

Civil Servants

Part 1

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This is the fourth of the Mr. Smith-stories (after 'Crime Does Pay,' 'Dark Shadows' and 'Honour the Liars') – or rather, just the first part of it, which can be understood as a separate story where it stops. It is used as the Christmas Story 2008.

A Christmas Present

The days were short, Christmas approaching and the snow fell during one of the short December days but immediately melted when touching the ground. Inside Mr. Smith's house in Hellerup, he saw nothing of the surroundings – Mr. Smith's office is in a strange windowless core but I had at least spent some hours in my own room, in vain trying to make up some details of the Swedish coast, before entering the inner temple for a coffee break. In the old fireplace, a modern furnace was installed, and quite suitable for the visual impression I had just left, lusty flames were flickering upwards behind the glass. Accordingly, it was very hot in the room.

Mr. Smith had earned too much this year, a grave crime in the Danish tax system. Accordingly, there was a lot of money to be paid back in the coming spring, and there would have been more so if we would declare all of the income.

"It is time to think of a new case," he said, after having tried to block all such laborious tasks for months, not always successful. "Of course, one with a bill next year. Something trivial which does not disturb my Christmas mood. No blood, a reasonable bill and, if possible, with a happy end."

"I'm afraid we are in the wrong business to fulfil such demands," I argued. In that moment, the telephone rang.

"Office of Mr. Smith, Eric Gusto speaking ..."

The big man suddenly interrupted – I never saw him so eager getting back to work. He took over the telephone. I could have listened to their conversation through another device but decided to play alone and undisturbed.

"Smith speaking. What is it about? ... yes I see. How about telling us tomorrow at the same time? ... Of course, it is always urgent. Now, we have a free term at 4 p.m. today, can you manage to come to Hellerup in 50 minutes? ... So you have the address, then we shall see you soon." He hung up, unable to end the conversation in a proper way.

"So what can we expect?" I asked curiously. I did not expect an honest reply and also did not get any.

"Santa Claus has lost one of his reindeers so short time before his seasonal duty. His wife wants us to find it in time, so it is very urgent. Details given soon, as you just heard."

Coming to Hellerup at 4 p.m. on a Thursday, shortly before Christmas, may take some time but apparently our new client called from nearby, because only 15 min. later the doorbell rang. Fortunately, I had just told Juanita that we expected a visitor at four o'clock, so she was prepared and showed the lady into the music room. Mr. Smith did not like people who came so early; neither did he like people who came too late. I never found out if he liked people who were precise, what he liked was perhaps only their money. Juanita tried to compensate his rudeness in offering our guest – after all, she was still not our client – coffee and cookies, and while it was so close to Christmas, I went out to her to gather her name et cetera ten minutes before.

She soon realized that if she wanted to see Santa Claus, she had come to the wrong address; similarly, her story soon revealed that she was certainly not married to a man of the stuff, real St. Claus are made from – I mean, below the peculiar red-and-white cap – as Mr. Smith had ironically presented me the case. But first to her shock.

At precisely 4 a.m., we entered the inner temple. Juanita was cleaning up after our coffee, so there was at least one human present – I still do not know, whether I shall count my chief as such. He is extremely fat, thereto very tall if he would ever stand up. However, his legs are paralyzed and an electrical wheelchair takes care of all transport. His blue eyes are almost covered by dense, long hairs of the eyebrows, somewhat darker than his vertically standing, slightly curled hair, which was partially dark blond, partially infiltrated by grey hair – a detail not to be well studied in the rather dark room, where the fire in the furnace offered both light and cosy surroundings. Except for that, there were no traces of the Christmas season – no stars, no candlelight. Mr. Smith had that in common with Dickens' Uncle Scrooge that he paid no emphasis on Christmas, yes, indeed disgusted the event but at least permitted me, his assistant to take some days

off. While Juanita paid no respect to Mr. Smith's feeling in that direction, she would fly to her family in Spain already next week, 8 days before the celebration, as soon as her replacement had arrived – this time from Poland – and was worked in as Mr. Smith's personal housekeeper and nurse.

"I guess I should pay Juanita less, so that she cannot afford to fly so much around," the old brute had murmured.

"If you do, she may not have enough for the return ticket," I lied, disregarding that flight tickets had now become ridiculously cheap. After all, we Smith-employees must stick together. Imagine if he would consider cutting my salary? But back to our visitor.

"My name is Jeannine Dumont, as I told you in the phone," she said. She was a tall and slim woman in her mid-thirties with dark hair styled as Queen Cleopatra and probably as beautiful in overall appearance. I do not know whether it was related to the coming seasonal event, but she was dressed in a red short gown and similar jacket with a red sweater and then black stockings and shoes. Not just beautiful but really elegant, with the red and white colours making it even appropriate for the season. "My problem is perhaps not really serious but certainly delicate."

"Most problems revealed within these four walls mostly are. Be assured that if we are not dealing with a preventable crime, nothing of what you say will come any further, regardless of, whether we take the case or not. Please present your problem."

"I am French and I have lived in New York for seven years with a wealthy man of otherwise no importance whatsoever, also not for the present problem. Fortunately, we have no children, and after our divorce this summer, I took my girl's name back. Now I consider changing that again in marrying a British gentleman, Mr. George Osborne, with whom I am in Copenhagen right now for a congress, he says. What disturbs me is that the topic of this congress seems to be a big secret, and I wonder, what it is really about. If we are dealing with preventable crimes, do not hesitate to disclose it. I want to know if George is an honest civil servant of the British Ministry of the Interior, at least as he tells me, and I can't understand what his position entitles him to participate in a secret meeting. If he lies to me, he can take whatever consequences, besides loosing his dear would-be wife."

"Mrs. Dumont," Mr. Smith said, after considering whether the girl's name also entitled her to a 'Miss' - he was very precise about such details. "Tell me that little you know about the conference."

"We arrived today and it starts tomorrow on the hotel where we are lining. It is not registered in the lobby and seems to involve only a half hundred of participants. George already talked with some, and the rest are expected to arrive today, so they can be ready for tomorrow's meeting. We are flying back in four days, so there is two days for the so-called conference in the middle. All the participants we greeted today so far are male and when George introduced me, they stalled back. One of them silently told George, that he was not expected to bring any female company, and overhearing that remark made me very suspicious. So I called your brother in Ireland, whom I learned to know some years ago. He recommended that I consult you and here I am."

"Yes, Soames called me today and prepared me of your arrival." So that was why his brother had called? I thought it was a private matter and had not given this call the faintest attention. "I hope we may be able to give you a satisfactory answer tomorrow afternoon at the same time. Concerning the bill, I have a small problem ..."

"I shall pay in cash and I do not need a receipt," she interrupted. "Soames prepared me in this way. My first husband was very rich – before our divorce," she added.

Immediately, I felt pity for this man, whatever his name. What gives a beautiful woman the right to plunder a rich man, and let us assume that he, in spite of his wealth is not even an unsympathetic one? But maybe this is my chance: I shall replace Mr. Osborne and, thanks to my great charm and handsome outfit, marry Mrs. Dumont and divorce her some years later and then ...

I was bluntly awoken by Mr. Smith's words: "I shall send an assistant to gather a first impression already tonight and Mr. Gusto shall commence tomorrow. Given all the secrecy, to which this meeting appears to be swept in, it is better to use different persons. Then tomorrow at 4 p.m. I hope to be able to give you an answer, and it shall

not ruin you. Eric, you do not need to ascertain advance payment and signature, I am satisfied with my brother's recommendation and there are no high risks at stake here."

Later, when I wanted to tease him, I reminded him of these words.

Lunch at Shepherd's

Shepherd's Hotel in Copenhagen is known by many but visited only by few of us natives due to its exorbitant price level. Most of its guests are invited and only few actually pay for themselves – on this weekend, probably none at all. I must admit that I had never been there but now, with a wealthy client, and with Alice having a free day in compensation of the extra hours to be served in the Christmas rush in the shop where she was working, I decided that this was the occasion. But first to the rest of day one.

Fred arrived close to 10 p.m. He was not proud of, what he could tell. "Indeed, there is something strange going on there. Nothing official, but the place is heavily guarded by both policemen and some foreign civil agents. I have no idea how many members there are, only that they are kind of officials. The hotel has room for nearly 1000 guests, but it seems to have been cleared of any normal visitors, leaving most of it empty so that the important conference participants can be among themselves."

"American, English?" Mr. Smith wanted to know.

"Both – and many other nations are represented on a high level. The most important recognition is, that I have almost not been able to make any at all."

"Given your extraordinary skill, that is also something, from which we can deduct: A. there is something exceptional going on; B. it is kept extremely secret and C. it enjoys governmental protection," Mr Smith concluded.

"So if you believe governments are always serving their sovereigns' desire, it cannot be dishonest," I added.

"But knowing government's tendencies and demands for secrecy, we must assume the opposite. So, which are your plans for tomorrow, Eric?"

"Improvisation. I cannot say without being there. Fred tried probably being discrete so I shall try the opposite. I suggest going there for lunch with my girlfriend, arriving in your immodest car. If the eating is just half as good as the price indicates, I may get an idea while being there. I asked Alice if she would come along and she is available – of course, provided your approval."

"Granted, in expectance of a result which we can show our client."

"I shall do my very best, but I can't promise anything."

The fat man overheard my reservations. "I am only interested in the results, not the excuses."

On Friday I came in an elegant suit, covered by a long blue trench-coat to work. I took the bus the two kilometres straight Northwards from my home to the site where the road to Mr. Smith's house goes off from the road Strandvejen, Eastwards down to the sea. Only these last few hundred metres I walked.

