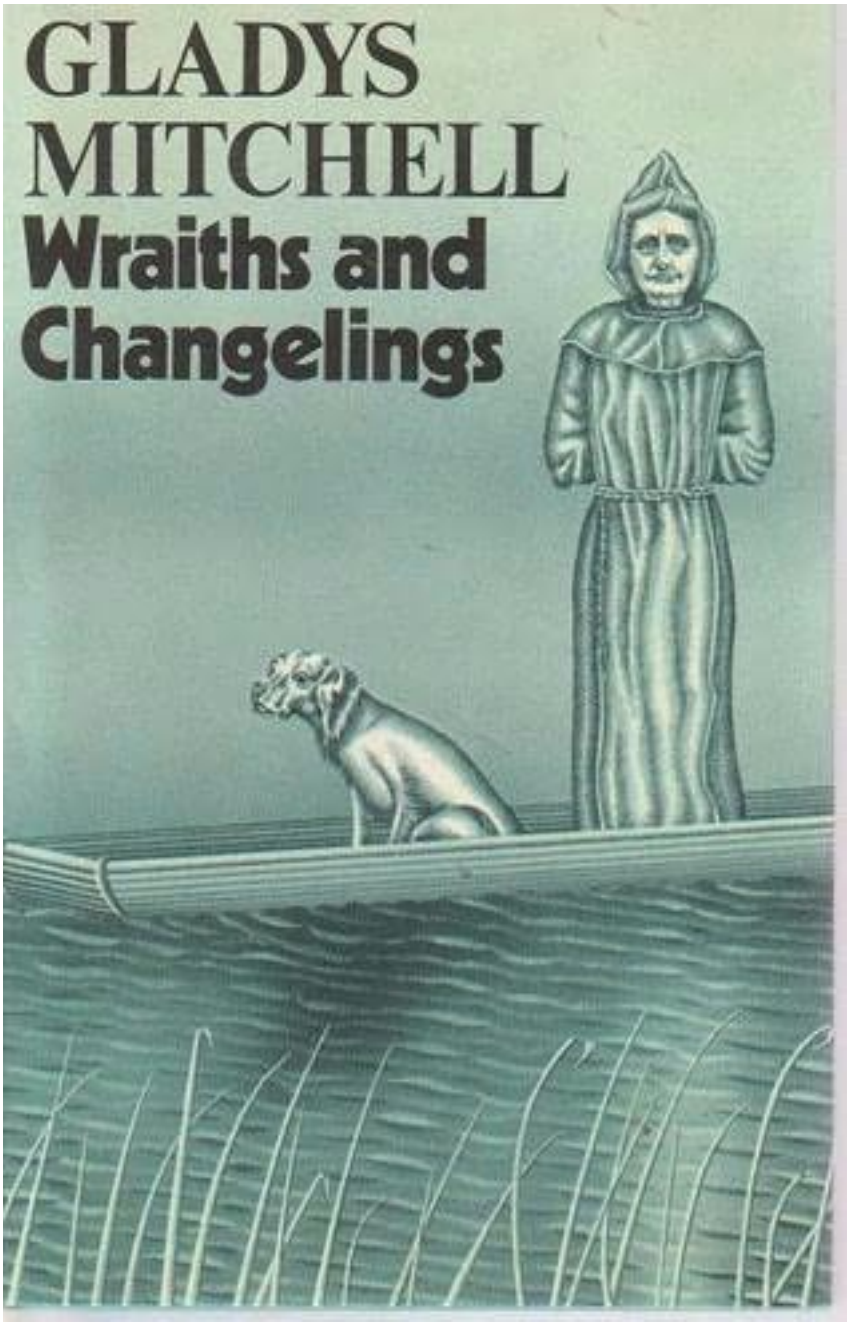

Wraiths And Changelings

Gladys Mitchell

MAGNA PRINT BOOKS
Bolton-by-Bowland Lancashire . England
British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Mitchell, Gladys
Wraiths & changelings.—Large print ed.
I. Title
823'.9'1F PR6025.1832W/
ISBN 0-86009-276-3
First Published in Great Britain by Michael Joseph Ltd 1978

Published in Large Print 1980 by arrangement with Michael Joseph Ltd London

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Redwood Burn Limited Trowbridge and Esher

Contents

GLADYS MITCHELL TITLES IN LARGE PRINT

Winking at the Brim
Watson's Choice
Convent on Styx
My Bones Will Keep
Twelve Horses & The Hangman's Noose
Noonday and Night
Fault in the Structure
Faintley Speaking
Late, Late in the Evening
Wraiths & Changelings

For
HELEN BRACE,
to whom I owe everything
SALVE DOMINA

Chapter One
Ghost Stories

‘I suppose nothing was said and done to frighten her?

You were not talking of anything very terrible, were you?’

Wilkie Collins—The Woman in White

The night was Hallowe’en and there had been the usual innocuous nonsense of bobbing for apples, lighting turnip lanterns, roasting chestnuts, picking up flaming raisins and an indoor barbeque in the enormous, stone-flagged kitchen. This had been followed, to the delight of the little boys, by the production of a box of pre-Christmas crackers, decorated with three-inch spiders with waggling wire legs, and the resultant shrieks and squeals as they chased the girls with these had convinced the host and hostess that everybody was having a splendid time. This may well have been true, since no expense had been spared in the preparations for the party and this often makes for success in any kind of entertainment.

With the cessation of childish yells, screams and laughter after the young had been sent to bed, the house might have seemed preternaturally quiet and a sense of anticlimax might have followed, except that, in place of the children’s pandemonium, other sounds had taken over.

What had begun as the evening of a mild, late-autumn day had changed, almost as soon as the children had gone upstairs, to a night of rain and wind. There was a roaring in the chimneys, the hiss of water dripping on to the vast log fire and great gusts of wind-driven rain slashed at the windows. A branch rapped and tapped against the glass like a stormbound traveller seeking admittance and this was of no help to the nervous.

‘I suppose there isn’t somebody outside?’ asked one of the women guests, a Mrs Crieff-Tweedle.

‘It’s a proper night for ghosts,’ said one of the men.

‘ “The night it is gude Hallowe’en;

The fairy folk do ride,” ’ said Laura Gavin, with a shudder that was only partly histrionic.

‘Ah, yes, come on, Mrs Gavin!’ cried somebody else. ‘If you know the rest of that ballad, do let’s have it!’

‘Much too long, dear,’ said Laura.

‘Give us the “Lyke Wake Dirge”, mamma,’ suggested her son Hamish.

‘I don’t know whether it’s generally known,’ said Lance Crofton, the host, realising that Laura was not anxious to perform, ‘but All Hallows is thought to have been the New Year’s Day of our pagan forefathers, so tonight would have seen the Old Year out, taking with it all its worries and troubles. No wonder superstition still attached itself to Hallowe’en. The Church’— he looked half-apologetically across at Father Melrose, an uninvited guest— ‘with its customary acumen and good sense, turned the pagan rejoicings which greeted the advent of another year into the great festival of All Saints. What is more, realising that one day of feasting would not satisfy their new converts, the monks instituted All Souls Day in further celebration.’

‘ “Celebration” seems an odd word to use with reference to dies irae, dies illa,’ said Hamish Gavin, ‘but don’t let us become too solemn. Doesn’t anybody know a good ghost story to finish up with?’ He looked hopefully at the priest. ‘Robert Hugh Benson had some very fine ones, I believe, sir? Couldn’t

you tell us one of his?'

'I was greatly impressed by Father Girdlestone's Tale,' said the priest, 'but, as the author himself caused his raconteur to protest, it is a very long story. I suggest that we each be responsible for telling a short anecdote, preferably about something which has come within our own experience.'

'Then you must begin, and give us a lead,' said Laura, realising that this was what the uninvited visitor intended to do.

'Very well, so long as you are prepared to follow on, my dear lady,' he said.

'But my story is more amusing than frightening,' Laura explained.

'All the better,' said the woman whom the tapping branch at the window had appeared to alarm. All done to create an effect, Laura decided. She did not like Mrs Crieff-Tweedle.

'Let me give everybody a drink,' said the host, getting up from his armchair to carry out this purpose.

'And then we must have the lights out,' said his wife. 'Ghost stories must be told in the dark.'

'Well,' said the priest, when everybody was settled and the fire-glow remained as the only light in the vast room, 'my story is of something which happened to me some time ago in the west of Ireland. So far as I know, it had nothing to do with the troubles in Ulster, although those had begun.

'I was staying with a small community of Benedictines, whose prior had been at seminary with me, and I had better explain that I was convalescent after illness, although well on the road to recovery.

'One evening I was talking to some of the others after Compline when the brother who was in charge of the door came to say that a man was asking to speak to me.

' "But I know nobody in the parish," I said, "except the young man who brought me here from the boat."

' "He asked for you by name, Father. He said it was urgent and that he knows you."

'I went with the monk into the vestibule and there, sure enough, was Tim Cooley, my recent young acquaintance. He was looking so pale and ill that I felt greatly concerned.

' "Why, Tim," I began; but he interrupted me. "Come quick, Father," he said. "He's in a bad way. There's been a fight and himself dying with all his sins on him. He's on the floor of my cottage. It's just a piece down the road."

'I got together what was necessary, but when I went back to the vestibule there was no sign of Tim. I concluded that he had been in the fight, too, and was anxious to make himself scarce. However, the prior told me that Tim's cottage was only about two hundred yards down the road. All the same, he insisted upon sending one of the brothers with me, as I was still very weak from my illness.

'The cottage door was on the latch, so we went inside and found a man lying on the floor. We had brought a storm-lantern with us and this was the only light we had. The man had been groaning and praying when we walked in, but as soon as he knew we were there he managed to say, "God bless you, Father, for coming so quick. I'm dying."

'I administered the last rites and die he did. He was Tim Cooley.'

'But—well, I mean, is that the end of the story?' asked one of the women guests. 'It is.'

'But what about the ghost?'

'The ghost was the wraith which came to the priory to summon me to the cottage. The doctor who examined the body said there was no way a man in Tim's condition could have walked to the priory.

Apart from some terrible head injuries, he had a broken leg. The Whatever it was which came to summon me had no injuries of any kind, but only looked deathly pale, as I said, and, as I told you, he had disappeared by the time I got back to the vestibule.'

'A case of identical twins?' asked one of the men. 'That is what I should think.'

'Think what you like,' said the priest. 'That is my story and now I am going to take my leave. Thank you so very much for a delightful evening.'

There was a long pause after his departure. The rain made new assaults on the windows and the branch tapped and tapped on the glass.

'Must have been identical twins,' said the man who had already suggested this.

'Then why didn't the twin who went to the priory stay and accompany Father Melrose to the cottage?' said the woman who asked whether the story had reached its conclusion.

'I expect the twin had been involved in the fight and wanted to go into hiding. I should think, in this weather, the good Father wishes he were in hiding, too,' said the host.

'I wish I knew why he thought I had invited him,' said the hostess. 'I mean, somehow, Hallowe'en and all the witches and things don't seem to fit in with a priest, do they? You'd think he'd want to be preparing for All Saints Day tomorrow.'

'Oh, priests like a bit of harmless fun, just like everybody else, I suppose,' said her husband. 'As for his gate-crashing our party, I expect he was invited some place else and got it all mixed up in his unworldly way. Still, his was a strange story, however you look at it, and quite a good one, too. Gives one something to think about. Oh, well, come on, Laura! Let's have a bit of light relief.'

'I'm not so sure that it will be,' said Laura. 'There could, I suppose, be an explanation of Father Melrose's story, but I've never been able to find an explanation for mine. I ran a motor-bike, not a car, in those days, because I was only just down from College and hadn't much money. This was just before Dame B. engaged my services, so I had been doing odd bits of supply work in various schools. I don't know whether you know the sort of thing. A supply teacher puts in a week or two here, a fortnight there, in schools where somebody on the staff is away ill, and that's what I'd been doing.

'Well, come the autumn half-term break there was I, stooging about on the old velocipede in Yorkshire. One late afternoon when I was not far from Marston Moor, a thick mist came down. I was on an unfenced moorland road, so I decided, when I spotted a biggish pub, that it wouldn't be a bad idea to pull up for a bit.

They weren't open, but they were decent souls and let me in, and the result was that the landlord's wife offered me a bed for the night, telling me that a mist on the moors at that time in the evening wasn't going to lift until the morning, if then.

'Well, I'd got to spend the night somewhere, although actually my basic idea had been a youth hostel, so I asked about terms and they were so reasonable that I closed with them very thankfully, picked up my haversack and asked her to show me to the appointed room.

' "Well," she said, "you can have your choice of two. I've nobody else staying. It's out of season. There's a nice little single room in the new part, or there's Oliver Cromwell's room. It's not so convenient, but it's historic. The only thing is that it's directly above our new saloon bar. Still, the saloon won't be as noisy as the public and that's at the other end of the house, so you won't hear much from there, and everybody gets turned out at half-past ten, anyway. Come to that, I daresay a good number won't come out on a night like this at all, so we're bound to be fairly quiet."

'Well, she showed me the two rooms and, of course, I didn't hesitate. Oliver Cromwell's room, so-

called, was small and inconvenient, but it had an oak-beamed ceiling, funny little cupboards so high up that you'd need a step-ladder to reach them, an oak floor with planks the width of a tree-trunk and with such a rake that they'd had to anchor the bed to stop it from sliding into the window. This was a diamond-paned affair which, anyway, did open, though I didn't open it wide because of the thick mist outside.

The woman took me downstairs again and gave me a smashing meal of ham and eggs followed by fruit cake, about half a pound of Wensleydale and an enormous pot of tea, and after that I sat in her parlour and we yarned for a bit and then I went to bed.

'Well, I've never needed much sleep — about four hours is my average—so by three in the morning I was wide awake. I know it was three in the morning because I lit the candle—there wasn't any other form of lighting in the room—and looked at my watch and wondered how I was going to get through the rest of the night. I had a book in my haversack, but I'm not keen on reading by candlelight, so I put out the candle and was about to settle down again when I heard this horseman.'

'What horseman?' somebody asked.

'I didn't know. He came galloping up to the inn and passed right under the floor of my room.'

'But—' objected somebody else.

'Don't spoil the story,' said the host.

'Well,' Laura went on, 'after that there was dead silence. It was rather an uncomfortable silence, as though there ought to be other sounds, but there weren't any. Actually it was a bit uncanny, as though the world, for a second, had stopped ticking over and had left a sort of hiatus in time. It's hard to explain what I mean.'

'You said this story wasn't frightening,' said the hostess.

'I got up as soon as it was light,' Laura went on, 'packed my few things, found a bathroom, dressed and went down to breakfast. It was a jolly good breakfast and when I'd got to the baps and marmalade stage the landlady came in and asked me how I'd slept.

' "Fine," I said, "but who was your horse-riding visitor at three o'clock this morning?"

' "Him?" she said. "Oh, did you hear Oliver Cromwell's messenger? Most people can't hear him, but some are tuned in, I suppose. We're so used to him ourselves that we don't take any notice."

' "But he galloped right under the floor of my room," I said. "That means he galloped right through the saloon bar."

' "Yes, of course he did," she said. "Before we had the alterations done, that room you slept in was over the old entrance to the inn-yard, so it's the only way to the stables—well, what used to be the stables — that he knows." '

'Marston Moor? Oliver Cromwell's room? Oliver Cromwell's messenger? Mamma, you've made it all up,' said her son sternly.

'No, really, it's mostly true,' protested Laura.

'Then why haven't you told it to me before?'

'I'd forgotten about it until now. It all happened years and years ago.'

'And had anybody ever seen the horse-man?' asked the host.

'I asked the landlady that, and she said none of them at the inn had ever seen anything, but that some

people in the village wouldn't go to the inn on certain nights of the year because on those nights the Gytrash—remember Jane Eyre? — was to be seen pursuing a horseman who was carrying a man's head stuck on the end of a pike, but that, I think, is a bit of local folklore.'

'I call it a jolly good story,' said the host. 'Anybody else ready with a touch of the eldritch?'

'I don't know about that,' said a middle-aged woman who was related to the host's wife and was there with her husband, Professor Byland, 'but, when I was very much younger than I am now, my parents booked a holiday in Winchester at a very old-fashioned hotel well away from the centre of the city. I had a single room on the first floor and because I wanted to be up early to go for a walk before breakfast beside the Itchen towards St Cross, I drew my curtains back from the window so that the morning light would wake me.

'I rather regretted this later on, for it was the time of the full moon and the room was flooded with its brilliance so much so that I could not get to sleep.

'At last I sat up, intending to go over to the window and draw the curtains across it, but there, by the dressing-table, I saw her, a young nun in a white habit.

'I don't remember feeling at all alarmed. We just gazed at one another. Then she glided towards the wardrobe, but, before she quite reached it, she disappeared.'

'A trick of the moonlight,' suggested the hostess.

'That may be the explanation, but two things connected with this experience still seem to me rather strange. One is that all the nuns I had ever seen up to that time were dressed in black with white collars and fronts. This nun was all in white. A few years later, my older sister, who had not accompanied us on the holiday and to whom I had never confided my vision, joined the Order of Preachers.'

'And they wear white?' asked someone.

'Except for their veils and when they walk abroad in their cappas or cloaks, they wear white habits, yes.'

'Could just have been coincidence, I suppose?' suggested a young man.

'There is one other thing, though,' said the story-teller. 'Before the end of our stay I got into conversation with a woman who was a permanent resident at the hotel and she told me that, before the hotel people bought it, it had been a nunnery.'

'A dominican house?'

'No. The nuns had belonged to a nursing Order which I suppose the National Health had put out of business and so they sold the house. Their habit was almost entirely black.'

'Talking of nurses, I had one of those roving medical jobs in East Africa once, when I was a young man,' said the local doctor. 'Some pretty strange things can happen in Africa. For one thing, nobody knows quite how far south the Roman legions penetrated.

'I was being given hospitality at one time by the headman of a village in what is now Tanzania and I was offered a hut built on a fairly high wooden platform which had to be reached by a rather primitive but stoutly-constructed ladder. It was the only dwelling of this type in the village and I wondered whether it was the head-man's own hut and that I was offered it as a signal mark of gratitude for having saved his son from dying of a nasty case of blood-poisoning.

'Well, for a time all was gas and gaiters. I wanted to stay long enough to make sure the boy's wound was properly drained. However, I began to realise that I was getting some unmistakable hints that it was time I left. This surprised me, because I had good reason to believe that the headman was grateful

to me. I asked him bluntly why he wanted me to go.

‘He was evasive at first, and obviously embarrassed. In the end he said he was asking me to go only for my own good. In a few days’ time the big magic would come and I was occupying the hut which belonged to it.

‘I offered to vacate the hut and take another, but it was clear that the only thing he wanted was for me to leave the village. Naturally I was curious. I said I was interested in native customs and would like to see this big magic of which he spoke. He hesitated and then said that he had something to show me.

‘Well, I’m a bit of a specialist in African art, although I haven’t a collection of my own. I’m familiar with the primitive graffiti and rock paintings of Fezzan, Libya and Rhodesia, the terracottas of Ife in Southern Nigeria, the Yaruba bronzes and, of course, the wonderful work done in Benin. I’ve seen Ashanti goldwork, bronze weights used on the Ivory Coast for measuring gold-dust, wooden statuettes from what used to be the Belgian Congo, and so on, but I had never seen anything of African origin like the little ivory figure he showed me when he invited me into a hut which I had believed to be untenanted.

‘ “One of my young men made it,” he told me. “When he had made it, he died.” A ritual killing, I supposed. I wondered why.’

‘So what was it you were shown?’ asked Laura.

‘I’ll leave you to guess when I’ve finished my tale. Anyway, having shown me the statuette, he hid it away again and, to my great surprise, he told me that I could stay if I liked, but that I was taking an enormous risk if I did stay.

‘Thinking that I might be in for something really interesting in the way of a tribal rite and, anyway, wanting to be sure his son was out of danger before I left, I told him that I would remain. He gave a queer sort of look and said something in his language which approximated to “In for a penny, in for a pound,” and that was that.’

‘Well, don’t keep us on tenterhooks,’ said Laura, who had begun to think that the whole story was spoof and would end in a leg-pull. ‘What happened?’

‘You’re none of you going to believe this,’ said the doctor, ‘but I swear it’s true. Come the night of the “big magic”, I climbed my ladder and sat in the entrance of my platform hut watching the moon. It began very low in the sky, was a deep orange colour and looked about the size of a child’s wooden hoop.

‘The village was absolutely silent and I sensed tension in the air. The moon climbed higher and became smaller. It changed from deep orange to pale gold and then to silver. The night air had been fresh and clean, but it began to turn sultry and thick and it seemed to me to smell of sulphur.’

‘So they were expecting the devil, I suppose,’ said a man. ‘Don’t tell us it was a statuette of Mephistopheles you’d seen in the headman’s hut!’

‘Do you want to hear the rest of the story?’ asked the doctor plaintively.

‘Sorry! Please go on.’

‘Very well. I said you wouldn’t believe me and you won’t. By the luminous dial of my wristwatch the time was approaching midnight. I decided nothing interesting was going to happen that night, so I went over to my portable travelling-cot and prepared to turn in. I was just about to pull off my bush shirt when I heard the sound of marching feet and men’s voices singing to the same rhythm.

‘They marched into the open space which faced my hut, but, in spite of the bright moonlight, there was

nothing to be seen. However, I could now make out the words of the song. You'll never guess what they were, but they startled me because the voices were singing in Latin.'

' "Monks of Rome from their home where the blue seas break in foam," in other words a band of Catholic missionaries,' said Laura.

'No. These chaps were soldiers. They got the command to halt; then you could hear them disperse to what I suppose were their quarters, but I could still see nothing, not even a shadow on the open ground outside. Then footsteps came towards me and began to mount my ladder. I don't mind confessing that I retreated into the farthest corner of the hut. Then at last I did see something.'

'Green spiders and pink elephants,' said a sardonic voice from among the young listeners.

'I saw the doorwar suddenly blotted out and I realised that Something had entered the hut. I fished out my revolver and switched on my torch. I swear I heard a gasp of surprise from the doorway, but still there was nobody to be seen. I knew he was there, though, because after a minute he started chucking things down on to the floor—clanking sort of things such as a sword and a helmet and a piece of body-armour, I thought. That was enough for me. The blotted-out doorway was clear again. I switched off my torch, pouched my revolver and was down the ladder in six-eight time. It's a wonder I didn't break my neck.'

'Where did you go?' asked his host.

'To my camp where my assistant and our bearers were. I said goodbye to the village next morning as soon as I'd made sure my patient was going on all right, and we made our way back to base.

'So what were the soldiers singing?' enquired Hamish sceptically. The doctor replied:

Decem crassi Germani in muro sedent;

Decem crassi Germani in muro sedent;

Unus crassus Germanus forte delabitur

Novem crassi Germani in muro sedent.

And, of course, the little ivory figure I had been shown was that of a Roman officer, as you must have guessed.'

'Ten fat Germans sitting on a wall!' exclaimed Laura satirically. 'To the tune of "Ten Green Bottles", I suppose!'

'I think we had all better go to bed,' said the hostess. 'We are not likely to improve upon Doctor Carpenter's tale, unless—' She was interrupted by the appearance of the butler, not a regular servant but an importation to assist with the party and (thought Laura) to impress the reputedly wealthy Crieff-Tweedles.

'I beg your pardon, madam,' he said, 'but the reverend gentleman who left here some while ago is back again and in a state of agitation.'

'Well, show him in,' said the host. Father Melrose seemed less agitated than excited.

'I knew it! I knew it!' he said. 'One of us is quite obviously psychic. As I was tramping along, (wet and exhausted) a large dog ran out at me, obviously with unfriendly intentions. He was a rather handsome cross-bred, half Alsatian, half, I would think, Dutch barge-dog. I shouted at him. He leapt for my throat, but, as I went to thrust him off, in mid-spring he disappeared, literally into thin air.'

There was a cry from Mrs Crieff-Tweedle.

‘Bonzer!’ she shouted. ‘It was the ghost of my Bonzer!’

Chapter Two
Developments

The jealous trout, that low did lie,

Rose at a well-dissembled fly.’

Sir Henry Wotton— ‘On a bank as I sat fishing’

‘What did you make of those so-called ghost stories last night?’ asked Hamish of his sister Eiladh as they sat on the back seat of their mother’s car on their way to spend a few days with her employer before resuming their own gainful occupations.

‘I mustn’t answer you. Mother told one of them and I’m not sure it would be tactful to air my opinion of it.’

‘She’s got to hear the truth at some time or other.’

‘Go on, both of you and don’t mind me,’ said Laura, without taking her eyes off the road. ‘I suppose you didn’t believe a word of my true story?’

‘I believed some parts of all the stories,’ said Hamish. ‘I believe most of Mrs Byland’s story about the phantom nun, although I think the bit about the white habit was a punch line so that she could link it up with her sister’s life; I believed the bit of the doctor’s story about hearing a Roman cohort—it can hardly have been a legion—in an African village, because, as he said, nobody knows how far south the Romans penetrated and it is well known that they have left more ghosts behind them than any other people on earth. All the rest of the yarn I’m sure he made up. Decent crassi Germani? A Roman soldiers’ marching song? Valiantly and rightly did you query it, mamma.’

‘Glad I was right about something. What was wrong with my own story?’ asked Laura.

‘Too much embroidery. The mist on the moors, the belated traveller and the spooky room all added up to something out of Tales of the Supernatural. At least, I thought so. It reminded me of M. Hector Gilliardof Mauberge at Pont-sur-Sambre who, according to Robert Louis Stevenson, “passed off some future tenses in a very florrid style of architecture”.’

‘One has to decorate a true story a little in order to make it sound true, I suppose,’ said Eiladh.

‘You didn’t disbelieve Father Melrose, then?’ asked her brother. ‘I thought the suggestion about identical twins was probably right. His further claim that he had been attacked by a ghost-dog which then did nothing in the night was rather suspect, though. How much did he have to drink at the Croftons’, I wonder?’

‘It was all rather like The Canterbury Tales,’ said Eiladh. ‘You know, the story told by the priest, the nun’s sister story, the doctor’s narrative and—what would you call mother’s contribution?’

‘The old soldier’s tale,’ said Hamish, laughing.

‘So Mrs Crieff-Tweedle,’ said Dame Beatrice Lestrange Bradley, ‘has announced her intention of finding out more about some of these reputedly true hauntings. I wonder how one would set about such a matter?’

‘Get the Society for Psychical Research on the job, I suppose,’ Laura replied. ‘Not my cup of tea, anyway. I can see spooks without going to look for them. I think that the Crieff-Tweedle woman was just showing off. Of course, she’s stinking rich—or so Amanda Crofton told me—so I suppose she can afford to indulge her little fancies, but to organise a ghost-hunt on the lines she suggested yesterday is only an excuse for a beano.’

‘No, I don’t think so,’ said her daughter. ‘She was serious. I’ve got to know her pretty well since I’ve been working for her husband. Poor old Dum! He’s a clever man and very nice and kind-hearted, but he’s a toad under the harrow. The trouble of course, is that she’s got all the money. The house and the estate are his, but, as she has been at some pains to tell me, it is only her solid cash that keeps them going.’

‘I understand that they have treasures,’ said Dame Beatrice. ‘There was an illustrated article describing the pictures and plate and so forth, I remember, in one of the journals which devote themselves to such matters.’

‘Yes, they have some fabulous pictures and other bits and pieces,’ Eiladh agreed. ‘Personally, I wouldn’t want the fact advertised. After all, thieves do break in and steal, in spite of burglar alarms and patent locks and fastenings.’

‘If she does organise this witch-hunt— ghost-hunt, I mean,’ said her brother, ‘will you be expected to join in?’

‘I don’t know, but I rather hope so. It will be a change from cataloguing the Crieff-Tweedle library and eating Dee’s unappetizing, meagre lunches and dinners.’

‘She was talking about tracking down that Father Melrose chap who gate-crashed the Croftons’ party,’ said Laura. ‘She wants me to go, too, and also the Doctor Carpenter who told that frightful Decem crassi Germani story about the Roman ghosts in Africa, but I’ve decided to opt out and I think he will do the same. Our excuse will be pressure of work. She wants us for the same reason as she wants Father Melrose. She thinks we’re psychic.’

‘Well, I’m relieved to hear you’re not going,’ said Eiladh. ‘She’s going to invite David da Cunha, and if I wanted to have fun with him you’d rather cramp my style.’

‘She ought to get Dr Carpenter’s daughter to stand in for him,’ said Hamish. ‘You’d like Liz. She was up at the same time as I was, but she went on to study medicine and I went into the ‘lying abroad for the good of my country’ business, so I haven’t seen much of her lately.’

‘What would you like to do with yourself for a week or two if you are not prepared to join Mrs Crieff-Tweedle’s ghost-hunters?’ asked Dame Beatrice, when Hamish and Eiladh had gone. ‘We can both be free for quite a time from now on. My book is with the publishers and we need not expect the proofs for some time yet. I should like to take a good long holiday and I would like you to do the same.’

‘Independently of one another, do you mean?’

‘Yes. When we have made our plans, let us go our separate ways until Easter. I still owe long-promised visits to relatives and friends. Also I should like to stay in London for a week or two and make a round of the theatres, and then I should wish to indulge in some frivolous reading for a change.’

‘Oh, well, then, I’ll go up to Scotland and inflict myself on my brother and his wife and, later on, if the snow does its stuff, I might go and fool about on a pair of skis in the Cairngorms. I’ll stay in Scotland for Hogmanay, anyway, and Hamish is always asking me to go and stay near him in Paris, so I might do that. If Gavin can take some leave we could have a second honeymoon over there and Eiladh might like to spend some long weekends with us.’

‘Excellent. I trust we shall all enjoy ourselves.’

‘What kind of frivolous reading have you in mind?’

‘Oh, ghost stories and other supernatural matters,’ said Dame Beatrice, waving a yellow claw. ‘Your account of All Hallow’s Eve fascinated me.’

‘You think psychics and psychos are closely related, do you?’

‘Present company excepted, of course,’ said Dame Beatrice courteously.

Christmas over, and the New Year out of its swaddling-clothes of snow and taking its first tentative steps towards the snowdrops and the crocuses, Dame Beatrice began what she had called her frivolous reading. She soon tired of it. Ghost stories which were reputed to be true bore little resemblance to the fictional ones. In her opinion, they were far less entertaining and, as might be expected, were tiresomely repetitive.

All this she wrote in a letter to Laura, who replied in an expensive telephone call from Paris: ‘I’m sending you a letter I’ve had. It’s the one you sent on to me the other day. In passing, see O.T. Numbers 13, verses 17 to 25, and jolly good luck to one and all.’

Dame Beatrice, whose knowledge of the Old Testament was less extensive than that of a secretary who had been brought up in a Nonconformist household, turned up the passage and found that it was an account of the spies whom Moses sent into the land of Canaan to assess its possibilities as a future home for his Israelites. She cackled as she scanned the verses. She read some of them aloud in her beautiful voice and wondered, not for the first time, what strange constituents from a supposedly Puritan ancestry had combined to produce Laura.

‘And see the land, what it is;’ read Dame Beatrice who, when she perused the Scriptures at all, preferred the Authorised Version, ‘and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many; and what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad; and what cities they be that they dwell in, whether in tents or in strong holds.’

She closed the Bible, returned it to its place on the shelves where, as a civilised gesture rather than from religious conviction, it was neighboured by Douai, Knox, the New English Bible, the Jerusalem Bible, and the Latin Vulgate. The letter to which Laura had referred had come to the Stone House after Laura’s departure. Dame Beatrice, whom many years’ acquaintance with her secretary had familiarised with the calligraphy of Laura’s correspondents, did not recognise the writing on the envelope.

When the letter came back from Paris there was an enclosure with it in Laura’s own handwriting.

