



THE
SAIN
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AROUND

THE WORLD

LESLIE CHARTERIS



THE SAINT AROUND THE WORLD

FOREWORD BY ADAM RAYNER

THE ADVENTURES OF THE SAINT

Enter the Saint (1930), *The Saint Closes the Case* (1930), *The Avenging Saint* (1930), *Featuring the Saint* (1931), *Alias the Saint* (1931), *The Saint Meets His Match* (1931), *The Saint Versus Scotland Yard* (1932), *The Saint's Getaway* (1932), *The Saint and Mr Teal* (1933), *The Brighter Buccaneer* (1933), *The Saint in London* (1934), *The Saint Intervenes* (1934), *The Saint Goes On* (1934), *The Saint in New York* (1935), *Saint Overboard* (1936), *The Saint in Action* (1937), *The Saint Bids Diamonds* (1937), *The Saint Plays with Fire* (1938), *Follow the Saint* (1938), *The Happy Highwayman* (1939), *The Saint in Miami* (1940), *The Saint Goes West* (1942), *The Saint Steps In* (1943), *The Saint on Guard* (1944), *The Saint Sees It Through* (1946), *Call for the Saint* (1948), *Saint Errant* (1948), *The Saint in Europe* (1953), *The Saint on the Spanish Main* (1955), *The Saint Around the World* (1956), *Thanks to the Saint* (1957), *Señor Saint* (1958), *Saint to the Rescue* (1959), *Trust the Saint* (1962), *The Saint in the Sun* (1963), *Vendetta for the Saint* (1964), *The Saint on TV* (1968), *The Saint Returns* (1968), *The Saint and the Fiction Makers* (1968), *The Saint Abroad* (1969), *The Saint in Pursuit* (1970), *The Saint and the People Importers* (1971), *Catch the Saint* (1975), *The Saint and the Hapsburg Necklace* (1976), *Send for the Saint* (1977), *The Saint in Trouble* (1978), *The Saint and the Templar Treasure* (1978), *Count On the Saint* (1980), *Salvage for the Saint* (1983)



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LESLIE CHARTERIS

SERIES EDITOR: IAN DICKERSON

 **THOMAS & MERCER**

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CONTENTS

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

FOREWORD TO THE NEW EDITION

THE SAINT AROUND THE WORLD

THE PATIENT PLAYBOY

1

2

3

4

5

THE TALENTED HUSBAND

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

THE RELUCTANT NUDIST

INTRODUCTION

1

2

3

4

5

6

THE LOVELORN SHEIK

1

2

3

4

5

THE PLUPERFECT LADY

1

2

3

4

[5](#)
[THE SPORTING CHANCE](#)

[1](#)
[2](#)
[3](#)
[4](#)
[5](#)
[6](#)
[7](#)
[8](#)
[9](#)

[ABOUT THE AUTHOR](#)

[WATCH FOR THE SIGN OF THE SAINT!](#)

[THE SAINT CLUB](#)

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The text of this book has been preserved from the original edition and includes vocabulary, grammar, style, and punctuation that might differ from modern publishing practices. Every care has been taken to preserve the author's tone and meaning, allowing only minimal changes to punctuation and wording to ensure a fluent experience for modern readers.

FOREWORD TO THE NEW EDITION

Proud as I am to have joined that exclusive club of nimble-eyebrowed thespians who have played the Saint on screen, I can tell you one thing for certain: it is impossible to be Simon Templar.

You try summoning all at once superhuman reserves of charm, wit, grace, athleticism, (cash), and—most importantly—courage. It's quite an undertaking. Even Sir Roger Moore, the original TV Saint confessed ST's appetite for danger somewhat outstripped his own!

But, of course, it is the impossibility of seeing all these attributes embodied in real life that makes Simon Templar such an enduring character in fiction. It is also what makes him so much fun for an actor to play. To portray Simon Templar is to indulge as a grown-up all your schoolboy fantasies of a "jet-set" life involving fine suits, fast cars, beautiful women, and exotic locations.

The Saint Around the World is a classic representation of the "jet-set" ideal of the 1950s with the Saint near-circumnavigating the globe in six stories. That phrase seems a little dated now but the idea of flitting from one airport to the next, always ready to be swept into a new adventure, remains as glamorous as ever. All of the Saintly qualities mentioned above are on display but so is the man behind the myth: "The Pluperfect Lady," for example, suggesting the tantalising possibility of a woman really getting under the Templar armour...

The Saint Around the World encapsulates the advantage that the written word will always have over attempts to "bring it to life" on screen. Years can pass leaving our hero untouched by the ravages of age, the "perfect" female form can exist many times over, and exotic new locations can be visited on every page without the terrifying budgetary implications this would involve for film and television. And most of all Simon Templar need not be reduced to mere flesh and blood by an actor like me. He can remain the true ideal: the Saint of our imagination.

—Adam Rayner



THE SAINT AROUND THE WORLD



THE PATIENT PLAYBOY

1

“I suppose you wouldn’t be interested in helping me find my husband,” said the blonde.