I checked the mail, which was rather uninteresting that day, and made sure that no new wars had occurred in the World. Then I called Shepherd's Hotel. I asked for the Wedding Suite – Mrs. Dumont had mentioned that their room was at the same floor, the 25th of 26.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Gusto, the hotel is completely booked out due to an international congress. Are you marrying this week-end?"

I had better not ask him which kind of congress could empty a hotel of nearly 1,000 beds. Of course, he was welcome to tell me, but my primary option was to get in there, and that would not be facilitated by making him suspicious. "No, unfortunately, I just want to give her a taste of, what it is to be married to me, and while her girlfriend, Mrs. Dumont, is living with George in room 2541, I thought that a stay in Shepherd's might be quite an experience, now that money doesn't matter. But can you advice a hotel of similar quality ..." I could hear him swallow.

"It doesn't exist. But if money doesn't matter, I guess that room 2543, neighbouring Mr. Osborne, is free – that is, it has been reserved by you then four weeks ago. And a small fee for the cashing office would appropriate."

"Shall we say 100 \$ in cash in my passport? No receipt needed!"

"OK. My name is Robert. When and how do you intend to arrive?"

"In a little more than three hours, around noon; and in an olive-green Bentley Corniche, which I drive myself. Registration number ..."

"No need for that, it is definitely the only olive-green Bentley coming to our hotel today. But to get it parked will demand for extra 20 \$ a day."

"There'll be 150 \$ in my passport, which you'll get immediately when we check in."

"Please be here at latest 12:30. My colleagues don't know about our agreement, and I shall appreciate if it will stay that way – except old Harald, who is guiding the traffic. If he stops you, just say 'Robert said so.' And if the police stops you, just refer to Harald and say you are living here."

"Understand. See you soon, Robert."

"Mr. Gusto!" and I believe I heard his heels clash. Not bad for 150 \$, plus three nights stay, whatever that might cost. But I hope that Mr. Smith and Mrs. Dumont would maintain that money doesn't matter. It is what you have, not what you talk about. My alibi, Alice, saw it the same way, although she obviously knew that money were not prospering on my account.

At nine a.m. I went to the kitchen for a cup of coffee while Mr. Smith, according to his never changing routine, came down with the elevator for breakfast.

"I hope it doesn't disturb you that I do not eat anything, but I want to keep some appetite for today's lunch."

"And I hope it does not disturb you that I eat both for breakfast and lunch – but even if it does ..." he answered.

"Certainly not. I have got customized to your appetite long ago." My intention to have only one cup of coffee was, however, broken by this greedy company; Juanita later told that she had counted five, of which I can recall only three cups.

In the office, at ten, I was expected to give a brief report, both of our mail and the news in general. "... a bill for the last operas you ordered. In football, FC København was beaten 8:1 by Tårnbæk, the United States declared war on Russia and Israel is ready to give up all settlements."

"Eric, stop that rubbish, I am completely awake. May I conclude that nothing special has happened?"

"That was a correct formulation, Sir!"

"I hope your report on Monday will be more interesting and less inventive. Will you please put the new Rimsky-Korsakov opera on before you leave?"

"Do you really want to hear 'May Nights' in the daytime of a December day?"

He did not answer but just pointed at the CD-player. With the first tunes of the overture, he pointed at the door. My presence was no longer required.

I took the majestic car out of the garage and drove to Alice's apartment at Østerbro. She did not expect me that early but I found it necessary to give a thorough instruction of her important role in this action, that we were not simply there for dinner and part of the success could be ascribed to her.

"You have been one year at school in Lausanne," I began.

"That is the truth so far," she answered.

"And you still speak French fluently?"

"Bien sure, Monsieur."

"Let us then assume that you knew another girl there, let us call her Jeannine Dumont."

"How did you know, Eric? We were really good friends. I even corresponded with Jeannine in New York for maybe two years, but she changed her surname. Is she here in town?"

"She is our client, but it is a great secret. Anyhow, it suits our purposes enormously if you'll 'incidentally' gain contact with her. But don't cut me off then, you must enable that I, too, am given the possibility to enter parts of the hotel where I would otherwise be excluded."

"Then tell me, what it is all about."

I did so, and no details were left out. "And don't forget, I have never met Mrs. Dumont before, so you must introduce me, at best in front of her husband. And do not speak really confidentially there with her or me. We must assume that the most modern spy devices are monitoring our activity there all the time. You must even warn Mrs.

Dumont about it, at best in writing. Let us prepare that here on a small piece of paper, that you must afterwards swallow or throw out at the toilet."

"You can swallow it, if you please, paranoiac. Otherwise, I shall throw it out in the toilet."

"But we are probably at a scene where officials from interior ministries of Western Europe and North America meet for obscure reasons – the exact reason we shall have to disclose. They are in charge of their so-called intelligence organisations, which are probably testing out the most sophisticated spy devices."

"And what is not so intelligent about these organisations that you use the word 'so-called'?"

"Their means and purposes. Never join any of these organisations, there is nothing romantic about them, and there is no exit, no way to stop working for them, except death or jail. But perhaps our job shall illustrate that?"

My prophesy turned out to be very precise on that issue.

It was close to twelve as we went off again, but our Target was just five minutes away. The entrance was, however, obliterated by two persons, a hotel servant in a peculiar uniform and a policeman, I happened to know by name. He approached me with the words, "Sorry, Mr. Gusto, there is no place for you here. What do you really want?"

"But I live here. Call upon Harald, he can confirm it."

He did so, but he came back with him. I needed to pack the agreed words in a sentence. "Room 2543, I think it was. Robert said so."

The old man saluted. "Welcome to Shepherd's, Mr. and Mrs. Gusto"

"That was not part of the deal," Alice silently said.

"Please shut up, darling. Don't forget that Big Brother is watching. Keep smiling." And so we did, both of us, as winners are expected to do.

We drove down into the garage, which covered two cellar floors of the new building. Strange, I thought, it was nearly empty, but so was the majority of the hotel, and their guests had mostly arrived by plane and taxi.

The lift brought us up to the lobby. I gave Robert our passports, mine with the agreed enrichment, emptied upon return. My credit card was screened and that was all for now. A piccolo was called upon and given the electronic key. He took us to the lift and we ascended rapidly to the 25th floor.

As we went out of the elevator, another couple wanted to come in, but they stopped as Alice exclaimed, "Mais quelle surprise, n'est-il pas Jeannine Dumont?"

"Alice," she answered, "Tu est en Copenhague?"

"Ahem," I coughed. "Would you mind to introduce us?"

"Of course," Alice answered. "This is Jeannine, with whom I went to school in Lausanne. And that is my friend Eric Gusto, of Canadian-Danish heritage.

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Gusto," Mrs. Dumont said, as if it was our first encounter. "And this is my girlfriend Alice, with whom I shared many secrets in Lausanne – they are still secrets, Alice." Both of the girls laughed.

"Mine too," Alice added. "What did she mean? Did she want to make me jealous?"

"And this is my friend, George Osborne. Which room do you have?"

The piccolo showed me the number on the key. "2543," I said.

"It is just next to ours – 2541. What a coincidence!" Jeannine exclaimed.

Unlucky words, I thought. Secret services produce coincidences, otherwise they do not believe in their occurrence.

"Let us continue over lunch in Restaurant 'Four Seasons'. We are just going there," Jeannine suggested.

"But darling, it is a closed arrangement," George objected.

"Never mind. The other restaurants in this ghost hotel are closed without any arrangements. They cannot refuse their guests from eating somewhere? I shall wait for you outside the restaurant," Jeannine said.

"We'll be there in a few minutes," Alice said. I did not believe my ears – so fast?"

Indeed, she did not use long and we were down by the restaurant in the second stock, in time to experience the end of an excited discussion. As we approached, everybody immediately calmed down. The chief waiter escorted us into a corner of the restaurant, far away from a big lunch party where Mr. Osborne – or George, as the friend

of my girlfriend had now been promoted – under other circumstances had participated. I had the feeling that all of the perhaps a hundred guests send us an unsatisfied glance. However, as soon we had been seated, waiters came in to separate the large room, at least optically, with some large coloured screens. A loud murmur resulted, from which no details could be differentiated. Then a bell was sounded and a short speech announced that the lunch was served and it was emphasized that the participants concentrate on the culinary qualities in topics for discussion.

“Against previous intentions,” George muttered. Excuse my bad mood, but if you had not turned up, I would have taken part in the company, important international scenery of greatest importance for my career. Instead, I can arrange for my home flight tomorrow.”

“Why tomorrow?” Jeannine asked. “We are now in Copenhagen, I have met my girlfriend for the first time in nine years, I have certainly no intention of leaving this city. Don’t make any decision of departure without consulting me about it.”

I decided to make a test: “Why is it so important for your career, George?” After all, it would be rather suspicious *not* to ask.

The answer was as expected: “I can’t tell you.” Then he made an error, adding, “Not yet.” Later, I wondered if it was this remark which could have been of crucial importance.

“Let us also concentrate on the culinary qualities,” Alice suggested. “After all, a lunch at Shepherd’s Copenhagen is acknowledged as a rare experience. But if you boys are fed up with miserable thoughts, please allow us girls to continue in our language.”

Grown up in Canada, I understand French, but George did not. Nevertheless, he did not miss anything important in the following hour, and neither shall the reader suffer. Instead, I tried to keep a conversation with him running, but it proved extremely difficult. I just spoke a few words in French in the girls’ conversation, and then George realized his complete isolation and started giving answer to my previous question.

