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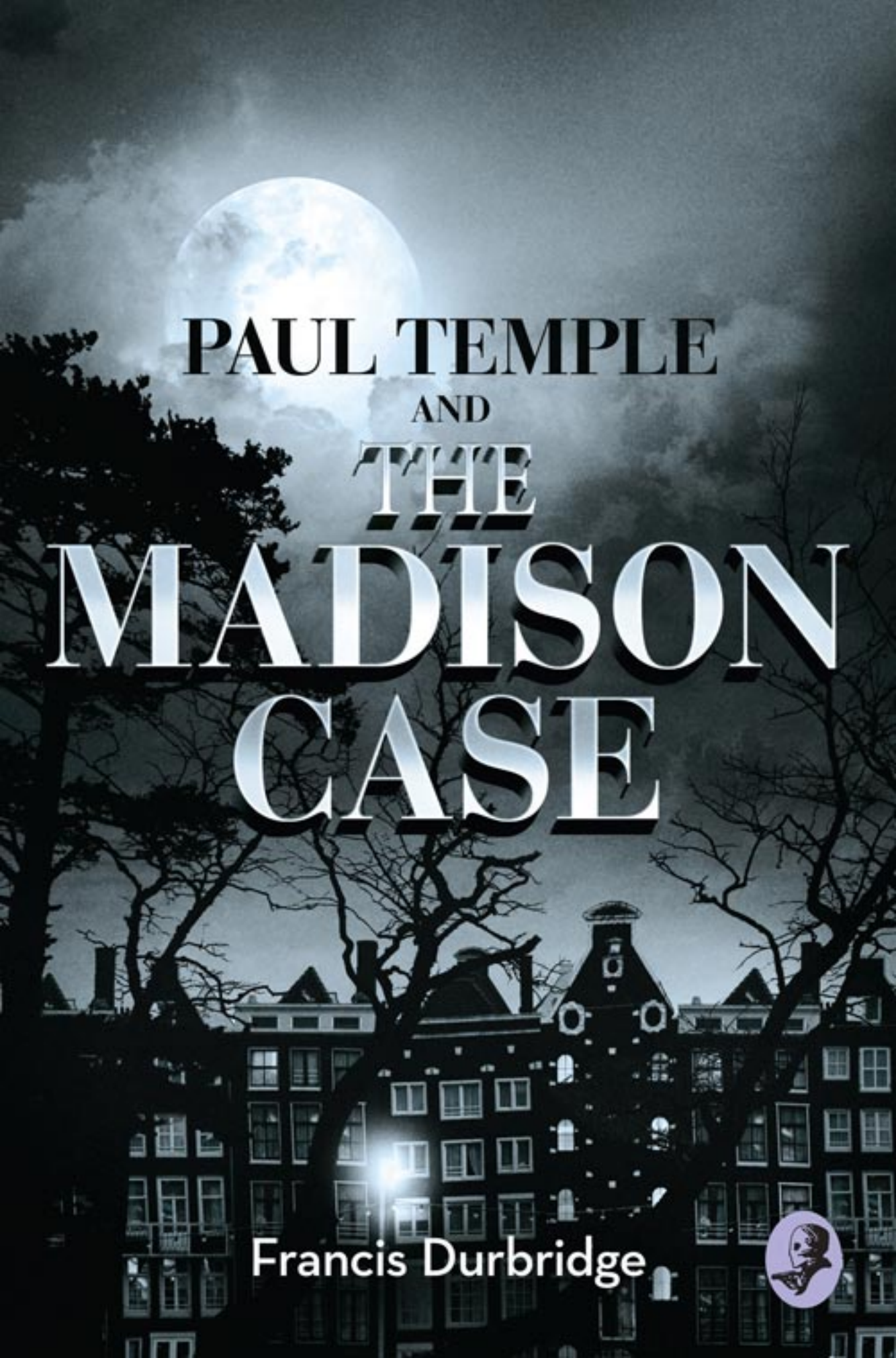
Paul Temple and the Madison Case

Written by Francis Durbridge

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PAUL TEMPLE
AND
THE
MADISON
CASE

Francis Durbridge



FRANCIS DURBRIDGE

*Paul Temple and the
Madison Case*



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CHAPTER I

My Name is Portland, Sam Portland

‘I think I’ll go up on deck for a few minutes, Paul. I’d like to take a last look at the New York skyline.’

‘Isn’t it a bit late, Steve? You said you wanted to change your dress before going down to dinner.’

‘Yes, I know, but it will clear my head a bit.’

‘You’re not feeling off colour already, are you? It’s only ten minutes since we sailed.’

‘No, darling, I’m fine. It’s just that I feel a little sea air will do me good.’

‘Well, take a wrap or something. And for heaven’s sake don’t get lost. Do you know the number of this cabin?’

‘I know we’re on the Signal Deck and isn’t it eight hundred and something?’

‘We’re on the Sports Deck and it’s number 8020.’

Mr and Mrs Paul Temple were on their way back from a stay in New York. They had flown out by Concorde and were returning in more leisurely fashion on the newly refurbished *Princess Diana*. Temple had been attending the International Conference of Anti-Crime Agencies. As an

eminent criminologist as well as an author of world renown, he had been invited to deliver the key-note address. His New York publishers had timed the publication of his new book to coincide with the conference and had offered to pay both his and Steve's expenses. After a week of lectures and seminars, interspersed with book signings and television interviews, he was looking forward to five days crossing the Atlantic at 29 knots instead of the Mach 2 of Concorde.

Steve had not been telling the complete truth when she said she was feeling fine. She was a bad sailor and whenever she boarded a ship and knew that she had left terra firma she began to feel queasy. Even on this huge liner, the length of three football pitches, she had a sense of being somehow trapped and enclosed.

As always, coming out on deck made things better. She was glad that she had not missed this magical moment. The great liner, dwarfed by the soaring skyscrapers on Manhattan Island, was just passing between the upraised arm of the Statue of Liberty and the twin towers of the World Trade Centre. Already the city was beginning to sparkle as lights were switched on in offices where staff would be working till the small hours. She tried to pick out the Waldorf Astoria in the closely packed muddle of buildings. The hotel had been their home for the last six days.

'Isn't that just the most fantastic skyline?'

Steve did not turn round at once. The voice was American but she was not sure whether the remark had been addressed to her. She was adept at dealing with approaches from strangers who could not resist the lure of an attractive woman on her own.

'The Big Apple. It's a sight that always brings a lump into my throat.'

Steve turned. The man leaning on the rail beside her was wearing a white suit and a gaily coloured tie. His hair was grey and thinning on top, but she did not put him at much more than fifty. His colour was high but whether from recent sunshine or blood pressure she could not tell. There was an unmistakable air of prosperity about him and she guessed that his corpulent build was a consequence of good living.

‘I was just trying to make out the Waldorf Astoria. That’s where my husband and I stayed.’