“Frankly, I’ve heard a lot more exciting propositions,” Simon Templar admitted. “If he doesn’t have enough sense to appreciate you, why don’t we just let him stay lost, and have a ball?”

“But I really want him back,” she said. “You see, we’ve only been married a week, so I haven’t had time to get tired of him.”

Simon sipped his Dry Sack.

“All right,” he said. “Give me a clue. What was it about this bridegroom that impressed you so much, darling?”

“The name,” she said, “is Lona Dayne.”

“Well, that’s unusual, anyway. He must have to listen to a lot of funny cracks about it.”

“Lona Dayne is *my* name, idiot. Not ‘darling.’”

“Oh.”

He regarded her with pleasantly augmented interest. It had been an entirely shallow and stereotyped reaction, he realized, to identify and pigeonhole her so summarily as “the blonde.” Certainly she had the hair, of a tint much paler than straw, which his worldly eye inevitably measured against her light brown eyes and traced back from there to the alchemy of some beauty parlor—but wasn’t it a mere cliché of fiction that expensively rinsed blondes were by contrary definition cheap, while the only good ones owed their coloring solely to a lucky combination of chromosomes? The pretty face and approximately 35-23-35 vital statistics which convention also attributes to blondes appeared to be hers without any important debt to artifice. And she could get away with calling him Idiot, when she smiled in that provocatively intimate way while she said it.

“To me, you’ll still be darling,” he said. “At least, until your husband turns up. I suppose his name is Dayne too.”

“Naturally.”

“You can never be sure, these days.”

“Havelock Dayne.”

“It has rather a corny sound, but I guess his parents loved it.”

“I love your dialogue,” she said dispassionately. “But I wasn’t kidding. You *are* the Saint, aren’t you?”

Simon sighed. He had heard that question so often, by this time, that he seemed to have used up all the possible smooth, shocking, modest, impudent, evasive, chilling, misleading, or witty answers. Now he could only wish, belatedly, that he had had the forethought to insist on an alias. But while that might have let him enjoy one cocktail party as an anonymous guest, it wouldn’t have fitted in with the project that brought him to Bermuda.

It had been a good party, until then. The Saint had thought it a happy coincidence, for him, that a friend from many years back in Hollywood, Dick Van Hesse, was currently managing a

miniature movie studio which had been improbably yet astutely set up in Bermuda to take advantage of tax privileges and lower costs to compete for the American television market. At the Van Hessens' hillside house was therefore gathered, almost automatically, a useful cross-section of island personalities: the local bankers and bigwigs, the grim and the gay social sets, the press and the professions, the merchants and the dilettantes, and a leavening of working actors and visiting firemen on whom all the others could prove how easily they could mix with celebrities. The Saint's cool blue eyes drifted down the long verandah that overlooked Hamilton Harbor, but failed to make any pertinent identification among the convivial mob.

"I've met so many people tonight, I couldn't possibly remember half their names," he confessed disarmingly, and with an unblushing lack of truth. "Does your husband have anything conspicuous about him—like a green mustache, for instance?"

"You haven't met him tonight. He isn't here."

"When did you lose him, then?"

"The day before yesterday."

"And only married five days at the time, according to what you said. It must have been a hell of a wedding. Did you have any inkling that Havelock was such a dizzy type when you agreed to let him love, honor, and pay the bills?"

"He isn't at all. He's lots of fun, of course, but he's terribly ambitious and earnest too. He's a lawyer."

"I'm looking for a lawyer myself," said the Saint. "Only I want one who's already embezzled at least five million dollars. Have you known Havelock long enough to notice him flashing a lot of green stuff around?"

"I'm sorry," she said stiffly. "I suppose I was asking for it. I should have known better. But I don't think your dialogue is so excruciatingly funny, after all—"

A quiver of her lips spoiled the trenchant ring that her last sentence was phrased for, and she turned away quickly, but not quickly enough for him to miss the blurring of her eyes. He moved even more swiftly to place himself beside her again where she leaned over the verandah railing with her back turned squarely to the incurious crowd.

"Pardon my two left feet," he said reasonably. "I'm afraid the atmosphere of the place got me. I thought you were playing it strictly chin-up and British, so I was going along with the gag. Let's start over, if you're serious."

She looked at him, blinking hard.

"I am!"

"All right. I know how you're feeling. I wish I could help. But just plain wandering husbands are a bit out of my line. I expect if you asked a few discreet friends and bartenders—or even the police—"

"But I can't. I've had to cover up—tell everyone he's laid up with a terrible cold. You're the first person I've told, and I shouldn't even have done that."

"Then stop being silly. If he's lost, he's lost, and false pride won't help you find him. Think yourself lucky he isn't really a case up my alley, for which he'd have to be at least kidnaped or even murdered."

"That," she said steadily, "is exactly what I'm afraid of. Or I wouldn't have talked to you."

