

East of the Sun

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Extract

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Chapter 1

LONDON, SEPTEMBER 1928

Responsible young woman, twenty-eight years old, fond of children, with knowledge of India, will act as chaperone on Tilbury to Bombay run in return for half fare.

It seemed like a form of magic to Viva Holloway when, having paid three and six for her advertisement to appear in the September issue of *The Lady*, she found herself five days later in the restaurant at Derry & Toms in London, waiting for her first client, a Mrs Jonti Sowerby from Middle Wallop in Hampshire.

For the purposes of this interview, Viva wore not her usual mix of borrowed silks and jumble sale finds, but the grey tweed suit she loathed but had worn for temporary work as a typist. Her hair – thick and dark and inclined towards wildness – had been dampened and clenched back in a small bun.

She stepped into the genteel murmurings of the tea room, where a pianist was playing a desultory tune. A small, bird-thin woman wearing an extraordinary blue hat (a kind of caged thing with a blue feather poking out of the back) stood up to greet her. By her side was a plump and silent girl who, to Viva's considerable amazement, Mrs Sowerby introduced as her daughter Victoria.

Both of them were surrounded by a sea of packages. A cup of coffee was suggested, but disappointingly, no cake. Viva hadn't eaten since breakfast and there was a delicious-looking walnut cake, along with some scones, under the glass dome on the counter.

'She looks awfully young,' Mrs Sowerby immediately complained to her daughter, as if Viva wasn't there.

'Mummy,' protested Victoria in a strangled voice and, when the girl turned to look at her, Viva noticed she had wonderful eyes: huge

and an unusual dark blue colour almost like cornflowers. *I'm sorry, I can't help this*, they were signalling.

'Well, I'm sorry, darling, but she does.' Mrs Sowerby had pursed her lips under her startling hat. 'Oh dear, this is such a muddle.'

In a tight voice she, at last, addressed Viva, explaining that Victoria was shortly to go to India to be a bridesmaid for her best friend Rose, who was, and here a certain show-off drawl entered Mrs Sowerby's voice, 'about to be married to a Captain Jack Chandler of the Third Cavalry at St Thomas's Cathedral in Bombay'.

The chaperone they had engaged, a Mrs Moylett, had done a last-minute bunk – something about a sudden engagement to an older man.

Viva had set down her cup and composed her features in what she felt to be a responsible look; she'd sensed a certain desperation in this woman's eyes, a desire to have the matter speedily resolved.

'I know Bombay quite well,' she'd said, which was true up to a point: she'd passed through that city in her mother's arms at the age of eighteen months, and then again aged five where she'd eaten an ice cream on the beach, and for the last time at the age of ten, never to return again. 'Victoria will be in good hands.'

The girl turned to Viva with a hopeful look. 'You can call me Tor if you like,' she said. 'All my friends do.'

When the waiter appeared again, Mrs Sowerby began to make a fuss about having a tisane rather than a 'normal English tea'.

'I'm half French, you see,' she explained to Viva in a pouty way as if this excused everything.

While she was looking for something in her little crocodile bag, the silent daughter turned to Viva and rolled her eyes. This time she mouthed, 'Sorry,' then she smiled and crossed her fingers.

'Do you know anything about cabin trunks?' Mrs Sowerby bared her teeth into a small compact. 'That was something else Mrs Moylett promised to help us with.'

And by a miracle Viva did: the week before she'd been scouring the front pages of the *Pioneer* for possible jobs, and one Tailor Ram had placed a huge advertisement for them.

She looked steadily at Mrs Sowerby. 'The Viceroy is excellent,' she said. 'It has a steel underpinning under its canvas drawers. You can get them at the Army and Navy Store. I can't remember the exact price but I think it's around twenty-five shillings.'

There was a small commotion in the restaurant, the clink of cutlery

momentarily suspended. An attractive older woman wearing faded tweeds and a serviceable hat had arrived; she was smiling as she walked towards them.

'It's Mrs Wetherby,' Tor stood up beaming and hugged the older woman.

'Do sit down.' She patted the chair beside her. 'Mummy and I are having thrilling talks about jods and sola topis.'

'That's right, Victoria,' Mrs Sowerby said, 'make quite sure the whole restaurant hears our business.' She turned to Viva. 'Mrs Wetherby is the mother of Rose. The one who is going to be married in India to Captain Chandler. She's a quite exceptionally beautiful girl.'