‘Say, you’re English! I just love that accent. How long you been over here?’

‘Only a week. We flew over on Concorde but decided to make a holiday of the return journey.’

‘You’re dead right. No better way to spend five days than in a ship like this.’

The American leant a hand against the rail and stared up at the single red smoke stack. The wisp of pale blue vapour from the three diesel turbines was tugged westwards by the fresh sea breeze.

‘It’s funny,’ Steve said. ‘I can’t see the Empire State Building.’

‘I guess it just slipped behind the World Trade Centre. You’ll see it in a minute. You spend your week in New York?’

‘Most of it. My husband was attending the ICACA conference.’ His expression had not changed at these mentions of a husband.

‘How did you like it?’

‘New York? I liked it enormously.’

‘It’s some city, isn’t it?’ He gave her an infectious grin. ‘You know, I’ve heard a lot of English people say they wouldn’t like to live in New York, but I just can’t imagine why they say that. It’s got everything.’

‘That’s probably why they wouldn’t like to live there.’

‘Yeah?’ His voice had become a little suspicious, wary. ‘That’s too subtle for me.’

‘Is this your first trip to England?’ Steve asked, deciding to keep the conversation on more conventional lines.

‘M’m-m’m, I guess it is.’ He nodded then added seriously, ‘At least I don’t think I’ve been there before.’

‘You don’t think ...?’ Steve laughed, taking it as a joke. ‘Don’t you know?’

‘Well, you see, I only ...’ He hesitated, then abruptly his manner changed. He held out his hand. ‘Maybe we ought to introduce ourselves. My name is Portland, Sam Portland.’

Steve took the proffered hand, which grasped hers strongly.

‘I’m Mrs Temple.’

‘Was that your husband I saw you with – the tall, tired-looking gentleman?’

‘Yes, that was my husband.’

Sam Portland was looking at her with renewed interest. ‘I’ve read quite a lot about your husband, Mrs Temple, but somehow I never imagined he looked like that.’

‘Confidentially he doesn’t.’ Steve smiled. ‘He’s suffering from an overdose of American hospitality.’

‘Oh, so that’s it,’ Portland said with a conspiratorial chuckle.

‘He’ll look quite different tomorrow.’ Steve assured him.

‘Maybe we’ll all look different tomorrow.’

‘Why, is it going to be rough?’

Hearing Steve’s tone of alarm Portland put his hands up, palm towards her. ‘No, no! Aren’t you a good sailor?’

‘Not very,’ Steve admitted.

‘Well that’s O.K. I’ll fix it,’ Portland promised with a twinkle. ‘I’ll have a word with the Captain. Don’t worry Mrs Temple, it’ll be as smooth as a glass of milk.’ Then he added, as an afterthought, ‘I hope.’

‘Look!’ Steve exclaimed. ‘There’s the Empire State coming into view now.’

As if to salute it, the *Princess Diana* gave two blasts of her horn. A few seconds later a multiple echo came back across the water from the impressive skyscrapers. Steve shivered and pulled the shawl tighter round her shoulders.

Thanks to the generosity of the American publishers the Temples had one of the special state rooms on the topmost deck of the liner. The suite consisted of a bedroom with bathroom en suite and a luxuriously appointed sitting room with VCR, TV, compact disc and radio plus a direct dial satellite telephone. A door gave access to their private veranda on the starboard side.

Temple was tying his bow tie in the bedroom mirror. Two cocktail glasses, delivered by room service, stood on the low table.

‘I ordered your usual dry Martini, darling. I hope that’s right.’

‘Perfect.’ Steve slid open the door of the long wardrobe where her dresses had been hung. ‘Now, what shall I wear?’

‘What about that Yuki you bought at Bloomingdale’s?’

‘No, I think I’ll keep that for the last night.’

Steve selected a dress, laid it on the bed and began to take off her tights.

‘Paul, have you ever heard of a man called Sam Portland?’

‘Sam Portland? Good lord yes! Why?’

‘He’s on board. I’ve just been having a chat with him.’

‘You’ve heard of Sam Portland. Portland’s Yeast ... It’s all over America.’

‘Oh, is that him?’

‘Yes, that’s Mr Portland all right. What’s he like?’

‘I rather liked him, but ...’

Temple gave his bow a final tweak and turned. 'But what?'

'He said rather a peculiar thing, darling. I asked him if he'd ever been to England before and he said, "No, I don't think so".'

'He doesn't think so? Surely he knows whether he's been to England or not! He was pulling your leg.'

'No, he wasn't.' Steve threw her discarded tights onto a chair. 'He was serious.'

'Must have been pulling your leg.'

'Paul, he wasn't,' she insisted. 'I simply asked him whether he'd ever been ...'

'Steve, for goodness sake stop arguing and get dressed, otherwise we'll be late for dinner.'

Steve stood up and put a hand on the back of the chair.

'Oh dear ...'

'What's the matter?'

'The cabin's swaying ... I hope it's not going to be rough ...'

'You're imagining things. We're only just passing Ellis Island.'

Room service had brought the Temples breakfast in bed, served on two trays with short legs. The lavish spread was entirely wasted on Steve, who could only nibble a piece of toast and sip a cup of coffee. Temple had got up and dressed soon afterwards and taken the lift down to the Promenade Deck. He wanted to get some exercise and had made three circuits of the ship before he paused, leaning on the rail and looking out over the bows. The ship was sailing at her cruising speed of 29 knots.

It was a fine, sunny day and the sea was calm. America had long since slipped down over the horizon, somewhere beyond the straight white wake churned up by the twelve blades of the twin propellers.

‘Excuse me, sir ... Mr Temple?’

Warily Temple turned to look at the man who had come up to lean on the rail beside him.

‘Yes?’

‘My name is Portland.’

Temple’s face relaxed into a warm smile. ‘Oh, good morning, Mr Portland.’

‘I had the pleasure of meeting your wife last night, Mr Temple ...’

‘Yes, so she told me.’

‘I was wondering how the little lady was feeling this morning.’

‘She’s not too good, I’m afraid.’

‘On a diet?’ Sam Portland suggested tactfully.

‘Strictly on a diet,’ Temple replied with a straight face.

‘Well now, that’s too bad. If there’s anything I can do for Mrs Temple, please let me know.’

‘That’s very kind of you.’

A little posse of youngsters in jogging gear trotted past, laughing and joking amongst themselves. Temple pointed to the deck chairs which had been set out by the crew.

‘Won’t you sit down?’

‘Why thank you, sir!’ Sam Portland lowered himself carefully into a chair and held up his large half-smoked cigar.

‘Does my smoking bother you?’

‘Not at all.’

‘Would you like a cigar?’

‘Thank you, not at the moment.’

The American drew thoughtfully on his Havana cigar. ‘Mr Temple, I was very thrilled when I saw your name on the passenger list last night.’

