delusion? Of course this must be a dream! I need only awake and that will prove it. But I must not awake, for then it will all start again. But I do not want this dream! I want a black thoughtless dreamless sleep. I refuse to join in your dream. I must defend myself with sleep, for this has saved me this far. I will not wake up and I will not dream then nothing can touch me. Take your dream away, I refuse to take part in it. I must . . .

Councillor Trazshay: Well, Green! Is this demented creature the man you would foist on us as Consul?

Comrade Green: Yes. This is the man! We were to have a doctor here for Smick, where is he? Have him in here and let him give poor Smick a dose of something to wake him up; and ask yourself, Trazshay, and you too, you others, if you think that you would have endured torture and held out as long as Smick and finished up so well. You need not pity Smick – keep what pity you have for yourself. Smick is a brave man who has been led to think himself a coward and a fool. Once he realizes that he is neither he will be a greater man for your Federation than ever Bronstern was. Let us adjourn now until Smick is well enough to be heard.

Adjournment followed. Meeting resumed ten minutes later.

Vice-Consul Smick: I am sorry for my weakness. I am awake now and feel better. This is what I have to say. This man Martin Green comes to us at a critical time. We all know that the security and well-being of our Federation has been set aside and sacrificed by Consul Bronstern. We must face this – that Bronstern has fallen into the pit of megalomania as others in his position have done before him. Into this pit he would drag us all, he would destroy everything! Each of us, and ten thousand others, will fall with him when he dies.

This man, Green, who was captured by Bronstern, and treated as we were treated, has found a way out for himself. What madness it would be for us to refuse to learn from him how we may escape as well! That is one side of the argument. The other side is more brutal. Green holds a pistol in his hand, and that pistol points at the man who holds our destinies and the fate of our nations in his hand. If Green should pull the trigger, what then? Certainly we can kill Green, but what does that avail? Within a day or two at most we ourselves would then be dead, and with us and all the others who would die would fall every defence we have. There is no escape from that.

I now offer myself to you as Consul in Doctor Bronstern's place. If you agree to this I tell you now that I will follow the directions and instructions that Green will give, and in doing that I will be acting to secure the future of the nations of our Federation, and the future I offer is different in every way from our past. We are now seeing the logical and extreme end of a State founded on a power too great to be resisted, of a State completely ruled by fear. We have grown by generations of fear, we have scrawled a bloody trail across the pages of history, and at last we have arrived at the end of the road. We have committed acts against our own people which they would never have tolerated from the most savage and brutal conqueror – we have been our own ravishers of our own nations for almost a hundred years and

now we can see where this road has led. We have fallen victim to ourselves.

I plead with my fellows of this Council to take this chance and change our history at this point – to change our story of despair to one of hope. I am not naïve enough to plead with you on moral grounds, to tell you we must change, for what we have been doing is wrong. Ethics! Moral rights and wrongs! These are not words that have been heard in my lifetime, for such things we have drowned in a bath of blood. We have not used arguments in these terms; our only argument has been that of force! The man who has, by whatever means, made himself most feared, has won all our arguments.

No! I am not talking to you of morals. I am talking to you of things which work and things which don't work. Now that we have been brought to the last brink, the very edge, of failure and disintegration by the means we have used, we must decide to give up those means and try something else, and we must be thankful that we have been given a choice.

The simple problem of any State is to come to terms with its people. There are many ways in which this can be done. We have tried one way and we have tried it exhaustively: year after year after year, until we have at last reached the bitter end of that way. That way was the way of fear, the way of using the whole power of the State as a brutal club in the hands of one man. It is not because this is wrong that I say we must try another way of coming to terms with our people, it is because our way has failed. We must try a way that will work.

After our century of experiment it is time to agree that we have failed.

It is time for a change.

Councillor Arons: I will go with you, Smick! We should lock up Bronstern in a safe place and make Smick Consul. Who agrees with me should stand up now with me. It has

been a pretence for many years that this mighty Council rules our Federation. Until now we have been a pitiful chorus echoing the dictates of our master. Let this be the first change. Who will stand with me on this?

(Members of the Council were counted. Six stood, Councillor Trazshay remained seated.)

Councillor Arons: We can easily deal with you, Trazshay!

Comrade Green: Yes! You will deal with Trazshay today. Then tomorrow someone else will disagree with you, and you will deal with him; and then another, and another, until only one man is left and this man will gather his little docile choir around him. In the name of God! Haven't you had enough of that?