‘Eiladh has committed herself to this binge, and, of course, can get leave of absence as she is cataloguing the Crieff-Tweedle library and they want her to go with them. No harm in it, I suppose? She ain’t superstitious like me. I’m sending the letter back for you to read because there is a bit in it which may concern you, although I’ll be surprised if you go along with the suggestion it contains.’ The letter ran:

Dum and I were so thrilled with our Hallowe’en party at Amanda’s that I am now in process of making up my party of ghost-hunters. We shall try Norfolk, as it seems to be positively riddled with ghosts, so we may expect some results, I think, although perhaps not so many as are claimed by the writers of the books I have read, so I shall be rather selective.

We shall be taking your daughter with us and David da Cunha will come as official photographer. I felt bound to ask Professor Byland and his wife, as they were our fellow guests at Amanda’s and also because she, Mavis Byland, appears to have been psychic in her youth, so may be useful, although I believe these powers often decline in later life. The Bylands have accepted by invitation but on

somewhat unsatisfactory grounds. She wants to botanise among the marshes, he to stalk and photograph the river and marshland birds. Still, as we shall be ghost-hunting after dark, their bizarre pursuits should not interfere with the real business of the tour.

I would like to have had you, as you also appear to be psychic, but, failing that, it would be delightful and most instructive to have Dame Beatrice with us.

Doctor Carpenter, who told that rather tall story about Roman ghosts in darkest Africa, is too busy, he says, to come, but has offered his daughter, also a Doctor Carpenter (so confusing!). She will take care of the medical side of things, should that prove necessary (and really, with the Bylands spending all day wading about in the marshes, it may prove very necessary), but I would welcome a psychiatrist, if only to make certain there is no question of fraud, a thing one always has to guard against when dealing with the occult.

Dame Beatrice returned the letter with a note to say that the proposition sounded somewhat esoteric, but was an admirable idea if one wanted to waste time in a pleasant way. She suggested, however, that on such an expedition an exorcist might be of far more use than a psychiatrist.

Laura gathered from this that Dame Beatrice had turned down the invitation. Mrs Crieff-Tweedle, however, was not so easily put off. She wrote a personal and pleading invitation to Dame Beatrice to take luncheon with the party before it set off and, at any rate, give it her blessing.

Translating this, correctly, as a plea that she would reconsider her decision, Dame Beatrice, who had no intention of doing anything of the kind, showed the luncheon invitation to Laura who, immediately after Easter, had returned to her duties.

‘I shall accept,’ she said.

The luncheon party was hardly a success. That the Crieff-Tweedles were wealthy Dame Beatrice had been told, but she would have guessed it from the magnificent furnishings of their house, although not from the salary which they were paying Eiladh. However, like ‘dear old Straddles’ who ‘had a mind above food’, Mrs Crieff-Tweedle was a very indifferent caterer. This was clear from the repast which had been provided. Not only were the dishes most inefficiently cooked and uninteresting, but the portions served were so meagre that nobody except the Crieff-Tweedles themselves who, presumably, were accustomed to living mostly on fresh air and Higher Thought, and Dame Beatrice, who had an extremely small appetite, had enough to eat, so possibly it was an advantage that the dishes were so unappetizing.

Dame Beatrice was seated between her host and a young man who had been introduced as David da Cunha and who confided to her, with understandable gloom after he had inspected the microscopic portion of roast mutton which had been allotted to him, that he was to be the official photographer to the expedition. Having given her this information he was silent. This was excusable since the conversation was dominated by the strident voice of their hostess, who had begun to address the table at large.

‘While they’re serving the pud-pud,’ she announced, ‘I’ll tell you a little more about the ghost-hunt. It’s going to be the greatest fun, but, of course, we must all be very serious about it as well. The ghosty-wosties won’t care to be laughed at’

‘Who’s laughing?’ muttered Mr da Cunha to the portion of bread and butter pudding which had just been set before him. He ate it in three angry spoonfuls and, under cover of Mrs Crieff-Tweedle’s relentless voice, he said to Eiladh, who was seated on the other side of him, ‘Think there’s a chance of any cheese?’

‘No. Be quiet!’ she hissed at him.

‘So we shall travel in two cars,’ went on their hostess, ‘although I haven’t quite decided who will go in which.’

‘I can help you there, Mrs Crieff-Tweedle,’ said Professor Byland, the ornithologist, cutting in before she could begin her next sentence. ‘It is a matter, surely, of compatibility.’

‘Oh, but I hope we shall all be compatible,’ said his wife, seeing the expression of wounded dignity, not to say acute annoyance, on her hostess’s face at the realisation that she had been up-staged by a man whom she had supposed, apart from her own husband, to be the meekest and most malleable of his sex.

‘Of course,’ said the professor, ‘but as, before lunch, I learned that Dame Beatrice’— he sketched her a little bow from across the table —‘will not, unfortunately, be able to join the party, surely we fall into two clearly defined age-groups.’

‘I fail to see the relevance of that,’ said Crieff-Tweedle, answering a glance from his spouse.

‘Your charming wife and mine, you and I, must be in our car, and Doctor Carpenter, Miss Gavin and David in the second car. This, I think, will be an ideal arrangement,’ said the professor smoothly.

‘It may not be as ideal as you suggest, Professor,’ said Dee Crieff-Tweedle with a dangerous glint in her eye. ‘As our employee, Eiladh, must travel in the same car as my husband and myself, and naturally she will like to have Doctor Carpenter with her, and so shall we. That leaves the second car for you and Mavis, with David.’

‘Oh, well, just as you please, dear lady, but there is just one small point—’

‘Well, the cars being settled, perhaps we can all go into the drawing-room for coffee, and I will finish telling you the arrangements in there,’ stated Mrs Crieff-Tweedle stridently.

There is just one other small point,’ persisted Byland, before anybody but the hostess had made a move to leave the table. ‘Neither my wife nor I can drive a car and young David, the reckless fellow, has had his licence taken away for the rest of the year. He was telling me about it as we came down by train this morning.’

‘Oh!’ said Mrs Crieff-Tweedle, pausing with her hand on the back of the chair from which she had risen. She decided to make the best of the situation. ‘Naughty, naughty David! Really, Mr da Cunha, I’m quite ashamed of you!’

‘It’s the gypsy in me,’ said David da Cunha, smiling brilliantly at her. The company repaired to the drawing-room and, as she walked along to it, Eiladh said to David da Cunha: ‘How did you come to lose your licence?’

‘Hush!’ he said. ‘Young girls, even pretty ones, shouldn’t believe all they hear. Tell you what, though! I may not be allowed to drive, but I’m a marvellous navigator.’

‘I bet you are!’ she said.

Mrs Crieff-Tweedle kept them a long time over their coffee. She finished telling them about the arrangements she had made, returning to what Eiladh later referred to as ‘her pud-pud manner’, and then she told the company of what she called ‘my secret weapons’.

‘As I knew beforehand that Dame Beatrice, owing to pressure of work, might be unable to accompany us,’ she said, ‘and as I have been unable to persuade her to change her mind, just before lunch I telephoned a famous medium, Madame Arcati.’

‘Infringement of copyright!’ hissed David da Cunha to Eiladh, whom he had sat beside again. In happy memory of Miss Margaret Rutherford, Eiladh laughed. She found Dee Crieff-Tweedle’s disapproving eye on her. ‘But you don’t know the cream of the joke,’ David continued, sotto voce.

‘So perhaps the re-arrangement of the car seating will be all for the best,’ Dee continued. ‘Madame Arcati will have to sit in the back seat of the second car. I hope, David, that you will enjoy her companionship. I shall now arrange for Doctor Carpenter and Eiladh to drive the second car. Professor and Mrs Byland will travel with Dum and me.’

‘As I suggested in the first place,’ said Professor Byland, ‘But are you wise to include a professional female medium?’

At this, David da Cunha gave a snort of laughter and, to cover it up, he said, ‘So all we need now is a priest to keep the good lady in order.’

‘There was that very agreeable cleric at the Croftons,’ said Dum Crieff-Tweedle.

‘Father Melrose,’ said his wife. ‘I thought of him right at the beginning, but does anybody know how to get hold of him?’

‘Of course, he did gate-crash the party,’ went on Dum in a reflective tone. ‘That wasn’t very agreeable of him.’

‘He must live somewhere near the Croftons, of course,’ said Dee, ignoring her husband as usual. ‘I wrote to Amanda Crofton, but she knew nothing about him except that he had attended her Hallowe’en party by mistake.’

‘Gate-crashed it,’ repeated Dum.

‘I don’t suppose he’ll come,’ said Eiladh. ‘Don’t they have a parish to look after?’

‘A chap who gate-crashes private houses is not going to pass up on a free holiday,’ said David. ‘I suppose it is going to be a free holiday?’ he added outrageously, looking with simulated anxiety at Dee. Eiladh kicked him, surreptitiously but hard. Dee answered graciously that of course the expenses of the ghost-hunt would fall entirely upon her husband and herself.

‘So the lot fell on Jonah,’ muttered David, massaging his assaulted ankle, ‘as the chap read out after somebody in the Bible was sick and the chap turned over two pages by mistake. Poor old Jonah!’ Aloud he said: ‘So you’ll need three cars.’

‘Three cars?’ enquired Dee.

‘Yes. You see, thinking that Dame Beatrice wasn’t joining us, I wondered whether you’d like to have an actor friend of mine, Salathiel Pavy, with us. I mentioned it to him. He’s “resting” at present and would be glad to come. He happens to be a first-class medium.’

‘Well, really, David!’

‘Not to panic, Dee darling. I told him I’d have to ask you first. As you don’t want him, I’ll just give him the bird and tell him he’s got to go on starving in his garret. I’m sorry, because he really has a most uncanny gift of raising the spooks. Never a dull moment!’

‘Of course he must come if you’ve invited him.’

‘Thanks a lot, then. He’ll be most awfully bucked, and so will you, I assure you. A very talented chap.’

‘Well, it seems we are to have a preponderance of young men,’ said Dee, not displeased. ‘Does your friend drive?’

Before da Cunha could reply, there was the sound of a backfiring motorcycle engine followed by a loud, masculine yell. Dee Crieff-Tweedle got to the french windows in time to see the rider of the motorcycle crawling out of the bushes into which his vehicle had flung him. The butler admitted him. He was a cheerful-looking youth in his early twenties. He had a Roman nose, a sensual, full-lipped

mouth, very large brown eyes and unusually close-cropped, dark-brown hair. ‘Accustomed to wearing a wig,’ thought Dame Beatrice. ‘I wonder why?’

‘Hullo, David,’ he said to da Cunha. ‘I’ve come to the right shop, then?’ He looked with shrewd interest at the assembly. David did the honours.

‘Hullo, you old Witch of Endor,’ he said. ‘Darling Dee and everybody, meet Madame Arcati.’

Chapter Three
Rearrangements

‘It also gave me pleasure to attend at it, and would have given more to all parties if Mrs Davy had not been so full of strange Vagaries expecting so much Court and Attention from everyone. There was not one of the Party pleased with her.’

The Rev. James Woodforde—Diary of a Country Parson

To say that Mrs Crieff-Tweedle was taken aback when her spirit-medium was introduced to her would be more than a mere understatement.

‘But—but—Madame Arcati?’ she stammered. The young man raised her hand to his lips with an exaggerated gesture of homage, bending over it as one who pays tribute to royalty.

‘Merely a trade name,’ he murmured.

‘Well, I don’t like it,’ said Dee, recovering her poise. ‘Young men have no right to masquerade as women. You fell. Have you hurt yourself?’

‘No, no. I always fall on my feet.’

‘Ha! Ha!’ ejaculated Dum, amused until he caught his wife’s eye. She turned angrily and unfairly on Eiladh.

‘Well,’ she said, ‘I appear to have admitted one cuckoo to the nest and, in the person of Mr Salathiel Pavy, whose name, I assume, is not the one by which he was baptised, David has added another. In fairness, Eiladh, I feel I should enquire whether you, too, would care to suggest any additions to our party.’

‘I wonder whether I might make a suggestion?’ said Dame Beatrice. Dee turned graciously towards her. ‘As you are including Doctor Liz Carpenter in your party, I wonder whether you would also take her brother, Tom? He would like to study the use of flint as a building material. Norfolk would be splendid for his purpose and of course he would pay all his own expenses.’

‘Mrs Crieff-Tweedle’s original list of ghost-hunters is gradually being augmented,’ said Dame Beatrice, when she returned to the Stone House.

‘So how many people now are going on this crazy trip?’

‘So far there appear to be eleven, including the Crieff-Tweedles themselves. Concluding that I would decline to take part, Mrs Crieff-Tweedle telephoned to a professional medium.’

‘Well, you’ve investigated some of their fraudulent claims. Which of your victims would this be?’

‘Not one that we know. This is a young man who calls himself Madame Arcati.’

‘Shades of Blithe Spirit protect us!’

‘Yes, indeed.’

‘Himself! A young man?’

‘Even so.’

‘It must be a joke of some kind.’

‘So Mr da Cunha appeared to think when he made the introduction.’

‘What did Dee Crieff-Tweedle do?’

‘She remarked that there were to be cuckoos in the nest and turned on Eiladh.’

‘The hell she did!’

‘Your daughter was equal to the occasion and declined to reply to Mrs Crieff-Tweedle’s satirical question, so I replied that I would like to add to Hamish’s friend, Liz Carpenter, Mr Tom Carpenter her brother. My enquiries have established that Mr Tom would welcome a visit to Norfolk in order to study the use of flint in the construction of churches and other buildings.’

‘Didn’t anybody suggest including the ghost-dog fancier?’

‘The—’

‘That phoney priest who gate-crashed the Croftons’ party and came back in the rain to say he’d been set upon by a ghost-dog.’

‘Ah, yes. Mrs Crieff-Tweedle would like to include him, but does not know how to get in contact with him.’

‘What’s the matter with an R.C. directory? Anyway, let me get this straight. The party is to consist of the Crieff-Tweedles and the Bylands, Liz Carpenter and her brother, my daughter Eiladh, a young buffoon called da Cunha and a male medium who calls himself Madame Arcati.’

‘And one person I do not appear to have mentioned. He is an unemployed actor whom I have not met. His stage name (borrowed, one assumes, from Ben Jonson’s nostalgic little tribute to a child of Queen Elizabeth’s chapel), is Salathiel Pavy.’

‘How long do they expect to be scouring Norfolk on this idiotic quest, I wonder?’

‘Nobody thought fit to ask. The servants have been given a fortnight’s holiday, I believe, so that would appear to fix the time allowed.’

‘Is it settled who’s going to travel with whom, or is there going to be a sort of general post each day?’

‘Barring quarrels or objections, the seating in the cars is settled.’

‘By Dee Crieff-Tweedle I suppose.’

‘No. Showing great courage, Professor Byland settled one party. This is to consist of the Crieff-Tweedles, himself and his wife. Doctor Carpenter has opted to travel with her brother and Eiladh, so this leaves the actor, the medium, the photographer and, if he joins the expedition, the priest, to occupy the third car, unless Father Melrose elects to accompany Doctor Carpenter’s little party.’

‘As well he may, I should imagine, if the alternative is those three fishy young men.’

‘We shall see. The chances are that he will not choose to go at all.’

As it turned out, the business of tracking down Father Melrose proved simple. Mrs Crieff-Tweedle, in

further correspondence with her hostess of October 31st, was told that Father Melrose had written in answer to Dee's advertisement which had appeared in a local paper. He apologised to the Croftons for attending the wrong party, said how much he had enjoyed it, begged to be put in direct touch with Dee Crieff-Tweedle who had given a box number in the advertisement and, naturally, he had put his address at the top of his letter.

In reply to a personal letter from an enthusiastic Dee Crieff-Tweedle, he accepted her invitation not only to join the ghost-hunters, but to stay at the Crieff-Tweedle residence for a day or two before they set out on their expedition.

'Everybody is to be collected up,' Dee explained, 'so that I may give a little series of talks about the nature of the task before us and the necessity for a serious and scientific approach to it.'

The information that the party was to be augmented, that neither Professor Byland nor his wife was able to drive a car and that David da Cunha's licence had been suspended, had caused Dee Crieff-Tweedle to alter some of her arrangements almost at the last minute.

As for her plans to house the ghost-hunters during their stay in Norfolk, these had been turned upside-down by the discovery that Madame Arcati was a young man and that the party was to receive additions in the persons of Salathiel Pavy and Liz Carpenter's brother, Tom.

So far as the cars were concerned, the next rearrangement was that the Bylands were to be Liz Carpenter's passengers and that her brother was to be her co-driver.

'I have tried to make certain that we have two potential drivers in each car,' Dee said. Father Melrose observed:

'My dear lady, there is no need to put two drivers in each car. You say we shall stay for lunch in Oxford and then dine in Norwich. Surely a single driver can manage those distances?'

'Oh, very well,' said Dee. 'Arrange the cars to suit yourselves. All my careful planning has gone for nothing, anyway. Madame Arcati has changed sex and we have been joined by Mr Carpenter and that obnoxious little strolling player Pavy, so all the accommodation in the holiday bungalows will have to be re-arranged and hotel rooms booked.'

'I see no difficulty,' said Dum. 'There are to be eleven of us and you have booked, I thought, three four-berth riverside dwellings.'

'You know perfectly well that I booked only two. There were to be eight of us in two cars and two bungalows, four people to each car and four to each bungalow. It was all perfectly simple and straightforward before Arcati changed his sex and Tom Carpenter and Salathiel Pavy were added to our numbers. What I'm to do now I hardly know.'

'Ah,' said the priest, 'perhaps I can help you there.'

'It was all so clear in my head,' went on Dee, with all the fretfulness of a woman who sees her careful plans upset. 'The bungalows have only two bedrooms, so Dum and I were to be housed with Eiladh, Madame Arcati and Liz Carpenter. The second bungalow was to go to the Bylands, Father Melrose and David. The beds are all single berths, so nobody would have been inconvenienced because we could put three beds in the larger bedroom of the bungalow I had earmarked for ourselves. Now, I suppose, I shall have to book hotel rooms in Wroxham for Arcati, Tom Carpenter and this wretched actor, and what that will add to the expense, already considerable, I really don't know.'

'A third bungalow would be cheaper and would keep the party more in touch,' said Dum, looking around for some backing.

'I can't get a third bungalow. Don't you realise that the holiday season has already begun? All

accommodation on the Broads was booked up long ago. I tried houseboats and caravans but all to no avail.'

'I think, as I was about to explain, that I can help you if you would prefer to engage another bungalow,' said Father Melrose. He spoke in a tone which Dee thought was one of reproof and from anybody else she would have resented it. However, he had so far ingratiated himself with her during his stay that she answered him with unusual meekness.

'Really, Father?' she said. 'Well, I shall be grateful for any suggestions.'

'I am, as I told Mrs Crofton, on furlough from the mission field, but my host has a parishioner who owns a six-berth bungalow in your chosen village. He does not offer it for renting because the various members of his family use it most weekends during the more clement months of the year, but I am sure I could persuade him to let us have it for at least a fortnight at a purely nominal charge. It has a double bed in one room, three single beds in another, and the sixth berth is in a small annexe which the owner added a year ago, and which I myself have occupied, at his invitation, once or twice already. I should be glad to do so again. It would enable me to plan my time and my prayers without inconveniencing a roommate. Moreover, it is on the telephone, which we may find useful.'

'Father Melrose appears to have a talent for getting to places where he wishes to be,' said Dame Beatrice, when Laura handed her a letter from Eiladh which described the amended arrangements. 'So the two middle-aged married couples are to share with one another the bungalow he has provided, leaving him the annexe, as he has suggested; Mr Tom Carpenter will occupy one room in the second bungalow and Eiladh and the young woman doctor, Carpenter's sister, will share the other room; the third bungalow is to go to the photographer, the medium and the actor. One may congratulate one and all on the excellence of the arrangements.'

Dee herself declined to accept this view. Having gathered the party together for an early start on the Monday by having them all assemble at her residence on the Sunday night, she prefaced her last briefing with a peevish attack upon 'those of you— I name no names, as it is not my wish to create dissension and ill-feeling—upon those of you who, for petty and selfish reasons of your own, have chosen to disrupt and alter my carefully-conceived plans.' She glared militantly around the gathering.

'The alterations have scarcely been a disruption,' said Professor Byland mildly. 'Two heads are better than one, I think, when there is planning to be done.'

'And too many cooks spoil the broth!' snapped Dee, her colour rising. 'I wish everybody to understand that, from this hour onwards, there can be only one leader, one voice, one interpreter of what is the best for us all. I am that leader.'

'Surely, surely, dear lady,' purred Father Melrose. 'Nobody is prepared to contest that.'

Dee again glared around the circle of impassive and non-committal faces.

'Well?' she demanded belligerently.

'We all understand you, my dear,' said her husband, 'and, of course, bow to your wishes.'

'Oh, yes, it's your party, Dee darling,' said da Cunha.

'As a paid hand, I'm prepared to take orders,' said Eiladh, catching Tom Carpenter's enquiring eye and making a face at him.

'Oh, well,' conceded Dee, relaxing and smiling, 'that's all righty-tighty, then. I don't want to be a bossy-wossy, of course.'

'Not bloody-wuddy likely-wikely,' muttered David, removing his ankles out of reach of Eiladh's

kicking-range.

‘So now to bed,’ cried Dee gaily.

‘And you may all kneel when you say goodnight,’ muttered David, sketching a halo behind Dee’s head as she rose to dismiss her audience.

Chapter Four
The Ghost-Hunters Encamp

‘We will now proceed to business, which with us is synonymous with pleasure, and see how we are to set about enjoying our holiday.’

Ernest R. Suffling—The Land of the Broads

The first dinner for the party had been booked at a hotel in Norwich which Father Melrose, now almost the only person in her entourage to be regarded with favour by Dee, had recommended warmly for its cuisine and also for its comparatively modest prices.

Owing to traffic lights and roundabouts the three cars had been unable to travel in convoy, but as plenty of time had been allowed for the journey, and nothing but a hasty bread and cheese lunch had been permitted by the Boudiccan leader of the party, and no stop made for tea, by seven o’clock the eleven adventurers were at table.

As soon as dinner was over, Dee took the group into the lounge, had the chairs arranged in a circle and began her briefing.

‘We’re going straight to Wroxham now,’ she said, ‘While there is still daylight. I shall point out the hotel where we shall dine each evening. Breakfast, tea and lunch you will get for yourselves. You will find plenty of food in the bungalows, with cooking facilities. I have checked all that personally. After dinner each evening the ghost-hunts will begin.’

‘So when do we sleep?’ asked David. Dee clicked her tongue at him.

‘It is unnecessary for all of us to chase each individual ghost,’ she continued, ‘so you will find your assignments on these lists I have prepared. They are to be pinned up in each bungalow. I rely upon you all to keep to the schedules, although you are free to carry them out in any order you please. If anything interesting occurs, please write a short report and, as soon as possible after I have received it, David will go to the site of the manifestation and take pictures.’

‘My flashes will scare any ghost into having fifty fits,’ said da Cunha. ‘Boys tried it once inside a haunted house, and the ghost nearly fell down the stairs. Suppose one tumbled into the river and got drowned! We should have all the psychic research people howling for our blood.’

‘Oh, David, do stop being idiotic. This ghost-hunting is to be taken seriously and your photography will be done by daylight. It is easier to see and hear ghosts in the dark, but they must be there all the time.’

‘Hamlet’s father wasn’t,’ said Tom Carpenter.

‘I think we ought to be setting out to identify our holiday lodgings,’ said Father Melrose, forestalling further comments. The meeting broke up and the ghost-hunters went out to their cars.

The hotel in Wroxham where they were to meet for the dinners was soon reached and identified and then Father Melrose took a seat in the Crieff-Tweedle car to show Dee the way to his friend's bungalow. Here he left the party, which waited until they saw the electric light go on in his annexe before Dee resumed command. She led the other two parties to their own bungalows before returning, this time with the Bylands and Dum, to her own pied-à-terre. By the time they reached it the light in the annexe was out, so they concluded that the priest had gone to bed.

The three bungalows were not very close together. That which the three young men were to occupy was the nearest to Wroxham bridge; the six-berth bungalow, beds for five in the main building and for one in the annexe, was nearly half-a-mile further downstream and the third bungalow was still further off. All three could be reached by water, but the cars had taken the back way to them along a road which turned off from the main thoroughfare and was used by tradesmen for delivering provisions, and by the postman and the refuse collectors.

When Eiladh and the Carpenters were settled:

'Well, so far, so good,' said Liz Carpenter. 'The final arrangements for housing the party are very satisfactory, I think.'

'Yes,' her brother agreed. 'The interesting thing is, though, that most of Dee Crieff-Tweedle's original plans have been altered in some way or other.'

'Serve her right! She's a selfish, bossy, muddle-headed woman with a bee in her bonnet,' said Eiladh.

'Why do you find it interesting that Dee's plans have been changed?' asked Liz. 'They were almost bound to be, when you think of the time-lag between the end of October and now. Things are sure to shift around over an interval of several months.'

'Yes, if they shift around in a normal way,' said Tom, 'but, from what I gather, some rather unexpected things have happened and I'm one of them. I never expected to get an invitation to join in a ghost-hunt.'

'And you wouldn't have got one if Dame B. hadn't asked that you should,' Eiladh told him. 'I bet I know why she did it, too.'

'Am I going to hear something to my credit?'

'I don't think I'm going to answer that. What do you say, Liz?'

'I wouldn't make him more conceited than he is already. So what about me? Why have I been brought along?'

'You know why you were pulled in. You will have to deal with our mosquito bites. I expect we shall get some with all this water around.'

'Well, Mrs C-T has managed to include two of the people who've seen ghosts,' said Liz, 'so she can't grumble.'

'Two?'

'Melrose and Mrs Byland.'

'What about Arcati?'

'He doesn't see ghosts; he only materialises them for other people to see.'

'He's a phony and I don't like him. I don't take to any of those three blokes,' said Tom.

'David da Cunha is quite fun,' said Eiladh.

‘I’m sorry you think so.’

‘Oh, Tom, don’t be so stuffy! You know, it isn’t that I have anything (except that) against you, but I can’t really understand why Dame B. was so keen to have you join us.’

‘Perhaps she’d got wind of my manly good looks. But as for joining you, well, that will turn out to be a matter of opinion. I’ll come on the ghost-hunts, of course, but during most of the day I expect I’ll be out and about on my own, you know.’

‘Chasing around Norfolk looking for flints?’ Try Grimes Graves!’

‘No, irreverent girl, chasing round Norfolk to look at old churches and mediaeval guildhalls. Let’s inspect our quarters, shall we, and stop the back-chat?’

‘You seem very anxious to change the subject, but, all right, let’s.’

Between the bungalow and the water there was a stretch of well-kept lawn. At one side it had been cut away to allow a mooring for a dinghy. The boat was there, but there was no boathouse. The grass was already damp, for an evening mist hung over the river.

The westering sun was beginning to set, but there was still plenty of light. Undisturbed by passing boats at that time of the day, for moorings had to be sought early by the hirers of pleasure-craft, the water reflected probable and improbable colours and looked oily as the river made its leisurely progress towards Thurne Mouth, where it joined the Thurne, Breydon Water and the sea. The orange, gold and shadowy violet of the sunset were repeated in the water, and there were also deep green patches moving into luminous pewter which turned to silvery white as the ripples washed ashore. Here and there in the reflections were streaks of kingfisher blue.

Reeds rustled and tree-roots sucked as the eddies rippled along the oozy banks. There was the occasional plop of a rising fish, a scurry as a dabchick made for home and other, less identifiable sounds. A bat missed—or seemed to miss—Eiladh’s head by a fraction of an inch. She turned and led the way indoors.

From the lawn a flight of wooden steps led up to a small verandah and the living-room was directly behind this. The two bedrooms were on either side of the living-room and both bedrooms overlooked the river, whereas the living-room looked out on to a garden containing a garage and a small shed. The kitchen also overlooked the garden, and was at the back of the smaller bedroom. This was to be occupied by Tom. The bathroom was behind the larger bedroom and opened out of it. All was compact, shipshape and sparsely furnished, but Liz, who had bounced up and down on the beds, pronounced them comfortable. She made bedtime drinks and, as the last of the light faded, the three turned in.

‘May as well sleep while we can,’ said Eiladh. ‘Goodness knows what will happen tomorrow night. Are you glad or sorry you came?’

‘Neither in particular. I’m being paid a retaining fee in addition to this “all found” for the holiday, you know, in case I’m needed to look after mosquito bites and so forth, so I can’t grumble, can I?’ Liz replied.

‘I’m being paid, too. I don’t really know why, because my present job is to catalogue the Crieff-Tweedle library, and I certainly can’t do that while I’m gadding about after ghosts.’

‘Do people—does anybody—really believe we shall see any?’

‘I’ve no idea. Incidentally—’

‘Well?’

‘Oh, nothing. I was only going to say I’m rather glad we’ve got your brother with us.’

‘He has only come because he wants to look at flint buildings. He’s paying his own expenses, which makes me feel less delicate about accepting mine.’

‘What do you think of the other three men?’

‘There are five other men.’

‘You can’t count Dum and Father Melrose. One is married and the other can’t marry. You know the men I mean.’

‘Tom says they’re bogus and he’s a pretty good judge.’

‘David da Cunha can be quite amusing, as I said before.’

‘Very likely. Oh, well, goodnight. See you in the morning. I’ll take the first turn at getting the early tea.’

The bungalow which was to be occupied by da Cunha, Pavy and Arcati was already empty. The young men had waited just long enough to speed the older members of the party on their way and to dump baggage, fishing-rods and golf clubs in the hall, and then they had returned to the hired car and gone to the nearest public house. Here they remained until time was called. David, who had paid for four out of the six rounds of drinks which they had time to consume, was drunk enough to insist upon driving home. The others, grateful for his hospitality, felt obliged to allow this, although Arcati insisted upon sitting next to him and acting as navigator. With the usual luck of the intoxicated—for he did not carry his whisky well—David brought the car back to their bungalow without mishap and all three sat up until after midnight talking and also consuming beer from the cans which Arcati, who had not reckoned on a visit to a pub that night, had stacked in all the available spaces in the boot of the car. When it was all gone they fell into their beds and slept soundly, although the last thoughts of at least one of them would have disturbed the peace of mind of Dee Crieff-Tweedle had she been aware of them.

In the largest of the bungalows Dee Crieff-Tweedle creamed her face and, this operation concluded, talked across the room to her husband who was already in his small single bed. He was longing to put the light out and get to sleep, but because of the years of training which caused him nowadays to allow his wife to dictate policy, he listened to her from what had become force of habit and answered her politely when an answer seemed to be called for.

‘I am not too sure about those young men,’ she said. ‘What do you think, Dum?’

‘Carpenter seems a nice chap.’

‘I don’t mean him. His sister can keep him in order, I hope. I refer to David, who is anything but serious-minded, and that down-at-heel actor who has been wished on us. As for Arcati, I wouldn’t trust him an inch. You don’t trust him, do you?’

‘I have not had much opportunity to find out. We have had almost no communication with one another.’

‘Well, what do you make of a man who conducts séances under a woman’s name?’

‘The same, I suppose, as I make of a woman who writes novels under a man’s name.’

‘Not the same thing at all! Do you suppose he disguises himself as a woman when he holds his séances?’

‘I suppose he would need to, since he calls himself Madame Arcati. They call it “wearing the drag”, I believe. Female impersonators—’

‘That is not the same thing, either. Everybody knows they are men, but this sort of thing, these’séances,

might lead to all kinds of complications if the sitters believe they are being conducted by a woman, when all the time people are being deceived by an unscrupulous, masquerading man!'

'I'll tell you which of the party I don't like,' said Dum, sitting up in bed, 'and that's the priest.'

'Oh, nonsense, Dum! There could not be a more courteous, considerate man!'

'I'm not talking about his manners.'

'I should hope not, indeed! What can you possibly have against him?'

'I just don't like him, that's all.'