‘Indeed?’

‘I’ve been an admirer of yours for some considerable time. As a matter of fact I once wrote you a letter.’

‘I can’t recall ever having received a letter from you, Mr Portland.’

‘No, you didn’t receive it, for the simple reason that I didn’t post it.’ Portland chuckled. ‘My wife persuaded me to change my mind.’

‘I see,’ Temple said, somewhat mystified.

‘Mr Temple, forgive me talking shop at this time of the morning but have you heard of a private investigator – a detective – by the name of Madison?’

‘Madison? No.’

‘I rather imagine he’s pretty well known in your country.’

‘Well, he can’t be very well known or I should have heard of him.’

‘Are you sure you haven’t? Madison.’ Portland spelt the name out letter by letter.

‘Quite sure.’

‘Well, now that’s very curious.’ Portland shrugged ‘Still, why should I worry if he gets the results.’

‘Is he working for you?’

‘Er-yes. Actually he’s employed by my London representative, a man called Hubert Greene.’

‘What is Madison doing exactly?’

‘He’s on a research job.’

‘Sales? Statistics?’ Temple prompted.

Portland paused, then said slowly ‘No, no, no, nothing like that. Purely a private investigation. *He’s trying to find out who I am.*’

Temple stared at him. ‘Who you are?’

‘Yes,’ said Portland, nodding.

‘But you know who you are! You’re Sam Portland.’

‘Sure. Sure, I’m Sam Portland. Samuel L. Portland, President of the Portland Yeast Company. New York, Chicago, Detroit, Michigan and all points west. I’m one of the wealthiest men in America, Mr Temple, did you know that?’

Temple laughed. ‘I had a shrewd suspicion.’

‘Right now I could lay my hands on four hundred million dollars. It’s an awful lot of dough.’

‘It’s an awful lot of dough, Mr Portland.’ Temple agreed seriously. He drew his legs in as another group of joggers, more elderly ones this time, ambled past.

‘Four hundred million bucks and I don’t know who I am! Mr Temple, would you like to hear my story?’

Too late Temple was regretting the encouragement he had given the American.

‘Well, as a matter of fact I did promise my wife ...’

‘You’re going to hear it anyway, so you might just as well relax!’

Temple echoed Portland’s laugh. The American leant on the arm of his chair and spoke in a confidential tone.

‘Thirty-five years ago, on October 9th 1952 to be precise, a Chicago policeman by the name of Dan Kelly arrested a young man for jay walking – you know what I mean, trying to beat the traffic. The young fella turned out to be something of a problem. He was suffering from what the doctors called amnesia, or to put it bluntly, just plain loss of memory.’

Portland waited for a couple who had paused in front of them to move on.

‘Go on ...’ said Temple, intrigued in spite of himself.

‘The young man was acquitted and the policeman – Kelly – took him under his wing. Kelly was convinced that sooner or later the young man’s memory would return, Mr Temple, but the young fella never established his true identity.’

Portland's cigar had gone out. He gave it an accusing look then laid it on the deck beside his chair.

'Go on, Mr Portland.'

'I lived with Kelly for the best part of seven years. We got along famously together. I guess he was like a father and the proverbial big brother rolled into one. In 1958 I moved to New York and started the Portland Yeast Company. The rest you can guess. It was just a long, long trail leading to four hundred million dollars.'

'What made you choose the name Portland?'

'Well, I had to call myself something.' Portland laughed and a gold tooth flashed. 'I was on Portland Avenue when Kelly arrested me.'

'But couldn't you remember anything?'

'Not a thing.'

'Hadh't you any marks of identification?'

'No. When I was arrested I had three dollars in my pocket, a white handkerchief, a fountain pen and curiously enough an English penny.'

'An English penny?'

'Yes. I've still got it. Look, it's on my watch-chain.'

Portland was wearing a waistcoat. Temple wondered if he did so purely in order to accommodate a gold watch and chain. He inserted two fingers in the left-hand pocket and withdrew one of the big old-fashioned pennies. The copper glittered in the morning sunlight. Either it had been treated with some lacquer or he polished it every day. Temple leant over to study it but Portland had quickly slipped the coin back into his pocket.

'How does this fellow Madison fit into the picture?'

'I'll tell you.' He hitched himself round in his chair to face Temple more squarely. 'For years now I've been making

inquiries in the hope of finding things out about myself. If you were in my shoes wouldn't you want to know who your parents were, where you came from and why on a certain afternoon in the year 1952 you were suddenly discovered wandering down Portland Avenue in Chicago?

Well, two weeks ago Hubert Greene, my London representative, 'phoned through to New York. He told me that a man called Madison – a well known private inquiry agent in London – had discovered certain facts concerning my identity. As you can imagine this sort of thing wasn't exactly new to me so I told Hubert to look into the matter.'

'Did he?'

'Yes he did. Three days ago he telexed me. He said he was convinced that Madison was on the level.'

Portland leant forward and gripped the arms of his deck chair. 'I'm finding this sea breeze a little too healthy for my liking. What do you say we move into the Midships Lounge? I hear they serve a very good hot bouillon there at eleven o'clock.'

The two men stood up and began to stroll down the starboard side of the ship.

'Frankly,' said Portland, 'I was rather surprised just now when you told me that you'd never heard of Madison.'

'Well, I can soon check on him for you. I've got some very good friends at Scotland Yard.'

'I hope that won't be necessary, but if it is I'll let you know.' Portland laid a hand on Temple's arm. 'Oh, by the way, if you happen to meet Mrs Portland don't mention this Madison story. She doesn't know anything about it.'

'No?'

'No, you see my wife takes the attitude that I should let the past take care of itself. "Why should you worry, Sam," she says, "you're sitting pretty anyway".'

‘Well, that’s certainly a point of view,’ said Temple, laughing. ‘Is your wife an American, Mr Portland?’

‘No, she’s English although she’s lived in America for a great many years. As a matter of fact we’ve only been married six weeks.’

‘Oh!’ Temple quickly controlled his surprise. ‘Congratulations!’

‘Thanks,’ said Sam, accepting the congratulations with the satisfied expression of a cat that had scooped the milk.

‘Why are you making this trip – for business reasons or simply to meet Madison?’

‘Well, my wife thinks I’m making it because of Moira. Oh, Moira’s my daughter – by my first marriage, of course. She works in my London office. Actually, however, I must confess I’m coming over simply because of Madison. I’m sold on Madison, Temple. I really think he’s found something. Hello, here’s George.’ Portland had spotted a man pushing his way towards them beckoning excitedly with one arm. ‘Now what does he want?’

Temple estimated George Kelly’s age as about forty. He was wearing sneakers, jeans and a brightly coloured sports blouse. All in all he seemed an unlikely appendage for the multi-millionaire.