Later there will be time to talk about these things but not now. There is too much to be done before I can trust you enough to put down this pistol I hold against you. You will be called together again. It is enough now that you have a new Consul. Consul Smick, I suggest that we be left alone to make some arrangements.

The Consul: The Council is adjourned.

44

Martin Green

After the Council meeting was called it was just a matter of tidying up. I hadn't thought that this meeting would have gone off so mildly. I was ready for all sorts of fireworks, for surely out of these men, I thought, there must be one who would take the chance of trying to disarm me before I could kill Bronstern; and in a way, this was the greatest risk of the whole thing. If there had been one desperate man to take advantage of my fatigue, who could have disarmed me and

assumed my control over Bronstern, we would have been back where we started.

But in this too, as in many other things, Bronstern's conditioning towards apathy had been too successful. The council had been well chosen, they were men who had learned to accept things complacently, and therefore there was no trouble. These boys had learned to listen to the toughest voice in earshot, and for the time being that voice was mine.

Once we had Smick talking sensibly after a shot of nula-drine it was all over. He held forth very persuasively and they went along with him, deposed Bronstern as Consul and put Smick up in his place and then the Council was adjourned.

When Smick and I were alone we called up Hood in Athens and Smick made the official request for the use of Istforce 10 to keep law and order, and I told Hood to come to Charetz as soon as this had been arranged.

I settled down to wait for Hood. Smick tied Bronstern in a chair, for the ex-Consul had now grasped the full implications of his position and had a very wild and dangerous look in his eye. I was nervous, so close to success, with only a few details to be fixed up, and now would have gone to great lengths to avoid the need to kill Bronstern. I think he sensed this and given the slightest chance may have tried to take advantage of it. It was still not too late for him to change everything back if he could get free.

Hood arrived early in the morning and by then it was sheer torment for me to keep awake. I had to keep alert against Bronstern, and against the chance that there may be some attempt from outside to relieve him, and I had to do this in the face of nervous and physical exhaustion.

I almost wept when I saw Hood's brown Australian face at the door. All that I could say was, "Oh Jesus! Am I glad to see you!"

I stood up and gave him the pistol. He hefted it in his hand

and looked curiously at me. "How does it feel to take half the world with a silly old gun like this?" he asked.

"I don't feel anything," I said wearily, "except tired, and sick of it all."

That was about the end of it when I handed the gun to Hood. It seemed a very ordinary thing to do, another moment, another action among a whole lot of other things, I was too tired to make any sort of gesture out of it.

45

From the occasional diary of Elizabeth Stevens

March twelfth. Again he has gone away. He came back to me, and now has gone, but, oh . . . how different now! Now joy speeds Time's slow measure, the clock runs fast . . . my inner timepiece that beats with every movement of my heart now looks hungrily at time as though to devour it with its own consuming passion.

Days ago, out of that dreadful silence, out of that deadness that crept on me; when everything had left me, all feeling, all hope; out of that emptiness came Scurry, the long brown man, Scurry with his thin devil's face and quick deriding eyes.

He came to me by road, for, to fly, he thought, might alarm me. Quietly he came to my door and quietly tapped, so that before anything else I would see his face, and seeing his eyes for once exposed in shared relief, and his thin mouth for once not twisted in irony, I would know without warning or time to be alarmed that my life could move, that stagnant time could break its dam and flow again.

What mysterious humility made me feel that I must not at first believe him? That I must not be too ready and eager to

accept his plain message? I pleaded with him for assurance, and made him say it over and over again, and when at last I did accept and fully believe I would have hugged and kissed him as though I had become a wanton; in my joy I was ready to wanton through the world, for the fullness of passion and relief stopped up in me and now set free would have been enough for a regiment of Joseph Scurrays.

His irony and coolness – his disguise – he took up again as soon as he could, but too late. He had let himself be seen.

Here is a man we can have for a friend.

Now I sang as I moved uselessly around the house in a turmoil of happiness for those few days that were yet to be passed.

Then my heart sang when I stood at the window at ten o'clock in the morning when the message had said it would be noon. Standing with my face pressed against the cool glass, staring into the empty sky. How many specks in the sky came to nothing – pelicans and hawks and herons climbing in the quiet air – before at last the one speck which, closer and closer, flashed in the sun and identified itself.

A coarse flurry of air, a whistling over my rooftop, a sound of hovering and a tired dropping to the earth.