'What a childish way to talk! Besides, we have reason to be very grateful to him. Do you realise that, but for the very fortunate circumstance of his knowing the owner of this bungalow, I should be footing the bill for hotel expenses for three or four of our party?'

'Yes, I suppose I had realised that.'

'Well, then!' She took off her dressing-gown and got into bed. 'Put the light out, Dum. We must get what sleep we can before the fun begins.'

'I only hope it's the kind of fun you are expecting!' muttered her husband.

'What do you say?'

'Nothing. Do you know that Melrose smokes large, expensive cigars?'

'Well, I expect one of his flock gives them to him. Parishioners are always giving their priest presents of wine and tobacco and little luxuries of that sort. After all, the poor man has no income of his own, you know. He is utterly dependent upon his flock for the very means of existence, let alone any little extras. And call him Father Melrose. The other sounds disrespectful.'

'Well, I don't know that I do respect him, my dear, and I wish you wouldn't just take him at his face value. After all, he did gate-crash the Croftons' Hallowe'en party. I always thought there was something very odd about that.'

'He simply mistook the house to which he had been invited.'

'And now he's added himself to this Norfolk excursion.'

'Of course he did not "add himself" to it! The invitation came from me and voluntary it was, I assure you. The person I wish I had never invited is Arcati. Father Melrose is a natural medium. There was really no need for me to have enlisted the services of a professional, and I wish I had thought of that sooner.'

'Even you cannot think of everything, my dear.'

It always took Eiladh a couple of nights to acclimatise herself to sleeping in a strange bed, and on this particular night she felt even more wakeful than usual; neither was she accustomed to sharing a room. She lay awake listening to the small, furtive sounds of the night. The moon rose and flooded the room with its brilliance. Somewhere a dog barked. Liz's quiet breathing was inaudible, but Eiladh was conscious of her presence and began to speculate about her and, from this, her thoughts drifted to the other members of what she was beginning to see was an ill-assorted company. The moonlight across her face became intolerable. She slid out of bed and crept to the window to draw the curtains across it. She looked out before she did so, hoping that the slight sound of the closing drapes would not wake her companion.

There was movement on the river. Into the wash of moonlight on the water a boat emerged. There was

only one person in it, a man. He was rowing with the long, rhythmic, regular strokes of a practised oarsman and Eiladh could see the silver of the moonlight glinting on the drips from his oar-blades as he lifted them clear of the water. Soon he reached a patch of darkness under the opposite bank and she lost sight of him.

'So, Father Melrose can't sleep,' she thought. 'Guilty conscience?' She drew the curtains across the window, went back to bed, and, in the soft, gentle darkness, fell asleep. Father Melrose continued his leisurely progress down-stream. Eiladh was the prey of extraordinary dreams and was thankful when she woke an hour later.

Chapter Five
The Bure at Night

'Earth, let not thy envious shade

Dare itself to interpose;

Cynthia's shining orb was made

Heaven to clear when day did close…'

Ben Jonson — 'Hymn to Diana'

As she had explained to her mother and Dame Beatrice just before the ghost-hunters set out, Eiladh liked to put herself abreast of a situation before she actually faced the facts of it. To this end she had immersed herself in what she termed 'Spook literature' and had been entertained by it to an extent unattained by Dame Beatrice, but (she believed at the time) she remained, like her godmother, unconvinced that ghosts really existed, or, at any rate, that they could be seen.

She had read Christina Hole's Haunted England, Harry Price's Poltergeist Over England and his now rather controversial account of the hauntings at Borley Rectory; Dee Crieff-Tweedle had lent her Ghosts of the Broads by Dr Charles Sampson (re-issued, after he had obtained copyright, by Mr Richard Sutton of Pulham Market) and from Dame Beatrice she had borrowed Haunted Britain, by Mr Anthony D. Hippisley Coxe and books on the folklore of Dame Beatrice's own Hampshire and the neighbouring county of Dorset. She had been deeply impressed by the works of Mr J. Wentworth Day, but remained a sceptic.

'Not that some of these accounts will be of much use in Norfolk,' she had announced when she returned her borrowings. Dame Beatrice disagreed.

'So far as my own researches go,' she said, 'which is not very far because I found the subject-matter both repetitive and boring, ghosts run to type. The ghostly hound, the grey lady, the headless coachman, the screaming woman, the empty gibbet on the moors which no horse can be persuaded to pass, the dog which follows a phantom all round the room with its eyes although no human being can see anything, the bells which ring of their own volition, the entity which flings unsuspecting visitors out of their beds, the phantom pack of hounds urged on by a ghostly horseman—everything, I believe, except the talking mongoose on the Isle of Man, has been duplicated over and over again. It is like these tiresome spirit-controls who are either little girls of below-average intelligence or Red Indians whose vocabulary seems limited to How and Wah, although, so far as my admittedly cursory study of their idiom goes, neither ejaculation means even Yes or No.'

The ghost-stories, however, must have made some impact upon Eiladh, for her dreams, that first night on the banks of the River Bure, were, so far as she could remember them afterwards, almost wholly concerned with what she had read.

The dreams themselves were strangely clear, although they were without colour and the events she experienced in them took place in a shifting mist. As so often happens to dreamers whose chief means of communication when awake is the spoken word, whether to themselves, their possessions or to other people, her thoughts were coherent and logical.

'I'm seeing pale kings and princes, too,' she said to herself, as, at the entrance to Wroxham Broad, which, incidentally, she had never set eyes on, she dreamt she saw a tall figure standing, it seemed, upon the water. He raised an imperious hand, but said nothing. Eiladh, however, knew exactly who he was and what he was doing there. He was keeping the entrance to the Broad clear for Caesar's procession of boats.

As she realised this, the dream changed. She herself was walking on the water and was unable to stop herself approaching a vast bed of reeds. They were whistling; not with the gentle, furtive rustling she associated with reeds, but with a sort of hideous ribaldry. Then she saw that, caught up among them, was the heavy branch of a tree which must have floated down stream (she told herself) until the eddies had trapped it by the reed-bed.

She felt a sensation of panic. The branch which was large and bifurcated had, first of all, two animal faces, one a dragon, the other a dog. They were menacing one another and, as she watched, they turned into the faces of the Crieff-Tweedles. Mrs Crieff-Tweedle was the dragon, her husband the menacing dog.

She tried to swim towards them, but, suddenly, there was no water in the river and she was scrabbling towards them over stones and mud. Before she could reach them they had disappeared and she was back in college again facing a Finals' paper in which she could not understand a single word.

'It's written in Japanese,' she thought, 'and I haven't attended a Japanese lecture since Christmas. I had better say the Lord's Prayer.' She woke up saying it. She had a recipe for banishing uneasy dreams which had never failed. This was to get out of bed, make sure that she was fully awake and then smoke a cigarette. She was anxious not to wake Liz, so she slipped out of the bedroom into the sitting room, switched on the light and looked on the sideboard for the packet of cigarettes she had left there. It was gone.

'Oh, damn!' she said softly. 'Tom must have picked it up, thinking it was his.'

It was a tantalising thought, the more so because, although she was a very moderate smoker, having decided upon a cigarette she felt that at all costs she must have one. It occurred to her that the moonlight which she had blotted out in her own room must be flooding Tom's, and that young men with no troubles on their minds are heavy sleepers. This judgment she based upon knowledge of her brother Hamish who habitually slept through the wildest thunderstorms and once had been known to mutter, 'Oh, get off my neck, you bitch,' when a tent he was sharing with another man and two girls fell in on him.

Secure in the thought that her furtive groping in Tom's jacket pocket would not disturb the sleeper, she switched off the sitting-room light, found the handle of his bedroom door, turned it and glided in.

She had been right about the moonlight. It filled the room and slanted in brilliance across the single bed. There was Tom's jacket draped across the back of a chair with his shirt upon the seat and his trousers laid out neatly upon the floor so that their creases were respected.

Her error was in supposing that Tom, like Hamish, was a heavy sleeper. With her back to the bed she

was fumbling in the pockets of the jacket when a pair of tough male arms pinioned her and Tom's voice said in her ear,

'What the hell?—Oh, good lord, it's you!'

'Let go,' said Eiladh. He let go, but swung her round to face him. 'So what?' he said. 'Why are you turning out my pockets? That's a wife's privilege, and we aren't married—yet.'

'Cigarettes. You pinched my cigarettes.'

'Did I? Sorry! Well, you'd better not stay in here. If Liz wakes up you'll need to do some explaining. Come on, let's smoke one together in the sitting-room. Here, shove this on. It's chilly.' He handed her the jacket she had been searching and himself donned the dressing-gown which lay across the foot of the bed.

They seated themselves upon the settee in the sitting-room and smoked in silence and in an intimacy rendered closer by the darkness. As Tom stubbed out his cigarette after Eiladh had extinguished hers, he put his arm round her and said,

'Taking a mean advantage of your burglarious intentions, I am going to kiss you.'

'All right,' she said, 'but hurry up about it because I want to go back to bed.'

'You're damn lucky that I don't carry you off to mine. Do you usually sneak into other people's rooms and search their jacket pockets?'

'Don't be a low hound. Let go of me.'

'For the second time of asking? There you are.'

'Thank you. I say, Tom, let's go for a row on the river.'

'At this time of night?'

'Father Melrose does.'

'Does what?'

'Goes for a moonlight row on the river.'

'The devil he does! Must have a guilty conscience.'

'That's what I thought. I don't like him.'

'I don't like him. We must be twin souls. I suspected it from the first. Are you serious about going for a moonlight paddle on the water?'

'Yes, I'd like it above all things.'

'Well, you can't go boating in your jim-jams and my jacket and with nothing on your feet.'

'And I may wake Liz if I go back to my room and get dressed, so that's that. Goodnight and—well, thank you for being a little gentleman.'

'Training, not inclination, I assure you. Look here, I've got plenty of spare gear in my room if you can just beetle in and get some shoes and socks from yours. I'll chuck you out some trousers—you can turn the ends up—and a sweater. Put the lot on over your pyjamas and you'll be plenty warm enough. Which way do you want to go?'

'Downstream to Wroxham Broad. I want to break a rather beastly dream I had. It was to wake myself right up that I wanted a cigarette.'

‘Nightmare?’

‘No, just a bad dream.’

‘Been reading too many ghost stories?’

‘Yes, I expect so. Throw out the sweater and pants and I’ll tap on your door when I’m dressed.’

‘Unisex, here we come,’ said Tom, and kissed the back of Eiladh’s neck.

It was a dream-like expedition. The dinghy which went with the hiring of the bungalow was already in the tiny staithe by the side of the lawn and its short, heavy oars were lying in the bottom of the boat. Eiladh stepped delicately aboard, Tom cast off and a hefty shove away from the wooden planking at the end of the staithe sent them into the main flow of the river.

Tom settled to the oars and the boat, helped by the current, passed riverside bungalows and, on the opposite shore, a boat yard, before all signs of habitation were left behind and there seemed nothing in the world but the great moon riding high in a clear sky, her reflection in the water, the black banks of the river fantastic with trees and reeds, and the boat itself travelling steadily along under Tom’s long, lazy pull on the oars.

Eiladh dangled a hand in the water, but drew it out with a catch in her throat as her fingers touched a piece of floating, slimy weed.

‘What’s up?’ asked Tom, whose ears had caught the slight gasp she gave.

‘Nothing. A dead man’s hand, perhaps. No, it was only a bit of river-weed, but it was clammy and nasty. How far do you think it is to the entrance to the Broad?’

‘I know roughly how far it is, and it’s as far as I want to row because we’re against the stream coming back.’

‘Don’t bother, then. It’s only a silly fancy of mine to want to see the entrance to the Broad.’

‘What was this dream you want to break?’

‘I saw the ghost of the man Charles Sampson calls Flavius Mantus, the Custos Rotulorum appointed by Marcus Aurelius to control the Bure and its environs.’

‘You have been reading too many ghost-stories!’

‘Yes, but that dream wasn’t frightening. It was what came next.’

‘Tell me.’

‘I hardly like to, because I’ve eaten their bread and salt.’

‘The Crieff-Tweedles?’

‘Yes.’

‘I wonder he hasn’t strangled that woman long ago. She treats him like a dog.’

‘Oh, but, Tom, that’s what he was in my dream! It began as a dead bough with two branches. One was like a dragon and it turned into Dee, and the other was like a dog and it turned into poor old Dum. In my dream I knew they were going to fight and one would kill the other. It was terrifying, so I said the Lord’s Prayer and woke up just as I got to Lead us not into temptation. Please don’t laugh.’

‘I wasn’t intending to. We’ll certainly get to the entrance to the Broad and break that sort of dream. Let’s hope it isn’t a prophecy, that’s all.’

‘Please don’t say that. One of my ancestresses is said to have had the Gift, and my mother comes out

with some rather startling things at times. I hope I haven't inherited anything uncanny.'

'Not you. One only has to catch a glimpse of Crieff-Tweedle's face when the madam comes out with one of her biting comments to see what he has to put up with and what he thinks about it. He cringes. All the same, I don't think you are cut out for a ghost-hunter. Too much imagination by far.'

They lapsed into silence and the boat gradually drew nearer the entrance to Wroxham Broad. There was no sign of Flavius Mantus, the reed-beds which bordered the opening on to the Broad were unstirred by the slightest breeze, for the night was unusually calm, and, far from the infernal whistling which Eiladh had heard in her dream, they made no sound at all. There was no dead branch, either; nothing to alarm or surprise.

'O.K., then?' asked Tom, resting on his oars.

'Yes. As James Elroy Flecker has said:

"She sank into the moonlight

And the sea was only sea".'

'Good enough.' With long, sweeping strokes he turned the boat, settled to his oars again and pulled strongly upstream for the bungalow. When they had stepped ashore and tied up, he took both Eiladh's hands but, to her mingled relief and disappointment, he did not kiss her.

'How old are you?' he asked.

'Twenty-two.'

'Hm! Know that thing of Yeats' called Politics?'

'Yes.'

'Ah!' He retained her left hand and side by side they walked across the dew-wet lawn. The moon had paled. The first light of dawn was in the east. Noiselessly Tom opened the door and noiselessly they tip-toed in. 'Good-night,' he whispered. 'No more bad dreams.'

'Goodnight,' she whispered back. 'Where shall I put your trousers and sweater?'

'Leave 'em on the settee and tap on my door. I'll give you a minute to nip into your room and then I'll come out and collect them.'

This time Liz was awake.

'Hullo,' she said, as Eiladh entered. 'Have you been for a swim?'

'No. I've been breaking up a bad dream and turning it into moonshine.'

'I hope Tom helped.'

Eiladh got into bed.

'How did you know I'd been out with Tom?' she asked.

'I didn't. I do now, though. Are your intentions honourable?'

'Don't rag me.'

'I'm not ragging. Are they?'

'Why do you want to know?'

'Because I'm fond of Tom and I would not mind having you for a sister.'

‘Good Lord! I’ve only known the two of you for a couple of days!’

‘That has nothing to do with it. Besides, diagnosis is supposed to be my strong point.’

‘I’d forgotten that you are a doctor.’

‘I thought you had. You haven’t answered my question.’

‘It’s one of those questions which will answer itself in time. Liz, do you think Dum hates Dee?’

‘If he doesn’t, he ought to. Why?’

‘In my dream one of them was going to kill the other.’

‘Which was which?’

‘I don’t know. I woke up before I found out. I’m glad I did. It was a horrible dream.’

‘Where did you go with Tom?’

‘As far as the entrance to Wroxham Broad.’

‘And it broke up your dream?’

‘Yes, and it’s a dream I don’t want repeated.’

Chapter Six
The Bure by Day

‘Reeds and willows bordered the stream, Here and there was a pleasant village among trees with a noisy shipping yard; here and there a villa in a lawn.’

Robert Louise Stevenson—An Inland Voyage

Dee Crieff-Tweedle did not begrudge the money which would have to be spent on her project—it was her own and not her husband’s money, anyway—but she intended to make certain that she received value for it.

At seven in the morning she woke her husband and the Bylands, and was about to go over to the annexe to find out whether Father Melrose was ready for his breakfast when the priest appeared on the lawn and came towards the bungalow.

‘Ah,’ she said, ‘here you are, Father. I thought we would make an early start. I want to visit our other bungalows first, to make certain that they have read and understood their schedules and have consulted the maps I supplied. The day, I feel, should be spent in familiarising ourselves with the terrain we are to cover. In that way, no time need be wasted tonight in getting to wherever it is that people ought to be.’

‘I know this part of the county well. As I told you, I have stayed here before. I should be glad, therefore, of a morning to myself,’ said Father Melrose. ‘I have correspondence to attend to and some ecclesiastical business in Norwich.’

‘I see. We shall be disappointed at being without your company. Will you be back here for lunch? It will only be cold ham and salad, I’m afraid.’

‘Ah, then, if I cannot get back, at least I shall not be vexing the cook. I am not sure how long my business will take. The authorities are sometimes dilatory and a mere missionary priest can hardly take

it upon himself to attempt to hurry them up.'

'Well, eat a good breakfast in case your lunch is delayed, and we will see you this evening, if not before,' said Dee, in not too cordial a tone.

Mrs Byland cooked the breakfast. It was a good one and Father Melrose obviously enjoyed it. He then returned to the annexe, presumably to deal with the correspondence he had mentioned.

'I hope,' said Dee, to the others, 'that Father Melrose is not going to be tiresome. I brought him here to see ghosts, not to go into conference with his ecclesiastical superiors.'

'I suppose he could scarcely come to Norfolk without paying them a courtesy visit,' suggested Mrs Byland, busy at the sink with Dum in attendance.

'Well, I shall expect him to fall into line from now on. You had better hand me that tea-towel, Dum. We have to make good all breakages, and you know what a butter-fingers you are. Go out and make sure we have enough petrol in the car. If not, you will have to run it into Wroxham and fill it up. I think you had better do that in any case. We don't want to find ourselves stranded in some out of the way spot late at night because the tank has run dry.'

'I filled up in Newmarket yesterday, if you remember, my dear, and we have done only about—'

'Never mind that. It is better to be safe than sorry. And get the man to check the tyres.'

'I'll come with you,' said Professor Byland. 'I want to buy a bottle or two of wine and some tobacco.'

The two men went off together; the women finished the washing-up. Mrs Byland said tentatively,

'Is there any particular programme for this morning?'

'After I have visited the other bungalows to make certain that everybody is up to scratch, yes, there is. We must make sure of where we can leave the car tonight while we make our reconnaissance. It would never do to get there after dark and not be able to locate a suitable parking-space.'

'Our appointment is with the ghosts of the monks at Salhouse, I see,' said Mrs Byland. 'What fun!' Dee looked sharply at her.

'Your tone is rather light, considering the matter in hand, Mavis,' she said reprovingly.

'The matter in hand is of a light-hearted nature so far as I am concerned,' said Mrs Byland, who had foreseen already that, unless they made a stand, Dee would dominate her and her husband as she already dominated the cowardly, peace-loving Dum.

'Well, that is not a helpful way to approach matters. The ghosts are not likely to appear to scoffers,' snapped Mrs Crieff-Tweedle.

'I think that, if ghosts appear at all, well—they just appear. That's what my nun did. The last thing I was thinking about at that time were ghosts, but, all the same, there she was.'

'Ah, yes, your nun,' said Dee in a mollified tone. 'Your nun, of course! That was the reason I asked you to come, wasn't it?'

'I suppose so, but I think now that she was only a trick of the moonlight and also, of course, I'd fallen out of our loft the night before,' said Mrs Byland, still holding out the red rag. Dee looked at her with something like loathing and flung the tea-towel over the kitchen line with so much force that the line came down and had to be refixed.

The two men got back with the car at ten and were scolded by Dee for having dawdled. Meanwhile ham sandwiches had been cut, thermos flasks filled with coffee, and biscuits and cheese put into plastic

bags. Professor Byland contributed a bottle of white wine and Dum a large bag of cherries.

‘Where do we go first, my dear?’ he asked.

‘To the other bungalows, and we are very late in starting. The young people have probably risen with the lark and are off on their assignments by now.’

‘Not if they’re anything like I was at their age,’ said Professor Byland, smiling nostalgically. ‘I was a regular bed-hog, I do assure you.’

Dee made no response to this except to order them all into the car to visit the Carpenters and Eiladh Gavin. She pulled up at the back entrance to their bungalow, which was oddly named Uplands. ‘There is no need for anyone else to get out,’ she said. ‘I shall not be more than a few minutes.’

She found Liz, in a bikini and a short beach-coat, cooking the breakfast. Her brother, wearing only pyjama trousers and tennis shoes, was out on the verandah in a deck-chair with his feet on the wooden rail. Eiladh was having a bath.

With the self-assurance which she felt was justifiable and to be expected in one who was not only financing the expedition of which these lax young people were members, but who was even paying two of them a retaining fee for their services, Dee had entered by the back door without knocking. Liz, scarcely looking round from the pan in which rashers of bacon were sizzling, said perfuntorily,

‘Oh, hullo, Mrs Crieff-Tweedle. Good morning. Have you come to breakfast?’

‘I had mine two hours ago and more. I came to find out whether you had studied your schedule and maps, that is all.’

‘Oh, yes, we did just glance at them last night. We’re having another look at them after breakfast.’

‘And then you will go along and identify the sites, of course.’

‘Of course, what?’ asked Eiladh, coming in from the bathroom. ‘Oh, good morning Mrs Crieff-Tweedle. Are you out for your morning constitutional?’

‘I have called in on my way to chart the items on my agenda. The rest of my bungalow party is waiting outside in the car. I want to make sure that you have plans to check your own routes.’

‘Oh, yes, of course we have. Would you like some breakfast? We’ve got enough for one extra, haven’t we, Liz?’

‘I have already breakfasted, thank you, Eiladh. Oh, well, so long as you all know what you are about, the day, of course, is your own. You will be wise to identify your sites as early as possible this morning so that you can have a good rest after lunch. At what time did you think of setting out tonight? It is as well to get into position in plenty of time so as to tranquillise the atmosphere.’

‘It depends upon how long it takes us to get to the rendezvous. We thought we wouldn’t leave before dark, though,’ said Liz. ‘Well, if you’ll excuse us, Mrs Crieff-Tweedle, I think these rashers are done. Rake in Tom, Eiladh, would you? He’s on the verandah, I think.’

At this moment Tom strolled into the kitchen barechested and with the overnight stubble still on his chin.

‘Oh, hullo, Mrs Crieff-Tweedle,’ he said.

‘Good morning, Mr Carpenter,’ said Dee, eyeing his bare torso with distaste. ‘And please don’t you ask me to breakfast!’ She removed herself, giving the back door a slight slam as she closed it behind her.

‘So what’s made her cross with us?’ asked Tom. ‘Have you two girls been teasing her?’

‘She thinks we’re a lazy, shiftless lot,’ his sister replied, ‘and so we are, and that’s the way I like it. Eat your breakfast and let’s get going.’

‘Where?’

‘To locate our ghost-dump,’ said Eiladh, ‘so that we can find it again when we get there tonight. We are under contract. Remember?’

‘I’m not. I’ve only come for the ride. And I’m paying my own expenses. Look, it doesn’t need three of us to go on this identification trip. Suppose you two drop me in Wroxham so that I can catch a bus into Norwich? I want to have a look at the banded flint-work of the Bridewell and St. Gregory’s Church. There’s the old Guildhall, too, and while I’m in the market-place I might as well take a gander at St Peter Mancroft.’

‘It’s all right. We’ll take it as read that you’re still coming with us this evening,’ said his sister, ‘so don’t worry. Just mind that Mrs Crieff-Tweedle doesn’t catch you playing hooky, that’s all. Shall we see you at lunch?’

‘No. I don’t want to have to cut short my visit and rush back. I’ll get something in Norwich. See you round about tea-time.’

‘I’ve got an idea,’ said Eiladh. ‘Our assignment for tonight is at Horning. Right? Well, then, why doesn’t Tom drop us instead of us dropping him? He can then take the car into Norwich. That Wroxham hotel where we are to have dinner each night is certain to have boats for hire, so you and I will go by river instead of by road. We can cut ourselves some sandwiches or stop off at the Swan at Horning for some lunch. Yes, that would be quite fun. We’ll do that, shall we?’

‘There’s a dinghy and an outboard motor here,’ said Tom.

‘It’s an awful old tub. I’d rather hire a launch. Is that all right with you and Liz?’

‘Fine!’ said Tom. ‘If I drop you just the other side of Wroxham Bridge, I can drive into Norwich by way of Coltishall and Crostwick. Just give me time to shave and we’ll be off.’

The two girls went to their room to dress and for a while all three occupants of Uplands were too much occupied inside the bungalow to notice something which, even had they seen it, would have meant nothing in particular to them, although it would have surprised and annoyed Mrs Crieff-Tweedle.

This was the spectacle of a dinghy propelled by an outboard engine and occupied by the solitary figure of Father Melrose, who, instead of going to Norwich as he had stated he would, had waited until Dee and her companions had visited the other two bungalows and were safely out of the way and then he had fixed an outboard engine to the boat he had rowed on the previous evening, exchanged his priestly garb for flannels and a sweater and was now chugging down-river.

The two girls, dropped by Tom at the hotel, went inside for a drink and then opened negotiations for the hire of a handy, wheel-steered motor-launch for the rest of the day.

They shot the slightest tricky bridge without difficulty and set off past boatyards and holiday bungalows for Wroxham Broad. They did not turn into the Broad, although there was an exit from it lower downstream, but kept to the river at a moderate speed.

There was nothing much to be seen from their low-lying craft except behind them the small waves, set up by the progress of their boat, washing and sucking among the exposed tree-roots and the water-plants which grew on the soggy black banks of the stream. Apart from tall reeds, there were occasional patches of ragged robin (to Mrs Byland, the magenta-coloured flowering marsh campion) and, on open ground, the tall stems of purple loosestrife.

The water-mint was not yet in flower, but the orange balsam, that American immigrant, was already showing the first of its tapering spurs. Coots, mallard and moorhens scurried or swam away as the boat passed by, but, apart from plants and aquatic birds and an occasional patch of short grass already in possession of a picnic party, there was nothing more to be seen from the launch except water and the enormous Norfolk sky. It was a break in the monotony, thought Eiladh, when, as they approached the great bend at Horning, yachts and cruisers began to pass them and the little launch lifted, rolled and bucketed on the crests of the newly-created waves.

Meanwhile, ahead of them and scarcely recognisable in his grey flannel trousers and royal blue sweater, Father Melrose took his sputtering little dinghy into the staithe which accommodated those boats whose owners had business with the Swan, and there he moored, stepped ashore and went into the hotel bar.

In the bar he met, obviously by appointment, a grey-haired, fit-looking man dressed in jeans, the ubiquitous sweater and a disreputable blazer on the pocket of which the cognoscenti might have been able to trace the badge of a famous rugby football club of which, incidentally, he had never been a member.

‘All set?’ enquired the priest of this man.

‘All set. Rather a rag in its way. Anyhow, it ought to keep our chaps gainfully occupied for a bit, and that’s all we need, isn’t it? Will you be joining your lot tonight?’

‘Oh, yes. It might arouse suspicion if I didn’t. Besides, we’ve got some cuckoos in the nest, I fancy. I’d rather like to keep my eye on them.’

‘Cuckoos? In our line of business?’

‘I think not, but I don’t know yet. Have you your car handy?’

‘Yes, of course. Can I run you somewhere?’

‘If you will. I have to return to my holiday home as though I’d come from Norwich, as that’s where I said I was going. I’ll give you lunch there, then perhaps you’ll drop me at Wroxham.’

‘What about your boat? I spotted you coming in.’

‘After lunch, perhaps, when we’ve had our talk and you’ve dropped me, you’ll come back here and pick her up. Nobody will be at home to see you return her. The bungalow is called Kojak and it’s about half a mile below the bridge. You can’t miss it because it’s the only one along there with an annexe which looks like a glorified garden shed. The woodwork is painted bright blue.’

‘Why?’

‘How should I know? Perhaps that’s the colour of Kojak’s eyes. There’s a tiny staithe to run the boat in, and you might remove the outboard and stow it in the annexe. I’d just as soon none of the party knew it had been used. I didn’t lock the annexe door before I came away, so you won’t have any difficulty if I don’t happen to be there when you call.’

‘What if your party are already home by the time I get there? It’s not out of the question.’

‘I don’t think they will be, but, if they are, you’ll have to spin them some yarn about having the owner’s permission to use the dinghy — no idea he had let the place—that sort of thing. If I’m there I’ll back you up and say I knew you’d taken the boat out.’

‘And how am I supposed to get back from the bungalow?’

‘Sorry, but that’s your problem. Why not hire one of those folding bicycles from that vast shop in the

village? You can take it back in the boot of your car tomorrow.'

Dee Crieff-Tweedle had been pleased with the three young men. When she arrived at their bungalow she found it locked up and the hired car gone.

'At least they have some sense of their obligations,' she said when she rejoined her party in her own car. 'Well, when we have picked up our sandwiches which dear Mavis so kindly made for us, we are free to go our own way, so now for Salhouse and a lovely picky-nicky as soon as we have made our naughty-waughty plans for trapping the ghosty-wosties tonight.'

As a lapse into baby-talk usually indicated that his spouse was in sunny mood, Dum plucked up sufficient courage to suggest that he should take on the driving for the trip to Salhouse Broad.

'Well, I don't see why not. I must save myself for this evening, I suppose,' said Dee amiably. 'Remember to sound your horn at all the bends. I don't know why some of these Norfolk roads need to wind the way they do. There are no hills to speak of.'

'Norfolk roadmakers always worked with their backs to the wind,' said Professor Byland solemnly. 'That accounts for the bends.'

'Oh, I see,' said Dee, accepting this explanation. 'Well, it does blow strongly in these eastern counties, I suppose.'

'By the way,' the professor continued, 'we shall be leaving you after our picnic lunch.'

'Leaving us?'

'Oh, only so that Mavis may go botanising. I shall accompany her, of course, and keep my field-glasses handy in case there are any interesting birds to be seen.'

Meanwhile the only members of her party with whom Dee was still feeling pleased would have forfeited her good opinion had she known what they were up to.

They had made their plans the night before, so David roused the others at a quarter to eight for breakfast and by nine o'clock they had left the bungalow locked up and were headed, with golf-clubs in the boot of the car, for Cromer. That is to say, two of them had Cromer in mind. Salathiel Pavy did not play golf and he explained that it would be a waste of time for him to walk round the course with the other two as they had suggested he should.

'I'm going into Norwich, if it's all the same,' he said. 'I can get to Great Yarmouth by bus from there and I know a chap who might be able to fix me up for July and August. I've got to get something to do this summer. I'm skint-broke to the wide—on my uppers and in the red.'

'We don't mind running you as far as the Norwich bus station,' said da Cunha, 'do we, Roger?'

'Surely not,' replied Arcati. Both he and David, although their own free-lance activities had prospered to some extent, knew what it was to live a life of uncertainty and sick hope. 'Have you money enough for your fare and your lunch?'

'I may have to treat this Yarmouth fellow, so if you could possibly—I mean, I'll pay you back, of course, as soon as I can.

'Poor devil!' said Arcati, when they had put Salathiel down at the entrance to the bus station. 'I hope he lands some kind of a billet to tide him over until he can get a proper shop. These bit-part actors must live pretty close to the breadline.'

'So do I hope he lands a job,' said David feelingly. 'That's the third fiver he's had from me since he first showed up on this jive-and-jitter-bug scene. I'm beginning to wish I hadn't suggested he should

come?'

'I've wondered about that. Why did you? You don't know him so awfully well, do you?'

'Well, no, but I'm a pushover for anybody who's down on his luck. Pavy called at my studio a few months ago and asked me to take some new pictures of him that he could show to theatre managers. He seemed a nice enough chap, so I agreed, provided he gave me an I.O.U. for them, which he did. After that he took to dropping in at the studio, so one day, thinking he looked pretty thin and all that, I took him back to my flat and gave him a meal. Since then he's continued to haunt me, more or less, so, when Dee Crieff-Tweedle asked me to act as photographer to her spooks, I thought she might as well support Pavy for a week or two, if only to take the weight off my bank balance, but, so far, it doesn't seem to be working out that way.'