“What is your occupation,” he suddenly wanted to know.

“Secret – as secret as yours. Next question?”

It came rapidly. “Do you like playing golf?” It was symbolic for the remaining conversation in Restaurant ‘Four Seasons’.

Instead, the lunch was really exceptional. I should better not give any details, since it included various animals, which are not considered eatable by other people.

After we had been there for almost one hour, a waiter announced that our coffee would be served in the bar at 26th stock, from where we could enjoy a wonderful panorama over Copenhagen and the surrounding sea over to Sweden. It was a nice way to tell us, that our time in this place had run out and they finally had mobilised additional staff (who had been given free) for the unforeseen intruders.

The coloured screens were put aside as we rose and followed the invitation. Immediately, the conversation at the big table muted and sour glances followed our exit. George went away with a bent back as a dog which had been beaten, I with a smile of having been able to cause so many disturbances, and the girls completely ignoring the situation, talking French – the beautiful language which invites to endless talking – without interruption.

We took the elevator upwards, but George suddenly announced that he would go to the room and did not want any coffee, so we let him out at the 25th floor. Then I had occasion to practise my French but soon understood that linguistic knowledge alone did not suffice as sole criteria for joining this conversation.

Yes, it really was a beautiful panorama from here, and I had plenty of time to enjoy it.

George Departs

Around four o'clock in the afternoon, the lights were all turned on in the streets of Copenhagen. We were approaching the shortest day of the year, and Christmas took care of additional lightning, although details were hardly visible from this high altitude.

After having had a wake-up coffee, I had left the girls alone – I am not sure, they even noticed it – while I tried to find out, what was going on here in this hotel – actually the reason for being here. The easiest manoeuvre was to get away from the roof-top bar, where only regular staff was employed. I knew I should avoid the lobby where the security check was at its highest. Instead, it was at the time to test Sam's newest device.

This was a small battery driven radio-receiver, but not meant for listening to music. The idea was, that others had probably installed bugs here and there, possibly also cameras. Both were now constructed so small, that you could never be absolutely sure to have found them all. It was practically impossible to avoid them. Cameras were omnipresent in bigger rooms – the bigger, the more there would be – but a small toilet was comparatively 'clean.' This was where I would take the device out of my inner pocket. It should certainly not be found among the luggage in the room, should somebody look after. The device itself was small, the biggest parts consisting of battery and earphone, which could be attached separately, after having been taken out of various pockets. The best was, that you did not need to install bugs yourself but just tapped the ones somebody else had installed.

So much for the theory. I had never used the device before and therefore had no practical experience with it. The debut should be made nearby, in my room at 25th stock. Foreseeing the possibility of video surveillance of the room, I escaped to the toilet. There were only a few bugs active. The first gave a very clear-cut transmission of the conversation between Jeannine and Alice – fortunately, I had warned Alice specifically concerning this possibility but I could only hope that Mrs. Dumont would also consider her words and the subjects discussed. In that case, I could only feel pity for the poor spy who had to listen to the heated French conversation.

Then there were some frequencies indicating that a bug was active but had nothing to report. The last frequency then brought me a familiar voice. It was George.

"... but who can guarantee me that?"

"Why do you want a guarantee?" an unknown male said in Oxford-style English. "You just come along and we shall arrange for your departure. The money will be in your account when you return to London. I shall give you no written guarantee; you shall just have to trust me. I could, of course, ascribe you the consequences, in case that you refuse the cooperation. Only, such a paper tends to be binding."

"All right, I rely on you. Let us get it done immediately."

I heard the door to the neighbouring room be opened and closed. I waited for them – George and his anonymous guest – to take the elevator, up or down, how could I know? Yes, if I rapidly went out to the elevator after they had left, I might see on which floor it stopped. But was it that important? I gathered not, by then, so I stayed in the room for another 5 minutes before seeking another accommodation.

The big conspiracy lunch was still carried out at the second floor, far below my room. Hoping for single information, what was actually going on here, I needed to approach that arrangement without being seen. So I took the elevator down to the third floor, which was deserted for the moment, and locked myself up at a toilet. I collected my 'debug-device' again and started screening the frequencies. There were several active bugs but, unfortunately, all were over tuned by an electronic noise. It only permitted one conclusion: there was something important brewing, which called for an extraordinary disguise.

It seemed like a vast of time, but I had no other plans, so I made a similar attempt from a toilet at the first floor. This was integrated as a gallery for the lobby and it was rather by chance that I managed to get down the stairs and into a toilet without being observed. Again, I made ready for collecting my 'debug-device' – but then, I received

visitors. The new intruders thought they were alone and did not care to investigate the cabins – perhaps a dozen in all – in which I had sought my refuge.

“Is everything ready for our big project?” one deep voice asked in English.

“Precisely at 8:41 on Monday,” a high-pitched voice answered in some dialectical English. Both were unknown to me.

“Shhh, no details, and don’t talk so loud,” the bass replied. Fortunately, the acoustic in this place, all walls covered with flagging, was so miserable that I could hear many words, even though the conversation was lowered considerably. In particular, the descriptions of ‘two bombs,’ ‘above and below,’ ‘metro,’ ‘C-Train,’ ‘simultaneously’ and ‘Nørreport.’ From that, it was obvious what was planned – and that in a few days.

The conspirators disappeared while I decided to wait stiff 10 min after the watch before emerging myself. This gave me time to consider the circumstances. What were the connections between the international meeting and the pending terrorist attack? There must be a connection, I deduced, since the hotel was currently only open to this strange agenda. However, it could not be the main purpose of this meeting, with people like George from the British Ministry of the Interior, whose purpose first of all was to prevent this sort of things from happening. Could I prevent it by reporting it to the Danish police? There was a risk that this would leak to the conspirators, possibly resulting in a postponement, rather than prevention. This was indeed complicated; I should gladly leave it to Mr. Smith to consider.

I emerged undetected from the lobby; there were nobody here on the first floor. I looked at the watch again: five p.m., now I had been nearly one hour away from the girls, so it was time to return.

It was just at the time. They were about to break up. “Can you take us into the city? We want to look at clothes in the big stores.”

“Nope. I was happy to get the car into the garage, I don’t know if I shall succeed again. It is going to stay there. You must take a taxi, and please excuse that I am not accompanying you, I have work to do.”

“No problem,” Jeannine said but Alice looked sour. “By the way, did you see George anywhere?” I denied. “Then I have a problem, getting my coat. George has the key to the room.”

“It is really a small problem,” I said and called the reception. “Let’s go down to the rooms, we should meet a man with a general key there.”

So we had the knowledge that at 17:18, room 2541 was empty.

I left the hotel with the ladies, but while they took a taxi, I just proceeded on feet to an old-fashioned telephone booth. In the age of mobile phones, they are getting rare but today I did not want to send any messages outside a fixed line network.

“Yes?” Mr. Smith answered. For years, I had tried in vain to instruct him, how to answer the telephone and how to end it. I told him what I had experienced. He concluded, “So Item 1 is, that we still don’t know the purpose of the meeting and George Osborne’s role in it, which is what we should find out for our client. Item 2 is that a terror attack is scheduled for Monday morning, carried out – or at least arranged – from circles in the meeting. My instruction for you is, to concentrate on Item 1 and leave it to me to make preparations for item 2. First of all, find Mr. Osborne, I have an odd feeling that his life is in danger.”

“Why?”

“The artist does not explain. Intuition is the opposite of logic. Do not try to understand, just do as I said. And then call me back when you found him.” He hung up – the audience had ended.

I went back to the hotel, took our electronic key at the reception and went back to our room. Not knowing what I could else do, I went to the toilet and activated the debugging device. I steered to the frequency of the bug that had proven active from the neighbouring room – and indeed, there was noise coming from the room, though no talking. ‘Of course,’ I thought, why would George talk to himself if alone?’ Then the door snatched and silence prevailed. I took off my earphone, dismantled fast the device and hurried out, aiming to catch George at the elevator. I was too late. A man was just entering the opened elevator. He had dark hair and a dark suit. He did not turn around before the elevator door closed, so I could not see any further details, but it certainly was

not George. The display above the closed elevator door revealed that it went all the way down to the lobby.

I went back to my room and looked at the watch: ten to six p.m. Then I went back to the toilet, listening for another five minutes, but everything was silent in 2541. I had no formal occasion for entering the room and decided to transfer my basis to the lobby, hoping that I might get a closer look at someone who could be the unknown visitor. It proved to be a vast of time. There was not a single guest appearing for the two hours I sat there.

"Where is everybody?" I finally asked at the reception.

"They have left in four buses at half past five for the official welcome dinner. Have you forgotten?"

"Unfortunately, yes. Where is it taking place?"

He named a famous restaurant. "Shall I call a taxi?"

"No, thanks, it's too late. Besides, I am waiting for the others, Mr. Osborne and the ladies. The latter went to the city. Have you seen Mr. Osborne?"

"No, I don't even know what he looks like," the friendly clerk answered.

I went back to my chair in the curiously empty lobby. Now I took the risk of calling Mr. Smith with my mobile. I informed him about the welcome dinner and that I was possibly the only guest present in the huge hotel. "It must be immensely expensive to keep it that empty."

"That reveals something about the economic power of those behind. The other issues are taken care about. Please stay in the hotel." He obviously wanted me to confirm my understanding the message. Maybe my undisturbed, lengthy fight to improve his rough habits was finally showing effects?

"Roger, over and ..."

He brusquely hung up. "Out," I completed myself.