‘There’s been a ’phone call from the New York office,’ he announced excitedly. ‘I couldn’t find you so I told ’em you’d ring back. They seemed to be all steamed up about something.’

‘Yes, all right, George.’ Sam answered him with an almost fatherly pat on the shoulder. ‘How’s Mrs Portland?’

‘About the same. She don’t look too good.’ Kelly’s high pitched laugh twisted his thin mouth. ‘I reckon she don’t feel too good either.’

‘O.K. I’ll be right down.’

Kelly nodded, glanced at Temple, then departed.

‘That’s George Kelly.’ Sam was watching the man’s receding back thoughtfully. ‘When poor old Dan died I promised to find his son a job. He’s my secretary. I guess you wouldn’t think so though to hear him talk. George is a drip! He hasn’t got the old man’s guts, personality or anything else. Still, what can you do?’ He shrugged resignedly. ‘Well, I’ll go down and see how my good lady’s getting on. Nice to have met you, Mr Temple,’ offering his hand. ‘Let’s all have a drink together sometime.’

‘Yes, let’s do that.’

‘Say we meet in the Princess Bar at seven o’clock? I’ll bring Mrs Portland along. How’s that?’

‘Fine.’

‘And don’t forget to bring Mrs Temple.’

‘Well,’ said Temple, laughing. ‘I will if she can make it.’
‘She’ll make it all right.’

Sam was lighting another cigar as he moved away in the wake of George Kelly. Temple gave him a minute’s start then made his own way to the door that led to the Midships Lounge. He was less interested in the bouillon than in locating the ship’s Business Centre with its telex, fax, up-to-date financial reports and secretarial facilities.

The Princess Bar, adjoining the Princess Grill, was on the Boat Deck, conveniently placed for the occupants of the prestigious suites just aft of the signals and communications tower. By seven o’clock it was already well filled and virtually everybody there had already changed into evening dress. The sun was sinking towards the horizon and the orange glow of its reflection on the sea cast a warm light on the ceiling of the bar. There was little movement on the well-stabilised

ship. The tremor of the nine diesel engines in the belly of the liner was hardly detectable. Already they had thrust *Princess Diana* seven hundred miles out into the Atlantic.

Temple was shepherding Steve towards an empty table by the window. She was walking gingerly, not too sure of her sea legs. More than one pair of eyes rested on them with frank appraisal. They were a striking couple. With his tall build, clean-cut features and the confidence with which he wore his London tailored clothes, Temple looked as British as the ship they were travelling on. Steve always turned heads, for she kept her figure in marvellous trim.

‘Are you feeling all right, Steve?’

‘Yes, I’m all right now, Paul.’

‘You certainly look better than you did this morning.’

‘I certainly feel better!’

They settled into low armchairs facing the colourful gathering. At once a waiter in the ship’s grey and green livery materialised before them.

‘What can I get you, madam?’

‘What would you like, darling?’ Temple enquired. ‘Have a champagne cocktail.’

‘Is that a good idea?’ She looked at her husband doubtfully.

‘It’s a very good idea. Two champagne cocktails.’

‘Yes, sir.’

The waiter hurried towards the bar. Steve’s eyes were checking over the men in their black and white tuxedos.

‘I don’t see Mr Portland.’

‘No, he hasn’t arrived yet.’ Temple had hardly spoken when he saw George Kelly coming in with a woman. The secretary’s wiry body had been crammed uncomfortably into a black jacket and trousers. He and his companion were ill-matched. She was a good looking blonde in her forties, with a generous,

full figure and slightly florid face. Her dress was obviously a model from a top designer. 'But here's his secretary!'

'Who's he with?'

'I don't know, unless it's Mrs Portland.'

'She's not that young, surely.'

George Kelly quickly spotted Temple. He pushed his way through the tables, clearing a passage for Stella Portland.

'Excuse me, Mr Temple. Have you seen Mr Portland?'

'No.' Temple had stood in expectation of being introduced to the lady. 'We arranged to meet here at seven o'clock but I am afraid he hasn't shown up yet.'

'I'm beginning to feel very worried, George.' said Stella, biting her lip.

'There's nothing to worry about,' Kelly reassured her. He added with his cracked laugh, 'He's probably found a quiet corner somewhere and fallen asleep.'

Stella shook her head. 'That's not like Sam. He doesn't do that sort of thing.' Then she turned her baby-blue eyes on Temple. 'Are you Mr Temple?'

'Yes.'

'I'm Stella Portland,' she said, holding out her hand.

'I'm glad to meet you, Mrs Portland.' Temple took the hand which was held for a moment in her warm grasp. 'This is my wife ...'

'How do you do, Mrs Temple?' Wisely, Steve did not stand up. 'I hope you're feeling better now, my husband told me that you were not too good this morning.'

'I'm much better, thank you.'

'Seasickness must be really dreadful,' Stella said, with earnest sympathy. 'I always feel frightfully sorry for anyone who suffers from it. Fortunately, I'm a very good sailor.' She turned to the secretary who was staring at Steve with

undisguised admiration. 'George, I do wish you'd go and look for Sam. I'm really dreadfully worried.'

'O.K.' Kelly was reluctant to be banished from the party. 'O.K., Stella!'

With unconcealed ill-humour the secretary departed, fidgeting his shoulders in his jacket.

'I don't know what's happened to Sam.' Stella was too worried to take one of the vacant chairs. 'No one seems to have seen him since lunch time.'

'Have you looked in the gymnasium?' Temple too had remained standing.

'My husband's hardly the sort of man to spend an afternoon in the gymnasium.'

Her tone was sharp but Temple put it down to tension.

'Well, what would you like to drink, Mrs Portland?'

'May I have a scotch? On the rocks.'

'Yes of course.'

Temple was trying to attract the attention of the waiter when one of the ship's officers came into the bar. He had his cap under his arm and his sleeve was braided with gold. His eyes searched the assembly and quickly spotted Mrs Portland and Temple. Her back was turned and she did not see him approaching.

'Paul!' said Steve, *sotto voce*. 'This must be the Captain and he's coming to talk to us!'

'That's not the Captain, darling. It's the Purser.'

'Excuse me, sir.' The Purser already knew Temple, as he had prevented a television crew from filming his arrival on the ship. He turned to Stella. His face was grave. 'Mrs Portland?'

'Yes.' Stella had paled. She already sensed that something was wrong.

‘The ship’s doctor would like to see you in the Health Centre, Mrs Portland.’

‘To see me?’

‘Yes.’

‘But why should I—? What is it? What has happened?’

The Purser licked his lips. He did not want to come out with the news. Then, with unintentional abruptness he announced, ‘I’m afraid Mr Portland’s met with an accident, madam. One of the passengers found him in the swimming pool. The doctor seems to think it was a heart attack.’

Stella’s eyes glazed immediately. She looked round wildly as if searching. ‘Where is he? Where is Sam?’