'I'll tell you what!' said Arcati. 'Pavy thought we could have rather a rag if—' The two young men went into conference, but, in the end, David shook his head.

'Not worth losing our beauty sleep,' he said, 'and the Crieff-Tweedle would spit blood if she thought we were playing practical jokes with her ghosts.'

Left at the bus station, Salathiel Pavy joined a bus queue, but the bus he caught was not bound for Great Yarmouth. Not so very much later it was crossing Wroxham Bridge. He alighted and set off, past Wroxham railway station, to walk to Belaugh. He found it a delightful village. The road went almost down the river, there was an atmosphere of peace, the gardens were very pretty and one had an ancient well in it with a high brick surround and a gleaming bucket depending from a windlass. There were trees and flowers and birds. There was also St Peter's church. It stood, with its fifteenth century tower, on a hill overlooking a splendid arc which curved, gleaming, from Wroxham past Belaugh Broad. The church tower had sound-holes and inside the church there was a Norman font and a rood screen with twelve panels, coloured but much defaced, showing the twelve Apostles. However, Pavy did not go inside. In the quiet churchyard a man was waiting for him.

'Good Lord!' said this man, glaring at the young actor. 'What in the devil's name have you been doing? I've been waiting for over an hour.'

'Sorry. I expected to come here this morning directly after breakfast, but those muddle-headed asses I room with insisted upon taking me into Norwich.'

'Why on earth did you let them?'

'I thought it might arouse their suspicions if I'd said I wanted to come here. We don't want anybody to smell a rat, do we?'

'Where are they now?'

'Gone north to Cromer to play golf.'

'Oh, well, that's all right, I suppose. Well, this is the place and you know what you have to do. Play it right and I might— it's not a promise, mind!— but I might be able to wangle you a job with Anglia T.V. I've got a boat here. I'll take you back to Wroxham and we can talk as we go.'

'You could take me straight to my bungalow, couldn't you? It's only just the other side of the bridge. I could give you lunch and we could make sure the plan is foolproof.'

'No, I can't stop off. I'll have to dump you. I've got to meet a chap and, thanks to your messing about, I'm late already.'

Chapter Seven
Plainsong at Salhouse

‘Most musical, most melancholy!

Oft on a plat of rising ground

I hear the far-off curfew sound

Over some wide-water’d shore…’

John Milton—Il Penseroso

It was Eiladh who, with a sixth sense handed down to her from who knows how many generations of Scottish ancestry, decided upon a slight change of plan.

‘Tom was quite right,’ she said. ‘It doesn’t need three people to keep all the assignments. How about two of us going ghost-hunting each time and the odd man out getting a night’s rest?’

‘I think you’ve got something there,’ said Tom. ‘Well, I opted out today, so you two toss for innings for tonight to see who comes with me.’

‘No, it’s Eiladh’s idea,’ said his sister, ‘so she shall be the first to benefit from it.’

As matters turned out, however, it was Dee Crieff-Tweedle herself who changed the original plan. She descended upon Uplands at nine o’clock in the evening. Her visit was not entirely unexpected, for she had been unusually silent through the dinner which the whole party had attended, as arranged, in Wroxham. She found Eiladh and Tom playing chess and Liz reading.

‘Ah,’ she said, ‘I am in time. The itinerary has been changed quite drastically. I have brought you a copy of the new arrangements. You will see that there is no need for this bungalow to go out tonight.’

‘Praise be,’ said Tom Carpenter. ‘I’m dead to the world. The girls stood in for me and I’ve spent the whole day in Norwich. But what has happened to change your plans?’

‘Arcati and David suggested a change, but I should take little notice of them were it not for Father Melrose. He has told me that, with the approach of the longest day, the forces of good and evil are fighting even harder than usual to gain supremacy over one another. Now I am not a superstitious woman—’

‘Why, then, did you organise this ghost-hunt?’ asked Tom.

‘And why did you attach so much importance to that branch which tapped against the window at the Croftons’ Hallowe’en party?’ asked Eiladh.

‘Oh, well, then, perhaps I am a little en rapport with the spirit world,’ admitted Dee complacently. ‘Anyway, Father Melrose has persuaded me to arrive at the conclusion that, although the time I have chosen is particularly auspicious for my project, what he queries is the scale of it.’

‘The scale of it?’ asked Eiladh.

‘Yes. He thinks I am attempting too much in too short a time. Strangely enough just before dinner Arcati and David came to me with much the same argument and I have considered it carefully and have given in.’

‘Big of you,’ murmured Tom. ‘What exactly did Arcati and da Cunha have to say?’

‘David thinks, as he thought at the beginning, that flashlight photography of any manifestations is

essential if we are to obtain tangible results.'

'I thought he said his flash-bulbs would scare any ghost into a fit.'

'Arcati has persuaded him that this is not so. Anyhow, I have rearranged everything and have brought the amended programme for you to study and keep.'

'So we've wasted our time today,' said Liz good-humouredly.

'Oh, I do not think so. You will see that I have called the three bungalows A, B and C. I am A, you three are B and the young men are C. I don't hope for much co-operation from the Bylands. Their minds are full of birds and flowers.'

'Quite Chinese,' murmured Tom.

'Father Melrose is also unpredictable and says he must be a free-lance and come and go as he wishes. I can hardly gainsay him, but I do not find his attitude very helpful. However, it is more than made up for by David, who is willing to accompany all the parties with his camera.'

'So very good of him,' said Tom, 'but I propose to take my own photographs, so this is one party he won't be asked to accompany.'

'But, Mr Carpenter, I wish it.'

'Sorry, Mrs Crieff-Tweedle,but I don't. I regard da Cunha as a slightly poisonous little bounder, and myself as being in loco parentis to these innocent young girls.'

Eiladh giggled. Tom's sister said, 'Well upon my word!' Dee said, 'Really, Mr Carpenter! Anyhow, here is the change of plan.'

'Fine! Thanks very much,' said Tom. When she had gone, he added, 'If those beauties have talked that silly woman into changing her plans, there's something fishy going on and I want no part of it.'

'Oh, nonsense!' said Liz. 'And are you including Father Melrose among your beauties?'

'Yes, I am. He seems to have masterminded this change of plan and now he doesn't want to muck in with the rest of us. I don't trust that saintly rascal.'

The girls were silent until Liz said,

'Well, we might as well take a look at this screed she's left with us.' They arranged themselves on the settee, Liz in the middle, and studied the document. 'Only one night in every three. That's a welcome change,' she said. 'So the itinerary covers nine nights beginning now, and when we get to Friday week we start all over again unless there have been any results, in which case we leave those places out of the second round and, later on, a decision will be taken about a possible third round. I doubt whether I shall stay as long as that. I'm going into partnership with three other doctors and as soon as we've got a suitable house I shall have to join them.'

'And I'm hoping to get a new town hall to design,' said Tom, 'so as soon as I hear that I've clicked I shall be off. That leaves Eiladh.'

'Yes, I'm still employed by Dum Crieff-Tweedle,' agreed Eiladh, 'so I suppose I shall have to stay as long as he does.'

'And he'll have to stay as long as Dee does,' said Liz. 'Well, now, what about these assignments? Oh, we're actually told what to look out for! That's a nice change!'

'Nothing like putting ideas into credulous heads,' said Tom. 'A big mistake, if you ask me.'

'We don't,' said his sister. 'Tuesday: A (that's Dee's lot) Salhouse Broad. Open-air Mass. Possibly

ghostly monk in Salhouse church. Wednesday: B (that's us) Burgh Castle. Body (ghost) thrown over wall of Roman fort. How nice! Thursday: (Arcati and Co.) Horning. Re-crowning of Saxon king. Possible ghost of suicide. Woman in white.'

'Shades of Wilkie Collins!' said Eiladh. 'So what is our next assignment?'

'You're so impatient. I'm going to read you the lot. Friday: A to Belaugh churchyard. Ghost of distraught young woman. Saturday: B to Ranworth Broad. Ghost of monk in boat with ghost of dog.'

'What species of dog?'

'All dogs belong to the same species. Breed is not mentioned. Sunday seems to be left out, so we can spend that in bed, and that brings us to Monday. C to Brundall. Abbot's flotilla. What's that, I wonder?'

'He blesses the natives,' said Eiladh. 'It belongs to the time before the bishop of Norwich was also Lord Abbot of St Benet's I think. Anyway, I understand he's a good ghost and banishes the bad ones.'

'Oh, yes? Tuesday: A to St Benet's Abbey itself—what's left of it apart from that ugly erection that some insensitive soul put up among the ruins—to see the ghost of the monk who was hanged for betraying the place to the Normans. Charming! Wednesday: B—wait for it! This is ourselves again. We wait outside the entrance to Blickling Hall to see Anne Boleyn's ghost-coach come through. Headless horses and coachman and Anne with her own head in her lap.'

'Not tucked underneath her arm?'

'No. Don't be flippant. Thursday: C to Thurne Mouth. Ghost of murdered farmer. And that, dears, brings us round again for a repeat performance beginning with Salhouse and the ghostly Mass.'

'Anything strike you about all this?' asked Tom.

'Only that everything is connected with the Broads and rivers except our Blickling outing,' said Eiladh, 'unless you don't count Belaugh churchyard.'

'I think you have to count that. It overlooks the Bure. That isn't what I meant, though. Don't you think the Crieff-Tweedle party have picked themselves some nice, near-at-hand assignments? We've collected Burgh Castle, right down on the Waveney, Ranworth Broad—and that involves a trek from Wroxham through Rackheath, Salhouse and Woodbastwick if I remember the road-map correctly and then bloody Blickling— literally, it seems, with all that headless-ness—and that involves going by way of Coltishall and Aylsham. Children, we've been conned.'

'Oh, it's not all that far. About twelve miles I make it,' said Liz, who had risen to pick up the motoring map. 'Stop bellyaching. At least we haven't got to go to Thurne Mouth to see a murdered farmer. That's a ghost anybody might think he saw. Headless horses and Anne Boleyn are just a load of codswallop, I'll be bound.'

'I'll tell you what isn't on the agenda,' said Eiladh, 'and that's Old Shuck.'

'It isn't necessary to mention him,' said Tom. 'That dog runs all over East Anglia and up into Yorkshire, where they call him the Gytrash.'

'It's not the same dog,' said Liz. 'He howls in a different key. Well, if it's all the same to everybody, as we haven't got to go out tonight I'm going to bed.'

'What sort of day did you have?' asked Tom, when his sister had left them.

'A wasted one. We explored the wrong area. Oh, well, perhaps it wasn't really wasted. We enjoyed it, and that's the main thing. How did you get on in Norwich?'

'Same answer. I didn't learn much, but I enjoyed it. Incidentally, Liz stopped short in her reading. What

happens on Friday week?' He picked up the itinerary. 'Oh, nothing is planned for that, apparently. There's a question-mark, that's all. How intriguing—I don't think! Still, it must have some significance if the omniscient Dee put it there.'

'I expect its significance is that she doesn't know whether David and the others will stay up here long enough to have another go. I'm not sure she is omnipotent, even if she's omniscient. I think those young men are cocking a snook at her authority. David can be quite cheeky to her when he likes.'

'Yes, he strikes me as a bit of a cub. Oh, well, if you don't mind, I think I'll turn in, too.'

'You're lucky to have a room of your own. The worst of sharing with somebody is that you can't altogether choose your own bedtime. Liz is an early bird, but I can't sleep if I get to bed before about one a.m.'

'Well, why don't you go and collect some bedding before she gets to sleep and then kip down on the settee in here?'

That's an idea. It only means bringing a couple of pillows and a sleeping-bag into this room.'

'I'll help you. Liz won't mind if I barge in while she's undressing. Brothers don't count.'

But, the exchange of beds made, Eiladh did not take advantage of it. She picked up Dee's list which Liz had left on the table, seated herself and studied it. It offered food for thought and grounds for speculation. Her brother Hamish, half in fun, half seriously had given her a couple of books on the English hauntings and, as well as those she had borrowed from Dame Beatrice's collection, half-amused and sceptical, half-hoping to be convinced, she had studied them carefully.

Now, comparing the notes she had made with Dee Crieff-Tweedle's list of assignments, she began to wonder upon what principle Dee had made her nine selections among a possible couple of dozen or more.

'If we'd been water-borne instead of having the cars, I could have understood it,' she said to herself, 'because, except for Blickling, which is the odd man out, all the places are on the Broads.'

Then she began to wonder why Blickling had been chosen, and, from this, to ask herself whether all the locations had been decided upon by Dee herself, or whether, perhaps, she had been influenced by da Cunha as the official photographer or (far more likely) by Father Melrose, although for what purpose she found herself unable to decide. She did not know the reason for her suspicions of him, but she found herself unable to forget his moonlight boat-trip on the first night of their stay. She told herself how unreasonable she was, since she and Tom had made a similar trip, but the thought stuck obstinately in her mind that Father Melrose was up to no good.

'This drastic cutting down is a bit peculiar,' she thought, 'I wonder what's really behind it? It doesn't seem like Dee to change her plans. It all began with the cars, when you come to think of it. I'd love to know what they all get up to. Well, here's the list. Why don't I damn well find out? Now I'm bedding down in here, I shan't disturb the other two if I slip out quietly. The car's in the road. Here goes!'

Her coat was hanging up in the hall. She slipped it on, let herself out quietly— if Tom heard her go he would think only that she had gone out on to the lawn for a look at the river before she turned in— made certain that she had her key with her and went round to the back of the bungalow and out to the car.

She turned left when the car reached the end of the approach road to the bungalows and then turned left again when she reached the turning to Salhouse. She had studied the map, but she did not know the district and there seemed to be a confusion of little roads. One led to a hospital, another to a farm. Even the vicarage and the church were not on the same stretch. More by luck than judgment she ended up at

the village post office and from there, instinctively (for at that time of night there was nobody from whom she could ask directions), she found a road which ran alongside a half-mile channel which formed the tail, so to speak, of the Broad.

Eiladh pulled up and got out of the car. The night was dark, for the moon was obscured, so she made a cautious approach to the water, stood still and listened.

There was no sound of voices, so she concluded at first that Dee's party either had not arrived or were keeping their watch in well-disciplined silence. She stood in the shadow of a boathouse, alert but still, while the little noises of the night, the occasional reminder that there were other living creatures besides herself near the water, went on around her.

The last thing she expected was a ghostly manifestation and her vigil began to seem a long one. She was wondering whether Dee had decided to give up the excursion or whether she herself had chosen the wrong place from which to do her spying, when she heard music. It was the music of men's voices, unaccompanied and they were singing a Gregorian chant.

She tried to work out whence the sounds came, but could come to no conclusion. She was too far from the church to believe that sound could travel from there; moreover, she doubted very much whether an Anglican church choir would be singing this particular music, certainly not at just on midnight.

She crept nearer the water. The shores of the Broad were well-wooded in one part and on another side a gentle, grassy slope led down to the water's edge. There were moorings close by—taken up, she had no doubt, at that time of year, but she also had no doubt that the ghostly singing would scarcely wake people who had spent all day in the bracing Norfolk air.

She did not imagine for one moment that it was the men in Dee's party who were singing. She could not estimate the number of the voices, but there were certainly more of them than could be accounted for by Father Melrose, David da Cunha, Professor Byland and Dum Crieff-Tweedle, even supposing that the last three were equipped to sing Gregorian chant.

Moreover, as the singing came to its first slight pause, she heard quiet voices speaking from a different direction and she concluded that these came from Dee's party of ghost-watchers, who must have arrived before she did, as she had heard no sound of a car. Little was said, for the singing, which now seemed to come across from a group of trees, broke out again and, with pauses which, this time, were unbroken by the speakers, continued for perhaps a quarter of an hour.

The effect was weird and beautiful. A fugitive moon played hide and seek with the stars, and the black and silver waters of the Broad lapped in infinitesimal ripples upon the gently-sloping shore. How long Eiladh would have stayed there became a matter for her own guess-work, but first a bat dottily flew almost into her face and then a barn-owl, forsaking its perch in Salhouse church tower, swooped past her on phantom wings and startled her into returning hastily to where she had left her car. The last thing she heard before she closed the car door were the continued sound of the chanting and an unearthly shriek from the barn-owl, a sound far more frightening in the darkness than the ghostly music.

When Eiladh got back, to her surprise there was a light in the living-room of Uplands. She was certain that she had turned it out before she left and her first thought was that one of the others had been taken ill. She let herself in and was met by a reproachful Tom Carpenter, fully dressed and with his shoes on.

'Where on earth have you been,' he demanded. 'I heard you go out and thought you'd just strolled down to the river for a breather before kipping down in here. I waited for half an hour and then I went out to make sure you weren't taking the boat out for a midnight sail or something equally daft. Who would want to look after crazy girls?'

Tom, dear,' said Eiladh, 'it's very unfashionable to worry about what women get up to nowadays.'

‘Then, when I found the boat was still there,’ Tom continued, ‘I went round to the back and found the car had gone. What have you been up to?’

‘I’ll tell you all about it in the morning. It’s rather interesting. There is jiggery-pokery going on. I think I’m now in a position to prove it, but whether it’s just a bit of spoof, or whether there’s something more behind it, I can’t say.’

‘So long as you’re all right,’ said Tom. ‘Another time, just tell me where you’re going, that’s all.’

‘Good heavens!’ said Eiladh. ‘Whatever next!’

‘Tom can’t help it,’ said Liz, as she and Eiladh were cooking the breakfast next morning while their escort was taking his turn in the bathroom. ‘He’s got a thing about women. He was absolutely horrified when he knew I was taking up medicine and might have to examine men patients. He belongs to another era. You mustn’t take any notice of him. But what’s all this about last night?’

‘I snooped on Dee Crieff-Tweedle’s lot at Salhouse.’

‘Whatever for?’

‘Fun, I suppose.’

‘And was it?’

‘It was interesting, anyway. You know, Liz, there’s no doubt somebody is out to lead Dee up the garden path. I don’t think it’s just for a joke, either. I’ve a feeling there’s something behind it.’

‘Well, what happened?’

‘We were told about an open-air Mass on the shore of the Broad. Remember?’

‘Don’t tell me you saw that happen!’

‘Oh, no. It didn’t. There was just the music’

‘Oh? Ghostly music?’

‘No, gramophone music, I think. Plain-song sung on a record is my diagnosis. I recognised some of the pieces. My friend in College was an enthusiast for Gregorian chant. Last night I heard Conditor alma siderum, followed by Nato canunt omnia.’

‘Are you sure?’

‘Then there was Cum natus esset Jesus. Other pieces I recognised were Lumen ad revelationem, Surrexit Dominus vere and, I think—no, I don’t just think, I’m certain—that I heard the Veni Sanctus Spiritus. It was lovely but eerie to listen to those men’s unaccompanied voices in the open air coming across the water at dead of night.’

‘Across the water?’

‘I’m sure of it. I was on the grassy, open side of the Broad and the sound came from the wooded side. Somebody was operating either a gramophone or a tape-recorder from among the trees.’

‘Did you see anything of Dee’s party?’

‘No, but there were voices talking very quietly from some distance away, so I concluded that Dee’s lot were present. It was too dark to see anybody and, of course, I didn’t investigate because I really had no business to be there, so explanations would have been a trifle awkward.’

‘I wonder whether they came to the same conclusion as you did?’

‘That a trick was being played? I don’t know. Perhaps I’ve got my father’s suspicious policeman’s

mind and, in any case, you see, I knew the record. It's a German one and I don't suppose it's in everybody's record cabinet. I've only named some of the plainsong chants. There were more. It's quite a lengthy record.'

'Well, we can expect Dee round here, I suppose, to make sure we're all set for tonight's manœuvres at Burgh Castle. I expect we shall also hear her version of your eerie music, unless, of course, she staged it herself to encourage the ghosts or create an atmosphere.'

'Don't let her know I was at Salhouse last night.'

'Of course I won't. We'd better warn Tom. If there is somebody playing the fool, though, we'll be ready for him this evening.'

'What are Tom's plans for today? More flint buildings?'

'I don't know. He's very keen, of course. We can't expect to see an awful lot of him.'

Chapter Eight
The Ghost of Gariannonum

'Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall:

Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.'

Anon. —Nursery Rhyme

'However, the egg only got larger and larger, and more and more human: when she had come within a few yards of it, she saw that it had eyes and a nose and mouth, and, when she had come close to it…'

Lewis Carroll —Through the Looking-Glass

When she turned up on the following morning, Dee Crieff-Tweedle was less excited about the previous night's experience than Eiladh and Liz had expected She expressed doubt.

'Of course it was very wonderful to hear subdued chanting in those beautiful all-male voices,' she said. 'Actually, it was rather too wonderful, if you know what I mean. I can vouch for David and I was hoping for photographs if there had been any visual manifestations, but there were none.'

'Only the singing?' said Liz, in a falsely sympathetic voice. 'What a pity!'

'Yes, only the singing.'

'Why do you say that you can vouch for David? Vouch for him in what way?' asked Tom. Having heard Eiladh's account, he could guess the answer perfectly well, but he was interested in Dee's reactions, for he had believed her to be the most credulous of women, basing this assumption on the fact that she had undertaken the ghost-hunt at all.

'Because David was with my party and I kept him under my eye, but the more I see of Salathiel Pavy and that young Arcati, the less serious I think they are about our quest,' Dee replied. 'Men of that age have not gone beyond the stage of thinking that practical jokes are an advanced form of humour. I should like to know what they were up to last night.'

'I wonder you did not take Arcati with you,' said Liz. 'I thought the whole point of bringing him was

that he is supposed to be a professional medium.'

'Professional fiddlesticks! I do not trust him. Besides, we had Father Melrose with us, a far more reliable person. He has a real gift.'

'Do you base that opinion merely on the ghost-story he told at the Hallowe'en party?' asked Eiladh. 'I didn't believe his story at the time, and I don't now.'

'You are young. That makes you a sceptic, my dear. I do not think a man in holy orders—particularly a Catholic — would put himself out to mislead or deceive us.'

'I suppose he really is a Catholic priest?' said Tom. Dee looked at him as if he had uttered a blasphemy. In her opinion, thought Eiladh, disguising her amusement, probably he had.

'Well, really!' Dee exclaimed angrily.

'Did you have him vetted before we left?' asked Liz, wickedly following her brother's lead.

'Certainly not! I would not dream of such a thing! I hope I know the genuine article when I meet it.'

'But, dear Mrs Crieff-Tweedle, you thought Madame Arcati was the genuine article.'

'Not when I met him, the deceitful creature!'

'Yet you allowed him to make one of our party.'

'My dear Doctor Carpenter, it is not my social policy to un-invite a guest once he has been asked to come. Such would be a violation of the code I was brought up to follow, old-fashioned though it may be.'

'I see—and I beg your pardon.'

'No need. No need at all. We cannot expect the young of today to understand and appreciate all les nuances of civilised intercourse. I came to ask whether you are fully prepared for tonight. You will need to set out in good time. Even by road it will take you quite a long while to get to Burgh Castle and you must allow for holiday traffic'

'We're going to make a day of it,' said Tom. 'We shall make for Acle and take the road to Runham and Gorleston.'

'Well, don't get lost. Burgh Castle is clearly marked on the map I gave you, so you should have no difficulty in finding it. I think it is a wise precaution to arrive in daylight.'

'Well, that's not really the object of the exercise. I want to look at Acle church. The lower part of the tower is probably Saxon and there's a good screen—restored and the colouring touched up, but still good,' said Tom. 'On the way we're going to stop at Ludham.'

To look at the bridge?'

'Yes, perhaps, but, again, chiefly to look at the church. It's a beauty. It has a parvise over the south porch, a hammer-beam and arch-braced roof and a very fine screen. You ought to go and see it.'

'Oh, you and your hobby!' said Dee, with what she intended as an indulgent, good-tempered laugh, but which came out as a forced and empty one. 'Well, don't get so much carried away by your explorations and enthusiasms that you forget what your real object is.'

'My hobby,' said Tom, when Dee had left them, 'also happens to be my job, but that doesn't seem to have occurred to her. How demoralising it is to be as rich as the Crieff-Tweedles. I wish they'd give me a commission!'

Tom's writing a book on local building materials,' said Liz. 'In other words, he's only here for the

flints. What do you want to do, Tom? Take sandwiches?'

'No. The pubs are marked on my map. We'll have a ploughman's lunch and lots and lots of beer.'

'I wish we could take the boat instead of the car,' said Eiladh, 'but it would be much too slow, I suppose.'

'Besides, we'd have to go into Great Yarmouth and out through Breydon Water on to the Waveney,' said Liz. 'I've looked up the table of distances and it's actually only twenty-eight and a half miles from Wroxham to Burgh Castle by water, so I'd vote for it, except for the Great Yarmouth bit.'

'Breydon Water is all right, so long as you stick to the channel. It runs between posts, so you can't really go wrong. Do let's try it!' pleaded Eiladh.

'We're going by car,' said Tom. 'Who called our dinghy an old tub?'

'Burgh Castle—Gariannonum to you, learned godmother,' wrote Eiladh to Dame Beatrice, …is too well known to need description, but in case you haven't seen it or been bothered to read about it, here goes. I wouldn't trouble you with it except for our extraordinary adventure, which we still don't know how to explain. Sceptic that I am, I don't want to believe in the ghost of Gariannonum, but, well, here are the facts, and Tom and Liz Carpenter (as level-headed a brother and sister as ever I met and shared a bungalow with) can testify to my words.

Tom, who is twenty-eight and bossy with it, decreed in his lordly way that we should go all the way by car so that he would have time to look at a couple of churches in which he was interested, but I know what these enthusiasts are like and I can see all I want of any church in, at most, twenty minutes, so I said I would go by water as far as Ludham bridge, moor there and he and Liz could pick me up in the car for the rest of the trip.

He argued that we couldn't return for the boat that night after we'd done our ghost-hunt at Burgh Castle, but I pointed out that there was nothing to stop us all going by car the next morning to Ludham, me to pick up the boat and bring her back and the two of them to stick to the car and return in that.

Liz opted not only to follow my plan, but to go with me, so the two of us hitched the four-horse outboard to the fourteen-foot dinghy—beam five feet six, so she's a nice roomy tub and comes as part of the rent for the bungalow— and off the two of us went, Tom disapproving but philosophical about it. I shall marry him if he asks me, and I think he will, so it's not too soon to start getting him trained.

We decided to have lunch at the Swan at Horning and to have it as early as we could so as to leave plenty of time for the eight-mile stint between Horning and Ludham. We had arranged to meet Tom in Ludham church, or on the bridge, as near half-past two as we could make it.

It was an uneventful little trip. There was a lot of stuff going up and down the Bure and there were some yachts, always a bit of a nuisance except on the Broads themselves, although I myself am fond of sailing. Still, most of them were on the big, broad bend at Horning. The Ant, when we got on to it about a mile our side of St Benet's Abbey, was a bit quieter and we reached Ludham and Tom in good time, having found moorings some little distance below the bridge. Tom, I think, was relieved to see us. He is the sort of man who always believes that women on their own are bound to do something daft and land themselves in trouble.

We drove out to Potter Heigham and down to Acle, where Tom looked at the church and Liz and I had tea and bought him buns and cheese and a bottle of coke so that he could have some refreshment, and we did the rest of the journey easily enough and got to Burgh Castle while there was plenty of daylight by which we could spy out the lie of the land.

The fort is very impressive. Because we approached it from the east, which you have to do if you go by

road, you really get the best view of it, as there is no wall on the west side which faces the river. If there ever was any construction there, Tom says it was probably guardhouses and a quay and an entrance gate from the water. Anyway, the whole fort covers at least six acres and has six enormous bastions built (Tom says) after the rest of the tremendously thick walls had been put up, so it must be one of the earliest of the Saxon shore defences.

The land outside the walls on the east side was afterwards used as a burial ground. I didn't like the sound of that very much, as we were to be there after dark, and I was relieved to know that the other two would be with me, especially Tom.

We had a good look round the great massive place, both inside and out, and decided where we would take up our position when night fell. Then we drove back to Gorleston, a kind of suburb of Great Yarmouth, and went to a hotel for dinner.

This passed the time very nicely, and just as it was beginning to get dark we drove the four or five miles back to Burgh Castle, left the car and took up our positions by the light of Tom's torch because, although the sky was clear, the moon was not up.

Liz's suggestion had been that we should split up. We knew what to expect if anything did materialise —and, after the gramophone hoax at Salhouse, we rather thought something might—but Tom wouldn't hear of it. He said that if somebody was going to lark about we must stick together. I pointed out that the fort covered an enormous area—one of the longer sides is said to measure six hundred and forty feet—and that we had no idea whereabouts the ghost was said to appear.

Liz said that it certainly couldn't be flung over the west wall on to the riverside, because there isn't any longer a west wall to fling it over. The ghost isn't Roman, strangely enough; it's Saxon. It's the ghost of a messenger sent to the fort to demand its surrender. The Danes had overrun it and the Saxons, who had taken it over after the Roman garrison had left, wanted it back, I suppose. Anyway, the Danes murdered the emissary, tied his white flag round his neck—I don't know whether strangulation with it was the cause of his death—and tossed him over the wall.

According to the screed we were given to read by Dee Crieff-Tweedle, the ghost lands with a thud which can be heard, and then it disappears. This accords with a story in one of the books you lent me. Tom thought that if Dee and I were right and Arcati and Pavy were up to some game, the 'ghost' would be a sackful of stones—there are plenty about where the masonry has crumbled—which would certainly make a thud upon landing, but which could hardly be expected to disappear.

Liz said she thought it would disappear. The whole point was that it should, otherwise the joke, or whatever, would misfire. There would be arrangements to collect it before we could get to it, she said—that is, if we weren't too scared to go anywhere near it at all.

Mind you, darling godmother, the place would have scared me into babbling lunacy if I'd been alone, in spite of my experience at Salhouse. Burgh Castle was built in the second or early third century A.D. and as I said, was taken over by the Saxons who undoubtedly fought some bloody battles hereabouts against the Danes. Then the place became Christianised and there's a story about a fight between a black and a white angel, and a church being built inside the walls and, later, a Norman motte and bailey castle, so, if there are such things as ghosts, there should be a good many of them at Burgh, not to mention the graveyard outside the walls.

We got some of this information from Tom while we waited for midnight and I must say that, sitting there in the shadow of one of the enormous bastions in the dark, I continued to be more than glad that he had insisted on our keeping together.

The time went very slowly; I know how slowly because my watch is luminous and each five minutes,

when I looked at it, seemed longer than the last.

Suddenly, however, my heart seemed to give a sort of jump. I had heard a sound which didn't belong to the other little noises of the night. I must have gasped, or done something, because I felt Tom's hand on my arm. He pressed it hard, to warn me to keep quiet. The next instant there was another sound, an unmistakable thud.

Tom got up and pulled me to my feet. Liz, who was on the other side of me, got up, too.

'Easy does it,' muttered Tom. 'Don't want to trip up and come a mucker.' By this time the moon was up. It gave no great light, but enough for us to see our way, Tom leading. 'I know where the sound came from,' he said. 'Stick close.'

I think Liz and I were glad to do so. I can't answer for her, of course, but if she felt anything of what I was feeling—scared and excited—I think she must have been glad that Tom was there.

Just ahead of us was a glimmer of something white. My heart thumped horribly and I felt clammy and slightly sick.

Tom switched on the torch again as we went forward.

'Not a ghost this time,' he said loudly. 'You two stay here.'

Well, of course, Liz and I did nothing of the sort. We went with him up to where the white thing glimmered in the moonlight. All I could think of as we stumbled forward—the going was rough and the moonlight wasn't strong enough to give much help—was that the white rag, which was supposed to have been the flag of truce the Saxon messenger had carried to the Danes inside the fort, was in the wrong place. According to the legend, the ghostly body should have been on the riverside, but it was just as well for us and our ankles that it wasn't. The river bank is littered with chunks of masonry among which you could easily have a nasty accident in the almost-dark.