I turned my head to see dimly, through the far window, as though dreaming, two men climb from the machine to stand for a moment and talk and shake hands, and then one returning to the machine and whistling away, and the other taking up his bag and walking into my house.

In this there had been time enough for me to walk to the door and meet him there as I had dreamed I would do. I turned from the window but could move no further. I was a toy laced on a wire, that needs this wire for its movement and life, that finds the wire snapped. My face was not my own, I could not deal with it, I felt it collapsing into tears.

He stood at the door of my room and said nothing, as though this was so much to be expected that there was

nothing to be said. He stood, watching me silently with a quiet smile that was almost not there.

Under his gaze I steadied myself, and walked slowly to him.

For a moment I held away at eyes length and studied this face to see that I had dreamed it right.

It was the same face.

This tightening of skin around these eyes would loosen again. This tiredness, deeper than anything I ever saw before in eyes, this too would go.

It was the same face.

In the evening we walked by the river.

It is really true that I had not thought beyond anything more than to have him safe, and, if I could, to be with him for some indefinite time that I had found no way of measuring. Always, as I imagined him, I saw him moving alone in the great world, a solitary man, sure of himself and needing to ask for nothing, taking what little he wanted from life, and living in the danger and excitement that had attracted and pursued him from boyhood. Living a life that did not need any support or agreement to bolster it up, none of these ties and strings that people gather around them for their security. If there was any permanent place for me in this I had not seen it – this I had faced and accepted. My bargain was to offer myself in any way and ask for nothing, to have sufficiently in return that he was back, having passed safely through his dangers.

This was a true humility which I was forced into by my fears; as hope died in me, as the days of his absence passed with no word, then I could not dare to be greedy, to ask for anything for myself, even in my most private thoughts.

In this evening, this cooling and ripening of day into night, to hear him speak hesitantly of marriage threw me into confusion.

I was confused into wonderment by his words which described us as people in the way in which we were seen

by his tired mind. I hardly understood what he was saying.

I had come to know him, he said, at a time when he was caught up in excitement and danger. It would be natural that I may not realize that life was not always like this for him. Whatever he may have been in his youth, he now saw himself as a quiet man maturing into dullness. He wanted of life the chance to settle down modestly and quietly and this would not be a bright enough life for me; to live with a man who had spent himself of all venturing and excitement in his youth and had no liking left for these things.

Perhaps he may have seemed to me a romantic figure, he said quietly, it was easy enough to form a quick impression of this sort when one was only able to judge in one set of circumstances. This should not influence me towards him, for it was not so. There was nothing of romance in being hunted and harried through life, and in any case he was finished with that, he had done all that could be asked of him and would now be left alone.

He thought that these things should be made very clear, his future would be to own an orchard and grow oranges, or even grow nothing at all if he felt that way. He could see nothing to attract a beautiful and desirable young woman in a life of that sort. He was only mentioning these things for what they were worth.

Later, I saw beneath these words a plea that I should marry him, expecting nothing more from him than to live with him. These were the thoughts of a man who had used himself up into exhaustion.

However this was said, still it offered far more than I could have let myself hope, it showed me a world and a life into which, even in my thoughts, I had not dared to wander. My heart would have accepted any bargain, but for once I could not find the words to tell him this.

My courage would only run to this – to ask him, "Where shall we live?" It was enough. Our walking came to an end.

We stood facing, and knowing suddenly that we had been playing a strange game, and one with some hidden and inner meaning, a game that had ended with my words. We joined in laughter – not knowing why we laughed.

When all the light had died from the sky we found our way back to the house. He said that he was needed in Canberra, there was no reason why we should not go together.

I chose to stay in my house, hugging my secret joy. Tomorrow, he will return.

46

POSTSCRIPT

(Andrew Forbes)

The task of gathering this considerable pile of material together, and then sifting and assembling until the most lucid and coherent form had been reached, has been long and not always easy.

From the beginning, it was made clear to me that in this form – and the form is not to be changed – some indefinite time must pass before the world may have it and read it; and knowing this did not make my task seem any easier or shorter.

Yet, there is no way around that. Time must be allowed to work until some of the rawness has been rounded and smoothed away, until the skeleton, or kernel, or essence, of this story, stands clear of the detail which might, while too new and recent, offend, hurt, and obscure. In considering, as an example, the way in which Bronstern died, this may be clearly seen.