I was still sitting in the lobby when the ladies returned around eight with a bundle of packages. The shops had closed and they thought that we, George and I, would perhaps join them to the evening life of Copenhagen.

"Let's get away from this boring hotel," Alice exclaimed. She had already forgotten why we were here.

"I am not really hungry after this excellent lunch and the cookies in the bar," Jeannine said.

"Great, because I'm slowly getting nervous on George's behalf. He doesn't open the door to your room, the key is not at the reception and he has made no attempt to call me during the stiff two hours I have been sitting here."

Answering the last item of my speech, Alice mentioned "which is still much better than standing two hours behind us when we make small supplements in our wardrobes." I had on an earlier occasion mentioned, that if the luxurious women's manufacturing houses would arrange a 'Men's Corner' to keep impatient husbands away from their wives' hunting area until confronting them with the bill, they might multiply the sale.

"I want to look for myself in the room," Jeannine nervously said.

"Then we must ask for a general key. It would anyhow be good to have assistance transporting your new wardrobes to our rooms."

That proved unexpectedly easy. No identity check prolonged the execution of these issues. A mature-aged piccolo joined us with the key, with all the sales packages stored on a luggage wagon. On ascending the 25th floor, some instinct told me that it would be better to secure these in our room before the truth from room 2541 was revealed. So while the clerk knocked a first time on that door, I opened ours and asked Alice to take care of the luggage immediately without asking any questions.

There was no answer to the door, so the piccolo opened it with general key. On the bed lay George, fully dressed and even with shoes on. Everything else seemed orderly, except that he was dead.

That order was also fast destroyed. A couple of minutes later, a slightly adipose man with gold-rimmed glasses and glittery black hair entered the room. He went straight ahead to George, felt the missing pulse at the neck and exclaimed "Cardiac arrest – call for an ambulance immediately!"

The piccolo took the phone and asked the reception to call for one, adding that Mr. Osborne had been found lifelessly here.

"Tell them also that Dr. Nielsen is present and that I have started a cardiopulmonary resuscitation," the laborious doctor told, while he made some gymnastic which should mimic heart massage. "Hey, you," he continued at us, "please leave the room."

"We have no intention of leaving our room," I said on behalf of Jeannine. "Neither do we assist any desecration procedures on the late Mr. Osborne."

"Are you a doctor, capable of determining death?"

"Are you one, incapable of doing so?" I answered.

"Piccolo, throw these people out while I fight for the patient's life."

"We are leaving by our own," Jeannine suddenly interrupted.

Back in room 2543, I asked her, "Why did you do that?"

"But if there is still hope for poor George, let the doctor try everything."

"I doubt that he is a doctor and I wonder, what the purpose of this circus is, with poor George perhaps being dead for more than two hours. Who has called him? Hardly had we opened the door, was he already there. Let's start finding out about this Dr. Nielsen."

Indeed, there was a Dr. Nielsen, who had a practice just across the street, which was definitely closed by now, Friday evening after 8 p.m. I decided to have a small chat with his telephone receiver.

"Practice Dr. Nielsen," a female voice said.

"Can I talk to Dr. Nielsen?" I asked.

"I'm sorry, he has been called to an emergency. Can I help you?"

"It's concerning an emergency at Shepherd's Hotel."

"But that is exactly from where he was called."

"Thanks, he is coming now." I hung up.

Noise from the corridor signalled that the ambulance staff had arrived. Without telling the ladies about the real reason for my absence, I went to the toilet, collected my debugging device and listened to an angry conversation from the neighbouring room. One of the paramedics talked about "Ritual desuscitation rather than resuscitation" and "intimate heart massage," while the other criticized a "brief" heart massage without ventilation. Dr. Nielsen argued that the ambulance was there very fast, now they should assist him in performing an endotracheal intubation. Doing so was rather silent, and the tube was introduced into one of the two holes in the throat – which ever of them did not matter to the fate of Mr. Osborne.

"No, no IV line and no drugs, just get off to the hospital," Dr. Nielsen was heard saying."

"Are you not joining us?"

"One to drive, the ventilator to breathe and one for heart massage. I feel superfluous in the company," Nielsen concluded. The paramedics agreed and the life-savers went off with their pray. I let water in the closet and emerged from the toilet, just as it knocked at the door. It was the piccolo from before.

"Due to the tragical circumstances, the hotel management has decided to put room 2545 at Mrs. Dumont's disposition. Here is the electronic key for the room. May I help you to transfer your luggage?"

The women had taken all their new possessions away but the luggage trolley was still standing in the middle of the room. Now, with the help of the piccolo, they removed the entire luggage. The room service impatiently waited in front of the closed door. Wait a minute: first a man had been murdered; the body was removed; now luggage was taken away and in a minute, vacuum cleaners and humid towels would eliminate the last traces at the scene. I had to stop it. I knocked at the door of 2541. The piccolo opened.

"A man has died under mysterious circumstances," I began.

"Dr. Nielsen said it was a hearth attack," he interrupted. "The room must be cleaned as fast as possible."

"I bet you are in a hurry, with all these guests living here." I decided to let all safety precautions fall. To the girls, I said in French that they should not hurry but keep their

activities for at least another quarter of an hour, and then I went to our own room, from where I called Chief Inspector Gösta Erlandsson directly from my mobile phone.

"In Copenhagen, a man has probably been murdered, his body was removed to a hospital under cover of pseudo-resuscitation, and now cleaning troops are standing for the door as vultures over a dying animal, ready to eliminate the last traces – unless you act in the next ten minutes."

"One minute suffices," he said energetically. "Where is it?"

"Room 25-41, Shepherd's Hotel." I could hear him lose the pen.

"But isn't it where the 100 James Bonds are having a meeting at the state's expenses?"

"Exactly. One of them may have found it suitable to test his licence to kill."

"There isn't such a permission to be found in Denmark!"

"Then come and prove it."

Erlandsson coughed nervously. "It can cost me lots of trouble." Maybe, after all, there is such a licence, also here?

"You can excuse yourself later, but you cannot recover the tracks that are going to be destroyed in a few minutes."

"OK, can you just give me the phone number of the hotel. I'll call them first and then show up right away. You shall please prevent this cleaning action until I come." I gave him the number and he hung up without goodbye, just like Mr. Smith used to do.

You may not quite accept the next step I made. I was supposed to stop any destruction of potentially available tracks. I meant the ones on the bed, on the carpet and in the bathroom, but certainly not among Jeannine's luggage. Call me a hypocrite, but I wanted to get that out before closing the door. It was fairly easy: I just opened the door to the room, told the ladies to come out, followed by the piccolo with the luggage trolley. Then, after the three had disappeared into room 2545, I closed the door and told the cleaning brigade that, according to orders by the police, who would turn up shortly, the room was sealed and any further entering was prohibited. To make sure that the order was kept upright, I remained in front of the door.

Alice came out to see where I was staying, not yet understanding the situation. It was a welcome occasion to ask her, in French, of course, to send the piccolo away and search George's luggage for documents, before the police might do the same. We should do that more often: in Denmark, very few people speak French whereas the English have no secrets when speaking in the presence of the natives.

I had still no occasion to call Mr. Smith and inform him about the new occurrences. Now Mr. Erlandsson turned up. He showed his identity papers to the still waiting cleaning brigade, and then I brought him into room 2541.

"This is where the dead body of Mr. George Osborne was found at 20:17. Three hours earlier, the room was empty. He was accompanied in Copenhagen by Mrs. Jeannine Dumont, a friend of my Girlfriend; they are both waiting in room 2545. However, I recommend you first of all to care about the body of Mr. Osborne, which was taken away by ambulance pretending resuscitation efforts initiated by a Dr. Nielsen, whose telephone number I found here. It is a mystery how Dr. Nielsen could be here less than 2 minutes after we found Mr. Osborne and why he insisted on bringing the body away. Perhaps the reception can inform you further?"

"Thanks for telling me, what to do. Incidentally, it is just what I intend to do, once a police constable arrives to guard the room – oh, there he is."

A young policeman in uniform had arrived. Erlandsson indicated that I was currently not needed, if not to say disturbing with my presence. "Where can I later find you and Mrs. Dumont?" I told him again about room 2545, as if she was sleeping separately there, but then headed myself for that room.

"There were no documents from this conference among George's possessions," Alice said.

It is strange, because I have seen George working on small booklets," Jeannine added.

"It is not at all strange," I responded. "The killer must have had ample time to steal whatever should not be found. My hope is that he overlooked something, e.g. a single piece of paper in his coat or another jacket."

The girls searched remaining pockets with new energy. "Maybe that is of interest?" Jeannine exclaimed, having found a piece of paper in a pocket of George's spare trousers. I looked at it: A list of participants in this symposium. In the meantime, I was convinced that also this room was bugged. I wrote a warning on a piece of paper and loudly said: "No, it is just a calculation of expenses." Hoping that there were no video bugs, I took out my mobile and indicated that I was going for a call.

That proved not to be an easy errand, since Mr. Erlandsson was active in the reception and there were no guests in the lobby. I decided to wait in disguise until he left. Instead, something else unexpectedly happened: The four buses had suddenly returned full of guests in a high mood – and a single guest suddenly emerged from within, giving an elderly man among the guests a brief report. I decided that this person, if not the murderer, probably had something mysterious to hide. I tried to get somewhat closer for registering any characteristics. His hair was indeed spectacular, platinum blond, he could therefore not be the person disappearing from George's room. He had blue eyes, the lips were narrow. He was my height but very much slimmer, wearing a light brown jacket and corresponding trousers. The light blue tie mirrored the colour of his eyes but did not really match his clothes. As I approached, the two men suddenly muted and stared at me.