Tom out-distanced us, for I found that Liz and I were beginning to slow down as we approached the glimmer of white. I heard Tom say, 'What's the game? Are you hurt?' Then I heard a groan and Liz hurried forward. That groan had roused all the doctor in her, I suppose.

I tried to run to catch up with her, tripped in the dark and fell flat on my face. I picked myself up to find Liz at my side. 'Are you all right?' she asked. I said I was. Then she said, 'Winded you, I expect. Sit down and take it easy.'

I told her there was no damage done. 'Nor to Crieff-Tweedle, I hope,' she said. Yes, dearest godmother, that's who our ghost turned out to be, Dum Crieff-Tweedle in person. Himself, not an inferior imitation. I felt myself all over to make sure I'd had nothing worse than a bit of a shaking-up and joined the dark, blurred figures which now hid the white thing from my view. Liz was holding the torch close to the ground and I could hear Tom quietly cursing as he struggled with something under the feeble torchlight. It turned out that the ends of the white cloth around Dum's neck had been wetted, so the knots were difficult to untie and poor Dum kept making little retching noises while Tom got to work. He broke the nail on his forefinger, but he got the white rag off at last and assisted Dum to stand.

'Got your car here, sir?' he asked. Dum said that he had. 'Lead me to it, then, and I'll drive you home. Liz, you and Eiladh will have to take ours. Follow me, and don't lose sight of my tail-lights.'

'Very good, generalissimo,' said Liz. We did as we were told, pulled up at the Crieff-Tweedle bungalow behind Dum's car, and he and Tom got out. Dum walked round to the front of the bungalow and let himself in. Tom walked over to the annexe and banged on the door. A light came on after he had knocked a second time. We could see it from the car because one window of the annexe looked out our way.

When Tom joined us and got into our car, Liz said, ‘Was Father Melrose at home?’ Tom said that he was and that he’d asked him to go up to the bungalow and take a look at Dum, who had had a nasty experience and was in a state of shock.

‘Couldn’t Professor Byland have looked at him?’ asked Liz. ‘Come to think of it, I suppose it was my job, really. I’ll go over there in the morning.’ Tom said she could please herself, but he didn’t really think there was any need. He said Dum wasn’t really shocked, only furious.

‘But what was Dum doing at Burgh Castle, anyway?’ I asked, just as we reached our own bungalow. Tom said that, so far as he could gather, Dee had sent him to make sure we were there keeping the assignment. Apparently she thought that, as it was a long way to go, we might have ducked out. This made me furious, but Tom said not to get hot under the collar, but to go indoors, make a hot drink and go to bed.

‘So what are you going to do?’ Liz asked him. He said he was going to call on David, Arcati and Pavy. We begged him not to, because if there was a row and they were drunk—or even if they weren’t —it was three to one.

There won’t be a row,’ he said. ‘I only want to find out whether they’re at home or not, just as I did with Melrose.‘ So that was why he had knocked the priest up, you see. I knew Tom didn’t like him, but it seemed a bit much to imagine that he might have had a hand in setting on and half-strangling poor old Dum, that meek and greatly hen-pecked man. Tom must have let himself in very quietly when he came back, or else the dollop of whisky Liz and I had had in our hot milk that night after all the excitement must have sent us into a deeper sleep than usual, for neither of us heard him come in.

In the morning he told us that David, Arcati and Pavy had invited a neighbour in for the evening to make up a fourth at bridge, but that’s their story. I wouldn’t trust that lot an inch, although I wouldn’t have thought even they would think it funny to set upon poor old Dum and pretend that he was the ghost just to take a rise out of us. Anyway, how could they have known he would be there?

Chapter Nine
Hauntings at Horning

‘Look at her garments

Clinging like cerements;

Whilst the wave constantly

Drips from her clothing’

Thomas Hood — ‘The Bridge of Sighs’

Tom Carpenter’s first action after breakfast on the following morning was to accompany his sister to the Crieff-Tweedles’ bungalow. They found Father Melrose in a deck-chair on the riverside lawn reading a newspaper. Tom apologised for having knocked him up on the previous night and asked how Dum was, and what Dee thought about it.

‘Very angry,’ the priest replied. ‘She wants to send those wild young men home, but Mr Crieff-Tweedle has a forgiving nature, although he says that skylarking could be dangerous. He claims that he was not only set upon and half-strangled, but actually thrown over a broken part of the wall. Mrs Crieff-Tweedle makes light of the matter.’

‘I thought you said she was angry.’

‘She makes light of his injuries. She has spoken angrily about those three young men and the dangers of senseless horseplay.’

‘Suppose she’s wrong? Is there any proof that they were the aggressors?’

‘Oh, no doubt they will deny the thoughtless exploit; nevertheless, one hopes they will not repeat it.’

‘I meant to suggest that perhaps they are as innocent as you or I,’ said Tom.

‘Do you think so?’

‘I don’t know what I think, but, if they deny setting upon Crieff-Tweedle, perhaps one should give them the benefit of the doubt.’

‘Then you really think there is a doubt?’

‘As I said before, I don’t know. There are three points in their favour.’

‘I should be glad to hear them.’

‘If you’ll excuse me, Father,’ said Liz, ‘I had better go into the bungalow and have a look at Mr Crieff-Tweedle. If he was flung over even a broken part of the wall, he may have severe bruises, if nothing worse.’

‘So what are your favourable points?’ asked the priest, when Liz had left them.

‘First, it was a darn long way to go on a dark night. Those characters would have preferred a pub. Second, I neither saw nor heard their car. Crieff-Tweedle, from what he told me, must have come to the fort while we were having dinner in Gorleston. We had it pretty late, but that fits with what he says was his time of arrival at Burgh Castle. He didn’t leave his lights on because he didn’t want us to know he had followed us, and, of course, those three chaps could have done the same thing, but I don’t believe they were there at all. There was no sound of a car leaving after we heard the thud which, presumably, was C-T’s body hitting the ground, and I’m sure no car passed me on the road home.’

‘There is more than one way of getting back to Wroxham from Burgh Castle, I think.’

‘The third and perhaps the most important point in their favour,’ Tom went on, ‘is that they had invited a guest to come in for the evening to play bridge.’

‘Do you know that for certain?’

‘Not that he was there all the evening, but he was certainly with them and seemed to be well settled in when I called. Besides, how could they have known that Crieff-Tweedle would be at Burgh Castle last night? The assignment was to me and my party. His wife sent Dum there to find out whether we were keeping the assignment and also whether anybody was playing tricks.’

‘It could have been foreseen that she might do so after the trick played on our party at Salhouse.’

‘Oh, you think it was a trick, do you, sir?’

‘I know it was a trick. Come into my hut. I have something to show you.’

Tom went with him into the annexe. Here, with an air of simple triumph, the priest showed him a portable gramophone.

‘Where is the record?’ asked Tom.

‘I did not find it.’

‘But, anyway, where is your proof? Anybody could have left the gramophone there by accident—

somebody off one of the boats.'

'You are full of doubts, my son. I am not. I suspected trickery at the time, so, in the very early hours, I pushed out the boat we have here, went to Salhouse Broad by water and, having a very clear idea of the location from which the chanting had come, I made a thorough search with the success which I now demonstrate.'

'Yes, it all hangs together,' Tom was compelled to admit. 'There is only one argument against it and that's the one I offered in connection with Burgh Castle. I think those three chaps are too lazy to bother themselves to go playing jokes at night which involve journeys and preparations and what not, and one of them, da Cunha, has an alibi for Salhouse.'

'Boredom creates a hiatus which needs to be filled up, perhaps.'

'Perhaps. Well, I'd better go and offer my condolences and so forth to Crieff-Tweedle and find out how he's feeling.'

'I've been to David's bungalow and got him out of bed,' said Eiladh, when Liz and Tom got back. 'I told him that Dum had been set upon and hurt and I asked him point-blank for the name and address of the man who had played bridge with them last night. Well, there's no doubt they're in the clear. I went to see the man. He is the son of the people in the next bungalow to David's and he was invited in at nine and they had beers and played bridge right up to the time you called.'

'I didn't see how it could have been da Cunha and the others,' said Tom, 'although Ma C-T seems to think it was.'

'What do you think, then?' asked Eiladh,

'Local chaps out to do a bit of poaching, or so Crieff-Tweedle seems convinced.'

'Would there be anything to poach at Burgh Castle?'

'Goodness knows. Rabbits, perhaps, or fish, if any of the Waveney is preserved.'

'I doubt whether poachers would set upon anybody visiting the ruins at night. They'd only think he was some dotty archaeologist and lie low until he'd gone.'

'Well, whatever the explanation, da Cunha and company seem to be outside it, and that brings me to another point.'

'Yes,' said Eiladh. 'As soon as I'd talked to this other man—his name is Pinfold—I realised that if David and the others weren't at Burgh Castle last night, we had no reason to suppose that the other two were the hoaxers at Salhouse. I mean, why should they want to play these tricks?'

'Melrose suggested they were bored.'

'I'm sure they're not. How could men of that age be, with food and drink all laid on for them free of charge, a car to use for which they don't pay a penny, not even for petrol, a boat they can sail or move under power, golf-clubs and tennis racquets—oh, yes, those are very much in evidence at that bungalow; I saw them. What way could they possibly be bored?'

'At least Dum doesn't claim the ghost tackled him. Young men play practical jokes for the hell of it,' said Liz.

'Well, they didn't play the one at Burgh Castle,' retorted Eiladh. 'That's if you call it a joke of any kind to throw a middle-aged, harmless man over a wall.'

'Well, so long as nobody thinks we did it, let's not argue,' said Tom. 'I want the car today. You two can come or not as you like, but I want to have a look at King's Lynn.'

‘I’ll come,’ said his sister.

‘And I’d like a day on my own just cruising around in the boat and maybe, this afternoon, spreading a few cushions on the lawn and catching up with some sleep. I assume we are presenting ourselves at Horning ferry tonight?’ said Eiladh.

‘It’s the assignment for da Cunha’s lot,’ said Tom. ‘I wouldn’t miss it for the world. If some trick or other is tried out on them, as well as on the rest of us, perhaps we can get a line on who the joker is. I vote we get to the Ferry Inn at about ten and stay until just before closing time. It’s bound to be crowded with yachtsmen and so forth, so it ought to make pretty good cover. If any of our crowd do spot us, well, there’s no reason why we should not drop in somewhere down-river for a drink.’

Eiladh saw the other two off and then she sat at a little table on the verandah and began another letter to Dame Beatrice. There was plenty to distract her attention. Cruisers large and small and an occasional small yacht were already out on the Bure. The sunny weather was holding and there was just enough breeze to make sailing possible. Voices, laughter and music came over the water. After writing a couple of pages Eiladh put her letter inside the book she had brought out with her, locked up the bungalow and unhitched the dinghy.

As they were to visit Horning that evening and as, in any case, she had been there before, she turned the boat towards Wroxham bridge and was soon on her way towards Coltishall. The river wound like a serpent after she had passed under a railway bridge, but there was a long, straight stretch after she had passed Wroxham church. Then came a sharper bend followed by another pleasant stretch before the river turned northwards again through wooded countryside. Eiladh drifted on towards Belaugh. Another church tower dominated the landscape. The river became noticeably shallower. There were trees and out from their shade came a couple of orange-billed mute swans, their graceful necks curved proudly as they sailed majestically upon the reed-bordered open water beyond the trees.

A great arc of the river carried Eiladh on to the end of her journey. She moored the boat before she reached the broken locks which cut off further passage, and got out to stretch her legs. She turned back to look at a great-crested grebe which was diving for fish. It was, like all its kind, a striking-looking, very beautiful bird with a white neck, the characteristic black ear-tufts and a chestnut-coloured frill. After a moment its mate appeared, followed by her well-grown, striped, black-and-white chicks.

As she was watching the birds, which seemed unaware of her presence, Eiladh was surprised to hear a voice behind her saying:

‘Well, hullo, there! Lovely day, isn’t it?’

She turned and found herself facing Salathiel Pavy. He was wearing a track suit; his rubber-soled shoes explained why she had not heard him come up.

‘Oh, hullo,’ she said. ‘I didn’t know you were in training for anything.’

‘I’m not, but I like to keep myself fit. How did you get here?’

Eiladh indicated her moored boat.

‘The other two have gone off to Kings Lynn,’ she said, ‘so I thought I’d bring our tub along a quiet part of the river. When do you start your ghost-hunting?’

‘Tonight at Horning. We’re not very keen, as a matter of fact. Besides, our hostess doesn’t like us. She came rampaging round after you’d gone this morning and as good as accused us of setting about her husband at Burgh Castle last night. Well, of course, we wouldn’t have done that, anyway, but, as you found out, we could prove a complete alibi. We were playing bridge the whole evening. David told her the ghosts must have scragged poor old Crieff-Tweedle, but she still went away uttering threats. It’s a

bit hard to be suspected of something we couldn't possibly have done.'

'Yes,' said Eiladh. 'Did you know that she herself sent Dum along to Burgh Castle to keep an eye on us?'

'Whatever was the object of that?'

'To make sure we turned up. She has a very suspicious mind. Before we came to Norfolk she locked up her stately home and turned all the servants out to grass to make sure they did no pilfering while she was away.'

'Good Lord! What an employer! I say, you couldn't give me a lift back in your boat, could you? I think I've got blisters on my feet. Roadwork isn't really my cup of tea. I prefer to do my jogging on grass.'

'Sorry, but I'm not going back for ages yet. I'm lunching at the pub and having a look at the church and then I'm stopping off at Belaugh and having a look at that church, too. Sorry and all that.'

'Oh, well, all right, then, if that's how you feel. I quite understand. I slide away from our lot whenever I can. Oh, look who's here! Surely that's the padre coming in to land? Perhaps I can stick him for a lift.'

He made for the water's edge. Eiladh, who was feeling that sense of relief and slight euphoria which comes, before remorse sets in, from knowing that one has been both uncivil and unkind, waved to the priest before she turned away from the river. On this occasion Father Melrose was in shorts and singlet and was paddling a double-seated kyak. Eiladh walked rapidly away towards the pub. Why she disliked Father Melrose so much she would have found difficulty in explaining.

'Those two met by appointment,' she said to herself, thinking in words, as usual. 'All that guff about his blisters and my giving him a lift was nothing but eyewash. He'd seen Father Melrose's canoe and wanted me to believe that their meeting was accidental. It was nothing of the sort. But why the need for secrecy, I wonder?'

'I don't like Thursdays,' said Liz Carpenter as she and her two companions walked home under the waning moon after dinner in Wroxham that night. Already, at the end of their fourth day of ghost-hunting, the party of eleven was beginning to split up into its separate groups. Even places at table had been changed so that each bungalow consignment could sit together and conversation had become anything but general, although Dee and Father Melrose did their best to keep the ball rolling. The three young men, in fact, had defected entirely and, finding that no wine was to be served at Dee's gatherings, had removed themselves to a separate table, where da Cunha chose and paid for the drinks.

'What's the matter with Thursdays?' asked Tom.

'Thor's day. He's the one who makes thunder and lightning, and I've a feeling we shall soon be in for both.'

Tim looked up at the clear sky and laughed.

'Well, why don't you stay home tonight?' he suggested.

'That's what I'd like to do,' said his sister. 'Who wants to trail over to Horning anyway? There's somebody playing the fool around and about this set-up and I want no part of it. For once I agree with Father Melrose who warned us all at dinner that this nuisance must cease.'

'Well, whoever played the fool at Burgh Castle, it wasn't any member of the party,' said Eiladh. 'It wasn't those three froth-blowers; it certainly wasn't ourselves, and I can't really see Professor Byland and Father Melrose setting about poor old Dum and throwing him over walls. It must have been some drunken louts larking about, or poachers, as Tom said.'

'Well, I'm going to Horning,' said Tom. 'I bought a new and expensive camera in King's Lynn and if

there's going to be funny stuff going on at Horning tonight I'm going to get a picture of it and then we'll get the sheep sorted out from the ghosts—goats, I mean.'

'No, you meant ghosts. It was a nice example of a Freudian slip of the tongue,' said Eiladh. 'All right, then, you go, and I'll stay and man the base with Liz.'

'No,' said Liz. 'I've a better idea than that. Horning is David's assignment, and we'll hope his lot keep it. I'll go and park myself on Dee Crieff-Tweedle and keep tabs on her little party. Somebody's playing these tricks.'

'Father Melrose has his own quarters and if he chooses to stick to them, as he's sure to do at this time in the evening, you can't keep the tabs on him,' her brother pointed out. 'My personal bet is that da Cunha and the others won't go anywhere near Horning tonight. They'll stay in the bar until they're chucked out at closing time, and then they'll stagger home and agree on some yarn they can pitch to Ma Crieff-Tweedle in the morning.'

'So why are you going to Horning?' asked Eiladh.

'Because I don't believe anything will happen there unless it's engineered by the Crieff-Tweedles or the Bylands or, more likely still, by Melrose. I agree with you, Eiladh, that the meeting at Coltishall today between him and Pavy was no accident. They're in collusion, for some reason or another, and I intend to find out what it is.'

'Perhaps they simply feel that Dee ought to get her money's worth,' said Liz. 'Anyway, you two can do as you please.'

'I'd like after all to go with Tom,' said Eiladh, 'if you don't mind an evening on your own.'

'There's not all that much of the evening left. It's nearly nine already. As soon as you've gone I shall call on Dee with the excuse of having another look at Dum and giving him a sedative, try to find out whether Father Melrose is with them or in his annexe and then I shall come back here and go to bed. Don't make too much racket when you come in. I'll leave some coffee in the thermos flask for you.'

'Well, if you're sure that's all right,' said Eiladh. She and Tom left in the car at a quarter past nine and were at the ferry in plenty of time to get a drink at the inn. The company was noisy, bonhomous and slightly drunk. A bronzed yachtsman offered to buy Eiladh a drink while Tom was still at the bar counter, but Tom got rid of him easily and pleasantly and settled himself and his companion at a table from which they had a good view of the crowded room.

'Nobody here that we know,' he said. 'So far, so good. I expect Liz was right. I wonder how soon we ought to take up our positions outside?'

'It doesn't matter, if nothing is going to happen. It's very stuffy in here, though, with so many people and so many pipes and cigarettes going.'

'Right. Drink up, then, and let's shift, unless you'd like another.'

The village was in two distinct parts. These were marked on the map as Lower Street and Upper Street respectively and they were connected not only by the main road which led ultimately to Caister-on-Sea and Great Yarmouth, but by the narrow street which entered the village hard by the Swan hotel. It closely followed the river past boat-builders' sheds, cottages and bungalows. Once these were left behind, there was nothing much except a boathouse or two, moorings for small craft and the marshy river-banks until, at a T-junction, another road down to the ferry and the inn was reached.

To get to Horning Upper Street, where there were the church, the school, another public house and a few cottages, this ferry road had to be retraversed and the previous road followed eastward well away from the river. It was hereabouts that Tom had parked the car so that nobody from among the rest of

Dee's party should pass it and perhaps recognise it.

'Though what does it matter if they do?' Eiladh had enquired. 'We've a perfect right to be in Horning.' Tom had laughed and said he liked playing little-boy games and had a secretive nature. From the parking-spot they had walked to the inn and now, having left the inn, they took cover in the shadow of a boat-house near the ferry and waited for something to happen.

It had been agreed between them that they would not converse while they waited. Little plops and splashes came from the river and a murmuring and rustling in the tall reeds as the night wind began to freshen. Clouds alternately screened and then revealed the moon. Singing, broken and tuneless, came fitfully from the inn. People came out from it and went off on foot to homes or moorings, or more noisily in their cars.

Time passed slowly after the inn cleared. The air was chilly and the river-smells obtruded themselves less pleasantly than by day. The lights from the inn went out until only one was left in an upstairs room. Then that disappeared. Tom felt for Eiladh's hand and put it, with his own, into the warm pocket of his reefer jacket. His arm, pressing against hers, was comforting. After a bit he removed their hands from his pocket and put his arm round her.

They waited and waited. Neither knew what to expect or whether, in fact, to expect anything at all, but, suddenly, they caught the sound of a car. Eiladh disengaged herself, but hardly needed to do so as Tom removed his supporting arm and handed her his torch.

'This could be it,' he muttered. 'Hold this so that I can see what I'm doing with this camera.'

The car came nearer. They could see its headlights, but it stopped some distance away and there was a strange silence until, again, the little noises of the night obtruded themselves as though they had held their breath for a moment, as Eiladh realised that she had held hers. Then, as though, again, they and she had been waiting for some dramatic happening to take place, it occurred. Flying feet came pounding down the road towards the ferry and, as Tom drew Eiladh even further back into the shadow, a figure, clad in white flowing draperies, burst into sight, made for the chain ferry and, leaping into the boat, began to pull for the further shore.

Tom's camera-bulb flashed and, as it did so, the figure in the boat, startled, no doubt, by the sudden light, gave a hoarse scream and tumbled overboard. At the same instant the car they had heard reversed up the road and was soon almost out of hearing. Nothing of dramatic interest remained but a flurried splashing in the river and a half-choked cry for help.

Eiladh began to pull off the anorak she was wearing.

'No! The boat!' yelled Tom. 'Stay put!' He rushed to the ferry landing-place, groped for and found the chain which worked the ferry and began to haul the now empty boat back to the shore. While the figure in the water floundered, splashed and emitted its panic-stricken, gurgling cries, he stepped aboard, pulled the ferry-boat out again and, as he caught an up-flung arm, there was a screech from the shore and Eiladh turned her head just in time to see another white figure streak out from the black shadow of the inn. It floated—or so it seemed— along the bank down-stream away from her and, as Tom brought the ferry-boat with its sodden but rescued occupant back to the little landing-place, Eiladh's more ghostly apparition disappeared among the reeds.

Chapter Ten
The Wrong Ghost

‘If a star were confin’d into a tomb,

Her captive flames must needs burn there;

But when the hand that lock’d her up gives room,

She’ll shine through all the sphere.’

Henry Vaughan— ‘Friends Departed’

‘Well, I do not doubt your word, Mr Pavy, after what happened to my husband,’ said Dee Crieff-Tweedle, ‘but, quite frankly, I find your story incredible.’

Having offered these contradictory statements, she placed her rimless pince-nez in position and gazed coldly through them at the pallid culprit.

‘I can’t help what you believe or don’t believe,’ said Salathiel, showing his first flash of spirit. ‘The facts are as I have given them, and if you think it’s funny to be set on by roughnecks off a motor-cruiser togged up by them like—like the ghost of Lady Hamilton, and then chased into the river when you can’t swim a yard, well, all I can say is—well, that’s all I can say.’

Having finished what had begun as bravado with what had to be regarded as bathos, he leaned back in his deck-chair and closed his eyes.

‘But what were your companions doing to allow you to be subjected to such drunken horseplay, for, if your account of the matter is correct, that is all it could have been,’ said Dee severely.

‘They weren’t there,’ said Salathiel, opening his eyes again.

‘But why not? It was their place to be with you. The whole point is that we work in teams so that we can check one another’s findings and sightings.’

‘They were going to pick me up at the Swan at ten, but these oafs got to me first. They asked me to have a drink, then they got me outside and shanghaied me aboard their beastly cruiser and stripped me and togged me up and then bundled me off their boat and into a beastly great car. When it stopped near the ferry I managed to open the door my side and make a bolt for it, but as I began pulling the ferryboat’s chain to get away on to the other side of the river where I knew they couldn’t follow me until they’d got the ferry-boat back, I overbalanced and fell in. I could have drowned if it hadn’t been for Carpenter.’

‘And what, pray, was Mr Carpenter doing at Horning ferry so late at night?’

‘You had better ask him,’ replied Salathiel, closing his eyes again.

‘You still have not explained what you were doing in the first place all alone at the Swan hotel.’

‘Oh, that! I had an appointment there to meet a chap who thought he could get me a job with Anglia TV.’

‘Indeed? I would ask you to remember that while you are in Norfolk you are under contract to me.’

‘Oh, now, look here!’

‘And how did you get into contact with this man?’

‘I met him at the Maddermarket, where I’d been to ask them for a job. Oh, not as an actor, of course,

but I thought that if I could get my foot in as a stage-hand or something of that sort—'

'A Sweep Behind the Scenes,' said Dum Crieff-Tweedle, laughing heartily at his own wit until he caught his wife's eye.

'I thought an acting rôle might follow,' concluded Salathiel.

'But now you say you want to leave our party.'

The chap can't promise me anything, but he's given me the address of another chap who's in with the Yorkshire crowd.'

'You must finish the fortnight you promised me.'

'You've nothing in writing!'

'Oh, of course, if a gentleman's agreement means nothing to you—'

'Come now, Pavy,' said Father Melrose, for it was in his personal deck-chair outside his blue-painted annexe that the young man was sitting, 'we must hold to our bargain, must we not? You made your agreement with Mrs Crieff-Tweedle in front of witnesses, you know. I myself was one of them.'

'A verbal agreement made in front of witnesses is good in law,' said Dum Crieff-Tweedle, looking towards his wife and, this time, receiving a gracious nod of approval.

'So you see,' she said, again addressing Pavy, 'we can hold you here, although I do not propose to do so against your will. Still, perhaps you would care to remember that you were to be paid at the conclusion of your services and that if you break your contract with me there is no valid reason why I should not break mine with you.'

'Oh, have it your own way!' snarled the white-faced young man. Father Melrose again intervened.

'I am sure,' he said, in a voice which escaped being unctuous, but not by a very wide margin, 'that our young friend would be well-advised—'

Pavy roused himself and sat up so suddenly in his deckchair that he risked its immediate collapse.

'Well-advised as to what?' he asked dangerously. The priest waved a muscular hand and essayed a disarming smile.

'Only to remember that cave canem is one of wisest pieces of advice ever tendered to those who value their personal safety,' he said, his smile widening.

'The wisest of all,' said Dum, 'is beware of the Greeks when they come bearing gifts.'

'Now that is quite clever of you, Dum,' said his wife, speaking as one who addresses a precocious child. 'I expect the mention of dogs made you think of the wooden horse of Troy.'

'The wooden horse wasn't a gift from the Greeks; it was their unexploded bomb,' said Dum. His hearers looked surprised. The priest clapped his hands and laughed. Pavy said:

'If we're going in for the classics, perhaps mention should be made of the lares et penates. Hi! Here! Look out!' The deckchair, owing to a clumsy movement by the heavily-built priest, disintegrated beneath him and it was with some difficulty that Father Melrose, inadequately assisted by Dum, extricated him from the ruins.

'So what do we make of Salathiel's story?' asked Liz, as they sat out on the riverside lawn of their bungalow.

'I think a lot of it was lies,' said Tom. 'I don't doubt he was roughed up, but I think the other two did it. All that stuff about being set on by drunken bullies off a cruiser and being dragged aboard and dressed

up as a woman is just a lot of guff. Why should they bring him down to the ferry? They could just as easily have chucked him into the river opposite the Swan, where he says he met them. If you ask me, the three of them planned this gag so that da Cunha could take a picture of Pavy as the ghost of the girl who's supposed to have committed suicide. In the interim, they all got sloshed and the other two turned on Pavy, probably because he refused to play his part. He must have been considerably under the influence to have tumbled into the river off that ferryboat the way he did.'

'He was very grateful for a good rub down and some dry clothes and your hot whisky and lemon, anyway,' said Eiladh, 'and you say the other two were in their bungalow when you ran him home last night.'

'Yes. He hadn't got his key, so, as there was a light in one of the rooms, I just hung about long enough to make sure one of the others opened the door to him. I didn't stay to offer any explanations because it was so late, but I must say that he expressed himself very decently when he called here after breakfast to return the clothes I'd lent him. However, the ducking he got has cheesed him off. He said he was going back to London.'

'I suppose the gramophone record at Salhouse and the business of Dum at Burgh Castle put the idea of the Horning ghost into their heads,' said Eiladh, 'but how do you explain the other white lady I saw down by the ferry? That wasn't just my imagination, you know.'

'I never thought it was, and, but for the half-drowned idiot, I could have got a picture. Mind you, I think the explanation is a simple one. I think she was a village maiden who had sneaked out to meet her bloke.'

'What Dame B. would call "keeping a clandestine assignation",' said Eiladh. 'It didn't look like that. However, I expect you're right, unless—'

'Unless what?'

'Well, we don't know who was responsible for the gramophone record at Sal-house Broad, but we're pretty certain it wasn't David and his lot who set upon poor old Dum at Burgh Castle, so what if it was the same joker who staged my ghost at Horning ferry to deceive David and Co? It was their assignment last night, if you remember.'

'Yes, but Pavy himself was dressed as the ghost of a girl,' said Tom, 'so, if his story is a lie, that means he and the other two intended a hoax but at some point it went wrong. I repeat that they wanted to take a photograph of him—I suppose to show Ma C-T.'

'But why?' asked Liz. 'Why should they bother?'

'To keep her happy and interested, I suppose, as she's not very fond of them at present. Are you going to mention your own white lady to her, Eiladh?'

'No. If you're right, it would be playing somebody else's game for them and I prefer to play my own; but if your first idea is right and it was only some village girl that I spotted, well, the whole thing fizzles out.'

'But why should those boys go to a lot of trouble to keep Mrs Crieff-Tweedle interested?' persisted Liz. 'They don't give a hoot what she thinks of them.'

'A grateful return for food, shelter and transport, perhaps,' said her brother.

'But does it keep her interested?' asked Eiladh. 'She soon tumbled to it that the Salhouse plainsong came out of the can, not out of the ghosts; she's certain Dum was set upon by human beings and now she knows that Salathiel was dressed up as a woman she's bound to come to the conclusion that somebody is determined to sabotage her ghost-hunt. That'll make her mad, not interested.'

‘If she knows he was dressed up, but, if he’s got any gump at all, he will play down that little bit of information,’ said Tom. ‘Apart from that, you see, he had every reason to be down at the ferry last night, so she can’t query that part of his story. The dicey bit is to explain how he came to be on his own down there, but I expect he’s fixed up some more or less likely story to cover that.’

The story which Pavy had told her was revealed by Dee when she came to visit them in the middle of the afternoon.

‘So you see,’ she said, ‘if Mr Pavy is telling the truth, he was set upon and dressed up in that ridiculous fashion by natives of the place who, probably from loose talk by the three young men themselves at the Swan hotel or elsewhere, have gained knowledge of the reason for our presence here and, for their own bucolic reasons, resent it. What do you think, Mr Carpenter? I mean, after all, we have now made three attempts and each one has produced no evidence except that a practical joker is at work. Our own party claims to be innocent, so we have to look elsewhere, it seems.’

‘I have no opinion I care to voice,’ said Tom. ‘Actually, I believe Norfolk people are proud of their ghosts. They might pretend to laugh at us for wanting to track them down, but they wouldn’t resort to violence. It must have been strangers, visitors, who attacked Pavy.’

‘Well, I find the whole incident, however it came about, deeply perturbing. We are to test the Belaugh haunting tonight and, in view of the attacks upon my husband and Mr Pavy, I have decided that our three parties shall support one another and that, from now on, everybody will be on watch every night. That was my original plan, and I wish I had never allowed myself to be talked out of it.’

‘As a matter of interest,’ said Liz, ‘who did talk you out of it?’

‘I cannot name one specific person, Doctor Carpenter. All I can say is that there appeared to be a consensus of opinion that people would not be getting enough sleep under the original plan. The real reason, I have since discovered, is that some of us,’ she looked accusingly at Tom, ‘prefer to put our own selfish interests before the communal good. Oh, well, I blame you much less than I blame your three contemporaries. At least you have been engaged in something sensible and constructive; David da Cunha, that wretched Arcati and the down-at-heel Pavy seem to have spent most of their time in low public houses or in playing golf instead of sleeping.’