Without any change of expression, the Saint's bronzed face seemed to become opaque, like a mask from behind which his eyes probed with a sort of rueful cynicism.

"Now I'll begin to think you're suffering from too much lurid literature."

"You'd be wrong," she said flatly. "Unless I suffered from writing it. Until a week ago, my name was Lona Shaw. Well, that doesn't mean anything to you. But it would if you'd lived in

England lately. I've worked for the London *Daily Record* since I was nineteen, and for the last four years I've been their star sob-sister. Do you have any idea how hard-boiled and unhysterical a girl has to be to hold that job on a newspaper like the *Record*?"

Simon nodded. Suddenly, as if a cloud had passed, the mask of his face was translucent again. It was the only outward sign that he had felt and recognized the icy caress of Destiny's fingers along his spine.

"Okay," he said soberly. "I'm sold."

His gaze nickered over the crowded balcony again, warily conscious of the beginning of one of those unanimous re-shufflings that surge intermittently through the human molecules of every cocktail party, and even more sharply perceptive of the covetous glances of certain males within striking distance who had transparently settled on Lona Dayne as the most intriguing target for tonight and were getting set to cut in at the first opening.

Simon huddled strategically closer to her along the rail.

"I gather you came alone," he said.

"Yes."

"Me too. No plans for dinner?"

"No. Fay Van Hessen said I could—"

"She won't mind. You just made a date with me, darling."

He put down his glass, took her by the arm, and steered her firmly and skillfully into an eddy that was flowing towards the exit. The frustrated wolf pack was still standing on its heels as they jostled into the line that was babbling thanks and goodbyes.

"Oh, don't go yet," Fay protested. "We're going to have some food presently."

"But Lona's husband might get better tomorrow, and I'd never get her all to myself again," Simon said with a leer.

"Well, behave yourselves."

"There should be a taxi waiting below." Dick Van Hessen said helpfully. "Send him back from wherever you're going, for the next customers."

Then they were down the stairs, and the steep narrow driveway, and a taxi was waiting as predicted at the foot of the steep slope where the house perched. Simon put her in and said, "The Caravelle."

"I ought to go home, really," she said, "and see if there's any message."

"Which I suppose you've been doing for the last two days. If you're out, he could leave a message, couldn't he?"

"Yes—the caretaker promised he'd be around and listen for the phone."

"Then you can call in and ask for news later. Meanwhile, you've got at least as much right to be out as he has."

"But—"

A Bermuda taxi is not a vehicle in which to discuss anything confidential. Being derived from any miniature English car by the sole process of attaching a taximeter to the dashboard, the driver and passengers are huddled together as cozily as olives in a jar. The Saint nudged Lona Dayne gently, and pointed expressively at the back of the driver's head, which he was trying not to bump with his knees.

"What's this about a caretaker?" he said innocuously. "Aren't you staying at a hotel?"

"We started in a hotel, of course, but we moved into this house just the day before Hav disappeared. You see, we were talking to the caretaker, and he happened to mention that his boss had just written and told him to try to rent it. The owner lives up in Canada and only comes down here in the winter, then Bob—that's the caretaker—goes to Canada and takes care of his house there.

Usually the house here just stands empty, but it seems as if the owner suddenly decided he might as well make a few dollars out of it. It's absurdly reasonable, really, and Bob didn't see why he couldn't let us have it just for a month, while he's waiting for someone who wants to take a longer lease. After we saw it, we simply couldn't turn it down—it's on a little island all of its own, the sort of thing you dream of. Only if we'd stayed in the hotel, perhaps we'd have been safer...But it's the most romantic spot..."

Simon let her go on chattering trivialities, preferring to have her overdo it rather than go on with the important subject until they were safe from any uninvited audience, or at least until he knew how seriously they should be thinking of safety. He kept her headed off from any reference to her husband until they were settled at a table in a corner of the terrace overhanging the water, and had ordered a chicken in white wine and a bottle of Bollinger to go with it.

"What am I supposed to be celebrating?" she objected half-heartedly.

"I'm prescribing it to give you a lift, which I think you could use."

He lighted their cigarettes, and settled his elbows squarely on the table, looking at her with sympathetic but disconcertingly penetrating detachment.

"Now," he said with sudden bluntness. "What is this all about?"

"Have you heard of Roger Ivalot?"

He winced slightly.

"No," he said. "And if I had, I wouldn't believe it."

"Why?"

"The name sounds even more improbable than your husband's."

"If you'd been in England lately—"

"I'm sorry. It's already established that I've been spending my time in the wrong places. Just enlighten my ignorance."

There was, however, some excuse for regarding anyone who had not heard of Roger Ivalot as benighted, as he soon learned.