‘Well—?’

Temple cut through the Purser’s indecision. It was better to have the truth out and be done with the agony. ‘Is he dead?’

‘Yes, sir.’

The Purser’s answer was almost a whisper but Stella heard it.

‘Oh, no!’ Her cry stopped all conversation in the bar. Every head turned towards the group by the window.

‘Watch out, Paul! She’s ...’

Temple had forestalled Steve’s warning. He had seen Stella sway and caught her as her eyes rolled upwards and her knees buckled.

The tragedy cast its shadow over the rest of the voyage, though deaths on board luxury liners were not uncommon. The average age of the passengers was high and it was not unknown for invalids to go on cruises merely for the sake of the excellent medical attention that was available. But the doctors had been unable to do anything for Sam Portland. He was dead before they hauled him out of the swimming

pool and though the most modern techniques of resuscitation had been applied all was to no avail.

Temple had gone up to the Health Centre and in view of his reputation was allowed to see the body. He could find no reason to query the doctor's conviction that the portly American had suffered a heart attack. He had been unable to ascertain whether he had any previous history of heart trouble. Stella Portland was prostrate with shock and grief and she had been sedated by the doctor. Steve, who felt very close to the tragedy, had gone to the Portlands' suite next day to see if she could be of any comfort, but George Kelly had told her that Stella was either unable or unwilling to see anyone.

The Temples had tried to make the best they could of the remaining three days of the crossing. Steve had got her sea legs well enough to become a regular visitor to the shopping arcade where such firms as Harrods, Cartier, Turnbull and Asser, Gucci had displays. Temple spent some of his time in the well-stocked library and in the business centre and kept himself fit in between times in the health spa. The sea behaved itself until the very last night, when a storm blew up. Steve was glad when they sailed into the tranquil waters of the Solent on a predictably overcast October afternoon.

George Kelly had spoken to Portland's London office on the telephone and informed his representative there of the tragedy. Hubert Greene would be coming down to Southampton to collect Mrs Portland by car. Rather reluctantly Kelly had passed on Temple's request that Portland's London representative should see him as soon as he came aboard the ship.

They met by arrangement in the library, which was disused, apart from the librarian, who was checking returned books. Temple whiled away the time of waiting by reading *Stalker*.

‘Mr Temple?’

Greene had come into the library through the door behind him.

Temple put his book down and stood up to face him.

‘Yes.’

‘I’m Hubert Greene. I understand you want to see me?’

Hubert Greene was obviously a man of strong personality. He wanted to dispel any possible impression that he was at Temple’s beck and call. His tone was faintly challenging. He was tall, even taller than Temple, and wore his clothes well.

‘Yes. Do sit down, Mr Greene.’

Greene chose a leather-upholstered, fairly upright arm chair. He crossed his legs, tweaked one trouser-leg and checked the alignment of his cuffs.

‘This is a most distressing business. I’ve just been on the ’phone to Moira ...’

‘Have you seen Mrs Portland yet?’

‘No. I came up here as requested by you.’

‘Moira’s Portland’s daughter?’

‘Yes – by his first marriage of course. The poor girl is heartbroken.’

‘I rather expected Miss Portland to come on board with you.’

‘No, as a matter of fact she couldn’t leave town so I ...’
Greene checked and shot Temple a wary look. ‘Do you know Moira?’

‘No, but her father spoke to me about her. I understand she works for you.’

‘Well, she’s attached to my office, yes.’ The corners of Greene’s mouth turned down and he tilted his head wryly. ‘Whether she does any work or not is open to question. Poor Sam! He thought the world of Moira.’ Greene’s expression suddenly changed. He uncrossed his legs and leant forward, quizzing Temple. ‘How did this business happen? You know,

it seems perfectly extraordinary to me. Do you think he did have a heart attack, Mr Temple or ...'

'Or what?'

'Or was it an accident?'

'The doctor seems convinced it was a heart attack,' Temple answered him blandly.

Greene stared at him for a second before shooting his next question.

'How well did you know Sam?'

'Not very well, I'm afraid. We met for the first – and the last time unfortunately – on Friday morning.'

'Sam was a great guy,' Greene said with warm enthusiasm 'A real American. That's the only way you can describe him.'

'Was he an American?'

'But of course!' Greene exclaimed, surprised by the question.

'I mean, was he born in America?'

'Why yes, I've always thought so. I was always under the impression he was born in Chicago.'

'I think perhaps I ought to tell you, Greene, before we go any further,' Temple spoke slowly, emphasising his words, 'Portland took me into his confidence. He told me why he was coming to England.'

Greene took that on board thoughtfully. 'He did?'

'Yes.'

'Well, I hope you won't say anything about it, Temple. Now that the old boy's dead, I don't see any reason why we should go ahead. After all, it puts rather a different complexion on it. Don't you agree?'

'Yes, but if you've no objection, I'd like you to do me a favour.'

'By all means. What is it?'

'I want you to introduce me to Mr Madison.'

‘Mr Madison?’ Greene repeated the name as if it meant nothing to him.

‘Yes,’ said Temple, watching him.

‘Who’s Mr Madison?’

‘Why, he’s the private inquiry agent, the man you ...’ Temple broke off. In a few seconds this affair had taken a whole new twist. ‘Are you trying to tell me that you’ve never heard of Madison?’

‘Of course I haven’t heard of him,’ Greene said with exasperation. ‘Who is he?’

‘Two weeks ago you telexed Portland with the news that a private detective called Madison had discovered information concerning his identity.’

Greene shook his head, more bewildered than ever. ‘Whose identity? Portland’s?’

‘Yes.’

‘Look here, I don’t want to be rude, Temple, but have you been drinking?’

‘You’ve never heard of Madison?’

Greene met Temple’s level gaze steadily. ‘I’ve already told you that I haven’t.’

‘Then why was Sam Portland in such a hurry to get to England?’

Greene reached into his pocket and brought out a packet of cigarettes. The librarian, standing on his library steps above and behind him, gave a loud cough. The library was a ‘No Smoking’ area. Greene put his cigarettes away again. ‘I thought you knew why. You said he told you. I was having trouble with Moira. I’ve been having trouble with her for weeks now. The girl’s a little bi– well she gets completely out of hand. I tried to keep it from Sam but in the end it was quite impossible. Three days ago I made up my mind that I

wasn't going to stand any more of her damned nonsense. I telexed her father and offered my resignation.'

'I see.'

'If you don't believe me, ask George Kelly.' Greene had already stood up. 'He knows about Moira, he knows what's been going on. Now, if you'll excuse me, I've got to see if Mrs Portland is ready to be taken down to the car.'

Temple did not stand up. He responded in kind to Greene's curt nod. His head did not turn as the other man walked past him and out through the door behind. He sat there quite still for several minutes before he stood up and followed Portland's London representative.

'Paul, I do wish you'd get out of my way.'