Now, at the very end of this task, this necessary postponement does not worry me. It was important that statements and records should be safely secured before the years had

scattered them, and I feel nothing but gratitude that this work fell to my hand.

How much of chance there was in this is of importance only to me. That I was chosen to carry out this first interview with Martin Green may have been due to nothing more than chance – but it was my curiosity about this man and this story, that carried matters beyond the first interview, where my involvement could so easily have ended.

This curiosity, the mark of my profession, is rarely accepted for what it is. Is it not, simply, a readiness to seek out the truth, and when that is found, to believe it? Demanding always that it be satisfied, this curiosity seems to me closer to a childlike faith than to the cynicism for which it is widely mistaken. Rarely is truth quickly uncovered, nothing less will satisfy, and it is this attitude that judgement has been left in abeyance, the refusal to believe anything until the truth has been uncovered; this is mistaken for cynicism.

It would be a pity if this last document were taken as an attempt by some outside person to point a moral. So far I have kept myself invisible beyond the frame of action, I have not intruded, and yet, I would be less than human if I could resist this last chance to inject something of myself into this story.

If excuse is needed, then I point to my expression of willingness to seek out the truth, and then believe it. This is, in my experience, a rare quality, but one which is thought to be common.

What I try to say, under this complication of words, is that I have sought truth in this matter and having found it, I accept it.

This is something that each man must do for himself.

My own impressions of Green at this first meeting do not, perhaps, matter very much, but training and habit are not to be denied. My years of being the one who sees, and describes, and narrates, are too strong for me.

My journey carried me at first through timbered hills and narrow valleys as green and neat as parks, and then across the spread of the desert that flattened itself like a drab unchanging sea, from the foot of the last range of hills to a horizon which faded at the bottom of the sky.

An hour across this plain a river twisted itself under a bridge, and at the ends of the bridge sprawled the split halves of a town. Away from this town a mile or two I turned across a concrete channel and followed a sandy track which strayed among encroaching groves of trees.

Near the house barking dogs rushed up kicking sand from the track as they pounded and leaped and turned their mad circles. At this commotion, Green, who had been tinkering with some ugly machine nearby, straightened himself, and saying a few words over his shoulder to the man who was working with him, walked across wiping his hands on a greasy cloth.

I was slow to realize that this lean man in faded khaki slacks and shirt was the man whom I had come to see. I was welcomed with a faint coolness, a cautious reserve which told me that I was on probation.

This quiet, almost ordinary seeming man, who now walked with me to his house, did not fit the picture which legend had sketched in my mind, of a man sufficiently virile and forceful to have subdued the leaders of a nation by courage and the sheer force of will. While this contradiction still teased me his wife came to join us on the wide verandah, and while I rose from my chair I could only gaze helplessly into this sensitive and passionate face which I accepted, instantly, at sight, as the proper face for Elizabeth Stevens, whose poems have made her the cherished idol of a wide circle of my contemporaries and associates.

Further confused by finding that Green regarded me with amused eyes as though my thoughts were no secret to him, I yet hoped that he did not realize how far he had been

measured short of my expectations, and how much more than my hopes had I found in his wife.

From the beginning of this first interview, which might so easily have been the only one, it was as though Green, dealing with my hesitant questions, threw aside a disguise of modesty which he had assumed; and let himself be seen.

Forbes: If we are to start now . . . I usually make it quite clear that I am recording. You have no objection?

Green: None at all. That machine in your pocket will save any disagreement as to what was said.

Forbes: I don't know the sort of question you are prepared to answer, or even the sort of answer we would be allowed to print. It would be quite safe to begin with this I suppose – let me put it this way: what is Martin Green doing here, retired into farming? There is a feeling that there is some mystery in that, and one which should be easily answered. The more detailed questions – what really happened in Charetz and so forth – can be dealt with by slapping words like "Security" or "Official Secret" over them, and people just have to be content with that. But this business of coming up here, living up here away from the world of events – that's the sort of deal that really teases people. That's the business I'm in – getting answers to little mysteries of that sort!

Green: You won't mind me saying that to me your business seems to go further than that. I would describe your business as cooking up a mystery, often where none exists, and then cooking up the answer. You can't lose – sell a mystery and then sell the answer; like one of those shops that sell tricks for amateur conjurors. Look at this particular mystery you have cooked up now. How many thousands of contented blockers are there up and down this river? Why shouldn't there be? It is a good life. Enough hard work, but enough time left to have a good look at the world, all the time watching what you have planted and tended living and growing. Where's the mystery?