In a country which is not by tradition or temperament adapted to the breeding of spectacular playboys, Mr Ivalot had succeeded in racking up a number of probable records. One of these could certainly be claimed for the rocket-like trajectory of his ascent from obscurity. Nobody, in fact, seemed to have known of his existence before the day less than two years ago when he had sent engraved invitations to the entire casts of the three most popular musicals then playing in London, bidding them to a champagne supper and dance in the Dorchester's biggest private ballroom, for which he also hired the most popular orchestra available. While some of the stars were snooty or suspicious enough to ignore the offer, almost six hundred guests (including several uninvited escorts) showed up to sample the hospitality; and when a somewhat notorious soubrette, professing indignation because no one had been asked to take a champagne bath, peeled off her clothes and had herself showered from bottles held by a flock of eager volunteers, nothing less than the simultaneous outbreak of World War III could have prevented Mr Ivalot becoming a celebrity overnight.

"I just wanted to meet a lot of people who liked to have fun," he said to the newspapers, which (of course with the exception of *The Times*) could hardly fail to note such goings-on, "and throwing a big party seemed the quickest way to do it."

Perhaps because he happened at a time when England, reacting from the longest hangover of post-war austerity that any European country had had to endure, and flexing the muscles of a new self-confidence, was ripe for any hero who struck a dizzy enough contrast with the drab years behind, Mr Ivalot was just what the circulation managers ordered. Although he threw no more parties of such indiscriminate grandiosity as the one which launched him into London's café society,

from then on he never lacked a convivial entourage, about three-quarters of it feminine, for his almost nightly forays into the gayest cabarets and bottle clubs; and in an otherwise dull season the more uninhibited journals were delighted to adopt him as a gratifyingly reliable source of copy.

The news value of his extravagances was enhanced by an occasional quixotic touch. The celebration of Guy Fawkes Day in London that year was materially enlivened by Roger Ivalot, who drove through the East End in a large truck loaded to the toppling point with fireworks, which he distributed to incredulous urchins on a succession of street corners. Nothing like the resultant bedlam of fire and explosion had been seen in that area since the last visit of the Luftwaffe. And at Christmas he rode through the slums again, this time on a stage coach which he had resurrected from somewhere, accompanied by three music-hall beauties, all of them in Dickensian costumes, tossing bags of candy from a seemingly inexhaustible supply to all the children who turned out to stare.

“All it took was money,” he told the reporters. “And I’ve a lot of that.”

He liked making corny jokes of that kind about his improbably cognomen. “I’ve a lot of living to do yet,” was another. But the nickname that stuck, with his enthusiastic endorsement, was “Jolly Roger.” His acceptance was made official by the huge skull-and-crossbones flag which draped his box at the Arts Ball on New Year’s Eve, where he and his whole party appeared in some version of a pirate costume, even though some of the female members had startlingly little material to work with between their top boots and cocked hats. He even tried to adopt the same pattern for his racing colors, to put on a horse he bought which was entered in the Grand National, but here the stewards of the Jockey Club drew the line. Within six months of his debut, he had become practically an institution, and when he announced that he was leaving to have a fling in Paris and continue from there on a trip around the world, a noticeable gloom overspread the bistros.

“But I’ll be back again in the autumn,” he told his friends consolingly.

He had always paid cash for everything, even for his biggest parties, so that there had never been an occasion for anyone to inquire into his credit or bank references, but he claimed to be the British Empire’s first uranium millionaire. According to him, he had foreseen the coming boom before the dust had settled on Hiroshima, and had invested in a skillfully selected list of mining enterprises in Africa and Australia. While he was shrewdly secretive about the precise location of his holdings, the soundness of his judgment appeared to be adequately evidenced by the amount of money he had to spend.

It was in answer to the obvious question of how even a uranium millionaire’s income could survive modern taxation with so little visible injury, that he had explained that he made his legal home in Bermuda, where there was no income tax.

True to his promise, he had returned in November, and the pattern of his first season had been more or less repeated, with the difference that this time he was already a well-known character with a large if not exactly elite circle of friends. Before the advent of another spring, only the most strong-minded comedians could get through a monologue of any length without hanging some gag on Jolly Roger Ivalot.

This year, however, Mr Ivalot’s departure was not signaled by a mammoth thirty-six-hour farewell party, as it had been the previous time. In fact, it was first confirmed, after several days of unwonted quiescence, by a solicitor who had been trying to serve him with a summons to appear and defend himself in court. Mr Ivalot, it transpired, had got wind of this project and had strategically taken himself out of jurisdiction, without saying goodbye to anyone.

“And how many people were discovered holding the bag?” Simon asked, with anticipative relish.

“Only one that we know of,” Lona Dayne said. “He’d just had one of the usual slip-ups with

his Jolly Rogering. One of his girls was going to have a baby—twins, as a matter of fact.”

—“Ah,” said the Saint. “A bag holding people.”

She let that wilt in an interregnum of withering silence.

“He didn’t owe anybody—I told you he always paid cash,” she said after the pause. “He hadn’t sold any shares or promoted anything. His furnished flat was paid up to the end of the month. He’d just packed up and gone.”