'Now don't be irritable, Steve!'

'Darling, we've been away for two weeks and I'm trying to unpack!'

The Temples were back at their flat in Eaton Square by seven o'clock. Charlie had prepared a special welcome-home dinner, which the Temples had felt bound to savour to the full. Then there had been the inevitable pile of correspondence which Temple had sifted through to find out if there was anything of immediate importance. In the end it was ten o'clock before they even started to unpack their suitcases and the extra packages of duty-free goods they had bought on board ship.

'Yes, all right! All right, Steve! Where's that bow tie – the one I bought in New York?'

'Now what on earth do you want that for?'

'I want to try it on.'

'You can't try it on now, not in your pyjamas, you'll look ridiculous. Besides, you've been trying it on ever since you bought it!'

‘Oh, here it is!’ Temple deftly tied the bow and studied the effect in the mirror. His expression changed from enthusiasm to gloom.

‘I think it’s a bit bright.’

‘Of course it’s too bright, I told you that in the shop.’

‘It looked all right in New York.’

‘Yes, well, we’re not in New York! Paul, go into your study and read a book or get into bed or have a bath or something!’

‘By Timothy, I am popular!’

‘You’re just getting in my way, darling! Now where did I put that blouse? Oh, here it is ... Come in, Charlie!’

Charlie was the Temples’ Jack-of-all-trades – cook, housemaid, watch-dog and even driver, but the latter only in time of dire necessity. He stood five-foot six in his socks, which were all he had on his feet now. Above them he was wearing a pair of over tight chef’s trousers and an old cardigan that had been buttoned up skew-whiff. He stared goggle-eyed at his master in pyjama top and dazzling bow tie.

‘What is it, Charlie?’

‘Sir Graham Forbes is here, sir. He’d like to have a word with you.’

‘Sir Graham? I didn’t hear the door-bell.’

‘No, sir. You and Mrs Temple was kickin’ up quite a racket. I put him in the living room, was that all right, sir?’

‘Yes, that’s all right, Charlie.’

Still mesmerised by the tie, Charlie withdrew. Steve exchanged a worried glance with her husband.

‘Paul, what does he want – do you know?’

‘No, darling. Where’s my dressing-gown?’

‘It’s on the bed.’

‘Oh, thanks ...’

Temple put on his dressing-gown and thrust his feet into slippers. Steve's voice stopped him when he was at the door.

'Paul.'

'Yes?'

'I shouldn't wear the tie, darling.'

Sir Graham Forbes was the kind of man who seemed to fill any room he was in. Broad shoulders, a trim moustache and bushy eyebrows enhanced his commanding features. He was old enough to treat women with an avuncular protectiveness to which they reacted favourably. Steve always flirted with him shamelessly, knowing that he would never overstep the bounds of correctness.

'Hello, Steve!' he greeted her, as she came into the sitting-room a minute or two after Paul. The two men already had glasses of whisky in their hands. 'My word, you do look well!' His eyes ran appreciatively over the silk house-robe she had put on. 'Are you glad to be home?'

'Well, I don't know, Sir Graham. It all depends what you've got up your sleeve!'

'I haven't got anything up my sleeve,' Forbes protested, a little too emphatically. 'So don't worry, my dear!'

'Well, Sir Graham, is this a social call?' Temple asked, waving his guest to a chair.

'Not exactly. I want some information.' Forbes sipped his whisky appreciatively and put the glass down on a low table beside his chair. 'When you were on the boat coming over from America did you meet a man called Portland – Sam Portland?'

Temple nodded. 'Yes, we did.'

'Did you see much of him?'

'Well – I had quite a chat with him. As a matter of fact I was going to 'phone you. There's something about Portland you ought to know.'

Steve was standing behind the sofa. 'Don't you think you ought to start the story at the beginning, darling?' she suggested.

'Well,' Temple began, 'we left America last Friday evening. I was feeling rather tired because I'd had a pretty hectic time. It was just after six o'clock when the boat sailed. Steve was on deck staring at the skyscrapers and waving a last farewell to New York ...'

Sir Graham listened without interruption while Temple told him in detail what had occurred on the *Princess Diana*. He ended with an account of his conversation with Hubert Greene.

'Did you speak to George Kelly?'

'Yes. He confirmed Greene's story. He said he'd actually seen the telex from Hubert Greene offering Portland his resignation.'

'Did you ask him about Madison?'

'He'd never heard of him.'

'M'm.' Forbes sounded sceptical about that. He picked up his glass and tipped his head back to empty it. Temple stood up to replenish both their glasses.

'Sir Graham, how does Scotland Yard come into this?'

'Just over a week ago one of my men – Chief Inspector James – received this note. Here we are, Steve, read it.'

Steve had seated herself on the end of the sofa. She reached over for the note and slowly read it out. 'An American multi-millionaire called Sam Portland intends to visit England. He must be stopped from doing so – if he isn't ... a ... murder ... will ... be ... committed.'

'Is there a signature?' Temple asked.

'No, it's typed, darling. There's no signature.'

'At first we thought it was a hoax,' Forbes said, recovering the note from Steve. 'Then something came up which made James decide to take it seriously. He contacted New York.'

They checked up and told him that Portland apparently hadn't the slightest intention of coming to England.'

'He probably hadn't at that time.'

'We kept the file open but took no further action until we heard that Portland was on his way over here ...'

'... and had died of a heart attack,' Temple finished for him.

'Precisely. Naturally we obtained a list of passengers and when I saw your name on it I was confident you could fill us in. There will have to be an inquest, of course, even though the doctor appeared quite happy to sign a death certificate attributing the cause of death as ...' Forbes paused as there came a knock on the door and Charlie poked his head in.

'Excuse me, sir.'

'What is it, Charlie?' Temple asked with ill-concealed impatience.

'There's a Mr Greene to see you, sir. I didn't say you was in.'

'Surely it's a bit late for a social call,' Steve protested.

'That's all right, Charlie,' Temple said with resignation. 'I'll see him.'

Steve stood up and adjusted her house-robe more carefully. 'What can Greene want, Paul?'

'We'll soon see,' Temple murmured. He just had time to put the whisky glasses away before Charlie showed the visitor in. 'Hello, Greene! Come in! What can I do for you?'

Greene was taken aback to find his hosts in night attire. 'I'm awfully sorry to disturb you, especially at this time of night, but ...' He was staring at Sir Graham, who had remained seated. 'I beg your pardon, sir, but haven't we met before?'

'My name is Forbes,' Sir Graham told him bluntly, as if that precluded any previous acquaintance.

'This is Sir Graham Forbes of Scotland Yard,' Temple explained tactfully.

‘Oh, I beg your pardon! I was under the impression that we’d met somewhere. How do you do, sir?’ Greene was ready to follow up the introduction with a handshake but Sir Graham made no move to respond in kind, contenting himself with a nod.