Forbes: No mystery at all – until we come to you. Like it or not you are a special case. If you wanted them you could have everything that most men have only in their wildest daydreams . . . fame and honour, and a position in the world which would let you play a vital part in affairs. These are the things that men everywhere have always sought and worked for. When such men see someone who could so easily have them turn his back on them it worries them.

Green: Surely it will do no harm to have people worried about that? I would like to think that it might lead them into questioning what it is they think they want – what you say they are working for. Then they may find that they have been running after the wrong things! It might lead some of them to start keeping a sharp eye on the men who do achieve fame, honour, and power. For if those men have won these things because they want them, and not indirectly through what they have done, then they are dangerous men. The vanity of such men has always been a curse to the world. I can look at both sides of this coin!

I've had the opposite of fame and honour, and lacked any position or influence to help me to do things that needed to be done. From down there, where you get a worm's eye view, below everything, I had my chance to examine fame and honour and saw them for what they are.

How poor a man must be inside himself if only the applause of other people can convince him that he exists!

This desire for fame and honour is nothing more than that – a need to have other men agree that you have been stronger, luckier, braver, or wiser than most. This tells all that need be known about the inner uncertainty of the man who hungers for fame. Have you ever wondered whether fame can possibly change a man's own knowledge of himself? Isn't this what counts? – what we gain from being tested by experience?

I am the same man when I look at myself as I was ten,

fifteen years ago; older, of course, more experienced in some parts of life, and now I look with some distaste on some of the actions which events seemed to force on me; but still seeming the same man to myself.

How could this be changed if I dragged myself as far up as I could into the limelight and swallowed thirstily all the praise and admiration I could engineer for myself? The man with that thirst will never see it quenched! If I had the need to believe what other people said about me, then I should have believed what was said about me ten years ago, and if I had believed that then, I would have been crushed into despair with myself. I was angry then, and nearly soured, I admit that, but perhaps this is where I learned my distrust of fame. It seems fortunate for me that I had it this way around. It is more usual to have fame before disgrace, for no one is more easily thrown into contempt and disgrace than the man who has let himself become enslaved to admiration.

This is the condition on which fame is issued – that it can be taken away. Does this seem heresy to you, as a dispenser of fame?

No matter, it is an answer to your mystery.

Forbes: Perhaps. But it is not an answer that many would understand.

Green: You did.

Forbes: I was talked into it. It may not seem so convincing on paper!

Much more that was covered in this meeting no longer seems relevant. As we drifted into discussion I made no real effort to keep to the formal pattern of an interview, for I knew that we had both sensed that the attitude of the other was not what had been expected. To my surprise Green was willing to talk freely, and I think he soon noticed that my curiosity was genuine; that, in short, I was something more than a man carrying out a task that had been set for him.

It is clear now that Green was ready at this time to have someone piece the whole story together, and it was my good fortune to have appeared on the scene at the right moment. He must have summed me up and been satisfied as we talked our way through this afternoon of dry pulsating heat, for by evening it had been arranged that I would stay on until his part of the story had been pieced together, as it now appears in these documents. Now after some months, much of it spent away from this country, I am satisfied that this account has been amplified and rounded out as far as it is in my power to accomplish that. All that was relevant and available has, at last, been put together and all that remains to be added is what I learned on the last day that I spent with Green before I went away.

This happened towards the end of that day. We sat looking out comfortably over the tops of the orchard trees to the far boundary, where the drab desert lay in its wildness at the end of the last concrete channel. His wife sat with us as she had often done during our conversations.

It had early been made quite clear to me that when my work was finished it must be set aside, but, throughout, I had nourished a secret hope that when everything had been covered Green might feel that this delay was not after all necessary. I had said something about this which I had thought was most oblique – just enough, I hoped, to steer the talk into a favourable channel.

“Forbes,” he answered, “it is quite clear what you are driving at, but it is quite out of the question. It is not simply a matter of modesty or shyness. Nothing like that at all.”

“I don’t deny that we have had an understanding about it,” I admitted. “I agreed to that. I am prepared to abide by it, only . . .”

“Only,” he broke in, “only you have not heard the end of the story. I never will cease to be amazed at this – it is almost beyond belief – that all this story is accepted and nobody ever

thinks to ask what happened to Bronstern. Is it thought that he simply evaporated, vanished away in the air? This story is not to go out yet, Forbes, because it must contain this – that I killed Bronstern. We are still too close to that brutal fact to have it go out to the world. Yet it must be included.”