‘I wonder who spilt the beans about that?’ said Liz, when Dee, mollified by Tom’s docility and fortified by tea and cake, had arranged matters for the Belaugh excursion and had taken a stately departure.

‘Father Melrose was her informant, I suppose,’ said Eiladh. ‘I expect he snoops. He looks to me like a snooper and we don’t know what he himself gets up to in his spare time, do we? There’s no doubt in my mind that his meeting with Pavy at Coltishall was a put-up job. If I thought it would do any good, I’d warn Dee Crieff-Tweedle against him, but she’s besotted with the nasty man.’

‘I don’t see what sort of warning you could give,’ said Liz. ‘The meeting at Coltishall doesn’t prove anything. Besides, as you say, nothing would shake her confidence in him unless—’

‘Unless what?’

‘Unless you could prove that he is masquerading as a priest and has no connection at all with the Catholic or any other church. That would shake her, but I’m afraid it would turn out to be too tall an order altogether.’

‘And I shall take it very ill,’ said Dee at table that evening, ‘if any of you fail to turn up in Belaugh churchyard tonight. In view of the attacks on my husband and Mr Pavy, it is essential that we all keep together on these midnight excursions. Dum could have been injured most severely and Mr Pavy could have drowned, for all those marauding persons cared. If we do catch anybody bent on mischief tonight,

I rely upon you three young men and Mr Carpenter to deal with him as he deserves.'

'So long as it's only "him",' said David da Cunha. Dee had had the three men moved back to her own large table so that she could dictate policy to all concerned at one and the same time and impress upon the company that it was a unit and (her remarks implied), a fighting unit, at that. 'But suppose it turns out to be "them"? I'm a professional photographer not a chucker-out at a downtown dance hall.'

'I abhor violence,' said Pavy, 'and I have suffered it.'

'There won't be any trouble,' said Arcati, 'if we all stick together. Mrs Crieff-Tweedle is right about that, and I'm all for it.'

'Exactly my point,' said Dee. 'We shall remain in the lounge here until ten, and then drive in convoy to the rendezvous.' In the lounge she saw to it that the chairs were arranged in so close a circle that the three thirsty young men were trapped in it and the bar waiter, coming up to solicit orders, was so viciously snapped at by Dee that any hope of his serving drinks was clearly out of the question.

When at last they left the hotel, she led the procession of cars out on to the road which went past the railway station, with da Cunha's car sandwiched between her own and that of Tom Carpenter, so that she had sight of it in her mirror and Tom through his windscreen, a measure of her distrust of the three young men.

The drive to Belaugh was a short one, for the road did not follow the windings of the river but, about a mile beyond the railway station, it cut sharply southwest and picked up the Bure below the church which was the party's destination.

They parked the cars some little distance from the churchyard and, by the light of an electric torch, Dee reviewed her troops to make sure that nobody was attempting to sneak off under cover of the darkness. There was little fear of such a contingency. The pubs were shut and she had impounded all the car keys, so, having impressed once again upon those present the necessity for absolute silence, she guided the party to the churchyard.

Here they took up positions on the river frontage of the church whose tower, by daylight, was reflected in the river but which now loomed, the darkest shadow in an almost impenetrable darkness, above and at the back of the watchers. Suddenly the voice of Father Melrose broke the eerie silence which Dee had imposed upon them.

'Come to think of it, dear lady,' he said in ringing tones which seemed to blaspheme the quiet air, 'we've picked the wrong day.'

'Shush, shush!' commanded Dee. 'You will drive her away.'

'Nonsense!' said the priest in a quieter but still clearly audible voice. 'She won't appear tonight. The twenty-fourth of August is her date.'

'Oh, be quiet! Be quiet, Father!' pleaded Dee. 'I am willing her to appear. She comes from her tomb in the church, as I've told you, and takes the path down the river. Listen for the clock to strike a quarter to twelve and keep your eyes open. Oh, I hope, how much I hope there will be no trickery tonight!'

The priest apparently subsided, for no more was heard of him. The next exclamation came from Mrs Byland.

'Oh, look! Look!' she called out. On the river a blinding white light had broken the ink-like darkness. In its circle of radiance stood a tall man with outstretched arms. Then the light and the figure both vanished.

'Well, really, Mavis!' exclaimed Dee, breaking a stunned silence. 'That was too, too naughty of you!'

‘But it was the wrong ghost,’ wailed Mrs Byland. ‘You told us to expect a girl to emerge from her tomb and run towards the river, but what we saw was a tall man in a boat.’

‘If only you would have waited calmly, instead of screaming out like that, a mystery might have been solved. All of you,’ said Dee, raising her voice, ‘stand up and identify yourselves.’

Obligingly the company did so, each uttering his or her name as Dee flashed her torch in everybody’s eyes in turn.

‘All correct, dear?’ asked Dum.

‘Yes, everybody is here at hand,’ she replied. ‘I believe we have seen the apparition of Lady Alys’s lover and, if only Mavis had kept her head, we might have been at last rewarded by a truly remarkable sight.’

‘A chap sniggling eels by moonlight,’ muttered David da Cunha to Eiladh.

‘There isn’t any moonlight,’ she retorted. ‘Look, to settle a bet, did you and Roger set about Pavy last night?’

‘No. Shut up. Ma’s talking. We togged him up, but we didn’t scrag him.’

‘We might have been privileged to witness a reconciliation between two sundered hearts,’ Dee continued.

‘You are beside yourself, dear lady,’ said the priest. ‘What we have witnessed—’

‘No, I refuse to listen to mundane interpretations,’ said Dee.

‘There are some matters which are better left alone,’ continued Father Melrose. ‘I think it is high time we all returned home if we are going to begin to take this nonsense seriously.’

‘Not until I have satisfied myself that it is nonsense,’ retorted Dee, nettled at being told that she was beside herself. ‘I do not quit Norfolk until I have satisfied myself upon these extraordinary matters. Let us return to the cars. Thanks to Mavis, we shall get nothing more here in Belaugh tonight.’

‘It was the wrong ghost,’ repeated Mrs Byland angrily. ‘In my opinion, the wrong ghost is no ghost at all. It’s all a lot of trickery and I’m getting tired of it. If you believe Salhouse was a trick, Burgh Castle a case of common assault and Horning ferry a drunken frolic, why are you convinced by some magnesium flares and a man waving his arms about?’

‘I refuse to discuss it,’ said Dee.

Chapter Eleven
Black Monk, Black Dog

‘The sun had already set, and the red reflected light of the western sky illuminated the scene with the peculiar effect with which we are all familiar.’

J. Sheridan le Fanu — Green Tea

‘Well, one thing is certain,’ said Tom, on the following morning. ‘If there’s any jiggery-pokery going on, it’s not the work of anybody in the party.’

‘No, that’s for sure,’ agreed his sister, ‘unless, of course, somebody in the party has an accomplice we

know nothing about.'

'Is that what you think?'

'Well, we don't really believe we saw the ghost of Lady Alys's lover, or whoever it was, do we? Somebody staged that little demonstration. I expect Dee to be round here at any moment to give us our briefing for tonight. I shall be interested to hear her views on last night's manifestation.'

'I am beginning to wonder,' said Dee, when she turned up as they had known she would, 'whether I was too hasty in supposing that the music we heard at Salhouse was from a gramophone record.'

'I thought you had quite made up your mind about that,' said Liz.

'Well, so I had, I suppose, but after that wonderful experience we had last night, I am beginning to wonder, as I said. Even the attack on Dum at Burgh Castle could have been made by supernatural agency, I suppose.'

'He didn't seem to think so,' said Eiladh 'and it certainly wasn't a ghost which toppled Salathiel Pavy into the river at Horning, but simply his own clumsiness. All the same—' she hesitated and glanced at Tom.

'Yes, go on,' he said. 'Tell her. After all, you did see it, you think.'

'See what?' asked Dee, immediately agog.

'Well, it was because we suspected trickery that Tom and I went to Horning that night, and, while Tom was rescuing Salathiel, I'm almost certain I saw another white figure dart out from near the Ferry Inn and vanish among the reeds.'

'Of course she came from the inn! Her body is buried under the floor of the bar, or so the story goes. But, my dear child, why was I not told of this until now?'

'I concluded it was another joke played by whoever was responsible for the other tricks.'

'But this is most important. We must certainly continue to keep watch. I have made all the arrangements for tonight. Unfortunately we shall be without Father Melrose. He showed me a letter which came for him yesterday inviting him to preach in Our Lady of Refuge Catholic Church at Cromer and to stay with a Catholic family in the town this evening.'

'Oh, yes, of course, tomorrow is Sunday,' said Liz. 'I had lost count of the days. What about Pavy? He gave Tom some impression that he wanted to go back to London.'

'Oh, he has been persuaded to change his mind by Father Melrose. Now to the arrangements for tonight: we shall all take part in the watching, as we did at Belaugh—'

'Except for Melrose,' said Tom.

'Yes, Mr Carpenter, except for Father Melrose. We shall dine at the usual time and set out immediately after dinner for Ranworth Broad. Ideally, of course, as the Black Monk of Ranworth is water-borne, we, too, should be in boats, but as the rule about moving hired boats along the rivers by night is strictly enforced, we must take the cars near the church and walk to the water's edge from there. You, like the rest of us, lost some rest last night, especially if, like me, you were too much excited to sleep when you got to bed, so I suggest you make up for it during the day so that you are fully alert tonight.'

'Make up for it during the day?' said Tom, when she had gone. 'Perish the thought. Do you two mind if I leave you to your own devices? I have a yearning to take the car northwards and have a look at Cawston and Salle.'

'I rather wanted to get a breath of sea air at Cromer,' said Eiladh. 'Cawston and Salle are not far off my

route. Could you manage if I dropped you off at one or the other and picked you up on my way back?'

'Surely. The two churches are only a couple of miles apart. I can walk that easily. Cawston has a stone tower, the stone, it's said, having been brought from Caen up river to Coltishall and transported by road from there. Salle is just about the finest church in the county and I'm determined not to leave Norfolk until I've seen it. But why Cromer? Don't tell me you're going to take a look at the Catholic church there?'

'Something of the sort,' said Eiladh.

'But why?'

'I like its name.'

'I'll come with you,' said Liz. 'I'd like some sea air myself, and I can go to sleep in a Cromer deckchair just as easily as in one of these at this bungalow.'

The church of Our Lady of Refuge was open. A woman was dusting the pews. Eiladh and Liz knelt in one of them, and then, this courtesy gesture completed, they approached the woman, who smiled at them.

'You have a beautiful church,' said Eiladh.

'Yes. You are staying in Cromer?'

'Only for a very short time. We have met the Father who is going to officiate here tomorrow.'

'Oh, yes?'

'Father Melrose.'

The woman shook her head.

'You have been misinformed,' she said. 'Tomorrow Mass will be served by our own parish priest, as usual. I have never heard of Father Melrose and I am the priest's housekeeper.'

'Well,' said Eiladh, when they had left the church. 'I've thought all along that Father Melrose was a phony. Now we know he's a liar as well.'

'It was rather rash of him to name the town and the church,' said Liz.

'All done to add verisimilitude and all that.'

'All the same, he took the risk of having somebody check up on him.'

'He didn't suppose for an instant that anybody would bother.'

To Eiladh's surprise, nobody at dinner that night made any mention of the unexpected ghost of Belaugh until almost the end of the meal. Dee maintained the silence, in fact, of deep displeasure, for there was insurrection in the camp. The three young men had insisted upon returning to their own table and David, in quiet but obstinate argument with her over this, had added that it was Saturday night and that he and his companions were going into Great Yarmouth to find out what it could offer in the way of entertainment.

'If Melrose can opt out for his private purposes, so can we,' was the gist of his case. He further argued that the Ranworth expedition could be put off until the Monday, 'when you'll get a full hand,' he said. 'I refer to Melrose and us and, presumably, all the rest of the mob. You won't get any joy out of ghost-hunting on a Saturday night. There'll be all the boozy boat-parties singing and playing records and so on. No self-respecting ghost is going to put up with that.'

Father Melrose had taken himself off to Wroxham railway station immediately after lunch and the three

young men finished their dinner in haste and were out of the dining-room without waiting for coffee. The silence at the big table lasted until the sound of their car was lost. Dee said.

‘In their present mood we are better off without them, but I am greatly disappointed in David da Cunha. He was supposed to be here as official photographer to the party and I do not believe he has discharged a single bulb.’

‘No, but I have,’ said Tom Carpenter. ‘I don’t know whether anything will come out, but I did have a shot at Belaugh’s vanishing man. I wonder what tonight has in store for us?’

‘A cowled and silent monk in a boat with his dog, I hope,’ said Professor Byland. Mavis Byland looked satirically at Dee.

‘He is a benevolent ghost,’ said Dee. ‘If he chooses to appear, we should all experience a sensation of peace and inner happiness. I have great hopes of Brother Pacificus, who restored the wonderful screen in Ranworth church and whose dog Caesar used to wait for him in the boat until he had finished work each day.’

‘One man and his dog went to mow a meadow,’ sang Dum, suddenly and surprisingly.

‘Really, Dum, must you draw the attention of the whole dining-room? Have you gone mad?’ demanded his wife furiously. Dum blushed and apologised. ‘I think we won’t wait for coffee,’ Dee continued. ‘I dislike being the cynosure of all eyes.’

‘I thought “cynosure” indicated admiration,’ murmured Tom to his companions as they walked out to their car, ‘and poor old Crieff-Tweedle’s little effort can hardly have excited that.’

‘Is the worm beginning to turn, do you think?’ asked Eiladh. ‘I would have the warmest admiration for him if that was the case.’

Owing to the abrupt termination of their meal, the ghost-hunters arrived at their destination before it was dark, but rich was their reward.

‘There he is!’ whispered Dee, excitedly. Out on the Broad was a boat. It carried no sail and no visible oars. In it a cowled figure, statue-still, appeared black against the last of the sunset as the sun declined behind the reeds.

‘No dog,’ muttered Professor Byland; but, as he spoke, up from the bottom of the boat scrambled a black, shaggy dog, and joined the monk on the thwarts.

‘Quick, Mr Carpenter! A photograph!’ cried Dee, more loudly than she had intended. Tom, for good measure, took a couple. The boat appeared to rock very gently on the quiet water. The monk and the dog remained immovable, but a voice came clearly across the water. ‘Pax vobis-cum,’ it pronounced. ‘Ite missa est.’

‘We are dismissed,’ said Professor Byland. ‘I am disappointed that he wants to be rid of us so soon. Neither,’ he added, ‘do I feel any sense of that peace and inward happiness you promised us, my dear Mrs Crieff-Tweedle. Oh, well, and so to bed!’ But Dee was in ecstasies.

‘How right, how very right we were to come,’ she said, ‘but we must leave him in peace now. Last night at Belaugh was very wonderful, but this is quite, quite out of this world!’

‘I doubt it,’ muttered Tom to Eiladh, as, following Dee’s lead, they returned to the church precincts and their cars. ‘All that charlatan wanted was for us to be off so that he could row himself ashore without our realising it. “You are dismissed,” indeed! Well, he knows his church Latin, anyhow. I’ll grant him that.’

‘I didn’t see any oars.’

‘He’ll have shipped them. I bet you they were in the bottom of the boat all right.’

‘Father Melrose?’

‘Or one of those three idiots in the other bungalow. Pavy is an actor, don’t forget, and he wasn’t with us.’

‘The boat wasn’t all that far out on the Broad, so I should have got quite a decent picture,’ said Tom next morning. ‘Well, now, thanks to Mrs C-T’s regard for the Sabbath, we have the whole of today to ourselves. What shall we do wiv it?—as the Cockney said to his wife when he found that the local council had included a bathroom in his municipal flat.’

‘Just nothing,’ said Liz. ‘I’ll be quite content to put in the whole day here doing damn all. If I could leave, I’d go home, but, as medical officer to this ragtime outfit, I can’t leave, particularly as I’ve had to deal with two casualties already.’

‘Well, I’m going to spend the day in Cromer, again,’ said Eiladh, ‘and make certain I’m not doing Father Melrose an injustice.’

‘Why don’t we all?’ suggested Tom. ‘Cromer it is.’

‘You two go,’ said his sister, ‘but it will be a waste of time, because the only service you can check is the six-thirty one. The seven o’clock and eight o’clock are over and, even if you set out here and now, you’d be too late for the eleven o’clock because it’s already half-past ten, so where’s the point?’

‘On second thoughts kindly supplied by you, there isn’t one,’ said Eiladh, ‘so let’s all spend a lazy day here.’

Tom looked disappointed, but said nothing, and Father Melrose’s movements remained unchecked. Dee’s original plan had included visits to several places which now had been dropped from the agenda. Blickling Hall was one; Thurne Mouth and Brundall were others; but St Benet’s Abbey had been retained and was the last on the list. When that had been seen, Dee’s revised plan was to pay a second visit to Salhouse. ‘In view of what we saw at Ranworth, I am still inclined to change my mind about the music we heard; perhaps I had too little faith in the supernatural after Father Melrose found the gramophone which seemed to explain the music. Then there was our strange experience at Belaugh. What the meaning of it was, I hardly know, but it was certainly very striking. If only Mavis had retained a little self-command, instead of frightening the spectre away by her idiotic, schoolgirl ejaculation of surprise and terror, we might have seen something both constructive and interesting. Guided by me, Dum is now willing to believe that the agency which attacked him at Burgh Castle may also have been supernatural. After all, he suffered no serious injury,’ she said, ‘and now we have seen Brother Pacificus at Ranworth, I am utterly convinced.’

All future expeditions were to be a repetition of the one at Belaugh; that is to say, they were to be embarked upon by the whole party, or as many as could be induced to go. (‘For I have no faith in the esprit de corps of David, Arcati and that wretched little actor.’)

These ‘asides’ were made by Dee when she visited Uplands in the middle of Sunday morning and she expressed delight when Tom said:

‘Blickling was down on this bungalow party’s list to begin with. I know you’ve confined the activities to outdoor sites only, but Blickling Hall is open to the public on Sundays, so I’d rather like to go and see it this afternoon.’

‘Soak yourself in thoughts of Anne Boleyn,’ advised Dee. ‘Who knows? You may get emanations, if nothing more. Of course, to obtain real satisfaction from my project, I should have worked out my dates, but that would have involved expedition after expedition and was quite out of the question. Anne

Boleyn's best date, if one wants to see the coach drive out from Blickling, is the nineteenth of May, the anniversary of her execution, and May would have done very nicely for Salhouse and St Benet's Abbey, too, but the emanations should still be fairly strong if you have faith. Until our wonderful experiences at Belaugh and Ranworth, I myself had begun to have doubts, but the shining lover and the Black Monk and his little dog have dispelled them entirely.'

The little dog?' said Tom. 'Was there one?'

'Oh, but, yes, the dear little creety-weety got up on to the seat in the boaty-woaty and stayed beside the monk-wunk as the legend states that he does,' declared Dee, with the positive assurance and the nonsense language she talked when she was excited. Eiladh glanced at Tom, raised her eyebrows, and shook her head at him.

'I saw it, too,' she said. 'A little black dog, but I believe it ought to have been white.'

'Whatever made you say you were going to Blickling Hall?' asked his sister, when Dee, having issued her instructions for Monday night, had gone off to visit the three young men and, in her own words, attempt to bring them to a sense of their obligations.

'I don't know. It was a sudden inspiration and a damn silly one, at that, because it means I shall have to go, I suppose.' He looked at Eiladh. 'Coming with me?'

It was in the long gallery, with its elaboration of Jacobean plaster-work and its nineteenth-century oak bookcases, that he proposed to her. Eiladh had been expecting this, but when he uttered the actual words she was taken by surprise.

Ridiculously, tears came into her eyes and to control them she said idiotically,

'I'll have to ask me mum.'

Anne Boleyn, whose old home, in any case, no longer exists, since the present mansion dates from 1616, with nothing of the Boleyn property left except the mound on which it had stood, was not mentioned either by Tom or Eiladh, so it is doubtful whether the poor lady received so much as a passing thought from either of them.

On the following night, David, Arcati and Pavy, having had their Saturday night fling, proved submissive and seemed anxious to placate Dee. They joined the main party at the dinner-table and listened with apparent respect when she outlined once again the main features of the night's engagement, the expedition to the ruins of St Benet's Abbey.

'Now we are clear, I hope, as to what we have to do,' she said. 'Professor and Mrs Byland have cried off and will return to Kojak as soon as dinner is over. The professor has been unwise enough to remain wet-footed for several hours yesterday in his enthusiasm to photograph the birds of the marshes, so he will be better off in bed with dear Mavis to minister to him. Fortunately, with our ranks reinforced this time by David and his friends, there will be plenty of watchers. Doctor and Mr Carpenter, with Eiladh and the young men, have agreed to visit the ruins from the Horning side. They will drive as far as they find they can—the map shows about half a mile of road beyond Hall Common—park their car at some convenient spot and then take the footpath to the ruins.'

She had reached this point in her revision when a waiter walked across to their table to ask whether one of the gentlemen was Mr Pavy. If so, he was wanted on the telephone. Pavy went out with him and did not return to the table. Dee fussed and fidgeted and, in the end, decided that there was nothing for it but to carry on the evening's arrangements without him.

'He really is being too, too tiresome,' she said. 'I suppose he has played his own game and has arranged for somebody to recall him to London. I thought I had got the better of him, but it seems not to be so.'

She summoned the waiter. ‘Is Mr Pavy still on the telephone?’

‘I will enquire at the office, madam.’ He returned to say: ‘The call was a short one. The gentleman then called for a time-table and has gone off, we suppose, to catch a train.’

‘Well, I haven’t paid him yet,’ Dee remarked in a spiteful aside to her husband, ‘and I shall not do so. I have been double-crossed by that perfidious young man.’

Chapter Twelve
Black Deeds

‘I need not, gentlemen, paint to you the heinousness of the crime of murder. You have but to consult your own breasts, and you will know it.’

The Hon Mr Bathurst —The Trial of Mary Blandy

‘Of course, the ideal thing would be to go by boat,’ said Dum, deciding not to comment upon his wife’s last remark. There are lots of moorings on that part of the Bure.’

‘Really, you make the most inane suggestions, Dum,’ said Dee, rising from the table. ‘First, as you very well know, we may not move hired craft after dark, and, in any case, our dinghy has no riding-lights; secondly, even so early in the season as this, all moorings will have been taken up long ago.’

‘All I meant, my dear,’ explained Dum humbly, ‘is that we shan’t get a very good view of the ruins from the other side of the river.’

‘Well, if you and the Father had been willing to walk with the young people you could have made observation from a better vantage point. There was nothing to stop you.’

St Benet’s-at-Holm has suffered three desecrations in its long existence. It was betrayed to the Normans by one of its own Saxon monks; the same monk had then been most ungratefully hanged by the Conqueror’s men; and, finally, a drainage windmill, itself now in ruins, had been built amid the crumbling walls of the abbey with the result that this had deprived them of any charm they might otherwise have possessed. It was the ghostly figure of the hanged monk which the ghost-hunters were hoping to see.

‘I’m going to push along as fast as I can tonight,’ said Tom, when the car was on its way to Horning. ‘According to the map, once we leave the car and take to the footpath, the land is all drains and ditches, so we had better try to cross it before dark.’

‘It’s liable to flooding, too,’ said Liz, ‘so here’s hoping it doesn’t rain.’

Dee, who was proposing to take a much longer route, expected complications after Panxworth. She had opted to use Father Melrose as navigator rather than Dum, but she had reason to regret her choice, particularly as she did not realise how very much astray she was until they found themselves back outside the Wroxham hotel where they had dined.

‘We appear to have made a circular tour,’ she said acidly.

‘I’m afraid I went wrong in South Walsham,’ Father Melrose observed apologetically. ‘I really think it would have been better to arrive at our destination in broad daylight, you know. It is so very easy to make mistakes on country roads at dusk. Do you feel inclined to try again, dear lady?’

‘No, I don’t,’ replied Dee, trying to keep reproach out of her voice. ‘We must just rely upon a report from the others, that’s all. As a matter of fact, I do not expect much to come of tonight’s expedition. There are moorings all along the river just there and there may be a riverside footpath, too. No apparition can be expected in such circumstances. Tomorrow may be more fruitful.’

Meanwhile Tom, Eiladh and Liz had also lost their way. As far as Ludham Bridge the route was known to them and, although it was by no means straight, it was straightforward enough and followed the main road. After the road swung northward towards the village of Ludham, Tom found the by-road he needed, but missed the turning in which they were to leave the car. He drove on across the common and, still following the wrong road, passed a farm which he knew was not on his schedule and then found his hopes renewed when the road met the river.

‘But I’m sure this is wrong,’ said Liz. ‘We are not supposed to be anywhere near the river until we come to the ruins themselves. I think we ought to go back to that farm and ask for directions.’

‘They’d think we were mad to want to go and look at the ruins at this time of night,’ said Tom. ‘There’s the beginning of a footpath and it goes in what must be the right direction. Let’s have another look at the map. Yes, here we are. There’s the farm marked and there’s a windmill. There’s the signpost at Thurne Mouth and the river bends round towards the ruins. We’ve only got to follow our noses. It’s not dark yet.’

‘But it’s miles to walk,’ said Liz, ‘and it’s certainly getting dark. If you want to carry on, that’s fine. Personally I’m going to sit in the car until you come back. I don’t like the riverside at dusk. It’s quite easy to miss your footing and fall into the water or walk into a marsh.’

‘I’m inclined to agree,’ said Eiladh, ‘and the sky has come over awfully black, I think it’s going to rain. How long do you think you’ll be gone?’

‘If I went, you’d have to reckon on a couple of hours, so I shan’t go. Can’t leave two girls in a benighted spot like this,’ said the chivalrous male.

‘Why not? Are you afraid Old Shuck might come along and bite us or spirit us away?’ asked his sister; but Eiladh shuddered.

‘Let’s pack it in,’ she said. ‘The mention of Old Shuck has finished me.’

‘Oh, he doesn’t haunt nearer than Coltishall,’ said Tom. ‘All the same, home we go, because, anyhow, here comes the rain.’ He reversed and then turned the car and back they went, which was why it was not until two days later that they heard that St Benet’s-at-Holm had collected another hanged man.

The other bungalow parties were also ignorant of this, since they had given up the expedition as well. In the morning Dee paid her usual visits, heard from da Cunha and Arcati that it seemed certain that Pavy had indeed gone back to London, (‘Leaving his kit here for us to tote back to his lodgings, the lazy devil,’ said David), and that they had no report to make of the abbey ghost.

‘I suppose you did go?’ said Dee suspiciously. ‘We saw nothing of your car after we left the hotel.’ They assured her that they had carried out her instructions to the letter, a statement they were very anxious to retract later on.

‘We got caught in the rain, as you see,’ said Arcati, pointing to a line of clothing spread out on the rail of their verandah. Following David’s lead, he did not explain that they had been caught in the rain getting back to their car when they left a famous pub at Potter Heigham at just on closing time.

So Dee, who was never to know of the fate which had overtaken Salathiel Pavy, issued her orders of the day and went on to visit Uplands for the same purpose. Meanwhile, the police, alerted by an excited holiday-maker who had moored for the night almost opposite the abbey ruins, were already trying to

establish the identity of a young man with no papers of any kind in his pockets, who had been found hanging from the gateway arch of St Benet's-at-Holm.

Innocent of any knowledge of this sinister business, Tom, Liz and Eiladh made full confession of their non-success of the previous night. Dee was prepared to be gracious.

'I did not get there myself,' she said. 'Father Melrose may be quite a capable driver, although I did not invite him to take the wheel last night, but he certainly is not gifted as a map-reader and navigator. It is a pity that he got back too late on Monday afternoon to do more than make a cursory study of the route I had planned, and that we did not set out before dusk. David and Arcati appear to have managed to make the journey correctly, but have nothing to report, so I was right when I assumed that we should obtain no results with so many holiday craft moored near the ruins. Tonight we shall be under no such disadvantage. I have decided that we shall make another attempt on Burgh Castle.'

'The only person who got any result there was poor Mr Crieff-Tweedle,' observed Liz. 'Luckily his injuries were only superficial.'

'Well, so they would be if a poltergeist inflicted them, which I now have convinced myself was the case,' said Dee. 'Poltergeists, I believe, are noisy and mischievous, but I have yet to hear of their occasioning actual bodily harm to anyone.'

'I don't know so much,' said Tom. 'I've read of people being pulled out of bed or given a black eye by them and poltergeists have also been accused of setting fire to things. Is Mr Crieff-Tweedle prepared to visit Burgh Castle again?'

'Of course he will go. There is no question of that.'

'I suppose the poor devil won't have any choice,' commented Tom, when Dee had left them. At dinner that evening, however, Dum did not appear and neither did the Bylands. Pavy, of course, nobody expected to see, as it was assumed that he was in London. Father Melrose was another absentee.

'I shall occupy the fourth seat in your car, Mr Carpenter,' Dee told Tom. 'The Father is again disporting himself, I suppose, with his ecclesiastical companions, so it will be pleasanter for me to join you than to drive alone. Professor and dear Mavis are still nursing their ridiculous colds and claim that after last night's rain everything will be very damp and that they are feeling most unwell and are thinking of going home. As for Dum, most annoyingly he claims to have caught cold, too, and declined to turn out. True, he became somewhat wet putting the car away last night, but I hardly see how the symptoms of a cold can have shown themselves so soon.'

'Perhaps, after his experience at Burgh Castle last time, he's got cold feet instead of a cold in the head,' said David da Cunha. This suggestion was not well received by Dee.

'I should not think of allowing him to be so pusillanimous,' she said coldly. 'It is quite bad enough that he makes so much fuss about his health. Talking of health, I wonder, Doctor Carpenter, whether I might have a word with you in the lounge before we set out?'

'Certainly,' Liz replied. 'If you would like me to go to your bungalow and take a look at the three invalids, I shall willingly forgo the trip to Burgh Castle.'

Dee made no reply to this suggestion. As most of the residents were still at dinner, they had the lounge almost to themselves. Dee seated herself and motioned Liz to do the same.

'I will not beat about the bush, Doctor Carpenter,' she said. 'Tell me, have you noticed lately anything different about dear little Eiladh and your brother?'

'I shouldn't call Eiladh "little" exactly,' replied Liz, realising from Dee's strident tone that she had better prepare herself for battle. 'If you mean that I expect quite soon to be told that they are engaged to

be married, yes, if you call that “noticing anything”, then I have noticed it. They are what the Scots call “well-agreed”.’

‘That is what I mean. Well, I am glad that we also are in agreement.’

‘What about?’

‘Why, surely, that it is no longer desirable for them to occupy the same bungalow.’

‘Why not?’

‘Oh, come now, my dear! Surely I don’t need to explain to a doctor what I mean?’

‘Yes, you do need to explain.’ Liz kept her voice level, although she could not control the rising tide of anger in her cheeks.

‘Well, really!’ Dee exclaimed. ‘I hardly thought I should need to be explicit, but, if I have to be, I shall not shirk my responsibilities. Does Eiladh still share your room?’

At this, Liz boiled over.

‘Look,’ she said, ‘if you’ve noticed, when you’ve come there far too early each morning, that Eiladh’s pyjamas are chucked over the back of the studio-couch, that’s because the studio-couch is made to do duty as a bed and on that bed Eiladh (and only Eiladh) has been sleeping.’

‘But of course, of course! I did not mean—’

‘And if she and my brother did want to creep into bed with one another, it would be nobody’s business but their own,’ Liz went on furiously.

‘I am responsible—’

‘For a girl who is of age and a man of twenty-eight?’

‘But—’

‘But you can take it from me that neither of them would have the bad taste to do anything of the kind which you suggest while I am staying in the same bungalow. Did that not occur to you?’

‘It is not a question of taste, Doctor Carpenter.’

‘Well, you would hardly know about that, would you?’

‘I do not care for your attitude.’

‘And I don’t care for your nasty, prurient insinuations. My brother is not a saint and Miss Gavin is not a puritan, but there are limits and they will continue to observe them. I will wish you goodnight. You will hardly expect the three of us to join this evening’s expedition now!’