The expectant mother, a nominal actress whose gifts sounded more thoracic than thespian, alleged that Mr Ivalot had been promising to marry her for more than a year. But although she had found herself pregnant almost immediately after his return, he had persistently evaded or postponed setting a wedding date; and when he finally proposed a cash settlement of some five thousand pounds as an alternative, it began to dawn upon the poor girl that his love might not be as passionate and deathless as he had proclaimed. By then she was on the verge of her fifth month and an X-ray had shown that she was preparing to endow the world with not one but two little Ivalots. This was the last straw that drove her to issue an ultimatum to the effect that unless Mr Ivalot came through with a wedding ring within a week she would continue their romance through a lawyer. It was not, she explained later to the former Lona Shaw, who interviewed her, that she thought that money could heal a broken heart, and that she felt it her maternal duty to see that her imminent offspring were not left to face a lifetime of illegitimacy with a lousy two thousand five hundred pounds capital apiece, instead of their rightful inheritance of millions.

This fair and sporting warning was her gravest mistake, for Mr Ivalot had promptly elected to vanish rather than contest the suit.

A lawyer with a fat contingency fee in prospect was not to be so easily discouraged. He promptly forwarded the papers to an attorney in Bermuda, with the request that they be served on Mr Ivalot there. And that was when the blow fell that punctured a fabulous legend and at the same time paradoxically inflated an otherwise routine scandal into the sensation of the year. For according to the advice that came back to London, nobody in Bermuda—no attorney, bank, real estate agency, newspaper, or any individual who had been questioned—had ever heard of Mr Roger Ivalot, nor was he listed in any official registry or directory.

“In fact, he never had been here,” said the Saint.

“That’s what I couldn’t quite swallow.” Lona Dayne said. “I thought it out this way. The Bermuda thing came out when somebody asked him about taxes. It seemed to me that that question might really have taken him by surprise. He had to have an answer quickly, and a good one, without having too much time to think about it or what it might lead to. But what he suddenly realized was that it might occur to the authorities to start investigating anyone who was throwing money around as lavishly as he was, in the hope of catching a tax dodger, and from what’s come out since he obviously couldn’t risk being investigated. He had to head that inquiry off right away. But how likely would he be to come up with Bermuda unless he knew a lot about it? I kept on thinking about that.”

Simon nodded appreciatively.

“That’s pretty sharp thinking. Most people wouldn’t have known about that tax angle. But if he’d run into someone who really lived here—”

“There wasn’t too much risk of that. You wouldn’t find many people with a home in Bermuda visiting England in the winter. But he might very easily have run into someone who’d visited here, so he had to be ready to talk about the place like a native. Which still made it look as if he must have spent a lot of time here, at least.”

The mystery of Mr Ivalot had all the earmarks of a monumental swindle, but it became even more baffling as weeks went by without anyone turning up who claimed to have been swindled. That

is, with the exception of the pregnant starlet, whose loss was debatable, and her plight and the cruelly clouded future of her two still unborn little bastards became a matter of popular concern and the grist of many columns of tear-squeezing prose for Lona Shaw.

“And you came here to go on milking it?” Simon asked.

“Well, not quite. You see, I met Havvie”—the Saint managed to suppress a shudder—“when he was in England last year on his holiday, and he’d been after me with letters and telephone calls to marry him ever since, and we really did get on awfully well together, so eventually I said yes. Then I had to get leave from the *Record*, and I’ve always been a thrifty type, so I sold them the idea that I ought to stay on salary if I came here and went on trying to dig up something about Ivalot. Then I only had to tell Havvie that I’d set my heart on a honeymoon in Bermuda, and everything was fine.”

“You’ve given me a new concept of romance,” murmured the Saint.

Her recital of the saga of Jolly Roger Ivalot, somewhat less succinct than it has been recapitulated here, had taken them all the way through dinner and dessert, and now they were sitting over Benedictine and coffee. Once again he lighted cigarettes for them.

“What was your plan of campaign when you got here?”

“We gave out a story to the local papers that the *Record* had unearthed a terrific clue which was expected to flush Ivalot from his cover within two or three days. I suppose that was before you got here, or you’d have read it.”

“I guess it was. But if I’d read it, I’d have thought it was rather an old wheeze.”

“It might still have scared Ivalot, if he was here,” she said. “I hoped it might tempt him to try to make a deal, or—”

“Or something more violent?”

“That’s what Havvie was afraid of.”

“He should have been. The rivers and ponds are full of amateurs who’ve had that kind of brilliant idea—anchored in concrete blocks.”

“That’s why he’s in trouble now,” she said bitterly. “He’s taking my place.”

“How?”

“He wouldn’t let me take the risk. He insisted that if there were going to be any games like that, he was going to play the reporter and draw the fire. He said that nobody here would know Havelock Dayne as an attorney from Philadelphia, and nobody would associate Mrs Dayne with Lona Shaw, and if there was going to be any rough stuff he could take care of himself better than I could, and if there was any real detecting to do I might find out a lot more if nobody knew I was more than an ordinary dizzy bride. He was terribly intense about it, and in some ways he made a bit of sense too, and I didn’t want to start off our married life with a quarrel, so I let him have his way. And that’s why this has happened to him.”