'I can't wait for you to meet her.' Tor was suddenly radiant with happiness. 'She is so much fun, and so perfect, everybody falls in love with her – I've known her since she was a baby, we went to school together, we rode ponies . . .'

Viva felt a familiar pang – what a wonderful thing to have a friend who'd known you since you were a baby.

'Victoria,' her mother reproved. The blue feather poised above her eyebrow made her look like a slightly miffed bird. 'I'm not sure we need to tell Miss Holloway all this yet. We haven't quite decided. Where is darling Rose by the way?'

'At the doctor's.' Mrs Wetherby looked embarrassed. 'You know . . .' She sipped her coffee and gave Mrs Sowerby a significant look. 'But we had the most exciting morning before I dropped her off,' Mrs Wetherby continued smoothly. 'We bought dresses and tennis rackets, and I'm meeting Rose again in an hour at Beauchamp Place – she's being fitted for her trousseau. The poor girl will be absolutely dead tonight; I don't think I've ever bought so many clothes in one day. Now, who is this charming young person?'

Viva was introduced to Mrs Wetherby as 'a professional chaper-one'. Mrs Wetherby, who had a sweet smile, put her hand in hers and said it was lovely to meet her.

'I've done the interview,' Mrs Sowerby said to Mrs Wetherby. 'She knows India like the back of her hand, and she's cleared up the trunk business – she says the Viceroy is the only one.'

'The girls are very sensible,' said Mrs Wetherby anxiously. 'It's just quite comforting to have someone to keep an eye on things.'

'But I'm afraid we can only offer you fifty pounds for both girls,' said Mrs Sowerby, 'and not a penny more.'

Viva literally heard Tor stop breathing; she saw her mouth twist in childish apprehension, big eyes trained on her while she waited.

She did some quick sums in her head. The single fare from London to Bombay was around eighty pounds. She had one hundred and twenty pounds saved and would need some spending money when she arrived.

'That sounds very reasonable,' she said smoothly as if this was something she did every day.

Tor exhaled noisily. 'Thank God!' she said. 'Oh, what bliss!'

Viva shook hands all round and left the restaurant with a new spring in her step; this was going to be a piece of cake: the gawky one with the blue eyes and the mad-looking mother was so clearly desperate to go; her friend, Rose, was about to be married and had no choice.

Next stop the Army and Navy Hotel to talk to a woman called Mrs Bannister about another prospective client: a schoolboy whose parents lived in Assam. She scabbled in her handbag to check the piece of paper. The boy's name was Guy Glover.

And now she was sitting with Mrs Bannister, who turned out to be an irritable, nervy-looking person with buck teeth. Around forty, Viva estimated, although she wasn't good at guessing the age of old people. Mrs Bannister ordered them both a lukewarm cup of tea with no biscuits or cake.

Mrs Bannister said she would come to the point quickly because she had a three-thirty train to catch back to Shrewsbury. Her brother, a tea planter in Assam, and his wife, Gwen, were 'slightly on the horns of a dilemma'. Their son Guy, an only child, had been asked to leave his school rather suddenly. He was sixteen years old.

'He's been quite a difficult boy, but I'm told he's very, very kind underneath it all,' his aunt assured Viva. 'He's been at St Christopher's for ten years now without going back to India. For various reasons I don't have time to explain to you we haven't been able to see him as much as we'd like to but his parents feel he'll thrive better in India after all. If you can take him, they're quite prepared to pay your full fare.'

Viva felt her face flush with jubilation. If her whole fare was paid, and she had the fifty pounds coming from Mrs Sowerby, she could buy herself a little breathing space in India, thank God for that. It didn't even cross her mind at that moment to enquire why a boy of

that age couldn't travel by himself, or indeed, why his parents, the Glovers, didn't come home to collect him themselves.

'Is there anything else you'd like to know about me, references and so forth?' she asked instead.

'No,' said Mrs Bannister. 'Oh well, maybe yes, you should give us a reference, I suppose. Do you have people in London?'

'My present employer is a writer, a Mrs Driver.' Viva scribbled down the address quickly for Mrs Bannister, who, fiddling with her handbag and trying to catch the waitress's eye, seemed half in flight. 'She lives opposite the Natural History Museum.'