Dee began to speak, thought better of it and flounced out. Liz gave herself a moment to regain her composure and then left the lounge. She looked in at the dining-room, but their table was empty, so she walked out to the asphalt square where the cars were parked, went up to her own and tapped at the driver’s window. Tom opened it. Eiladh, already belted in, was seated beside him. It had begun to rain again.

‘We’re not going,’ said Liz shortly.

‘Not going? Because of the rain?’

‘No. I’ve had a row.’

‘With Ma?’

‘Yes. I want to go straight back to the bungalow and start packing.’

‘We heard Dee’s opening remarks,’ said Eiladh. ‘Why worry? She can’t help being a nasty-minded old bitch.’

‘Oh, can’t she? Tom!’

Tom knew his sister. It took a good deal to upset Liz, but upset she undoubtedly was.

‘O.K., big girl,’ he said. ‘Hop in and we won’t spare the ’osses.’ He also knew better than to argue with her. He pressed Eiladh’s arm to convey the necessary hint to her, reversed out of the hotel parking-space and the car was soon crossing Wroxham bridge. As he opened the car doors for the two girls to get out when they reached Uplands, he said cheerfully,

‘As it’s begun to rain again, I should think they’d all pack it in for tonight.’

Liz said nothing. She hurried to get into the bungalow and, when Tom and Eiladh followed, they could hear her slamming things about in her bedroom.

‘What on earth can Dee have said to her?’ whispered Eiladh. ‘We heard the first bit, but there was more. Liz is properly mad about something.’

‘Yes, me, too.’

‘Well, about what? We’re not married yet, but I think you ought to practise.’

‘Practise what?’

‘Having no secrets from me.’

‘Oh, I see. Well, it’s not a secret. Ma approached me in a furtive, prayer-meeting kind of manner before dinner this evening and said: “Mr Carpenter, I believe you are a gentleman.” I handed her the time-honoured gag that, so far as I knew, I wasn’t a lady, and she went on to say that this was no occasion for flippancy. She just hoped that I realised I was the protector of two innocent girls. I said I hadn’t noticed it, at which she gave me what’s called “a significant look”, repeated the word “innocent” in a marked manner and went into dinner shaking her head sadly.’

‘Oh!’ said Eiladh. ‘Did she indeed! She wants drowning!’

Liz came out, suitcase in hand.

‘You can stick this in the boot as soon as ever you like,’ she said to her brother.

‘Not tonight, love. It’s raining. Let’s all have a drink. Why allow a nasty, nosey -parkering old so-and-so like Ma Crieff-Tweedle to upset the apple-cart? Sit down for goodness’ sake, and take the weight off your mind. These people who’re past it can’t help envying those who are not. Snap out of it and let’s all get sloshed. I’ll do a crawl and see what wines and spirits I can rustle up.’ He pulled his sister on to his knee. ‘Or, if you prefer it, sob your little heart out,’ he added. Liz pulled herself free and, to the relief of the other two, laughed in an entirely natural way.

‘Sorry,’ she said. ‘She got my goat, that’s all.’

Whether it was owing to their potations or due to previous short nights, the three of them overslept on the following morning and were awakened by heavy and prolonged banging on the front door. Eiladh, who, in the lounge, was nearest, pulled on her dressing-gown and went to answer the knocking, thinking that the visitor was Dee Crieff-Tweedle making her morning rounds as usual.

Instead of that, it was Dum Crieff-Tweedle who stood there. Eiladh asked him in and, as she closed the door behind him, first Liz and then Tom appeared.

‘You must forgive me for calling so early,’ said Dum, ‘but 1 suppose you haven’t seen Dee this morning, have you? But, no, of course you haven’t. The fact is, I can’t think what’s become of her. I went to bed early last night to nurse my cold, and when I woke up this morning she had made her bed and gone out without any breakfast.’

‘How do you know that she hadn’t had any breakfast?’ asked Liz.

‘I counted the eggs and the uncooked rashers of bacon. I usually do the breakfasts, you see. Dee and Mrs Byland cook the lunches and Byland gets the tea.’

‘Sounds a fair division of labour,’ said Tom. ‘Didn’t the Bylands hear Mrs Crieff-Tweedle go out?’

‘They weren’t there.’

‘Weren’t there?’

‘No. You see, before dinner yesterday Mrs Byland said that she and the professor would not be going to Burgh Castle last evening because of their heavy colds. My dear wife was rather unhappy about this. She said their colds were their own fault and—well, you know how it is when that kind of argument begins—one thing led to another and my wife pointed out that she did not give free holidays to people who had no sense of their obligations.’

‘Oh, dear!’ said Liz.

‘Mrs Crieff-Tweedle seems to have had a field day yesterday,’ remarked Tom.

‘So what happened?’ asked Eiladh.

‘Regrettably, my dear, the Bylands have taken themselves off, bag and baggage. They left while the rest of you were at the hotel.’

‘We noticed they were not at dinner last night, but we thought it was because of their colds.’

‘Their colds were severe.’

‘So they shouldn’t have been riding in trains and spreading infection,’ said Liz.

‘I begged them to reconsider, but they were affronted, of course, by Dee’s unfortunate remarks. I will say that, perceiving how upset they were, my wife apologised and added her voice to mine, but they were adamant.’

‘So, for all you know, Mrs Crieff-Tweedle did not come back from Burgh Castle last night,’ said Tom suddenly. Dum gaped at him.

‘Well, if you care to put it like that,’ he said, ‘no, I suppose I couldn’t say whether she came back or not, except that I thought I heard the car and then her voice.’

‘She was to have had a seat in our car, but, when we opted out, I suppose she joined da Cunha and Arcati,’ said Tom. ‘I rather think, sir, you had better go and look those chaps up. Half a minute and I’ll get dressed and come with you if you like.’

‘Up to now,’ said Dum to the two girls, ‘I have been merely puzzled; but now, remembering my own strange experience at Burgh Castle, I am beginning to be deeply perturbed.’

Tom came back from the visit without him.

Those blighters at the other bungalow haven’t a clue,’ he said. ‘When they realised that none of us would be joining Ma C-T on the excursion, they made a bolt for it directly after dinner and went to the pub at the other end of the village and never showed up at Burgh Castle at all.’

‘But that means she went alone, if she did go,’ said Eiladh. ‘Would she do that, especially in the rain?’

‘She’d had a row with the Bylands and then with Liz, so she may have done, if she was all steamed up.’

‘Well, we’d better get over there ourselves and see whether we can find out what’s happened to her,’ said Liz.

‘What about getting the police on the job?’ suggested the Assistant Commissioner’s daughter. She was overruled by Liz, who said that if Dee had been a victim of the same treatment as had been meted out to Dum at Burgh Castle, a doctor was the first consideration. If Dee had been subjected to violence, the police could be called in later.

‘Are we picking up Dum, then?’ Eiladh asked. ‘There’s a seat in the car for him if he wants it.’

‘No. For one thing, he’s been on the bottle and got a hangover. He’s got himself into a bit of a state now he believes she went alone to Burgh Castle. We’ll be better off without him if she has had an accident. I really think that must be the case, you know,’ said Liz.

While Tom had been gone the two girls had made coffee and cooked breakfast and had kept both hot against his return. The drive to Burgh Castle seemed shorter and easier than their previous trip to it had been, and the fort itself, for all its grim strength and formidable bastions, was less impressive than it had appeared under the mysterious cloak of the night.

Just as they got out of the car they heard voices and, following the direction from which these seemed to come, they saw a fairly large motor-cruiser hove to on the river frontage of the fort with a noisy party on board and two men in a dinghy pulling towards the shore.

The reason for the excitement was apparent. On the foreshore, amid pieces of stone and other débris, lay a woman. Round her neck a white rag was tied. Liz ran forward, regardless of the risk of turning her ankle on the stones which strewed the way, and waved at the two men who had beached their dinghy and were making for the inert figure on the strand.

‘Keep away, please!’ she called out to them. ‘I am a doctor.’ They continued to come towards her, however, as she knelt beside the body.

‘Want any help, miss?’ one asked.

‘No, thanks.’

‘Wonder how she come to take a nasty tumble like that?’

‘Looks as if she suicided herself jumping off one of them walls,’ said the other. ‘She’s dead, I reckon.’

‘Please go away. You can’t do any good, thanks,’ said Liz. She took no more notice of them, but released the white rag, which was loosely tied around the woman’s neck. Gently she made her examination. Tom had come up beside her. Eiladh, horrified, had remained where she was.

‘Is she—?’ Tom asked his sister.

‘Yes. Strangled and then bashed on the head,’ said Liz. ‘You had better send Eiladh to Gorleston for the police. I’d like you to stay here with me, please.’ Tom addressed the two strangers. ‘How long has your boat—your party—been here?’ he asked. ‘Were you moored here overnight?’

‘No. Only just got here. Moored last night at Seven Mile House, just above the ferry,’ one of them replied.

‘You had better let me have your names and addresses and the name of your boat.’

‘Here! We don’t want no part of this!’

‘You’re witnesses to the finding of a body.’

‘Oh, well—’ Suddenly they supplied the required information. Tom recorded it on the back of an envelope.

‘Your own craft?’ he asked.

‘No, of course not. Hired her for the week from Oulton, didn’t we, and come up the dyke on the Waveney.’

‘Where are you bound for?’

‘Don’t know, do we? Just making our way and enjoying ourselves. On holiday, like. O.K?’

‘Yes, of course. Well, good-day to you. We’ll take care of all this.’

‘Wish you joy, then. Cheerybye.’

Chapter Thirteen
Interlude for Two Inquests

‘ “People are not saying anything. What they suspect they are keeping to themselves.”

“For how long, I wonder?” ’

Charles Mitchell—Bentham Q.C.

The inquests on Salathiel Pavy (strangely enough this turned out to be his real name, the brain-child of George Pavy, his father, a schoolmaster) and on Dorothy Anne Crieff-Tweedle followed hard upon one another. Both inquests were adjourned so that the police might make further enquiries, but the verdict reached by the coroner’s jury in each case could never have been in doubt.

In both cases the medical evidence was that the victim had been strangled. The bodies had then been the objects of the murderer’s warped sense of humour. Evidence of this was supplied by a police witness in each case.

‘We understand, sir, that the party to which Pavy, the deceased, belonged had come to Norfolk to study the local old-wives’ tales, sir.’

‘Could you elucidate, Inspector?’

‘The stories about ghosts and demon dogs, that kind of thing, sir.’

‘And this had a bearing on Pavy’s death?’

‘Not on the death itself, no, but on what was done to the body after death.’

The public gallery drew its breath, hoping for horrors. They were partly, but only partly, disappointed.

‘Go on, Inspector.’

‘In the said case of S. Pavy’—the Inspector was unwilling to commit himself to the pronunciation of the deceased’s baptismal name—‘the body was strung up at St Benet’s ruins in imitation of a murder there in—’ he consulted his notes —‘in early Norman times. The said ruins are now said to be haunted by the hanged man.’

As Dum Crieff-Tweedle was deemed, in the absence of his wife, to be the leader of the party, he also was called on account of Salathiel Pavy, but not until the holiday-maker who had been the first to see

the hanging body had given his evidence. Dum appeared calm.

‘The last I saw of Pavy would have been on last Saturday evening. Pavy was at table with us that evening when he was called out to take a telephone call. We did not see him alive again.’

‘You instituted no enquiries?’

‘We assumed he had been called back to London and would return when he thought fit. He was always leaving the party for some reason or another.’

‘Can you enlarge upon that?’

‘I think so. He was an out-of-work actor and was very anxious to get a shop, as he called it, so he chased off if he thought there was a chance he would be offered a part. We thought nothing of his going off like that.’

The medical evidence with regard to Dee Crieff-Tweedle was that after strangulation—most improbably, the doctors thought, with the white handkerchief which had been found tied around her throat, although that was a possibility— she had been struck on the side of the head by some heavy object after she had died.

It transpired that the police were still searching for this object, although, with numerous Broads and miles and miles of rivers at the murderer’s disposal, the chances of locating it were, to say the least, slender. Even if it were found, clues to its ownership might be impossible to establish.

As to the time of death, the possibilities were unhelpful. In Pavy’s case there was the evidence of that portion of the dinner he had eaten before he was called to the telephone. The police had checked with the hotel to confirm that these particular viands had been on the menu on that particular evening. After that, which fixed the time of the telephone call nearly enough, although the call itself had not, so far, been traced, the doctors became cautious. Any time between eight o’clock and midnight was their estimate of the time of Pavy’s death.

It was not known, either, whether Pavy had left the hotel on foot or in a car. It was the holiday season. Cars and pedestrians and people off the boats were everywhere. An individual, even in broad daylight, unless he were well known or badly-behaved, would never have been remarked. Nobody, it seemed, had noticed Salathiel Pavy leaving the hotel.

As for Mrs Crieff-Tweedle, her manœuvres were equally difficult to follow. She had been seen last at the end of dinner on the Tuesday following the disappearance of Pavy on the Saturday. Owing to the unwillingness of her party to go ghost-hunting on an inclement evening —at this point no hint of quarrels and disagreements had been made public—it was thought (said Tom Carpenter, called as the senior male who had been present at that Tuesday dinner) that she was determined enough to go to Burgh Castle alone.

‘Well, presumably she did, as her body was found there,’ said the coroner. ‘You yourself found it, I believe.’

‘Yes, after it had been spotted by some people off the motor-cruiser Cantaloupe.’

‘We have them here. What took you to Burgh Castle that morning, Mr Carpenter?’

‘Mr Crieff-Tweedle came round to our bungalow rather worried because his wife had gone off without any breakfast.’

‘Women are casual about breakfasting, surely?’

‘He was then afraid she might have gone alone to Burgh Castle on the previous evening and failed to get back.’

‘So it was not altogether her lack of breakfast which worried him? Surely he knew whether she had slept in the house or not?’

‘He had this head-cold and was heavily sedated. He was confused and said he was afraid she might have had a skid in the car either that morning or the evening before, so my sister and I, with Miss Gavin, volunteered to go and look for her.’

‘And found the body.’

‘Yes, after the Cantaloupe people had already seen it lying on the foreshore,’ repeated Tom firmly.

Chapter Fourteen
Notes and Queries

‘Did she say anything of apparitions?’

Prosecution Question to B. Norton — The Trial of Mary Blandy

Except for a postcard to say that she was sharing a bungalow with the Carpenters, Eiladh had hardly corresponded with her mother, neither had Laura expected many letters. Dame Beatrice, however, had received almost a daily epistle from her goddaughter and the letters had been lengthy and informative. The one which Dame Beatrice received on the Friday following Dee Crieff-Tweedle’s death was not only informative; it was also an appeal for help.

‘We’re all under suspicion,’ wrote Eiladh. There was information, too, of a different kind and from a different quarter. It was, in fact, a newspaper report of a robbery. The Crieff-Tweedle mansion had been broken into while the owners and their entire staff of servants had been on vacation, and the house had been stripped of its pictures and plate. Nothing of value was retained except for the family jewels. These were always lodged at the bank except on the occasions when Mrs Crieff-Tweedle had decided to wear them, and they were safe. They were of small value, however, compared with the treasures which had been taken from the house. The robbery had been an audacious one. The thieves, posing as house decorators, had spent a week at the mansion, loading up their spoils and removing them every evening in a pantechnicon van large enough to cover the front entrance to the house and disguise the operation which was being carried out. Furniture and fittings had also been taken. In broad terms, the mansion had been gutted.

Eiladh’s communication mentioned nothing of all this for the simple reason that, at the time of writing, she did not know of it.

‘The police probably think Salathiel Pavy committed suicide and, being an actor, did it in the most spectacular manner he could think of,’ her letter ran. ‘I think it was murder and that poor Dee was killed by the same person, although goodness knows why. The Norfolk police have handed over to Scotland Yard, so we have Daddy’s wolf-hounds baying all over the place. I do wish you would come and sort it out, otherwise the police will arrest one of us or, more probably, poor Dum for Dee’s murder, and that’s just plain ridiculous. A more inoffensive man can’t be imagined.’

‘Of course, when one comes to think of it,’ said Dame Beatrice, when Eiladh’s mother had read the communication, ‘Harvey Hawley Crippen was also an inoffensive man. Nevertheless he was convicted of wilful murder and hanged. Besides, Eiladh’s remarks about Mr Crieff-Tweedle are either disingenuous or else she has forgotten a very extraordinary dream she wrote to me about.’

‘I suppose you’ve already made up your mind who done it,’ said Laura, eyeing her employer narrowly. ‘Yet you always tell me one shouldn’t argue ahead of the data.’

‘But we have the data,’ Dame Beatrice pointed out. ‘Eiladh’s letters to me provide the necessary facts.’

‘She doesn’t write to me.’

‘Children are ferae natural.’

‘Meaning what?’

‘That they are the natural prey of poachers.’

‘So who’s poaching what?’

‘If I am not mistaken, your daughter finds Mr Tom Carpenter “a very pretty man”.’

‘What?’

‘According to statute, she came of age four years ago and reached the age of consent even earlier than that.’

‘I suppose so. One doesn’t realise how soon they grow up. What are you going to do about this last letter of hers?’

‘ “The time is out of joint”,’ declaimed Dame Beatrice. ‘ “O cursed spite, that ever I was born to set it right!—Nay, come, let’s go together.” I mean that last bit,’ Dame Beatrice added in her ordinary voice. ‘I take it that you would wish to accompany me to Norfolk?’

‘Yes, please. If for no other reason, I should like to meet this Tom Carpenter. You spoke of our having the data about those deaths but I can’t see that we have very much to go on.’

Then we must tap other sources. Have we the address of Professor and Mrs Byland?’

‘No, but I’ll look it up. He’s probably in Who’s Who.’

The Bylands occupied a pleasant house on the northern outskirts of Oxford. They responded readily to Dame Beatrice’s telephone enquiry.

‘No details over the telephone,’ said Mrs Byland, who took the call, ‘but, as you may imagine, we have been harassed.’

Dame Beatrice rightly interpreted this as an admission that they had been interrogated by the police.

‘I understand that the Norfolk enquiry has been handed over to Scotland Yard,’ she said, when she visited the Bylands on the following day.

‘Yes. None of the people concerned had anything but a holiday connection with Norfolk, and poor Mr Pavy, of course, was a Londoner and so are David da Cunha and Arcati, although David was staying with us when the Croftons sent out the invitations to that dreadful Hallowe’en party.’

‘Dreadful?’

‘Well, but for that, Mr Pavy and Dee Crieff-Tweedle would have been alive today, would they not?’

‘Today, possibly; tomorrow, or some other day in the very near future, doubtfully.’

‘I’m afraid I don’t follow you.’

‘Well, I cannot be sure about Mr Pavy, but I am certain about Mrs Crieff-Tweedle.’

‘If anybody had cause to murder her it would be poor old Edward,’ said Professor Byland.

‘Edward?’

‘She called him Dum, but his name was Edward. Tweedledum and Tweedledee, you know. She was a very stupid woman.’

‘She did not realise how overbearing and hurtful she was to him,’ Mrs Byland charitably pointed out.

‘That is what I meant when I called her stupid, my dear,’ said the professor. ‘Forgive me for asking, but what is your interest in the matter, Dame Beatrice?’

‘It is two-fold. Eiladh Gavin is my goddaughter. Her mother is my secretary and personal friend. Added to that, I am interested in the man who calls himself Father Melrose. It is concerning him that I hope to obtain information and comment.’

‘Comment first, then,’ said Mavis Byland decisively. ‘That man is no more a priest than I am.’

‘He was a fellow guest of yours, I believe, at that Hallowe’en party last year.’

‘Uninvited. He should have been shown out as soon as he appeared.’

‘You did not think so at the time, though, did you?’

‘Oh, well, it was not my house. The Croftons are ridiculously hospitable. They concluded that he had mistaken their place for another and they did not care to embarrass him by pointing this out.’

‘Strange, as apparently he was expected elsewhere.’

‘I’m certain now that he was not. He knew all about the Croftons and I believe he wanted to scrape acquaintance with them. They are very well off, you know.’

‘But not so well off as the Crieff-Tweedles. You know, perhaps, about the burglary?’

‘Dee Crieff-Tweedle was a suspicious and short-sighted woman. She did not even trust her own servants. The house was empty while we were all fussing about in Norfolk. No wonder it was burgled!’ said the professor.

‘One would think the police would have been informed that the mansion would be tenantless. Surely they should have been asked to keep watch on it while the owners were away?’

‘She had had trouble with the police over Bonzer, a savage guard-dog she kept. First he bit the police-sergeant when he called to collect for a charity and then he got out one day and entered the playground of the village school and badly savaged some small children. The magistrates ordered the dog to be destroyed. Dee never forgave the police for that, so I think it most unlikely that she would have enlisted their help in any way.’

‘Burglar alarms?’

‘She is certain to have installed those, but the system could have been tampered with, I suppose. The robbery seems to have been well-planned and must have been the work of a gang,’ said Mrs Byland.

‘Led by a man who found out about the Norfolk ghost-hunt, of course, and that the house would be left entirely empty. It looks as though this knowledge could have been gained most easily by one of the ghost-hunting party, does it not? They all stayed in the house at some time or other, it seems.’

‘But that suggestion involves my wife and myself,’ said Professor Byland, smiling.

‘Oh, certainly. It also involves my goddaughter, Mr da Cunha, Mr Arcati and Father Melrose, not to mention Mr Crieff-Tweedle himself, Doctor Carpenter, her brother and the young actor Pavy.’

‘Surely you wouldn’t suspect Dum of stealing his wife’s property?’

‘Did none of it belong to him personally?’

‘Only a few valueless portraits of his ancestors, I believe. Everything else was hers except the house (and she paid for the maintenance of that) and the actual estate itself, but, like most large properties nowadays, both were more of a liability than an asset.’

‘Quite. I wonder whether you will be kind enough to give me your version of the time the party spent in Norfolk?’

‘You mean you would like an account of our own activities, I think,’ said Professor Byland. ‘Well, since we did not burgle Mrs Crieff-Tweedle’s house or murder her and that young actor, I suppose, Mavis, that we may as well commit ourselves to a narrative of events as we saw them?’

‘Dame Beatrice is not within her rights in asking for it. She is not the police,’ protested Mavis.

‘No, but she may be able to act as a buffer state between ourselves and them, my dear. Eiladh Gavin’s father is a high-ranking official at New Scotland Yard,’ said the professor drily. ‘At what point, Dame Beatrice, would you wish us to begin?’

‘At whatever point strikes you as most relevant. For example, when did it first occur to you that Father Melrose was not everything he claimed to be?’

‘Oh, that really would be putting the cart before the horse,’ said Mavis, apparently impressed by her husband’s argument and now speaking eagerly. ‘It was very late in the day that we began to suspect that Father Melrose was playing a part.’

‘Well, hindsight comes into that,’ said the professor, ‘but I believe I thought he was a bit of a charlatan when he came back to the Croftons’ house that night and told us about the ghost-dog.’

‘Oh, you can’t get away with that, dear! You didn’t think anything of the kind! When we discussed it afterwards we thought he’d just got ghosts on the brain and simply mistook some shadows for a dog. As for our activities on the ghost-hunt, they were most harmless until the end, when Dee decided to make herself so obnoxious. She knew perfectly well that we weren’t particularly interested in ghosts; much more so in your birds and my botany.’

‘In what way did she make herself obnoxious?’ Dame Beatrice enquired, although she had had an outline of the story from Eiladh.

‘I would say in most ways,’ Mrs Byland replied. ‘It began even before we set out and continued throughout the holiday. It culminated in a most insulting diatribe which convinced us that the only thing for us to do was to leave her and return home.’

‘What led up to the insults?’

‘We caught colds.’

‘She reproached you for so doing?’

‘She objected to our botanical and ornithological interests, and she complained that we had caught colds in pursuing them. She was most unreasonable about it all.’

‘She decided that we were not the ideal ghost-hunters, in fact,’ said Professor Byland, ‘because our minds and activities were not solely devoted to the quest for Norfolk spooks.’

‘I see. Could one put it that a quarrel ensued?’

‘No. It takes two sides to make a quarrel and we are not quarrelsome people.’

‘Now, as to the supernatural aspects, did either of you see or hear anything which, in your opinion,

could be ascribed to the spirit world?'

'Are you a believer in the spirit world, Dame Beatrice?'

'I try to keep an open mind, and am slightly biased in favour of extra-sensory perception.'

'Spoon-bending?'

Dame Beatrice cackled and replied that spoon-bending failed to excite her.

'What about the little black dog in the monastic boat?' she asked.

'Neither of us saw him, although others swore to him,' said Mrs Byland. 'We saw the monk, but not the dog.'

'Interesting. Photography would seem to bear you out, although it has been stated, erroneously, that the camera cannot lie.'

'You mean the others did lie?—that there was no dog in the boat?'

'No dog appears on the print I have been shown.'

'Shadows can give some strange impressions,' said the professor charitably. 'The rest of the party, I'm sure, were genuinely mistaken. They wanted to see a dog and so they saw one. I can understand their error and the cause of it.'

'And the vanishing girl at Horning ferry?'

'I know what Miss Eiladh has claimed, but I am sure that was no ghost. There was only one vanishing girl at Horning that night, and that was our other false transvestite, the unfortunate Salathiel Pavy, and he simply vanished overboard into the Bure and was rescued with commendable promptitude by Tom Carpenter,' the professor calmly stated.

'Eiladh is certain that the ghostly music heard from across Salhouse Broad was produced on a gramophone record. This seems to have been confirmed by Father Melrose, who claims to have found the apparatus. What do you make, though, of the attack upon Mr Crieff-Tweedle at Burgh Castle?'

'Hooligans or possibly the male partner of a courting couple whom his presence had disturbed.'

'Would either have been sufficiently acquainted with the traditional story to have tied a piece of white cloth round his neck, though?—a flag of truce in the original version.'

'The intention was to gag him, I expect, and the gag slipped from his mouth and finished up round his neck. It was mere coincidence that it happened to be white, like the flag of truce in the original story.'

'I wonder what happened to it?'

'Does it matter?'

'It would be interesting to find out where it came from.'

'The chances are that it was poor Edward's own pocket-handkerchief which was used,' said Mavis Byland.

'An ingenious and not unlikely theory. Why do you call him "poor" Edward?'

'Well,' said Professor Byland, answering for his wife and eyeing Dame Beatrice as though he were summing her up, 'we both call him that because we feel he was very badly treated by Dee, who clearly despised him. Besides, I see no chance for him to escape being charged with her murder. After all, he had the three classic incentives—motive, (very strong indeed, I would say, in his case. She led him the devil of a life); means (there are loose chunks of masonry all over the riverside frontage of Burgh

Castle and she seems to have been hit over the head with a piece of stone as well as being strangled—'

'Ah, yes, but there is also a question of opportunity,' said Dame Beatrice. 'Are you sure about that? According to his own story, as I understand it, he spent the entire evening and night at his riverside bungalow nursing his cold after he had taken you and Mrs Byland to Wroxham railway station.'

'There are no witnesses to what he did after we had gone, though.'

'Nor,' said Dame Beatrice, 'to the fact —if it is a fact—that you and your wife ever caught a train that evening. Mr Crieff-Tweedle may have taken you to the station, but did anybody meet you at the other end?'

'Of course not. Nobody expected us home so soon. By Jove, though,' said the professor, with a scholar's willingness to consider a proposition dispassionately, 'come to think of it, Dame Beatrice, we are under suspicion—just as much under suspicion as poor old Edward himself. It's known we quarrelled with Dee and it can be argued that, knowing how wrong-headed and impulsive she was, we, like Edward, could have wagered that she would go alone to Burgh Castle if there was nobody to go with her. Did those two young men accompany her, do you know?'

'Well, really, dear!' remonstrated Mrs Byland. 'Anybody would suppose you wanted to get us into trouble! I don't suppose for a moment that David and Arcati went anywhere but to a pub.'

'Facts have to be faced,' said the professor, pleased with himself for facing them. 'I am obliged to Dame Beatrice for pointing out the equivocal nature of our situation. I think I had better have a word with my lawyer. Of course,' he added, 'we shall not be alone in our quandary. There are others in similar straits, notably Father Melrose. He, like ourselves, appears to lack an alibi for the particular evening.'

'I believe we were not the only people to take exception to certain remarks made by poor Dee,' said Mrs Byland, looking meaningly at Dame Beatrice, who nodded solemnly and agreed.

'Mrs Crieff-Tweedle appears to have been an expert in the gentle art of making enemies,' she said. 'You refer, no doubt, to the exchange which took place when Mrs Crieff-Tweedle introduced a topic which stressed the undesirability of an engaged couple occuping rooms in the same bungalow.'

'Well yes, that is what I meant, although of course, we only know of it by hearsay. David told us about it.'

'What are your own views on the subject?'

'My wife has none,' said Professor Byland. 'Opinions and standards have changed considerably since she was Miss Eiladh's age.'

'And for the better in many respects,' put in Mrs Byland, with spirit. 'And I do have opinions. I think it was disgraceful of poor Dee to make a quarrel on such an issue, and so does David. Tom Carpenter, as nice a young man as ever I met, and Eiladh, who is sweet reasonableness itself if you stroke her the right way, are both of age and are permitted to please themselves (within the bounds of the law, of course) as to what they do. They were absolutely right to take exception to Dee's unkind insinuations, and I don't care who hears me say so.'

'The only person who would have been likely to take exception to your saying so, is dead,' Dame Beatrice pointed out. 'However, one aspect of your remarks interests me very much. How did Mr da Cunha know that my god-daughter and Mr Carpenter had had cause to take exception to Mrs Crieff-Tweedle's remarks?'

'Because David overheard her talking to Doctor Carpenter,' said Mrs Byland. 'Poor Dee had an unusually strident voice, particularly when she was laying down the law about something or other.

David ’phoned us about it.’

‘So, if Mr da Cunha heard her, others could have heard her, too.’

‘He said he thinks everybody in the hotel could hear her—everybody in the lounge and the dining-room, anyhow. She probably thought she was talking quietly, but, as usual, apparently she was not.’

‘I see.’

‘David said he and Arcati “oiled off”. That is why I think they went to a pub instead of to Burgh Castle.’

‘Ah, yes. It sounds likely, does it not?’

‘So, of course, as far as my husband and I can make out, Dee must have gone alone to Burgh Castle, the same as Edward did when he also was set upon and thrown over the wall. It was lucky for him that he wasn’t murdered, too.’

‘Mr Pavy, I understand, was believed to have left the district long before Mrs Crieff-Tweedle interviewed Eiladh in the lounge.’

‘Oh, yes. At a previous dinner Salathiel was called from table to answer the telephone and that was the last one saw of him.’

‘It seems, from the medical evidence given at the inquest, that he may have gone straight from the hotel to his death.’

‘All three of those young men behaved very badly the whole time, considering that not only were all their expenses being paid, but that each one of them was receiving a fee, David for photography, Arcati for his reputed powers as a spirit medium and Pavy for much the same reason, although the only witness to Pavy’s powers appears to have been David, who proposed that Salathiel should be included in the party. We think they were up to some game to deceive Dee into believing that she was raising ghosts when nothing of the sort was really happening.’

‘That is very interesting. Could you supply footnotes?’

‘Well, I said just now that Edward was lucky not to have been murdered at Burgh Castle, but what if his assailants were those three young men?’

‘Unless their next-door-neighbour has perjured himself, that does not appear to be possible. The four of them played bridge all the evening.’

‘So they say! Then what about that evening when Pavy dressed up as a girl and fell overboard from the Horning ferryboat because he was drunk?’

‘We have already referred to that, and I think a hoax was intended. But how do you explain the “ghost” of the shining man standing up in a punt at Belaugh? That could not have been one of the party. They were all accounted for.’

‘It could have been Pavy posing as the monk on Ranworth Broad, though.’

‘Possibly. The other young men may know. I am beginning to see the reason for these impersonations.’