“I still don’t know just what has happened,” said the Saint.

She took a gulp from her glass.

“The day before yesterday, I went into Hamilton after lunch, to do some shopping. Havvie decided he’d rather stay home and fish. When I got back, about five, he’d left a note. Here it is.”

She produced it from her purse. It was crumpled and smeared from many readings.

Fantastic break on Jolly Roger. This is It! Must get after it at once or he’ll get away. Don’t worry even if I don’t get home tonight. Love and XX.

H.

“You’re sure he wrote this?” Simon asked automatically.

—“Unless it’s an absolutely perfect forgery. And it would’ve had to be done by someone who knew that he always signed his letters to me with just an ‘H.’”

Simon handed the note back, and for perhaps the first time that evening his face was completely grave, without even a give-away trace of mockery in his eyes.

“And since then you haven’t heard another word?”

“Nothing.” The task and distraction of drawing the complete background for him had sustained her so far, but now he could see her straining again to keep emotion from getting the upper hand. “That is, unless...I’ve got to call home now.”

“Go ahead.”

He finished his liqueur, his coffee, and his cigarette, with epicurean attention to each, holding his mind in complete detachment until she came back; and presently she was at the table again, but not sitting down, her face pale in the subdued lamplight and her hands twisting one over the other.

“We’ve got to go to the house at once,” she said, in a low shaky voice. “Or I must. There’s been a message. Not Havvie. Someone who said he’ll call again, until he gets me. And he said I mustn’t talk to anyone, if I want my husband back.”

The island lay less than a hundred yards off shore, out in the Sound. Simon judged that they were somewhere in the middle of the deep horseshoe curve that is the approximate profile of the southwestern end of Bermuda, where the segmented chain of land curls all the way back over itself like a scorpion's tail. From the tiny landing-stage just below the road, where a taxi had dropped them off, he could clearly see the outlines of the white rain-catcher roof of the house that crowned a hillock which might have been an acre overall. Overhead electric wires bridged the distance to the island by means of two intermediate poles standing in the water, and below the place where the wires took off from the little landing-stage was an ordinary bell-push which Lona Dayne pressed with her finger. Almost at once a floodlight went on over a dock on the island opposite them, and a man came down and got into one of the skiffs that was tied up there and began to row over to them.

"Usually we'd leave the dinghy we came ashore in tied up here," she said. "But since I've been alone, Bob insists on ferrying me back and forth. I'm sure he doesn't believe I can row a boat."

"How much does he know about all this?" Simon asked.

"About as much as I've told you. Except that he still thinks my husband is really the reporter, like everyone else here. But obviously I couldn't tell him the story I've been telling everyone else, about Havvie being in bed with a cold."

"Why is he still caretaking, even though you've rented the house?"

"There are servants' quarters where he sleeps, and he still does the gardening. He sort of goes with the place."

"And you mean to say he hasn't spread this juicy bit of gossip all over Bermuda?"

"Wait till you meet him!"

That was only a matter of moments. The man shipped his oars as the skiff glided in, and stood up to catch and hold on to a ring bolt set in the concrete of the landing-stage.

"Has there been another call?" Lona Dayne demanded frantically, while he was still steadying the boat alongside.

"No, ma'am."

"Did you tell me *everything* they said, on the phone?"

The caretaker looked up at the Saint, through plain gold-rimmed spectacles which combined with a bony severity of jaw and the total hairlessness of his shiny black cranium to give him the air of some kind of African archdeacon.

"That was the message, ma'am," he answered. "Not to talk to *anyone*."

"Simon, this is Bob Inchpenny," Lona said. "Bob, this is Mr Templar. I'd already told Mr Templar everything, before you gave me that message."

"Oh yes, ma'am."

The caretaker regarded Simon with even more critical reserve, and the Saint realized how ridiculous the suggestion that this man might be a wellspring of idle gossip must have sounded to

anyone who knew him. Simon had seldom encountered a Negro who bore himself with such an austere and almost overpowering dignity.

They got into the dinghy, and the caretaker picked up the oars and began to row stolidly back to the island.

“What did he sound like, this person who telephoned?” Lona asked.

“Sort of muffled, like he was disguising his voice.”

“Couldn’t you guess anything about him?” Simon persisted. “For instance, what nationality would you say he was?”

The colored man pondered this for several strokes, with portentous concentration.

“I’d say he might be an American, sir.”

The Saint turned to Lona.

“You must have heard almost everything about Jolly Roger. Did you ever hear what he sounded like?”

“Not exactly. It must have been pretty ordinary English. If he’d sounded like an American, I’m sure it would’ve been mentioned.”

Simon was still thinking that over when they reached the island dock. He stepped out and gave her a hand, and let her lead him up the alternations of steps and meandering path that wound up the slope to the house.