"Mr. Gusto," somebody suddenly exclaimed, giving the two men information I had desired about them. No, it was not Erlandsson, he had disappeared; it was Robert, at the reception. I went to him, out of hearing distance from the others in the lobby. "There is a message for you," he said, giving me a thick envelope. "The man who gave it asked that you did not open it here."

"Was it a blonde man, like the one standing over there?"

"Yes, I believe he was it."

"Thanks," and I went out of the hotel, immediately throwing the envelope in a bush in front. The buses had left, the doorman had entered the lobby, and there was quite a distance out to the street. I did not go far before an explosion shattered the street. Everybody passing looked up but then decided that it had been a premature New Years celebration. Actually, it would only have been deadly if I had carried it in one of my pockets, so I proceeded to the telephone booth I had used already once before.

"Yes," said Mr. Smith.

"Mission accomplished. George has been killed, I was the supposed victim of an assault and the ladies are well. We want to break off the mission here and give full report tomorrow at 10 a.m."

"Permission granted." He was not even curious about further details; he just wanted his car, and perhaps the insiders, undamaged back. Now it was my turn to hang up the phone without any oral salutes.

Breaking Up

I went straight back to room 2545, where Alice and Jeannine had waited nervously for me. "With a certain right," I commented and then I told about the assault. "Let's order something to be brought to the room, I do not dare to leave any of them now.

"Look, we found a door between the rooms and got it opened, so 2543 is now blocked from the inside and we can see if somebody is coming," Alice said.

"That is just excellent. We shall all leave this hotel tomorrow morning. Let us finish packing before we go down for breakfast so that we don't have to come back. At 10 a.m. we shall be by Mr. Smith, and then afterwards we shall find an accommodation for Jeannine. How long do you plan to stay in Copenhagen?"

"Just a few days until George's coffin are returned to London."

"Please stay with me," Alice said. "I shall take a couple of days off the job." In an exclusive shop just before Christmas, I thought. Was this the first symptom of a devastating cold?

"Thanks for this offer, Alice, I greatly appreciate it. Anyhow, I have enough of hotels at the moment, however elegant and expensive they may be."

I ordered a delicious late supplement dinner with first a Chardonnay and then half a bottle of Gewürztraminer. However, before it arrived, Erlandsson knocked at the door.

"I want to know why Mr. Osborne was here, why Mr. Gusto is here, why Mr. Smith's luxury car is here and what exactly happened this evening."

"The first three questions are answered fast: I am here to find out why Mr. Osborne was here, a task I didn't manage to solve before his death. The Bentley brought us here and Miss Jørgensen, whom you have met on a previous occasion, went to school with Mrs. Dumont in Lausanne. It was not quite easy to get a room at Shepherd's Copenhagen."

"My compliment for this success, even if it didn't help you further."

"But maybe you can tell us what it is all about?"

"I'm sorry, I have strict obligation to secrecy." He was interrupted by the room service. His eyes betrayed an immense hunger as he saw what was rolled in.

"Do you need a fourth set?" the waiter wanted to know.

"No, Mr. Erlandsson will leave soon due to certain obligations," I answered.

"I may ... be able to ... postpone them," he stuttered. "After all, we are working together in this case."

"Could you supplement this small buffet with about the half?" I asked the waiter.

"Without the fish parts ... perhaps some ham instead ... and a beer," Erlandsson nervously suggested.

"I shall be back in 10 minutes," said the waiter.

"No need to rush, we shall discuss some matters first – but you can of course bring it here as soon as it is ready – and bring a second beer right away." I wanted to make it clear to Mr. Erlandsson that he had to disclose something first, before enjoying the crumbs from the rich people's table.

He perfectly understood. Before the waiter returned with the bait, he had told me what he knew about the meeting, which was not much more than I had been able to deduce but still a valuable confirmation.

"Hey, didn't you give the waiter 200 DKr in tips?" he exclaimed as the supplements were brought and the waiter had disappeared.

"That is the level here at Shepherd's – and it is still just a fraction of the price of your late night dinner. Please serve yourself and I shall try to describe what occurred this evening." And so I did, supplemented by Alice and Jeannine, so that I also got something between the teeth. Did Mr. Erlandsson really not appreciate black caviar? Never mind, there are times where I also long for ham and beer, fortunately not while at Shepherd's.

"And you have no idea who killed Mr. Osborne?" he said while enjoying the second beer.

"No. Most of the brotherhood that invaded the hotel was absent, probably giving themselves a mutual alibi, which doesn't exclude that some came back. Oh, I nearly

forgot, all the rooms here are intensively bugged, but until now, we did not disclose anything unknown to Big Brother's humble servants."

Mr. Erlandsson made some movements with his right hand as if he had burned it on a candle light. "You are certainly right, until now we only discussed matters known to the murderer, although he might not have known what we all know. But with the excellent late dinner, and the late time, I think I can stop working for today. How long are you staying in this hotel?"

"We are feeling kind of not strictly welcome here, so we are leaving tomorrow morning – if we survive the night."

"Given that event, I know where to find you. Thanks for the small meal."

"It was perhaps a small meal but ... like to have a glance at the bill?"

He shuddered. "No thanks. Goodnight." A very fast exit and he was gone.

Alice came to me. "Eric, my dearest, I know you paid for a double room, but Jeannine asked me to stay with her for the night."

"I understand. You don't love me any more. I shall just stay awake and shoot all intruders – if I can remain awake after all the poison we ingested."

"Which poison?" she asked nervously.

"I think it is called alcohol"

"O, my favourite poison. I knew you would understand."

I did not, but who cared? I closed the middle door, went to the bathroom and heard how Alice closed the outer door to 2545 and placed a suitcase in front of it, so that any intruder would make a terrible noise. Then she just opened the middle door – I guess to enable me to shoot the intruders – and I could for a long time hear a low-grade French conversation. After half an hour, I lost my nerve and stood up. "Just before you really go to sleep, you can open the door again, but for now I need some rest."

Around four o'clock, Alice opened the door and tested my vigilance, but I was too sleepy to abuse the occasion. Then she went back to her otherwise mourning but now sleeping mate.

The next morning brought only one interesting event while still in the hotel: while we went down for breakfast, our luggage already collected on a trailer and in the surveillance of another piccolo, I suddenly found myself behind the platinum blonde man from yesterday, whom I suspected of having attempted my assassination with the letter-bomb. So how do you open a conversation – speaking about the weather or about Christmas-presents? I decided for another tactic. "O, excuse me," I exclaimed as I fell upon him and spilled a glass of orange juice over the back of his light-brown jacket.

He turned around and considered for a moment if he should kill me right away, but an elderly man turned up and calmed him down, not with words but with a hand on his right arm.

"I shall of course pay the expenses for the cleaning," I said. "Please take your jacket off, so that we can reduce the damage done." Alice had already approached with a bunch of napkins.

"No, not necessary," he said – in a strange, high-pitched voice while nervously moving away. That is the disadvantage of carrying guns for breakfast, I thought. No doubt, this was the man I had heard in the toilet yesterday afternoon. As certain, it was not the voice I had heard talking to George just before that event. If it was of any importance, there were at least three of the fellows who stayed in the hotel yesterday evening when the others went celebrating. With my new knowledge, it was too gentle pouring orange juice over him – burning petrol would have been more appropriate. Maybe next time?

Instead, I excused myself again and confirmed my offer to pay for the cleaning of his jacket; my name was Eric Gusto, which he knew already. He did not reverse the presentation but said with a frozen voice that he understood it was an accident and if I would please excuse him, he was busy – at breakfast on a Saturday morning.

We completed our own breakfast and went to check out. Robert was at the registration desk. "I thought you would stay for the weekend."

"So did I, but unforeseen events force us to leave; and we are taking Mrs. Dumont, previously of room 2541, now 2545, with us."

"Mrs. Dumont's accommodation will be paid by the congress organizers. May I ask you of the new address, in case Mr. Osborne's regrettable fate makes a contact necessary?"

"It has not been decided yet," I lied. "For contact, you can use my address. Did I give you my phone number yesterday?"

He transferred the question to the computer. "Yes Sir." And while he presented me the immodest bill, I gave him the key to the Bentley. Harald could then test if there was a booby trapped bomb in it.

The test was negative, and a few minutes later, we sat in the car. Since it was only 9:35, I first drove to Alice's apartment for delivering their luggage there and emphasized the need to come right back, while I circled around in the area due to the usual absence of a parking place. I had almost ended my fourth circle and decided then to proceed to Mr. Smith without the ladies, but they must have felt my intentions, suddenly they were there. After all, Mr. Smith would find a way to occupy himself, I thought.

I was wrong! "Finally, there you are," he muttered.

"The breakfast brought an important new revelation," I said. Then I gave an almost thorough report of the 22 hours at Shepherd's Copenhagen. In the meantime, Alice showed my office to emphasize the view over Øresund to Sweden, arranged that Juanita made further coffee for them, and then familiarly entered the room without knocking the door – apparently the only person who could do so, not even from me or Juanita would Mr. Smith tolerate such indiscretion.

There was another person who did so and therefore harvested a brusque response. I had not quite finished my report as the doorbell rang. Juanita as usual tried to transfer the visitor to the music room, and as usual, Mr. Erlandsson went straight behind her. As she knocked on and opened the door a bit to report that "Mr. Erlandsson ..." the very person pushed the door wide open freshly saying, "... is already here."

"Would you please take place in the music room," Mr. Smith asked.