‘I think you’ve met my wife.’

‘Yes, we met at Southampton.’ Having been rebuffed once Greene did not offer to shake hands with Steve. ‘Good evening, Mrs Temple. Temple, I’ve just left Mrs Portland. She’s in a pretty bad way, I’m afraid, and she seems very upset about – well – what seems to me rather a trivial matter.’

‘What is Mrs Portland upset about?’

‘Well, it seems that somebody’s stolen Mr Portland’s watch-chain.’

‘Stolen his watch-chain?’ It was Sir Graham that spoke.

‘Yes.’

‘Was it very valuable?’

‘From the way Stella’s going on about it I should say extremely valuable.’

Steve guessed that Mrs Portland had recovered from her shock sufficiently to give her late husband’s London representative a very difficult time.

‘She’s probably thinking of the sentimental value.’

‘I daresay she is, Mrs Temple, but surely at a time like this ... to bother about a watch-chain ... it seems most odd.’

‘Have you been in touch with the shipping line?’ Temple asked.

Greene was turning his head this way and that as questions came from three different directions.

‘Yes, I’ve even been on to Southampton!’

Temple had deliberately not offered Greene a drink nor invited him to sit down. He had not forgotten the abrupt way the man had ended their conversation on *Princess Diana*.

‘Well, quite frankly, I don’t see what I can do.’

‘I was wondering if by any chance you can recall seeing the chain. If I remember rightly you saw Sam shortly after – after he died.’

‘The only time I saw it was the morning he introduced himself to me. It was a thin gold chain with an English penny on the end. He kept the penny in his waistcoat pocket.’

‘I don’t know anything about that. All I know is I wish to goodness we could find the chain!’

‘Where is Mrs Portland staying?’

‘She’s at the Ritz but there’s some talk of her coming down to my place for the weekend.’

‘Is she alone?’ Steve asked with some concern.

‘No, George Kelly’s with her and Moira’s moving in tomorrow morning.’

‘Who’s Moira?’ Forbes wanted to know.

‘It’s her step-daughter.’

‘Have they met before, by the way?’ Temple asked.

‘Yes, they met about six months ago in New York.’

As no one else had made a move to sit down Forbes abandoned his chair and got to his feet.

‘Mr Greene, I understand from what Temple tells me, that you’re in charge of the Portland Corporation in this country.’

‘Yes, Sir Graham.’

‘When did you last see Portland?’

‘About four years ago.’

‘Was Portland over here?’

‘No, I was in America. So far as I know this was Sam’s first trip to Europe.’ Greene had got the message that his intrusion so late in the evening had not made him exactly popular. He began to move towards the door. ‘Well, I’m sorry to have bothered you, Mr Temple. I thought perhaps

you might be able to throw some light on the missing watch-chain.'

'If I were you I should try and get in touch with the Purser.'

'Yes, I'll do that.'

'Can I give you a lift?' Forbes offered surprisingly. 'I was just about to make a move.'

'Well, actually I'm on my way to Park Lane. If you could drop me I'd be very grateful.'

'Yes, certainly.'

'Paul ...' Steve had waited till she heard two doors closing, the front door and that of Charlie's own private little flatlet. 'Do you think the doctor was mistaken about Portland? Do you think we've all been mistaken and – he was murdered?'

'No, I don't. But there's one thing I'm rather curious about, Steve.'

'What's that – the watch-chain?'

'Yes. I'm going to have a word with Mrs Portland.'

'Oh, darling, not at this time of night!'

Temple was already at the telephone table. 'I've got a hunch it's important.' He opened the telephone book and ran his finger down the column till he found the number.

Shaking her head half in exasperation and half in affection, Steve went to the drinks cabinet and poured herself a small measure of brandy. Behind her she heard Paul stabbing the numbers, talking to The Ritz switchboard and finally getting through to Mrs Portland's suite. Her voice came over loudly on the 'phone and Steve was able to hear both sides of the conversation.

'Mrs Portland? This is Paul Temple here.'

'Oh, good evening, Mr Temple!'

Temple quickly distanced the 'phone a few inches from his ear. 'Forgive me ringing at this time of the night, Mrs

Portland, but I've just been having a chat with Mr Greene. He tells me that you've lost your husband's watch-chain.'

'Is Hubert with you at the moment?'

'No, he's just this second left.'

'I've got the chain, Mr Temple, there's no need to worry about it.'

'You mean you've found it?'

'No, I mean it was never lost. I – I had it all the time.'

'I see,' said Temple, trying to conceal his annoyance at the false alarm.

'I doubt very much whether you do see, Mr Temple.' Mrs Portland paused. 'Are you likely to be passing my hotel tomorrow?'

'Yes, I might be. Probably in the morning.'

'I'd like you to drop in for a few moments.'

'Yes, all right. Shall we say eleven o'clock?'

'That will do nicely. Good-night, Mr Temple.'

'Good night, Mrs Portland.' Thoughtfully Temple put the receiver down. 'You heard all that?'

'I couldn't help it, Paul. Why did Greene lie to you about it?'

'I don't think he was lying, darling. He really did think it was lost.'

The Temples' flat was fitted with Banham double mortise locks on the front door and the latest burglar-proof double-glass windows. But Steve always insisted on having a window slightly open in the bedroom. She could not sleep unless she knew that there was an inlet for fresh air, even on the chilliest nights.

She had been the first to put her light out and soon afterwards Temple had closed his book and followed suit. But his sleep was not deep. In his subconscious mind he

kept running over the short conversations he had had with Forbes and Greene and checking back on his encounter with Sam Portland. He heard the gentle chimes of the clock in the sitting-room striking two and soon after that he must have dropped off completely.

Perhaps an hour later he woke up. The only sound was the muted hum of the radio-alarm on his bedside table and the echo of a car in the square below. He tried to recall the faint noise that had alerted him, more like a furtive creak than a sharp crack. He felt a stronger current of air on his face and the rustle of the curtains stirring at the window. Opening his eyes he saw pale moonlight slanting across the balcony outside. Was the chink in the curtains wider than when he had gone to bed?

Then for a moment the shaft of moonlight was broken as a shadow passed across.

Very quietly Temple pushed the covers back and swung his legs out of the bed. His movement woke Steve.

‘Paul ...’

‘Sh,’ he whispered. ‘There’s someone on the balcony. Don’t talk.’

She froze. He could sense her fear as she held her breath. There was no further movement at the window. Temple sat completely motionless for five minutes. Through the wall he could just hear a faint sound like waves on a pebbly beach. It was Charlie, snoring in his sleep.

At last that creak came again. The curtains swung slightly. Again the moonlight was broken by a shadow. Someone had come through the window and was standing behind the curtains. Temple still made no movement except to put a reassuring hand on Steve’s arm. All his antennae were on full alert. He sensed rather than saw the intruder move out

from behind the heavy curtain, into the pool of darkness in the corner beside the door. He could smell the faint tang that always clings to clothes of a heavy smoker.