The living-room that she took him into was very large, but so cunningly broken up that it seemed to consist entirely of inviting corners. The formal center was an enormous fireplace flanked by a pair of huge but cozy couches; on one side of them was a spacious alcove that contained a sideboard and a modest dining table, and on the other side a bay that was almost completely walled with bookshelves encircling a built-in desk, while yet a third wing suggested relaxed entertainment with a door-sized bar niche and the cabinets and speaker fronts of a hi-fi sound system and the slotted shelves of an impressive library of records. And between all those mural features there was still room for several stretches of full-length drapes, now drawn out in neatly extended folds but promising windows for unlimited sunlight and air in the daytime. It was a room which, in far more than adequate justification of its name, asked to be lived in, offering every adjunct to a kind of timeless tranquillity that could make calendars superfluous.

“Now do you get an idea why we couldn’t resist it?” Lona Dayne said.

He nodded, conscious of the associations that must have heightened the strain that she was fighting.

“You’ll both be enjoying it again before long,” he said quietly, “if I’m still any good at these games.”

She turned and walked briskly over to the bar.

“How about a whisky and soda?”

“Thanks. But make mine with water.”

“Going back to your last question,” she said, making herself busy with her back turned, and speaking in a resolutely clear and business-like voice, “I’m certain now that Ivalot always passed as British. You see, one of the things that’s made him so hopelessly hard to trace is that there’s so little real information about him. In the hotels where he stayed, for instance, the only record was the name, Roger Ivalot—address, Bermuda. Only a British subject could have registered like that. If he’d been taken for a foreigner, he’d’ve had to fill out a form with a lot more questions than that, and give a passport number as well. And then we’d either have had more facts to go on, or the police would’ve been leading the hunt for him, for making false declarations.”

“Whereas right now there’s no official interest?”

“I’ve told you, there’s nothing against him except a paternity suit, and that sort of thing

doesn't concern Scotland Yard."

—With a discreet knock, the caretaker entered.

"Will it be all right if I wait in my quarters, ma'am," he asked respectfully, "until you want me to row Mr Templar ashore?"

Lona Dayne turned with the Saint's drink in her hand, nonplussed for an instant, and then Simon took it and said calmly, "That won't be necessary. I'd much rather take you ashore, Lona, to a hotel, where I think you'd be safer than out here."

"But this is almost like a castle with a moat around it!"

"And anybody who can row, or even swim, can cross a moat. Unless it's guarded. So if you're determined to stay here, which you probably are, to be around for any more messages that come in, I'm going to stay and join the garrison."

She hesitated barely an instant.

"That would be quite wonderful," she said frankly, and he admired her for not making any half-hearted protests. "Bob, would you make sure that everything's ship-shape in the spare room before you go to bed? And thank you for waiting up."

"Yes, ma'am."

The caretaker withdrew, looking more than ever like an Ethiopian pontiff with a troublesome congregation.

"I'm afraid this shocks him even more than your husband's disappearing act," Simon remarked.

"I can't help that. I'll be perfectly honest now and admit that I've been scared for myself too. But I'd have tried not to tell you if you hadn't mentioned it first." She picked up her drink and brought it over to join him. "It's true, isn't it—a man in Ivalot's position might do anything?"

The Saint selected a corner of one of the big settees and let himself down into it.

"That depends on how desperate he is—which means, what he has to feel desperate about. You say nobody's filed any criminal charge against him. So that would mean that he chose to pull up stakes and vanish completely, leaving all the fleshpots that he seems to have thought were fun, just to duck a common paternity suit. But half of those suits are plain ordinary blackmail, anyway—which Jolly Roger seems to have suspected, since he offered a fairly handsome settlement. From the rest of your account, he doesn't sound like a guy who'd be unduly concerned about his reputation, at any rate with the blue-nosed set. So if the little mother's price was too high, why didn't he just get himself a tough lawyer and fight it?"

"You tell me," she said. "I've been going around it all by myself until my head's swimming."

"Well, I'd say it suggests that he had something pretty big to hide. I don't see him being so scared of the lawsuit; but the lawyers would certainly start investigating his means before they got into court, in order to prove how much he could afford to pay, and I'm inclined to think that's what scared him. Did anyone ever check on these uranium mines he was supposed to have an interest in?"

"Yes, we did. We contacted every Australian and South African mining company that has anything to do with uranium. None of them had ever heard of him, and his name wasn't on any of their lists of shareholders. But of course, his shares wouldn't necessarily have to be in his own name."

"No. But it's usually only millionaires and big operators who're concerned about keeping their holdings hidden. According to Ivalot's story, as you told it, he wasn't in either category when he bet his shirt on the atomic future. So why would he have bought stocks then under a phony name?"

"Perhaps even in those days he didn't want to be investigated."

"Perhaps. But another thing. He must have done something to earn a living and save up a

stake before he invested in uranium. While you were doing your research on him, didn't you ever turn up anything on that background?"

"I tried to, naturally. But I didn't find out anything. If anyone asked him, he must have managed to dodge the question."