“That is surely no secret, is it?” I asked. “Isn’t that something that everyone knows – that Bronstern died because of what you did? Is anyone likely to be worried about that?”

He turned his head towards his wife, and then gazed straight out at the bank of clouds which had moved up to blanket the sky. When he raised his head it was as though he was facing up to some inner effort that he had yet to make.

“You must have a proper end to your story, Forbes,” he said slowly. “It must have a sting in its tail. Bronstern didn’t just die. I killed him. He and I were alone. He was unarmed. I gave him no possible chance; I shot him as I had intended to all along.”

At this his wife cried out.

Green turned to her and said in a hard cold voice, “Have I anything to explain to you about this? Of all people you should know enough about me to understand.”

“But you never told me!” she cried. “You came to me with that kind of blood on your hands and said nothing. It was because of that woman. You killed him out of revenge for his wife, and never told me!”

I turned to his face to see how he was affected by this accusing cry. His face made me afraid. For an instant I imagined myself to be Bronstern facing this rocklike mask; looking into these eyes which burned in this stony face, I knew for a moment how Bronstern must have felt to see his death in this relentless executioner.

But Green spoke quite calmly and quietly to the wife who sat beside him with bowed head.

“You must forget Bronstern’s wife as I have almost done.

This started the hatred between us, but it was not the reason for his death.

"That lies far deeper than revenge. This was something that I knew could not be avoided from the time when I first could hold some hope that I might free myself from his grip and overthrow him. When I succeeded, then Bronstern had to die. I had to be the instrument of his death. I knew this while Hood and I still maintained an unbroken guard over him by day and by night. This was something which was beyond our trust in any others. This part of the story can be quickly told.

"Within a few days we had brought order into everything. Istforce 10 had moved in and we had men placed at every inter-section of office and power throughout the whole Federation. Our next task was to discover and apply some reliable way of neutralizing the capsules in these GD people which had placed everything so neatly in our hands. This was something which had to be done on a mass basis and we tricked Bronstern into doing this work for us.

"By this time the strain had finally worn through his sanity, he would sit for hours staring at us with eyes that held the beady, unresting cunning of a rat, waiting for the slightest weakening of our attention. It was only with great uneasiness and discomfort that Hood and I could face our turn of duty guarding him. One day we had him drugged and one of the doctors installed one of his own capsules in him. When this was done we locked him away in his laboratory which had been installed with scanners. He had been there, under guard, every second day to reset the master exploder circuit. This was a complex thing as big as a piano which had first to identify him by some secret code and then would allow itself to be reset for another two days. We were never able to discover this code for ourselves.

"Now that he was locked up in his laboratory, with the knowledge that he too was the victim of a capsule, he immediately set to work sketching circuits and he did this for

the best part of a day. The next day he began assembling some sort of contrivance and worked through that day and the next night. As he worked, under our close scanning, we saw him slowly regain stability. His behaviour became sensible until when he had finished his apparatus he had the appearance of a sane man.

"When it was complete and he had checked everything he put a sort of electrical harness around his body and threw down a switch. He staggered sideways as though under a heavy blow, and then removed the harness. We realized from the expression of triumph and satisfaction on his face that he had built for us the machine we had wanted. We tested him with the pain signal of his capsule but there was no reaction. After this we placed him again under close guard and held him there until the technical men had copied his machine and found it successful in neutralising other capsules. When we were satisfied about that, Bronstern had lived out his usefulness. I had to brace myself to carry out the decision I had not been able to avoid."

He was still watching the tumbling mass of cloud building up over the sky. He paused to choose the best words for what he had yet to say. In the waiting silence he lit a cigarette and flipped the dead match over the rail at the edge of the verandah.

"I have told you these things," he went on, "so that you will understand that it was quite out of the question to deal with Bronstern before he had helped us to solve the problem which he had created. Had I killed him at the moment when I burst into the room over the bodies of his guards there would never have been a single question in anyone's mind. That was the right time to do this, and the moment I would have chosen, the moment when I still trembled from the battle with the guards at his door. But you must see that this was out of the question.