"Gladly, if you can just spare Mr. Gusto. He invited me here for exchanging information that he preferred not to give in the hotel – and in return, I have some strictly confidential information, for his ears only. The music room would suit me perfectly, provided you have some songs of my preference." He knew how to serve his bait.

Mr. Smith looked at me with a troubled expression. "You invited him here? For what time, then?"

I was put in the defensive. "It is true that I mentioned to Mr. Erlandsson that all rooms were bugged and I would therefore prefer to give my statement under more secure conditions – I hope this is one. But we did not agree on a certain time. Nevertheless, I am very curious to receive the confidential information. Would you please excuse me for a moment?"

"No. If Mr. Erlandsson has something important to say, he must deliver it here and now or wait in the music room until we have finished – in a few hours."

Mr. Erlandsson expressed the obvious compromise. "I recognize Mrs. Dumont and Mrs. Jørgensen, so if you can keep the information confidentially, I can spread it to all ears simultaneously – after Mr. Gusto's report."

Mr. Smith grunted, the closest you could now receive for an approval. The ladies swore to confidentiality and the ball was back in my goal. I made a repetition of my just delivered report, only considerably shorter and omitting all details from outside the room. Mr. Erlandsson was not hearing anything about the crucial event which was scheduled for tomorrow. He made extensive notes of my statements. Then his 'confidential' news was to follow:

"The cause of death of Mr. Osborne is cleared – officially, at least. It was a hearth attack."

"Who decided that, the pathologists or the politicians?" Mr. Smith wanted to know.

"Your suspicion is well founded – and that is the confidential part: the pathologist told me that he was urged not to report anything special and prohibited from making toxicological tests. This is where the plain cloth policeman meets his limits. But perhaps you have an idea."

"Give me a sample of blood and urine, and keep another one secured, then I can let Boers Ltd. in Amsterdam make an independent toxicological examination. It is not official, but it shows us what we can find at a later examination when we look for it."

"Great idea, as if it came from me. In fact, I had the same idea and here is what you asked for." Mr. Erlandsson handed me three big test tubes, one with full blood, one with plasma and one with urine. "You'd better freeze it immediately."

I brought them to the kitchen and asked Juanita for a plastic bag, before mixing it with the foodstuff. "We only have a conventional freezer," I stated, back in the Office.

"Never mind, in the evening, the samples are on their way towards Shiphol, and you shall, of course, receive a copy of the result. If you can then use it, is another case, Mr. Smith commented.

"Mr. Smith, please now take this challenge. I ask you to investigate it on my behalf, and on my expenses," Mrs. Dumont said.

"I am sorry, but this is impossible. Also Mr. Erlandsson will probably never be allowed to solve this crime, even if he had a written confession from the killer. And if we prove it was murder, the authorities will claim it was suicide – which will be gratefully supported by any life insurance company"

"I am afraid, you are right. The members of the company really have a licence to kill. It is almost an honour to be killed by them, even if you are then proclaimed a terrorist."

"Please delete the last comment of Mr. Erlandsson," I said to the imaginary protocol-writer.

"I am not convinced so fast," Jeannine said. "Anyhow, it is good to know that George was not part of that sinister company, now that we know what they might be up to."

"And what are they up to?" Mr. Erlandsson wanted to know.

"Anything bad, as you have already seen with Mr. Osborne," Mr. Smith interrupted. "So Mr. Erlandsson, I hope we have been able to help you. I believe you have a big programme for today; we shall not disturb it further. Mr. Gusto, can you help Mr. Erlandsson out?" He said it with an expression, undoubtedly meaning 'and take care he is out when the door is closed – and locked.'

Erlandsson felt that something important might be coming up, but he also knew that his time by Mr. Smith had passed, so after a fraction of a second, an intermission only noticed by a trained eye, he stood up, saying, "Yes, I have indeed a lot to do. The conference at Shepherd's ends today, so if I shall interview any witnesses, it is urgent. But we'll keep in touch." Mr. Erlandsson indicated that he left because he wanted to, not because Mr. Smith said that the time had come.

I followed our guest out and made sure that the door was locked afterwards. As I returned, the ladies tried to persuade Mr. Smith to take the case.

"Normally, that would imply that I searched for a killer with the purpose of turning him to justice. That has no point in this case. Whatever I find out, it will be postulated that Mr. Osborne died of a natural cause. The best I could possibly do is to convince you of the opposite, which is anyhow the case. So it is simply a vast of your money and ..." he sighed deeply before mentioning the worst, "... my work. Besides, we have an important job to take care of these days."

"I also have to arrange the funeral of George in London," Jeannine said.

"There are undertakers who take care of that," Alice responded. "You just have to select among some alternatives ..."

"And buy clothes for the occasion and make a list of people to invite and talk to this and that person – be sure, there is a lot to do. I better get started. I can buy the clothes in Copenhagen on Monday. For now, I can call his parents and deliver them the sad news."

"Please feel free to use Mr. Gusto's office and phone for that," Mr. Smith said.

"Alice, help her with my computer, by eMail she can reach a lot of people at once. And for Monday, stay away from Central Copenhagen in the morning, it may be very troublesome according to some information I have got."

"So you will be there," she reasoned sharply.

"Of course, somebody has to make the trouble."

Having gotten the ladies aside, I continued my report with the issues I had omitted, my experiences in the lower part of the hotel when Alice and Jeannine had gone shopping. Partly, I had already informed him with my phone calls, but there were some details I had kept for now, such as the experiences with Mr. X, as I now called the man with the high-pitched voice, the remotely-controlled letter bomb and the paper from George with the list of participants.

Then we considered the list of participants, Jeannine had found in George's spare trousers. The country of origin was printed but in handwriting was added, presumably by George himself, which organisation the person was representing. There were a few ministries, sometimes with added 'constitutional defence,' sometimes an unknown organization, but also well-known such as CIA, NSA, MI5, MI6, BKK, BND, Mossad and so on, all from Western Europe, North America or Israel – even a Dane from PET which was hosting the meeting and probably only tolerated for paying the bill. Under the long double columned and two-paged list, which continued on the back of the page, there was something written in hastily handwriting. I decided that it was 'Gladio,' which I believe to have heard before.

To Mr. Smith, Gladio was a definite concept. "It seems George was in the wrong film here. The assault, which is scheduled for tomorrow, is typical for an act of Gladio, but perhaps their first in Denmark. Perhaps it is not assigned to them. Ironical, our civil servants, whose task it should be to protect us from terrorism, is arranging this to emphasize the importance of their existence, and afterwards they are using their crime to demand increased budgets."

"And how can we prevent it?"

"We cannot prevent it, but we can use their own weapon – the public terror neurosis, you may call it 'terroritis' – to ameliorate its effect. But we should at best know, in which train the bombs are brought. Let us first study the two predecessors, the assault in Madrid on March 11, 2004 and in London on July 7, 2005."

I found the notes to the two assaults and we read them interchanged.

"It seems they prefer to let bombs explode in driving trains," I remarked.

"Yes, they want as many victims as possible. But even if there are only two bombs, we can hardly predict their direction. Moreover the problem is, that we preferably have to stop the trains before the explosion – and then we do not know, if there are more than two bombs."

"But even then, it is preferable to stop the trains before, at best on stations, and that should be a small problem. Stop one train in each direction and we have a total break-down. That is four trains altogether," I counted.

"Wrong, while one train is on the station, the next may still be underway, perhaps even containing the bomb, meaning that you will have to stop it before the next one – so we have 8 trains to care about. Go to your office and get a plan of their arrival from the Internet," he ordered.

I was so happy to get away from him that I even forgave him for not saying 'please'." In my office, the girls were occupied at the computer but permitted me to open a new window and do my research. I printed out a plan for both metro and S-train. Before I left them again, I asked them for their plans for today.

"After the stressful time and the sorrowful events, I imagine that we just go to my place and stay there," Alice said.

"And tomorrow?"

"Jeannine must clarify details about the transfer of George's body to London. Afterwards she wants to see Elsinore. She heard a lot about the statue of Hamlet in the cellar."

"Perhaps you should save her the disappointment that the statue is not of Hamlet?"

She laughed. "We cleared that already. How about yourself?"

"I shall be very busy until Monday afternoon. Afterwards, I am either a hero or a terrorist. I may be free in the late afternoon, if I am not in jail."

"Call me around noon, if you are free – and perhaps, you can get the car from Mr. Smith?"

"If I am successful, I may probably borrow it as a reward."

"You make me nervous. What is the big secret?"

"As most big secrets, it is a secret. However, if you promise not to tell anyone, I am going to throw a bomb. That's what most terrorists do."

"You are impossible. Then, please tell me what it was all about when it is all over."

I promised. "Leave the computer on and tell us when you are leaving."

"There are still some uncertainties," I told Mr. Smith. Especially concerning the Metro. In the morning, there is a train in each direction every two minutes, and cellular phones are probably not working in the tunnel. The bomb may therefore be released by a conventional timer. Above the ground, they may use mobile phones, but if they work with a timer in one place, they'll stick to that in the other as well – or the others, if there are more than two bombs."

"Therefore, I think of another strategy than I had first intended."

And we discussed the methods and means.