Reaching towards the bed-head he pulled the string to switch on his reading lamp. Sudden light flooded the room.

The man who already had his hand on the door-handle whipped round, blinking and momentarily dazzled. He was tall, fiercely moustachioed, heavily built, fortyish and scared. In his hand he gripped a stubby automatic.

Temple said, in his normal conversational tone, 'Are you looking for anything in particular, my friend – or is this just a social call?'

'Stay where you are! Don't move either of you!'

Temple had faced men with guns before and he already had the measure of this one. By the way he was holding his weapon he was no trained marksman. But he was scared and that was always the danger.

Temple did not obey the command. He shuffled his feet into the slippers he had discarded before going to bed, stood up and put on his dressing-gown.

'Paul, he's got a gun!'

'Yes, darling. I can see it.'

'Now don't try anything!' the man warned. 'I'm prepared to use it.'

'I'm sure you are,' said Temple. 'Just tell me what you're looking for and I'll try to help you.'

'You can help me by putting your hands up and standing against that wall. No, facing it. And keep your hands up!'

'Paul, for God's sake do as he says!'

Temple did as he was told, feigning submission. He heard the man padding across the room behind him, suspicious that he had some weapon in the pocket of his dressing-gown.

This was almost too good to be true. The man was obviously a novice. He smelt the whisky on his breath as he came close. The nose of the automatic was pressed hard against the small of his back. A hand groped in the pocket of his dressing-gown.

At that critical moment and in a lightning movement Temple's arm flailed down like the blade of a propeller. The side of his stiffened hand connected brutally with the man's wrist, knocking his hand sideways and loosening his grip. The automatic clattered to the floor. Temple's movement had swung his body round to face his assailant.

Paradoxically he was more dangerous now. Deprived of his gun he had to rely on weapons with which he was more familiar – his fists.

Temple, himself no mean boxer, had aimed an uppercut at his jaw. The man parried it expertly, then jabbed Temple viciously low in the stomach. The blow doubled him up gasping for breath and he felt the side of an open hand smash down on his neck behind the ear.

He saw a white flash and slumped to the ground.

'I thought you were never coming, Paul! I've poured your coffee out.'

'Oh, thanks, darling.'

'I've told Charlie to make you an omelette. Is that all right?'

'Yes, that's fine.'

'How does your head feel this morning?'

'It's not too bad. I could kick myself for letting that chap get away!'

'Do you know, Paul,' she said now, remembering her behaviour with shame, 'although I was worried I had a most terrible fit of the giggles. I just couldn't help myself.'

‘I don’t know why the devil you didn’t hit him with something! I’m afraid you didn’t come up to scratch, darling!’

‘You didn’t exactly come up to scratch yourself!’ Steve flashed back. Then she relented and put a hand on her injured husband’s arm. ‘Have you been in touch with the Yard?’

‘Yes, I spoke to Superintendent Vosper. He’s calling round after breakfast.’ Paul cocked his ear at the sound of the front door bell. ‘Perhaps that’s him now.’

A minute later Charlie appeared at the door of the dining-room. He looked haggard after his broken night’s sleep. ‘I beg your pardon, Mrs T.’

‘Yes, what is it, Charlie?’

‘There’s a Mrs Portland’s called – she wants to see Mr Temple.’

Steve turned to Temple in surprise. ‘I thought you’d arranged to see Mrs Portland at her hotel?’

‘I did. I said I’d drop in about eleven.’ Temple shrugged. ‘It’s all right, Charlie, you can show her in.’

Steve would hardly have recognised the woman who walked in as the Stella Portland she had met on her second evening on board ship. She was wearing a dark grey costume, the nearest thing to black that she possessed, and had aged by ten years. Gone was her confident, contented manner. She clearly felt it was no longer worth while taking trouble over her make-up and her eyes were red from weeping.

Steve rose to meet the American, her face showing concern.

‘Good morning, Mrs Portland. We’re just having some coffee, won’t you join us?’

‘That’s very sweet of you, Mrs Temple.’ Stella’s voice was weary, drained of emotion. ‘A cup of coffee certainly would be very welcome.’

‘You look tired,’ Steve said, pulling a chair back for her.

‘Yes, I’m afraid I didn’t sleep very well last night.’ Stella made a great effort to pull herself together. She gave a pathetically forced smile. ‘I’ve just been for a walk in St James’s Park. It’s a lovely park, isn’t it? You know, there’s no place like London, is there? I don’t know why, but I always think the trees look different. Sam would have loved it over here ... It’s an awful pity that ...’ The brief attempt at bright conversation had failed. She closed her eyes and choked back a sob.

‘Do sit down, Mrs Portland.’

Stella took the proffered chair, as Charlie came in with another cup and saucer. No one spoke as Steve poured the coffee and pushed the milk and sugar towards her.

Then Temple remarked pleasantly, ‘I think we had an appointment at eleven o’clock.’

‘Yes, we did, Mr Temple.’ Stella was immediately contrite. ‘I’m awfully sorry dropping in on you like this.’

‘That’s all right,’ Steve reassured her. ‘We’re delighted to see you.’

‘I thought we might be able to talk better here than at my hotel. You see ...’ A hint of desperation crept into Stella’s voice. ‘Mr Temple, did Sam talk to you about his watch-chain? Did he show it to you?’

‘Yes, as a matter of fact he did. Mrs Portland, what is this all about?’ Temple’s voice also betrayed him, showed his impatience. ‘Hubert Greene came here last night, he told me that you’d lost the chain and yet when I telephoned you at your hotel you ...’

‘No, no, I haven’t lost it. It’s here. I want you to have a look at it, Mr Temple. Please ...’ Stella had opened her handbag. She produced a chain with a watch at one end and

a shiny penny on the other. She handed it to Temple. 'Is that the chain that my husband showed you?'

'Yes.'

'Are you sure?'

'Yes, I'm reasonably sure. It's got the penny on the end and it looks exactly the same. Yes, this is it all right.'

'Did my husband tell you about the penny?'

'He said it was in his pocket when a policeman called Dan Kelly arrested him for jay walking. That was in Chicago in 1952.'

'That's right,' Stella confirmed.

'Your husband told me rather a remarkable story, Mrs Portland. He said that, from the moment he was arrested his memory was a complete blank and he simply couldn't recall ...' Temple, turning the penny over in his hand, had stopped dead and was staring at it.

'Paul, what's the matter?'

Temple pushed the penny across the table. 'Steve, look at the head on this penny!'

Steve examined the penny and looked at Paul, puzzled. 'What about it?'

'That's Queen Elizabeth. She had not come to the throne when Portland was picked up in Chicago. Look at the date on the back.'

Steve turned the penny over and shook her head in bewilderment. '1957!'