"So what this all boils down to," said the Saint, "is that we don't have one single solid fact about him before he exploded on London like a bomb, and everything you've told me except what he actually did in London before witnesses is probably pure fiction."

"Except that he did have a lot of money."

"He spent a good deal of money. But not millions. We don't know how much he had left when he checked out."

"And he is in Bermuda."

"Apparently. Which only leads to another question: why? When things got too hot in London, he took a powder. Nothing happened to the gal who was giving him trouble. But here, it's your husband who disappears. Why?"

She put her clenched fists to her temples.

"What are you driving at?" she pleaded. "You're only making it seem more hopeless!"

"I have to do this, Lona," he said steadily. "It's the dull part of playing detective. First I have to prune off everything that we don't actually know at all. It isn't till we've trimmed off all the camouflage and confusion that we'll get a good look at what's really left. And raising more questions sometimes leads to more answers. For instance, that last one. The two most likely reasons why our boy hasn't left Bermuda are either a) that he feels better able to cope with things here, or b) that it's harder for him to leave. I wouldn't call those sensational clues, but they might come in handy before we're through."

She recovered herself again, with a toss of her blonde head something like a dog shaking off water.

"I'm sorry," she said, smiling very hard. "I must remember, I told you I was tough. What next?"

"Something very important. Do you have a picture of this character?"

"No. That's what makes it even more impossible."

"A playboy like that never got his picture taken?"

"Photographers don't go popping flash bulbs all over the place in England like they do in America, or at least in American films. They'd have to ask his permission, and if he didn't want any pictures he could get out of it."

Simon scowled thoughtfully.

"And yet he didn't care how many people saw him making an exhibition of himself—he did everything to attract attention. Damn it, it doesn't make sense... Wait a minute, though. Maybe it does. It means he wasn't afraid of anyone in England recognizing him, but a news photo might go anywhere in the world."

"Another clue?"

"Could be. But you must have a description of him."

She screwed up her eyes a little, concentrating.

"Ordinary height—about five feet ten. Medium build, but quite muscular. The girl with the twins said he was in very fine shape for his age—and please don't say whatever that vulgar expression is getting ready for, Simon, I think I've already heard every possible joke on that subject. He told her he was fifty-three. But a lot of people thought he looked older, because he was half bald, and the fringe of hair that he had left was very gray, and so was his beard—"

"Oh, no," groaned the Saint. "Not a beaver, too?"

“Not a royal growth. The kind that just carries the sideburns on down around the jawbone until they meet and make a tuft on the chin.”

“Which can be grown in two weeks and change the outline of a face completely. And I was just going to ask you what type of face he had.”

“And I was going to tell you it was round. But I see what you mean. Everyone says he was always smiling—the Jolly Roger business, of course—and that would help his face to look round, too.”

“Mouth?”

“Biggish—the smile would help that, I know, don’t tell me. And of course he had a mustache.”

“Of course. He would. Teeth?”

“Good.”

“Nose?”

She moved her hands helplessly.

“Did you ever try to make the average person describe a nose? It wasn’t a great beak and it wasn’t an Irish pug and it wasn’t broken. It was just a nose.”

“Eyes?”

“Brown. Two.”

Simon Templar unrolled and came up on his feet in an ultimate surge of exasperation.

“God burn and blast it,” he erupted, “do you realize that that adds up to practically nothing at all? A middling-sized guy with strictly conventional features—the greatest physical assets any crook could start with. Everything else could be grown or glued on and shaped and/or dyed or worn as an expression, on this foundation you still haven’t described. We don’t even have a clear picture of his age, except that I’ll bet that it’s less than fifty-three. If you want to do a good job of faking, it’s a lot easier to pretend to be older than younger—as I shouldn’t have to tell a woman. But as for all the spinach on this act...”

He groped around for an illustration, and his gaze lit on a framed photograph on the mantelpiece. He targeted it with a dynamically outthrust forefinger.

“Why,” he said, “I could pin the same shrubbery on that guy, and he’d fit your description.”

“That guy,” she said, out of an icy stillness, “happens to be my husband.”

The Saint stood transfixed, his eyes almost glazed with the fascination of the frabjous idea that his runaway train of thought had gone hurtling into. But she never noticed that teetering instant of thunderstruck rigidity, for within the same full second the telephone began to ring.

She started towards it with a tensely even step, but reached it in a rush.

Simon was beside her as she picked it up. With an arm lightly around her, he pressed his ear to the other side of the receiver.

“Hullo,” she said.

He was inappropriately aware of her hair brushing his cheek and her faint perfume in his nostrils, while he listened to the voice which he could hear thinly but quite clearly through the plastic. It had a forced and unmistakably artificial timbre, with a strong nasal twang.

“Mrs Dayne,” it said, “I’ll let you talk to your husband as soon as Mr Templar has left Bermuda. But if he isn’t on a plane tomorrow, you can consider yourself a widow.”

There was a soft click, and that was all.

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