The First Bomb I ever Threw

On Monday morning, I was at the station in Valby. At 8:31, I was to take the C-train towards the city. This was the train which should be at Nørreport at 8:42, the closest to the scheduled bombing time. In the other direction, it should arrive only one minute later, but assuming an underground explosion could cause more devastation, it seemed reasonable to expect that this was a train foreseen for the calamity. My task was to take care about *creating* panic in case the anonymous call, made by Mr. Smith himself from a stolen card mobile (which I had bought cheap at the main station) at 8:25, failed to stop the traffic. We had discussed the optimal time span. Too early might influence the plans and give the conspirators a second chance which we would know nothing about; the consequence of too late alarm was obvious. And then, there was still a risk that nobody wanted to react to the alarm.

The train was precise – nothing to be guaranteed in Denmark – and I entered the hind wagon. I went through the train, without noticing anything suspicious. The train was full of people, who were starting working in the city at 9 a.m. The next station, Flintholm, I used to change the wagon. At the main station, I was in the front wagon. If the train was not stopped at the next station, I should release the emergency brake. Then I saw him.

I believe he was a North African type. He was carrying a large rucksack. I went to him and he looked nervously at me. The train starts towards the station Vesterbro, just a few hundred meters away. At Vesterbro, my preparedness for action was replaced through a demand for all to leave the train because of a bomb alarm. It was not necessary for me to contribute to the panic, the gymnastic effectuated at the doors was phantastic and prevented most of the passengers from leaving the train. But I and my suspect were standing near the doors and the first to get out. I kept my hands on the rucksack, and as a reaction he took it off. That was a confirmation that something was strange with this luggage, otherwise he would not give his property up so easy.

I had no use for the young man – actually, he was probably just a patsy, like the four young men in London in 2005. Revealing his identity would support the conspiracy behind this terror act. The Rucksack, however, may have contained a bomb and should therefore be thrown away from the fleeing people. I hope the other train would not appear to soon and threw it on the rail at the other side of the platform, then I also ran away. "Run away," I screamed, there was a bomb in there," and then I followed my own advice. Perhaps 15 seconds later, an explosion appeared. There would drive no train there for the next few days.

I continued towards the exit and waved for a taxi. The crowd coming after me was too surprised to consider any escape, perhaps also curious of what would now happen, and the original carrier of the rucksack was already gone. I hope enough witnesses could later confirm that I was not the carrier of that bomb. Anyhow, when I think back, it was a very chilling feeling – I guess it always is with the first bomb you throw.

There was no point in waiting for any colleagues; the traffic jam behind me was already complete, caused by the huge amount of people suddenly running away from the terror attack. It was even worse at Nørreport where two metro trains and an S-train, one of which really contained a bomb, were emptied simultaneous, I was later told.

One after the other, we met in the old white villa in Hellerup, where we gave report of our experiences. I did not know how Mr. Smith had collected so many assistants. The task of most of them had been to stop the metros, several trains, in fact, to avoid any of them being between the stations when the bomb went off. In all cases, they were to release panic by releasing the emergency brake of the standing train, screaming "a bomb," and in all cases, regardless of a later explosion, this sufficed to precipitate a panic reaction in the terroritis marred Danish population, and all of us managed to get away in the crowd.

At Nørreport metro station, Frederik Nielsen had a similar experience as I at Vesterport. He had identified a young man, a Mediterranean type, who carried a rucksack. He threw it in front of the train, which was damaged by the explosion.

Fortunately, also the driver of the train was among the fugitives as suddenly the rucksack appeared before his eyes.

In Mr. Smith's office, there was now a foreign-body I had never seen before: a television. I did not realize that there even was an antenna on this house, it could not be cable access, and Mr. Smith would not pay for something he never used.

The TV did not report anything for the first hour after my return and only at 11 o'clock, when we had all joined, did the word "terror" first fall, but since then repetitively. It was as a repetition of the old recognition that the larger a disaster, the longer the time for the recognition that it was a disaster – only this time, it was not. Nobody had been killed and only a few lightly injured as the big crowds headed for the exits in panic. Then around 12 the question was raised, why some trains had been stopped prematurely to the centrally guided alarm but only two bombs exploded. It was also mentioned that there had been an anonymous call, but only seconds before the explosion, so it had no influence on the occurrences.

I looked at Mr. Smith who smiled: "After all, they wanted to be absolutely certain, and that demanded the explosions. As compensation, they stopped also traffic on undamaged stretches."

The slow speed, in which the recognitions were presented and the endless repetition of unspectacular film clips began to bore us all and I suddenly remembered that I should go away with the girls.

"Could I borrow the Bentley and take the rest of the day off? Mrs. Dumont wants to see Elsinore."

Mr. Smith was in a very high mood and had, for the first time in which I worked with him, forgotten that Juanita had lunch ready at 1 p.m. "You are right, it is time to break up. Thanks for your excellent work, gentlemen. Mr. Gusto will pay you the agreed fee plus 50% for a successful project. And you, Mr. Gusto, can call the Mrs. Dumont and ask her to come here. By then, you may leave and ..."

The doorbell rang. Knowing that Juanita was busy with the lunch, I went to the door and looked through the door spy. I ran back and cried, "It is Erlandsson!"

"Hurry up, all in the morning room. Eric, let us get it over, let the lion in."

From the office, there is a door directly to the dining room, baptised the morning room by a previous owner who enjoyed his breakfast with the view of the rising sun over the Swedish coast, a sight Mr. Smith never saw – even now, he arose after sunrise. The seven assistants disappeared silently while I went back to open for Mr. Erlandsson.

"I'm Sorry to keep you waiting, Mr. Erlandsson. Here just after 1 p.m. ..."

Mr. Erlandsson was smiling over the whole face. "I won't spent a long time, I just want to congratulate you – is the big man still in the office or shall I go to the dining room?"

"No, you can still find him in the centre of his nest."

Mr. Erlandsson passed me and continued into the office. "Congratulations! No, I shall not want to hear any confession, I just saw Mr. Gusto throw a bomb on a surveillance video, and knowing in which company he spent the weekend, I made my deductions – privately, of course. I am fortunately not dealing with a big terror event and can therefore – again privately – allow myself to enjoy your success, putting all the James Bonds back at the wall. I shall, of course, not share my recognitions with anyone in the police. Congratulations again and thanks on behalf of all the potential victims – just in case that someone forgets to express their gratitude. But Mr. Gusto will probably have to consider what he will tell the police, because very soon the surveillance video which I saw will be made public. I have not told that I know the person, but soon somebody else will recognize him. And I believe the second bomb thrower will also be identified by a surveillance video soon, which undoubtedly will lead to a visit here in Hellerup. It is not good if they find me here, I can only leave my sympathy. Goodbye, Mr. Smith, Goodbye, Mr. Gusto, please receive my deepest respect."

Mr. Erlandsson found his way out himself. I turned the television on and almost instantly saw my deed. Afterwards, the speaker read a petition to the public to inform the police about the identity of this person. We just saw a few seconds to see if Fred also had been photographed – which he undoubtedly had, in Big Brother's World, everybody

is filmed several times a day, but the amount of video footage is largely unseen due to a lack of censors.

Mr. Smith asked me to open the door to the morning room and let all assistants in.

"Gentlemen, I may ask you to leave. Mr. Gusto shall pay you and you will leave with small intervals. Mr. Gusto has made an explosive start as the favourite actor in TV, and the police will soon have identified him. In case you should also be questioned, never agree on any conspiracy."

"You can pay me on another occasion," Fred said and went out as the first. Sam said the same and went as number two but the other five, whom we only use very occasionally, got their sum in cash, before disappearing one by one.

"And now, let us get some dinner, before you call the police yourself," Mr. Smith said as the last assistant had left. "Don't forget to emphasize the explosion shock, which caused your late call."

"Of course. We talked about that already. Why I was at that train, *et cetera*. Come, let us get some decent to eat, I shall then be occupied for the rest of the day – God gracious, I forgot that I made a promise."

"Who could guess that they were that fast. You have to call it off."

"Too late, they are already on their way here in a taxi."

"Then the lunch is an urgent matter. I shall ask Juanita to show them into the music room."

I smiled. Mr. Smith hated disturbances, in particular when he was dining. "No, I shall get something to eat somewhere else. I just got a different idea. You must enjoy yourself with Juanita." I heard a taxi arriving and ran out to stop it and the ladies.

"One moment, please. Can we use the same taxi for a short trip? I just got to make a phone call."

"I have to start the meter again," the driver said.

"Please do. We are anyhow only driving a short distance." Then I went in to call someone – no, not the police. Then I ran back to the waiting taxi.

"Hellerup Hotel, please."

"But it is less than 500 meters."

"I am sorry, but we are in a hurry, and it is anyhow on your way back to the city. I told you, it was a short drive."

"I can imagine the reason for your change of plans," Alice said. We saw it on TV. A friend called me and ..."

"Please keep imagining, Alice" I said, meaning 'not talking.'

"I am leaving Denmark tomorrow," Jeannine said. "They have given George's body free and even themselves arranged the back transfer on a British Airways plane – with a reservation for me, too. It was anyhow a bad time for an excursion."

"Yes, it is a bad time for many things," I said.

"You heard about the terror attacks?" the driver wanted to add, joining the conversation.

"Yes, it was me who threw one of the bombs," I thought, but I did not say it. Instead just, "So here we are already."

Being Famous

"Hey Eric, didn't I just see you on TV," Simon said. Simon was receptionist at the hotel, and I had known him for years.

"Possibly. There are some people coming to see me at 3 p.m. We are going to the restaurant first, then it would be good if you had a room for us, useful for a small press conference."

"You can stay in the restaurant. It is anyhow closed from 3 to 7 o'clock. We can push some furniture together. How many do you expect to come?"

"With the technicians between 12 and 20. Make your preparations and let us get some lunch."