'I'll also send you a map of Guy's school and your first payment,' said Mrs Bannister. 'And thank you so much for doing this.' She produced all her rather overwhelming teeth at once.

But what had most struck Viva, watching the back of Mrs Bannister's raincoat flapping in her haste to enter her taxi, was how shockingly easy it was to tell people lies – particularly when it was what they wanted to hear. For she was not twenty-eight, she was only twenty-five, and as for knowing India, she'd only played there innocently as a child, before what had happened. She knew it about as well as she knew the far side of the moon.

Chapter 2

'She seems all right, doesn't she?' Mrs Sowerby said to Mrs Wetherby after Viva had gone. 'She's very good-looking,' she added, as if this decided everything, 'if you discount that appalling suit. Honestly, Englishwomen and their clothes.' She made a strange hood of her upper lip when she said the word 'clothes', but for once Tor couldn't be bothered to react.

How balloon – they had a chaperone, phase two of the plan had fallen neatly into place. Her mother's pantomime of careful consideration might have fooled the others, but it hadn't fooled her. They'd fought so bitterly that summer that a hairy ape could have applied for the job and her mother would have said, 'He's perfect,' so desperate was she to see Tor gone.

And now, the excitement was almost more than she could bear. The tickets had come that morning, and they were leaving in two weeks. *Two weeks!* They had a whole day ahead of them in London in which to buy clothes and other necessities from a thrilling list that their Bombay hostess had provided.

Her mother, who normally had all kinds of rules about things – for instance, only lemon and water on Tuesdays, and no cake on Wednesday and saying 'bing' before you went into a room because it made your mouth a pretty shape – had relaxed them, even to the extent of allowing her walnut cake at Derry & Toms. And now she knew she was definitely going, all the other things that normally drove her completely mad about Mother: the way she went all French and pouty as soon as she got to a city; the embarrassing hats; her overpowering scent (Guerlain's Shalimar); not to mention the other rules about men, and conversation, seemed almost bearable – because soon she'd be gone, gone, gone, hopefully never to return, and the worst year of her life would be over.

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After coffee, Mrs Wetherby flew off to pick Rose up at the doctor's.

Tor's mother was sipping a hot water and lemon – no tisane had been found – she had her silver pencil and notebook out with the clothes list inside.

'Now jods. Jodhpurs. You'll probably go hunting in India.'

It seemed to Tor that her mother was speaking louder than usual as if hoping that the people at the next table would know that, for once, they were the exciting people.

'Ci Ci says it's too stupid to buy them in London; she knows a man in Bombay who'll run them up for pennies.'

Ci Ci Mallinson was a distant cousin of her mother's and would soon be Tor's hostess when she arrived in Bombay. She had also heroically agreed to organise Rose's wedding without ever having met her. Her letters, written on thrilling brittle writing paper in a slashing hand, spoke of constant parties, gymkhanas, days at the races, with the occasional grand ball at the governor's.

'Such a good idea,' she'd written in her last about a recent ball at a place called the Bombay Yacht Club. 'All the decent young Englishmen are rounded up, and the girls spend ten minutes with each of them and then get moved on – great fun and usually quite long enough to know if one can get on.' Before she'd signed off she'd warned, 'People out here really do try to keep up, so be sure to send out a couple of issues of *Vogue* with the girls, and if it's not too much of a bore, one of those divine silk tea roses – mine was munched upcountry by a horde of hungry bog ants!'

'Quinine,' her mother was ticking away furiously, 'face cream, darling, don't forget, please. I know I nag about unimportant things, but there really is *nothing* more ageing and you are already quite brown.' This was true; Tor had her ancestors' smooth olive-brown skin. 'Eyebrow tweezers, darling, I *am* going to take off your own caterpillars before you go.' Eyebrows were an obsession of her mother's. 'Evening dresses, a camp stool – oh, for goodness' sake! I think that's too Dr Livingstone – I'm going to strike that – and . . .' she lowered her voice, 'she says you'll need packets and packets of you-know-whats. They're wildly expensive there and I—'

'Mummy!' Tor frowned at her and moved away; any moment now she felt her mother would blight her beautiful morning by talking about 'Dolly's hammocks', her code for sanitary towels. 'Mummy,' Tor leant across the table, 'please don't cross out the camp stool. It sounds so exciting.'

'Oh, how pretty you look when you smile.' Her mother's face suddenly collapsed. 'If only you'd smiled more.'