"After that there was too much time to think about it. I shrank from what I must face. It is a hard thing to accept

the idea of killing when your blood has cooled. But, in this time of waiting, when I would have done almost anything to dodge the issue, in this interval of waiting, which could not be avoided, I looked at my motives and decision again and again and found no honourable way of refuting them. There could be only one ending to this chain of circumstance and fate which had centred itself on me."

He drew deeply on his cigarette and blew smoke soundlessly into the air. He seemed calm, but his mouth tightened to a thin line as he spoke again.

"In the end Bronstern and I will be seen only as symbols. It took time for me to see myself as a symbol, though long before I realized this I readily saw Bronstern as a symbolic figure. I saw him; and this is the way in which he will always be seen; as the clearest symbol of the man who has decided that it is possible and permissible for one man to exercise absolute power over other men. It is as though he had spent his life in establishing the perfect system of absolute control. The concept of the RLW capsule must have seemed to him a revelation of an ultimate power which could be controlled by one man. He perfected it, he placed himself in the position where he could best use it, and it seemed that he would succeed. He must have thought that he had proved his theories to the world – not only his theories but those of a whole historical echelon before him. It must be clear enough what symbol Bronstern represented.

"But what place have I in this? What symbol did I discover myself to be? I am the rock on which any wave of absolute power must break itself. One rock out of millions more on an endless coast. In many ways it was an accident that I was the rock on which this wave was broken, that when the wave subsided, I was still there. It could have been, would have been, any other rock, any man. But I was the rock, the symbol, placed against Bronstern. When he comes into the thoughts of men, perhaps of people not yet born, Bronstern

will be a symbol. That symbol must be a symbol of the failure of a philosophy, a way of looking at men and the world, and there will be needed against this another symbol – the symbol on which he was broken. Do you begin to see what I mean?"

He looked again at his wife, but there was no answer.

"It would be a mistake to assume that this is mere philosophical speculation. An argument couched in these terms, and at this level, may not be widely understood. Therefore one does not argue this, because it is so often in vain. But on the level of intuition these things are grasped and understood by all – but; for this, symbols are needed, symbols that are as sharp as though they were cut on glass by a diamond.

"There must be no blurring. That is why I killed Bronstern – and that is something that will soon enough be known. For this, I know, I should have broken him with my bare hands – but this is something that I could not face. But that would have shown as the ideal symbolic end.

"The truth of this will always be known when it is needed to remind men of what it is too easy to forget. When there are weapons which can crush a nation men forget this – that a weapon is only a thing. Men make it. One man, somewhere, must decide that it is to be used. That man, that one man, is no stronger, no more powerful in his own body than any other man in the world. Men must learn from this not to fight against the weapon, for the weapon is a sort of illusion put up to hide the weak man behind it. Go after that man! That is the lesson! This will soon enough be known, that I, one man who might have been any man, a symbol of what there is in every man that sooner or later resists the power other men would exercise on him, that I, that symbol! overthrew Bronstern. Overthrew him – and killed him at my own hands. This I am willing to have revealed at the proper time."

He turned again to the bowed head of his wife. She did not raise her face.

"I will never talk of this again, so hear it now." He spoke with a kind of suffering defiance. "Bronstern was pacing up and down the room like a beast in a cage. I had relieved Hood and the butt of the pistol was warm in my hand. It had never been out of one hand or the other for days — there had every moment been a finger on the trigger and a hand wrapped on this butt so that it was warm and sticky in my hand.

"Bronstern sensed something new and different in the air. I could feel the sweat cold on my brow and the sickness inside me. He faltered in his restless pacing. He saw suddenly his death in my eyes. He ran towards me and went down on his knees.

"'You are going to kill me because of her,' he screamed. 'I did not kill her! It was an accident. I did not kill her!'

"I would have tried to explain to him that it was not this, but now that he had realized he was to die, it would have been something done for my own sake, not to have him die thinking that I was taking an ordinary vengeance on him. It would have been added savagery to give him more time to lacerate himself with fear.

"I shot him twice in the head and he went down. I ran from the room, past Hood who had come running at the sound of shots, and I was sick."

He closed his eyes and his mouth thinned and turned down in a hard line.

His wife stood and looked down at him. "You were thinking of her when you killed him? That is the truth, isn't it, Martin?" Her gentle voice no longer accused him.

"Yes. I was thinking of her . . ."

For the first time I noticed that it was almost dark and that a scattering of heavy raindrops fell on the sand.

The words that Green added were almost unheard in the sound of a cold rush of air.

"—that almost saved him!"

END

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