We went to the restaurant and ordered a small lunch. Considering my expectations for the evening, alone in a naked cell or even worse, under intensive interrogation, a warm meal seemed appropriate. A beer or two would have been so, too, but the coming event demanded a clear head, so I restricted myself to mineral water. The servant, Torsten, could not hide his surprise:

"I have served you often here, Eric, but I have never experienced that you stayed that sober. What is wrong with you?"

"After yesterday evening, I promised never to touch alcohol again," I lied.

A minute later, Torsten returned with a big Fernet Branca. "It is on the house. Swallow it fast. Either you will die or you recover, but in any case, your troubles will be over."

I could not resist the health offer. "But I shall still stay with water for the lunch. If I am still alive at 4 p.m., I shall go to the bar and get drunk again."

"I shall not experience it then, you know, I have my free time. But tell me, are you the reason for us to rearrange the room for 3 o'clock?"

"Yes, I am giving a press conference about, how to throw a bomb, based on my personal skills." Already Mark Twain had noted that everybody doubted him when he said the truth and all seemed to believe him when he lied. It seemed to be the same with me.

He laughed. "So it was you! Your world-famous modesty reached new heights."

I changed the subject. "The ladies want white wine. They will share a bottle of Riesling. What can you recommend?"

"We have a dry 'Schloss Vollrads,' ideal for the time of the day."

"OK, let us have that - and give me also a glass, then the ladies may have some of water in return."

"Good old Fernet Branca," Torsten concluded. After all, I had just caused a tremendous explosion; I had the right to appear a bit shaken.

During the lunch, I gave a brief description of, how we prevented the killing of scores of civilians, not forgetting my own role in it, and the reason for the coming confrontation with some of the media, to which I recommended them not to be present. As we finished, it was almost three o'clock. Without definite agreement about a fee, Jeannine gave me a fat envelop for Mr. Smith.

"I thought the job ended abruptly with George's death?" I said.

"It was a strange way, but at least we found out that George was the positive exception among the gang who met at Shepherd's. That is why he had to die. Besides, I also appreciate the deed you made in the morning. I wish we had such people in London in July 2005. Instead, our civil service failed."

"Seen from their intentions, they succeeded. Also the civil servants here were not to be trusted. That is why I use the occasion to meet the press before meeting the police. I have no idea how they will react."

"I hope to see you tomorrow. We shall be at the hospital at 9 and at the airport at 10:15."

"I'll call this evening if I am among the free. Now you better get going, I see a man with a camera approaching."

The explosions were little more than 6 hours old and nobody had yet told the reporters, for what to show an interest and for what not, so there was a vivid interest, many more coming than I had expected. But it heats up the mood better with too many people present in a small space than a few scattered over a large auditory.

"I was the one who threw the bomb at Vesterport," I started. "My first bomb, by the way." Laughing. "But I did not prepare it myself. I was with the train from Vanløse after some work there for my employer, Mr. Smith here in Hellerup, and when the train stopped, I suddenly noted a young man with a suspicious rucksack, which reminded me of the ones which had been used in London on July 7, 2005. I asked him what was in it but he panicked and took it off, running away without showing his face. Then I panicked myself and threw it away and good so, for you know what then happened."

"And your presence was purely incidental?" one wanted to know.

"If I had expected a bomb there, I would have taken the bus," I lied.

"Can you describe the bomber better?"

"Not particularly. I cannot remember his face, but I guess the surveillance cameras will soon do their best – I mean, that is why we have them over all; to protect us or when that fails, at least tell who the villain was." In this moment, I saw him, Mr. X, the man with the platinum blonde hair whom I had given a healing orange juice shower Saturday morning, the one who had betrayed details of the plot at Shepherd's without suspecting that any were listening and thus making our precautionary measures possible. Was he here to take revenge? Suddenly I longed for the police. "Who is representing the police here? Nobody? Would somebody please call them, they should also be present at this conference."

"Who are you anyway?"

"Who is asking?"

"Bent Petersen from Ekstrabladet."

"I am Eric Gusto, 32 years old, born in Canada, now Danish citizen as my mother, working here in Hellerup as assistant to Mr. Smith.

"Tell me more about your experience. Why did you leave the scene immediately?"

"I guess it was the shock of the explosion. I have asked myself this question repetitively. I can't really answer it. I ran away and suddenly found myself in a taxi, heading for Hellerup. I trembled all the way here and, on reaching my employer, even had to lie down in my own office where I have the possibility. Only around noon did I tell Mr. Smith about the incidence, and he persuaded me to inform police and public – which is why you are here now."

The conspirator was about to disappear. If he just went away, I might never again be safe. Somehow, I had to nail him. "Didn't I see you with the bomber in the train this morning?" I asked.

He stopped and said, "But no, how do you claim that, I have an alibi for the time."

I saw the television camera fixed on him. It was enough. But the interest for this person increased as I said, "I still have the feeling I have seen you somewhere recently."

"Indeed, Saturday morning in the hotel."

Should I add 'with all the secret services people?' No, the public is still not ripe for this revelation; it would only damage my own prospects. Fortunately, the police soon arrived, and the reporters indicated that they should secure his data as well as mine. Thereby, the press conference was also soon finished.

The reporters waited outside the hotel, probably expecting to see me being taken with the police. I was myself not certain whether I would be celebrated as a hero or arrested as a terrorist. It turned out to be neither nor. They heard my story without asking a single question, subsequently wanted to see my driving licence but I had the feeling that they knew who I was – and then, they were suddenly gone.

I skipped my promise to Torsten about visiting the bar and walked back to Mr. Smith's house. He was enjoying his coffee in the central office.

"They were not very interested in my story. The reporters ate it with a few polite questions but the police was obviously bored. Interesting was the presence of the man with the high-pitched voice. I tricked him out and the police secured his data. I let it be with that. Denmark is not ripe for the big news."

"And else, what about the ladies?"

"Good that you remind me. Mrs. Dumont left you a this envelope and she is leaving with her lover's remains tomorrow morning. Can I ..."

Mr. Smith threw a glance at the content and interrupted, "of course, you will drive her to the airport – and when?"

"Before and during your breakfast."

"Then don't wake me up when you get the car." A Bentley is not a car you leave nights on the street, so I was forced to come back in the morning, taking it from the garage without necessarily entering the house.

I looked in the TV, but they had not yet any contribution relating to my press conference. Strange, they could at least have mentioned it.

I called Alice and gave her the latest information. Then I parted from Mr. Smith, I could use some sleep now.

Home with Honour

I got up a bit more early than I had planned. I was curious to see the newspapers, but since I did not subscribe to any – it was part of my job to screen them for Mr. Smith – I decided to enter the house and by that occasion ask Juanita for coffee.

I had perhaps expected to be celebrated as a hero, but that was not reflected. One of the headlines concluded that 'The Terror has come to Denmark' and described the explosions and the panic. It was mentioned that two brave passengers, one of whom had been identified, had thrown the bombs away from the crowd but *unfortunately* on the rails, so that the traffic would be disturbed for days to come. You could almost feel a disappointment that nobody had been killed. It was noted that several trains had been stopped in advance to the explosions, but that was attributed to a brave engineer who had reacted to an anonymous call from a Danish al-Qaeda group. Dear me, with such quality of reporting, I was grateful that my name was not mentioned.

It was time to leave. I went out and took the olive-green Bentley out of the garage, and then I drove to Alice. She and Jeannine, both clad in black but more elegant than sorrowful, were waiting at the street – I had called and asked them to do so, since there was never a possibility for parking a big noble car in that street. From there, it was a short step to the hospital.

We were asked to wait, but that gave us the possibility to study who else would escort the late Mr. Osborne to the airport. Two cars were unexpectedly carrying the British ambassador – after all, George was a governmental serviceman, but I was surprised now to learn that he was of higher ranks – and the chief of the Danish police secret service, whom I had seen at Shepherd's and who had been presiding the meeting. He also recognized me, saying, "wasn't it you who threw away one of the bombs yesterday?"

"I had the honour," I answered.

"Hmm," was his comment to that. "Who threw the second bomb?"

"I have no idea yet, the police failed to find out." We ended the discussion there, and he gave Jeannine some comforting comments.

The ambassador was accompanied by a young man, holding a Union Jack. The white coffin was now decorated with the flag, giving the whole procedure such a great distinction of honour that I felt myself forced to ask, "But he did die of a heart attack, didn't he?" which the other men hastily confirmed.

Now four policemen on motorbikes arrived, in order to enable an uninterrupted cortege. I felt sort of important to be worthy of participating in this show. A black Bentley might have been more appropriate, but the other cars were large black Mercedes so it was still the crown jewel of the convoy.

While driving to the airport, Jeannine handed me an envelope: "Just in case your boss forgets to split, I also want you to get this proof of my gratitude."

"Thanks a lot. I hope to see you again in Copenhagen under more happy auspices."

"Certainly. I have met Alice quite unexpectedly and hope to see her again somewhere this summer – perhaps in your company?"

We came to the airport where first the coffin was loaded on the plane, and then Jeannine parted from us. I had enough of the police company and wanted to get away. Alice stayed behind, changing some of her clothes, so I could drive her to work on the way back.

"Do you think there will be another bombing now you disturbed this one?"

"No. First of all will it be difficult for them to hire new patsies, as their scheduled fate as involuntary 'suicide bombers' has been exposed. Second, our civil servants got their terror attack and will, as usually, play the Terroritis-game accordingly, although to their deep regret nobody was killed. New civil servants will be employed and the civil rights further reduced."

"Merry Christmas," Alice said with a tired voice.