In the silence that followed, Tor sensed a series of complicated and painful thoughts taking place under her mother's hat; some of them she was all too familiar with: had Tor smiled more, for instance, or looked more like Rose, all the expense of sending her to India might have been saved; if she'd eaten less cake; drunk more water and lemon on Tuesdays; acted more French. Her mother seemed always to be adding her up like this and coming to the conclusion she was a huge disappointment.

But now, how strange, an actual tear was cutting a channel through the loose powder on her mother's face and had lodged in her lipstick.

'Hold my hand, darling,' she said. When she took a deep sobbing breath, Tor couldn't help it, she moved her chair away. Her mother in this mood seemed horribly raw and human, and there was nothing she could do about it. It was too late, and the harm had already been done.

It was impossible to find a taxi that day, and even though they weren't normally bus people, an hour or so later Tor was on top of an omnibus, looking down on drops of rain drying on the tops of dusty trees in St James's Park. The bus swept down Piccadilly towards Swan & Edgar, and Tor, feeling the perfumed bones of her mother sitting so unusually close to her, was surprised to feel another stab of sorrow.

This felt so exactly like the kind of outing a happy mother and daughter might have had, if she hadn't been so difficult: a father left at home with a plate of sandwiches, the 'girls' up in town for the day.

From the top of the bus she could see the vast bowl of London spreading out to the horizon: splendid shops with mannequins in the window, interesting people and already a much bigger world.

Bars of sunlight fell across her mother's face as she leant to look out of the window. The blue feather in her hat wiggled like a live thing.

'Darling, do look!' she said. 'There's the Ritz - oh God, I've missed London,' she breathed. And all the way down Piccadilly she pointed out what she called 'some smart waterholes' (when Mother got excited her English let her down), places she and Daddy had eaten in when they had money, before Tor was born: Capriati's, the In and Out - 'dreadful chef' - the Café Royal.

Tor heard a couple of shopgirls behind them titter and repeat, 'dreadful chef'.

But for once, she told herself she didn't give a damn – she was going to India in two weeks' time. *When you're smiling, When you're smiling, The whole world smiles with you.*

'Darling,' her mother pinched her, 'don't hum in public, it's dreadfully common.'

They'd arrived at the riding department at Swan & Edgar. Her mother, who prided herself on knowing the key assistants, asked for the services of a Madame Duval, a widow, she explained to Tor, who'd fallen on hard times and who she remembered from the old days.

'We're looking for some decent summer jods,' her mother had drawled unnecessarily to the doorman on the ground floor, 'for the tailors in Bombay to copy.'

Upstairs, Tor mentally rolled her eyes as Madame Duval, removing pins from her mouth, complimented Mrs Sowerby on how girlish and slim she still looked. She watched her mother dimple and pass on her famous much-repeated advice about lemon juice and tiny portions. Tor had been forced to follow this starvation diet herself, all through the season, when her mother had only agreed to buy her dresses in a size too small to blackmail her into thinness. Sometimes she thought her mother wanted to slim her out of existence altogether: their fiercest row – they'd almost come to blows – was when her mother had found her one night, after another disastrous party where nobody had asked her to dance, wolfing half a loaf of white bread and jam in the summer house.

That was the night when her mother, who could be mean in several languages, had introduced her to the German word *Kummer-speck* for the kind of fat that settles on people who use food to buck themselves up. 'It means sad fat,' she'd said, 'and it describes you now.'

'Right now, I've got the larger size.' Jolly Madame Duval had returned with a flapping pair of jods. 'These might fit. Are we off to some gymkhanas this summer?'

'No,' Tor's mother as usual answered for her. 'She's off to India, aren't you, Victoria?'

'Yes.' She was gazing over their heads at her reflection in the mirror. *I'm huge*, she was thinking, *and fat.*

'How lovely, India!' Madame Duval beamed at her mother. 'Quite an adventure. Lucky girl!'

Her mother had decided to be fun. 'Yes, it's *très amusant*,' she told her. 'When these girls go out they call them the Fishing Club because there are so many handsome young men out there.'

'No. Mother,' corrected Tor, 'they call us the Fishing Fleet.'

Her mother ignored her. 'And the ones who can't find men there,' her mother gave Tor a naughty look with a hint of challenge in it, 'are called returned empties.'

'Oh, that's not very nice,' said Madame Duval; and then not too convincingly, 'but that won't happen to your Victoria.'

'Um . . .' Tor's mother made the little pout she always made when she checked her face in the mirror. She adjusted her hat. 'Let's hope not.'

I hate you, Mother. For one brief and terrible moment Tor imagined herself sticking a pin so hard into her mother that she made her scream out loud. *I absolutely loathe you*, she thought. *And I'm never coming home again.*

Chapter 3

There was one last arrangement for Viva to make and the thought of it made her feel almost light-headed with nervous tension. An appointment at seven o'clock at the Oxford and Cambridge University Club in Pall Mall with William, her guardian and executor of her parents' will.

It was William who had, two months ago, inadvertently set off the whole chain of events that now led her to India by forwarding a letter – written in a quavery hand on cheap writing paper – telling her about a trunk her parents had left in India. The writer, a Mrs Mabel Waghorn from Simla, said the trunk, which contained some clothes and personal effects, was being kept in a shed near her house. The rains had been heavy that year and she was afraid the trunk would disintegrate should she leave it there much longer. She said that after the funeral the keys of her trunk had been left with a Mr William Philpott, at the Inner Temple Inn in London – if they weren't in her possession already, she could collect them.

William had attached his own letter to this. The sight of that careful cramped handwriting had brought a slap of pain.

'Forgive me for being brutally frank,' he wrote, 'but I don't think you need do anything about this. I would send the old lady some money and get the trunks disposed of. I have the keys should you want them.'

Though she hated to agree with him, Viva had at first been convinced he was right. Going back to India would be like throwing a bomb into the centre of her life.

And what would she find there? A Rider Haggardish child's dream of buried treasure, a glorious reunion with her lost family?

No, it was ridiculous, only pain could come of it. When she thought about it, she literally saw it in her mind as a step back into darkness.

For, finally, after six months and two dreary typist's jobs in

London – one for a drunken MP, the other for a firm that made iron locks – she'd fallen into a job she adored as assistant to Nancy Driver, a kind, eccentric woman who churned out romantic novels at an impressive rate and who was generous with advice. Her new job paid thirty shillings a week, enough for her to move from the YWCA into her own bedsit in Earl's Court. Best of all she had started to write herself, and had experienced for the first time a feeling of such relief, such pleasure it felt almost cellular. She'd found – or was it stumbled into? – what she knew she wanted to do with her life.

She dreaded seeing William again – their relationship had become so soiled and complicated. She wrote to him asking if he could post the keys, but he'd refused.

So why, given all these new and wonderful opportunities in life, had another vagrant part of her leapt hungrily into life again at the thought of seeing her parents' things?

In certain moods she could barely remember what her family even looked like. Time had blurred those agonising memories, time and the relative anonymity of boarding school and, later, London – where, at first, she had known nobody. Indeed, one of the things she most liked about the city – apart from all its obvious attractions, the theatre, the galleries, the exhilarating walks by the river – was that so few people ever asked you personal questions. Only two ever had: first, the form-filler at the YWCA, querying the blank she'd left after 'Family's place of residence', and then Fran, the plump friendly typist in the next bed in her dorm. She'd told them both they had died in a car accident years ago in India; it always seemed easier to dispose of them both at once. She didn't tell them about Josie at all. *You don't have to say* was something she'd learnt the hard way with William.

He was waiting for her outside the grand Graeco-Roman façade of the Oxford and Cambridge Club when she ran up the steps around a quarter to seven. As usual he had arranged his backdrop carefully – placing himself on this occasion between two imposing Corinthian columns, his thin hair lit by the golden glow of lamps from the luxurious rooms behind.

A fastidious man, he was wearing the pin-stripe suit she had last seen folded over the arm of his chair in his flat in Westminster. She remembered how he'd lined up his sock suspenders on top of his underpants, a starched collar, his silk tie.

'You're looking well, Viva.' He had a sharp, slightly barking voice,

used to great effect in the Inner Temple where he now worked as a barrister. 'Well done.'

'Thank you, William.' She was determined to stay calm. She'd dressed herself carefully for this occasion: a coral silk dress – one of Miss Driver's cast-offs – the silk delicate as tissue. A purple rose covered the scorch marks on the bodice, the reason for it having been given away.

She'd got up early to wash her hair under a cold tap because the geyser was on the blink again. It had taken ages and a shilling's worth of coins in the meter to dry. She'd dampened down its glossy exuberance and tied it back with a velvet bow.

'I've booked us a table.' He was steering her towards the dining room, which smelt of roast meat.

'There was no need to do that,' she said, moving away from him. 'I could take the keys and leave.'

'You could,' he said.

A waiter led them towards a table set for two in the corner of the grand dining room. Above them, hung in a straight line, portraits of distinguished academics looked down on her gravely, as if they too were considering her plans.

William had been here earlier. A bulky envelope – she presumed it held the keys – lay propped against a silver pepper pot.

He settled his pin-striped knees carefully under the table, smiled at her blandly and told her he had taken the liberty of ordering a bottle of Château Smith Haut-Lafitte, a vintage, he told her in that prissy, self-satisfied way she now recoiled from, of which he was particularly fond.

The waiter took their orders, brown soup and lamb cutlets for him; grilled sole for her, the simplest and quickest thing on the menu. She was ashamed of herself, in spite of everything, for feeling hungry.

She glanced at him. Still a commanding presence with his impeccable clothes, his air of slightly impatient authority. Still handsome in a bloodless sort of way – although a bad go of malaria during his tour of India had left his skin a permanently waxy yellowish colour.

A few stiff pleasantries, then William glanced around the room and lowered his voice.

'Are you sure you really want these?' He closed his hand over the envelope.

'Yes,' she said. 'Thank you.' She had made up her mind before this interview not even to try to explain herself.

He waited for her to say more, manicured nails beating like drums on the tablecloth. How clean their half-moons were, the cuticles neatly trimmed. She remembered him scrubbing them in the bathroom.

'Are you going back?'

'Yes.'

'On your own?'

'On my own.' She bit the inside of her lip.

She heard him make a whistling sigh. 'Can I remind you, you have no money – or very little.'

She forced herself to say nothing. *You don't have to say.*

He squeezed his bread roll, scattering its crumbs over the side-plate. He looked at her with his cold, grey eyes – eyes that had once shone with sincerity. The waiter brought his soup.

'Well, for what it's worth,' he took a careful sip, 'I think it's an absolutely dreadful idea. Completely irresponsible.'

'Soup all right, sir?' Their chirpy waiter had approached them. 'A little more butter for madam?'

She waved him away.

'Stay where you are,' William said coldly for she had moved her chair back.

He waited until the waiter was out of earshot.

'Look, Viva,' he said, 'whatever may or may not have happened between us, I still feel responsible for you. I can't allow this to happen without getting a few more details.'

She looked him straight in the eyes. 'Are you in any doubt about what happened to us?'

'No.' For the first time his eyes met hers. 'But there'll be nothing in India for you,' he said, 'and I'm worried it will upset you.'

She gave him a quizzical look. 'It's a bit late for that, William,' she said. 'Don't you think?'

She'd pined for him once like an animal, haunting streets near his flat, hoping for a glimpse of him; she'd learnt to cry without sound under the pillows after lights out.

'Viva, I . . .'

'William, please.'

As she picked up the envelope, a few grains of rust seeped through the cracks and left a trail near the salt pot. He frowned as she put the keys into her handbag. 'I've made up my mind,' she said. 'One of the

advantages of being an orphan, I would have thought, is that I'm free to do what I like.'

'How will you support yourself?'

'I have already found two people willing to pay my fare – I am to be a chaperone and then I have some addresses in India.'

'A chaperone! Do you have any idea how irresponsible you are?'

'And I'm also going to be a writer.'

'How can you possibly know that?' She could see bright spots of colour on his cheeks. He simply couldn't bear not being in control, she could see that now. He preferred the wounded bird.

'I've made a start,' she said. She wasn't going to tell him how much it terrified her.

He shook his head and briefly pouched his fingers over his eyes as if to block out her many stupidities.

'Do you know, by the way, there's a small rip at the back of your dress,' he said. 'The colour suits you, but I wouldn't wear it in India – they don't like women who go jungli out there.'

She ignored this. Now that the keys were inside her bag and she had said what she meant to say, she felt a surge of power, like oxygen in the bloodstream. She suddenly felt really hungry.

She raised her glass of Château Smith Haut-Lafitte towards him.

'Wish me luck, William,' she said. 'I booked my passage on the *Kaiser* today. I'm going.'