‘Just young men’s devilry on the part of David and Arcati,’ said the professor.

‘I doubt that, but I have certain questions I intend to put to young Mr da Cunha.’

‘I hope he’ll answer them truthfully,’ said Mrs Byland. ‘He is not very reliable.’

‘In view of the deaths of Pavy and Mrs Crieff-Tweedle, I believe that he will tell the truth.’

‘Are you thinking of contacting Father Melrose as well?’

‘Unless his case warrants an intervention by the Home Office, I shall leave the police to deal with him.’

‘His case? You mean—you are a psychiatrist, so you mean that Melrose may be mentally—well—unsound?’ enquired the professor. Dame Beatrice cackled and pursed a beaky little mouth.

‘Oh, no,’ she said. ‘In the regrettable modern idiom, I am sure that Melrose has all his marbles.’

Chapter Fifteen
The Young Men’s Story

‘Is’t not fine to swim in wine,

And turn upon the toe,

And sing hey nonny no!

When the winds blow and the seas flow?’

Anonymous— ‘Hey Nonny No’

‘Trouble with the police?’ said David da Cunh. ‘Dear Dame Beatrice, you haven’t guessed half of it! I should say we have had trouble with the police—and us as innocent as the babe unborn.’

‘The doctrine of original sin refutes you, Mr da Cunha.’

‘Can’t I be David, please?’

‘Well, David, are you capable of telling a bald, unvarnished tale?’

David da Cunha became serious.

‘I’ll be glad to,’ he said, ‘and thanks for the opportunity. To hear the construction the police seem to put on our actions, you would think they’d made up their minds that we roughed up Dum Crieff-Tweedle for the hell of it, hanged poor old Pavy for a lark and went too far in playing a merry jest on Ma — sorry! — on Dee Crieff-Tweedle and killed her. By the time they had finished grilling us I began to wonder whether it was all true.’

‘What caused you to join the ghost-hunters?’

‘Free board and lodging, with use of car, a fee for acting as official photographer, a rather unfortunate sense of humour and to get Pavy out of my hair. He’d rather parked himself on my lap with the object of helping himself to the money in my pockets.’

‘Did you like him?’

‘Not particularly. I put up with him at first because I felt sorry for him, but he became more and more of a clinging vine, so I wished him on to Dee and hoped he’d take a fancy to her little nest-egg instead of mine. I reckon he did, too, in the most conclusive way.’

‘He could hardly have been one of the thieves who stole from the Crieff-Tweedle mansion, could he?’

‘I wouldn’t put it past him. Roger— that’s Arcati—and I used to lose track of him for hours at a time. I don’t really think he did any of the actual burgling at the Crieff-Tweedle place, but I’ve wondered, since his death, whether he was acting as a stool-pigeon for the others.’

‘Including Father Melrose?’

David stared at her.

‘You don’t mean that seriously, do you?’ he asked. ‘I mean, his demeanour and his unctuous gift of the gab would have deceived an archbishop.’

‘Not an archbishop of the Roman Church, perhaps. Besides, deceived is the operative word and you have used it. Added to that, Eiladh Gavin was on one occasion the witness of what she thought was a planned, suspicious meeting between him and Mr Pavy.’

‘Oh, I know Eiladh didn’t like Melrose, but I put that down to prejudice. Aren’t her people Presbyterians or Wee Frees or something?’

‘Did you like him?’

‘Well, of course I didn’t get to know him all that well. If I hadn’t believed him to be a priest, I might have thought he was an amusing old scoundrel. He’d got Dee Crieff-Tweedle sewn up in a sack all right.’

‘On the first night that the party spent at Wroxham, Eiladh saw Father Melrose rowing down-river by moonlight.’

‘Nothing in that, is there?’

‘Perhaps not. Later on, during his stay, he told a lie to explain his absence from one of the ghost-watches. He claimed that he had been invited to preach at the Catholic Church in Cromer. There was no truth in the story.’

‘Which ghost-watch was that, I wonder?’

‘On another occasion she witnessed, as I mentioned a moment ago, what appeared to be a prearranged meeting between him and Mr Pavy at Coltishall. It was made to appear an accidental encounter, but Eiladh did not think it was. Then there was the possibly insignificant business of the gramophone which Father Melrose found among the trees on the shores of Salhouse Broad.’

‘Well, somebody seems to have played a joke that night. I can’t speak as to that; I wasn’t there.’

‘What about Mr Arcati and Mr Pavy?’

‘Roger was with me. We went on a bender in Norwich.’

‘And Mr Pavy?’

‘I don’t know. We shed him when we could. He was a bit of a leech, you know, as I indicated, and we didn’t see why we should sub up for all his drinks.’

‘Could he have been the person who worked the gramophone?’

‘Easily, judging from his other exploits.’

‘What were they?’

‘Well, nobody ever got to the bottom of that business at Horning ferry, you know.’

‘When Mr Pavy was set upon by two unknown men and subsequently fell overboard from the ferry-boat?’

‘Yes, that’s it. It was a pretty tall story, we thought, and he always refused to enlarge on it. But, I mean, does it hold water? He did, I suppose, when he tumbled into the river, but the story always seemed to me particularly thin. I mean, if the chaps meant to rough him up, why did they first dress him as a girl?

And if there were two of them on to him, how did he manage to get out of their car and dash to the ferry? None of it makes sense. And then the beastly way he died! That wasn't a joke which went wrong; it was a particularly loathsome murder.'

'I agree. It was what the Americans call "first degree" murder, too—motivated, planned and carried out entirely ruthlessly.'

'It looks like a case of revenge to me.'

'Less revenge, perhaps, than the removal of a threat.'

'You think he was blackmailing somebody? The little tick was quite capable of it, I'd say. But who? Do you think he found out something about Melrose or the Bylands or even the Crieff-Tweedles, which was not exactly to their credit?'

'Or else that somebody who had been employing him had no further use for him and believed that he might be dangerous, as I have just suggested.'

'You're referring to the big robbery at the Crieff-Tweedle house, I think, but really I don't see how he could possibly have been mixed up in that, although, as I say, Roger and I lost track of him at times.'

'He was an actor. I have a number of letters from Eiladh in which she describes the activities of the party while you were all in Norfolk and it seems to me that Mr Pavy could have figured as the ghost in at least two of the manifestations. You have already admitted, I think, that he could have been responsible for the music heard at Salhouse and there seems some likelihood that he was the monk in the boat at Ranworth, although I do not think he was.'

'No, as it happens, that isn't so.'

'Oh, really? How do you know?'

'Because he was with us. It seems his roughing up and his ducking at Horning had made him anxious for our company, so we took him along with us and all three of us spent the entire evening together, so Pavy couldn't have been the monk. Besides, he's terrified of dogs, and we heard that there was a dog in the boat with the monk.'

'A strange dog, too, from all accounts. Some of the party saw him, others did not.'

'Oh, well, moonlight plays queer tricks. Well, I don't believe in ghosts, so I think the monk and the dog were real and, as the monk couldn't have been Pavy, it must have been Melrose. He'd look the part, I guess.'

'Could all the party be accounted for at Belaugh when you waited in the churchyard for the ghost of Lady Alys?'

'Oh, yes, we all went. Dee insisted on it.'

'And Father Melrose accompanied the party?'

'Like I said, everybody turned up.'

'So there was no chance that the "Shining man" vividly described in one of Eiladh's letters to me, could have been Melrose or Pavy?'

'I don't see how. We were all together and I'll swear nobody sneaked away. Besides, we'd all come from Wroxham. The boat came from the opposite direction, from Coltishall.'

'When Mr Pavy was not with you and Arcati, what did he do?'

'Oh he had various yarns when we met up with him again. He'd been to the Maddermarket to pitch

them the tale and ask for a job; somebody had half-promised him a part in a show which Anglia TV were putting on; somebody else had told him he might have a chance of hooking on to the Yorkshire network— all that kind of thing. We believed him at first.'

'Only at first?'

'We couldn't swallow the Horning story. It was altogether too wild and woolly. Then we began to wonder what he was up to. I'm not terribly gifted at putting two and two together—too lazy to bother myself, I guess—but Arcati, old Roger, you know, is a very shrewd chap. He thought Pavy had some shady friends in Horning and they roughed him up. Roger makes his living by deceiving most of the people most of the time and makes a damn good thing out of it, I believe, so I reckon he knew. You need to be a real student of character to make a success of his job.'

'Fortune-telling?'

'Well, of course, he doesn't call it that. I believe it's still against the law to pretend you can foretell the future. He calls himself a psychic consultant and the old ladies absolutely bombard him, because the word soon gets round as to what he really is, and they positively flock, you know.'

'I thought he claimed to be a spirit-medium.'

'Oh, that as well. I'm told his séances are something out of this world.'

'How did Mrs Crieff-Tweedle come to hear of him?'

'I may have dropped a hint at some time or other, I suppose, but, anyway, he's in the book. I don't suppose Dee realised that Madame Arcati is a character in Blithe Spirit. I shouldn't think she would go to a play of that sort. Ibsen and Strindberg would be more her mark.'

'Tell me more about your suspicions of Mr Pavy after the Horning episode.'

'Well, they were more Roger's suspicions than mine, as I indicated. He said, "David, that pansy is up to some game. Let's find out what it is." So we took Pavy to a hotel in Norwich where we happened to know, because we'd been there before and without Pavy, that the Anglia chaps were apt to congregate for their drinks. It was only just across the road from their studios.

'Well, I thought Pavy seemed pretty restive and as soon as Roger got into conversation with the Anglia people, Sally— Salathiel, you know—oiled out, presumably to visit the gents, but when we got back to the car he was sitting in it. Said he wasn't feeling too well, but Roger thought it was because he didn't want to meet the Anglia crowd in case it would come out that he'd never met any of them before.'

'You could not prove that, could you?'

'No. I expect he could have covered himself by saying the chap he'd spoken to at the studios wasn't in the hotel bar that evening, but he didn't; he simply walked out.'

'I should like a word with Mr Roger.'

'I'll ring him up for you and explain that you're not a cash customer but the voice of conscience.'

Arcati was wearing 'drag'. His close-cropped hair was covered by a beautifully dressed dark wig and his elegant hands sported some good rings. On his left wrist was a small jewelled watch and on his right arm a gold bracelet in the form of a serpent with emerald eyes.

The room smelt discreetly aromatic and was expensively and equally discreetly furnished. Arcati greeted Dame Beatrice charmingly and with no concession to his appearance (a successful one, she thought) of femininity.

'Forgive the get-up,' he said. 'I've only just rid myself of a client and haven't had a chance to change.'

‘It is good of you to see me.’

‘Far from it. I gather from David that you’re the only person who can preserve us from having to decorate the dock at the Central Criminal Court. May I give you a glass of sherry.’

‘Thank you. I will try not to keep you long, but perhaps you will be prepared to confirm, or otherwise, certain statements which I have been given by other witnesses. So far, I have talked to Professor Byland, his wife, and David da Cunha. I also have in my possession a collection of letters sent to me from Norfolk by Eiladh Gavin.’

‘Oh, yes? A series of very peculiar goings-on, those in Norfolk, don’t you think?’

‘That is how the ghost-hunt struck you?’

‘Well, ghosts are part of my stock-in-trade, you know, so I suppose I’m up to most of the dodges.’

‘You classify the Norfolk ghosts as “dodges”, then?’

‘Oh, Dame Beatrice, please don’t insult my intelligence! They weren’t only dodges; they weren’t even convincing dodges.’

‘Pray enlarge upon that. You interest me deeply.’

‘That fellow who calls himself Father Melrose was behind most of them.’

‘Not all of them?’

‘No. The plainsong at Salhouse must have been Pavy’s contribution and in my opinion it was the only artistic effort which was attempted in any of the spoofery.’

‘But you did not hear the music that night, did you? I understand that you and Mr da Cunha were on pleasure bent elsewhere.’

‘Eiladh Gavin told me about it. She accused me of being the spoofer. When I denied it, and claimed that David was equally innocent, she recited the titles of some of the stuff she had heard coming across the water. That’s when I thought of Pavy. He’d brought a tape-recorder to David’s flat one time when I was there and the plainsong, or what have you, was on one of the tapes he left behind him when he went back to his digs.’

‘Not one of the tapes he played to you?’

‘No. We played it for our own amusement later. I don’t suppose he had any idea I’d ever heard the thing. I don’t know very much Latin, but my verbal memory is rather good—remarkable, I’ve been told—so, when Eiladh recited the titles, of course I recognised them.’

‘It was a gramophone which Melrose claimed to have found.’

‘I know. That’s when I began to wonder what his game was, and that’s when I reckon he decided to take Pavy under his wing.’

‘How would he have known that Pavy was the practical joker?’

‘Because he asked me whether I was. As he put the same question to David, I imagine he tackled Pavy, too, and Pavy came clean.’

‘It is an interesting theory and would explain a good deal,’ said Dame Beatrice. ‘What did you mean when you said you began to wonder what Father Melrose’s game was?’

‘Well, you see— Well, let me tell you the whole story if you’ve time to listen to it.’

‘My time is yours.’

‘Right. I’ve nobody coming for at least another hour and the story won’t take that long to tell. By the way, the police have been here, of course, but I don’t think they gained anything by their questions. They wanted to know what I’d been doing on the night of Pavy’s death and I suppose they checked my answers against whatever David may have told them. Well, I could account for Pavy up to the time he was called away to the telephone, and, after that, David and I have a dozen or more people to swear to us. The police say Pavy was strangled, so he was already dead when somebody strung him up at the entrance to the abbey ruins. Stands to reason that’s true because they—whoever they are—would never have done the strangling there and risked waking up people on those boats which were moored near the ruins. As it was, they took big chances.’

‘The inference would be that he was told to meet someone at or near the railway station and persuaded or ordered to get into a car, I suppose,’ said Dame Beatrice.

‘And taken either to our bungalow—he may have suggested that himself, because he knew David and I wouldn’t be there— or, if Melrose was one of the gang, to the Crieff-Tweedle annexe and finished off there.’

‘You are going too fast for me. You are involving Father Melrose in the murder, are you?’

‘Well, somebody killed the poor b.’

‘It could not have been Melrose. He was engaged in taking Mrs Crieff-Tweedle’s car-party on a circular tour of the countryside so that none of them, himself included, was anywhere near St Benet’s abbey that night. I think we shall have to find another scapegoat.’

‘He could have been implicated. He could have led the Crieff-Tweedles that Tony Lumpkin dance around the neighbourhood while his gang got on with the murder. Then I think they took the body by boat to the ruins and strung it up some time between midnight and dawn.’

‘You cling to this talk of a gang?’

‘The chaps who are supposed to have set upon Pavy at Horning that night, they didn’t dress him up as a woman. That was a yarn he made up to explain his costume. He was already dressed up. He must have been. He was to impersonate the ghost of the girl who committed suicide. I don’t believe anybody set upon him at all. I think he was meant to run towards the river and disappear among the reeds, but he can’t swim, wouldn’t take a chance of going in out of his depth, so took to the ferry-boat instead and tumbled overboard in his hurry to get the boat away.’

‘And you think that because of this he was murdered?’

‘No, I don’t think he was murdered just for that. He must have double-crossed somebody in some way.’

‘But who—and how?’

‘I don’t know, but I wouldn’t mind betting now that chap Melrose was mixed up in some pretty funny business.’

‘You appear to have taken a dislike to the man,’ said Dame Beatrice innocently.

‘I can tell you one thing about him. He was becoming a sort of Rasputin where Mrs Crieff-Tweedle was concerned. I don’t think anybody else spotted it, unless her husband did, but my chosen profession makes me very much aware of people’s reactions and I’m sure she was coming under what scaremongers would call a sinister influence.’

‘Your perspicacity astounds and delights me.’

‘Moreover,’ said Arcati. ‘I believe he was responsible for getting her to insist that, after the fiasco at Horning, we all went on the next assignment.’

‘Let me see now. That would have been kept in Belaugh churchyard overlooking the river. Can you be sure that everybody was present?’ It was a question she had put before. Arcati gave the answer she expected.

‘Oh, I’m sure we were all there,’ he said. ‘She took jolly good care of that.’

‘If you are right in thinking that this had been at Melrose’s suggestion, what would have been his object?’

‘I don’t know. It’s a feeling I have. I can’t explain it. Perhaps Mrs Crieff-Tweedle got a bit restive after she knew that Pavy had been seen dressed as a woman. She wasn’t altogether a fool and I expect she got an idea that people—the three of us, no doubt, egged on by David, whose sense of humour she didn’t trust— were ragging. We weren’t, of course, except for Pavy’s music at Salhouse, and she sensed immediately that that was a leg-pull. Anyway, the jokes we might have planned didn’t seem worth the effort, especially when we found we couldn’t rely on Pavy.’

‘In what way could you not?’

‘Oh, only that we never knew when he would be available. He seemed to be here, there and everywhere, on the excuse that he was looking for a job. We believed him until we found out that he’d never been near the Anglia TV people and that none of them knew him.’

‘Mr da Cunha told me about that.’

‘David didn’t have as much dope on it as I had, though. You see, I did know them.’

‘Oh, really?’

‘Yes. They wanted to put on a thing last winter which had a séance in it. Actually, the whole plot depended on this spookery and they wanted it to be especially effective, so they hired my rooms and got me to arrange the whole set-up.’

‘Are there no spirit-mediums in Norwich?’

‘I’ve no idea. The thing is that a friend of mine had changed horses from the BBC and gone to Anglia, and as this “filming on location” is the done thing nowadays, this chap put my name forward and I met his mob here and we talked the thing over.’

‘I trust that the play was a success.’

‘I expect it was, but I couldn’t get it on my set in London. Anyway, that’s why I took David and Sally to this particular hotel. I knew we’d run into some of the mob there. They were young, you know, and full of the joys of spring. I knew David would like them, and I hoped to give Sally a boost, but it didn’t work out because he dodged the column.’

‘You have given me food for thought, Madame Arcati. Tell me one more thing.’

‘With pleasure, but won’t you call me Roger?’

‘Well Roger, why did not you and your two companions accompany the rest of the party to Ranworth to see the monk and his dog?’

‘But we did, only the others didn’t know it. I told David that I knew—I was certain—the shining ghost at Belaugh was a trick, so we sneaked off to Ranworth to see what happened there.’

‘So you went to Ranworth, did you?’

‘Yes, indeed.’

‘Accompanied by Mr Pavy?’

‘We insisted—forcibly and physically, I’m afraid. He pleaded he wasn’t feeling well, but we were determined to have him with us. We were certain by that time that he was up to some game, you see, and David was getting a bit tired of Pavy’s free drinks and odd fivers, so we made him go with us. He was a bit cross about being bundled into the car.’

‘Perhaps he was reminded of his experiences at Horning.’

‘Very likely. Anyway, it was David who thought he was cross. I myself got an impression that he was scared.’

‘Of the two of you?’

‘Perhaps, but I don’t think so. I think we had queered his pitch in some way by insisting upon taking him to Ranworth.’

‘And none of the others had the slightest idea that you were there?’

‘I’m sure they hadn’t.’

‘What happened at Ranworth?’

‘We saw the monk and the boat and heard him speak. I’m a specialist in voices, having to use so many different ones in my job, and I’m sure the voice that came over the water with that Latin blessing, or whatever it was, was Melrose’s voice.’

‘What about the dog?’

‘What dog?’

‘The dog in the boat.’

‘There was no dog in the boat; simply Melrose impersonating the ghostly monk.’

‘With what purpose, do you suppose?’

‘I don’t know, but I’m good at guessing. I think his job was to keep the Crieff-Tweedles so interested that they would stay on in Norfolk while their house was stripped.’

‘An interesting conclusion. Have you voiced it to anybody else?’

‘No.’

‘How did you reach it?’

‘Well,’ said Arcati, with his satyr’s smile, ‘I live by my wits and on the credulity of my clients, so when there is anything peculiar going on I immediately suspect a fiddle of some kind, as I’ve already said.’

‘I see.’

‘Another thing: I believe Pavy’s little stunt—the plainsong at Salhouse, you know—nearly queered Melrose’s pitch. He didn’t want practical jokers horning (Sorry! No pun intended,) horning in on his territory. Then I think he saw how Pavy’s idea could be used to keep Dee in Norfolk while her house was ransacked.’

‘In that case, surely it would have been better not to have produced the gramophone.’

‘I don’t know. I suppose he’d decided to take up Pavy’s idea at that point. He may have thought that any hoax which was found out would be laid at David’s door or mine, and that we should be asked to go home, leaving him a clear field. That didn’t work out because Mrs Crieff-Tweedle still wanted David’s photography and my (as she thought) mediumistic powers, I suppose.’

‘You have an explanation for everything,’ said Dame Beatrice.

‘No,’ said Arcati seriously. ‘I can imagine why Pavy was murdered, but not Dee Crieff-Tweedle. That doesn’t make sense.’

‘Will you share your thoughts with me?’

‘I guess you know them already.’

‘You believe that Pavy was resorting to blackmail.’

‘That’s right. I never thought the people he claimed to meet were connected with the theatre. I think he was beginning to put the screw on and one of Melrose’s bad lads put him out of circulation.’

Chapter Sixteen
Tweedledum

‘How now, Horatio? You tremble and look pale:

Is not this something more than fantasy?’

William Shakespeare—Hamlet

‘I suppose I had better tell you what I think,’ said Edward Crieff-Tweedle. ‘The burglary, in my opinion, was a put-up job.’

“The police suspect as much and so, of course, does the insurance company, but I am not interested in the burglary. My concern is with the deaths of your wife and Mr Pavy.’

‘I didn’t kill them.’

‘Do you know who did?’

‘It’s the fact that it was both of them, you see. It doesn’t make sense.’

‘How do you mean? Mr Arcati is of the same opinion.’

‘Nobody would have killed them both.’

‘Why not?’

‘It doesn’t make sense,’ repeated Dum.

‘Oh, well, tell me what you think about the burglary, then. That does make sense if it helps to solve the problem of the two deaths.’

‘I suppose I ought to have explained to Dee what risks she was taking, but you might as well talk to a deaf mute as try to talk Dee out of anything she’d set her heart on, and her heart, I believe, was set on this burglary and getting all that money from the insurance people. She had it all planned, I’m sure, and it wouldn’t have been a bit of good my telling her her ideas were completely potty. It all began with that beastly dog of hers.’

‘Which bit policemen and savaged young children?’

‘Yes. Biting the police-sergeant was an accident, but I’m afraid the riot in the playground was deliberately engineered.’

‘Very bad luck on the poor little kids,’ said Laura, who was taking shorthand notes of the interview.

‘Oh, Dee was utterly callous and calculating. She knew she’d be prosecuted and fined and that the dog might be put down as he had already bitten the sergeant, but it gave her the excuse she wanted for quarrelling with the police and so having a reason for not warning them that our house would be empty while we were cavorting about in Norfolk. Naturally, having arranged for it to be burgled, she didn’t want the police keeping an eye on it.’

‘So now we come to the story of Father Melrose, I suppose,’ said Dame Beatrice.

‘Yes. How did you know?’

‘I know he is not a priest and I doubt whether his name is Melrose. Moreover, the Norfolk bungalow which was leased to your wife at a peppercorn rent happens to be the property of a man who is in prison for forgery. He left the keys in Melrose’s possession.’

‘You’ve checked on Melrose, then?’

‘The police have, and thoroughly.’

‘I’ll go on, then, shall I? I hope I shall not go to prison for allowing my wife to attempt to defraud the insurance company, although I didn’t so much allow her to do it, you know, as just stand by when I guessed what she was up to. We were getting rather poor, you see, so I guessed she would be up to something.’

‘Poor?’

‘Taxation, you know, and inflation, and all her shares dropping to next to nothing, and her jewellery all paste, you know, so there wasn’t any point in selling it, and the pictures and plate all heirlooms which couldn’t be got rid of, so a burglary and a claim on the insurance people were the only possible things, or so I believe she thought. I ought to have pointed out the risks, but I knew that all my arguments would be brushed aside, so I just commended my soul and let her charge ahead. I suppose you were surprised at the miserable lunch we gave you that day you came. It was because she thought we ought to economise, although we still had enough to live on, I suppose.’

‘And to pay your servants and Eiladh Gavin and rent holiday bungalows and hire an extra car and invite several people to go with you (some even with pay) and have nightly dinners at a not inexpensive hotel,’ said Dame Beatrice, severely.

‘Oh, well, I suppose Dee had enough in the kitty for all that, and I expect she got most of it on tick until the insurance company paid up.’

‘Most of what?’

‘The rents for the extra car and the bungalows and, of course, the payments to da Cunha, Doctor Liz and Arcati. They were only promised their money, you know. I don’t think she had actually paid them anything.’

‘I see. Well, all that, interesting though it may be, is no business of mine. You are aware, I suppose, that you are under suspicion of having caused your wife’s death?’

‘Oh, yes, that is part of police routine, I believe. They always suspect the husband or wife of a murdered person. But, if it is a permissible question, Dame Beatrice, what is your own interest in all this?’

‘A personal and private one. In a word, you are not the only suspect. Every member of the expedition is involved and that includes my god-daughter, Eiladh Gavin. The police are cognisant of the fact that I am making some enquiries and I must warn you that it is understood that I keep them abreast of my findings if I do find out anything.’

‘In that case, anything I tell you cannot be told you in confidence, but I can account fully for all my own actions and I assure you there is nothing discreditable about them.’

‘Except that you connived at the robbing of your home. Let us begin at the beginning. How did Father Melrose become a member of the party?’

‘Dee must have wanted him to join us. That is all I can say.’

‘Did she— was she aware that he would appear, as though by accident, at the Croftons’ Hallowe’en party?’

‘I don’t know, but hindsight suggests that it was planned. There is no doubt in my mind that, although Dee may have planned the robbery, Melrose organised it and his gang carried it out.’

‘I see. So what about his appearance at the Hallowe’en party?’

‘You do labour your point, don’t you?’ said Dum good-humouredly. ‘Yes, well, I think the idea was that Dee should appear to make his acquaintance accidentally and that he was to tell a ghost-story in the hope that others would follow this lead. Therefore Dee’s plan must have been to take herself, me and the others, particularly Eiladh (whom she knew to be of above average intelligence) away from the sphere of operations, so the ghost-hunt was to take place while the house was being stripped of its treasures. I think it was Melrose who put all the burglar alarms out of operation and took (with Dee’s full knowledge and connivance) copies of the keys to the house.’

‘That all seems very clear, but is it true?’

‘Dee would be quite clever about it all, you know. She even started the ball rolling at the Croftons’ by pretending to be alarmed by a branch which was tapping against the window. I know I was surprised at the time that she should be so childish. It was completely out of character.’

‘Eiladh mentioned that incident in one of her letters. It seemed to her to be out of character, too, so perhaps your wife was not so very clever after all. It certainly was not clever of her to go alone that night to Burgh Castle, where she met her death, was it?’

‘I warned her, Dame Beatrice. I reminded her of what had happened to me when I went alone to that fearsome place.’

‘Ah, yes. For what reason, do you think, were you attacked when you went there?’

‘Well, I don’t put it down to the spirit-world. My attackers were human.’

‘Did they speak to you?’

‘Not until later, but I know who they were.’

‘Really? That is most interesting, but why have you kept this knowledge of their identity to yourself?’

‘Because I can’t prove anything. I was simply leapt upon from behind by two people and thrust and bundled over the wall. Then, as though in all innocence, my assailants came galloping up to render first aid. It must have been Carpenter and one of the girls, you know.’

‘But, assuming your story to be true, why should Tom Carpenter and either his sister or Eiladh (you say your assailants numbered two) attack you at all? I find that difficult to credit.’

‘I suppose they mistook me for the ghost.’

‘But, as soon as they found they could lay hands on you, they must have realised they were wrong. Why should they have thrust you over the wall?’

‘Youthful high spirits, I suppose, or perhaps chagrin at finding I wasn’t the ghost. They’ll deny it, of

course, if you ask them (as I suppose you will), but those are the facts of the matter.'

'Then who attacked your wife, and with a result far more serious than anything which happened to you?'

'I don't know, but nobody liked poor Dee and, for that particular night, nobody has a foolproof alibi.'

'Including yourself.'

'Including myself, yes.'

'What did you make of the Ranworth incident?'

'The—?'

'Eiladh mentioned in one of her letters to me that the party—or some members of it—saw a monk and a dog in a boat on Ranworth Broad.'

'Oh, that! I'm afraid, Dame Beatrice, I don't believe in ghosts, particularly after Melrose was able to explain the origin of the ghostly music we heard from across the water at Salhouse.'

'Oh? How did he explain that?' asked Dame Beatrice, although she knew the answer to her question. She knew that Dum had already told her one lie and she wondered whether she was to hear any more.

'He went out very early in the morning and discovered the gramophone which had been used,' said Dum.

'That was clever of him.'

'Yes. It upset Dee very much to think that somebody was playing tricks. She suspected David, of course.'

'Oh? Why was that?'

'It was the sort of stupid joke he would think funny.'

'But you did not think it was Mr da Cunha who pushed you over the wall at Burgh Castle. Was not that an even more senseless trick than the gramophone joke?'

'I was not hurt. I bear no malice, and it was not David.'

'Even so, I think you are quite wrong in supposing that my god-daughter's party assaulted you.'

'But they were the only people there. It must have been them.'

'Ah, well, there is no point in my arguing the matter with you. One thing I can agree about. Whatever other practical jokes they may have played, Mr da Cunha's party spent that entire evening with a neighbour from the next-door bungalow. It was on the Wednesday, I believe, that you went alone to Burgh Castle.'

'That's right. Monday we went down to Wroxham after dining in Norwich, Tuesday was music night at Salhouse, Wednesday—yes, Wednesday I went, at my wife's instigation, to Burgh Castle to prove whether the young people turned up. Oh, that might furnish another explanation of their attack on me. They may have resented being spied on. All the same, I don't accuse them of attempting to harm me.'

'When did you alter your opinion that you were set upon by poachers or other local men?'

'That was never my opinion. There couldn't be poachers in a place like that. What would there be to poach?'

'I have no idea. What about the rest of the party?'

‘My wife and the Bylands were snugged down in our bungalow with the radio on. Father Melrose was in the annexe. At least, I suppose he was. I remember noticing that the light was on in the annexe when Carpenter took me back. I must admit that the young people showed remorse for what their horseplay had done to me. They even called round on the following morning to ask after my injuries.’

‘A little while ago I asked you what you thought about the Ranworth monk and dog, but after you had said that you did not believe in ghosts, I am afraid I sidetracked the conversation and did not allow you to complete your answer. Did you actually see the monk and the dog?’

The monk, yes, but I’m sure it was Melrose in the soutane he affects (when he is not in holiday attire) and he had a cowl over his head.’

‘And the dog? Was it a black one?’

‘Dog? There was no dog, simply the monk and the boat. Of course one could not swear that the monk was Melrose. The boat was not very near the shore. That was one of my reasons for believing that our party was being spoofed. If the monk and the boat were ghosts, the boat would have been moored at the shore of the Broad or else the monk would have been rowing. I think he did row himself ashore later on, when we had gone. Melrose was not expected back at our bungalow that night, so the opportunity for imposture was there.’

‘And you saw no dog?’

‘What is all this about a dog?’

‘Oh, the monk is said to have had one in the boat with him.’

‘Melrose would not have provided himself with a dog. Suppose it had barked? Even my wife would not have believed— Oh, well, why do you harp on the dog?’

‘Some saw it, some did not. Eiladh and your wife saw it. Interesting, don’t you think? Tell me about the Belaugh ghost.’

‘Ah, now, that was the most extraordinary thing! It really was quite uncanny and there seems to be no explanation of it. One minute we were there in the dark churchyard with my wife full of hope that the Lady Alys would come out of her tomb in the church and walk towards the river, and the next minute what should appear but a shining apparition standing upright in a boat and holding out its arms. The weird scene lasted only a few seconds, but we all saw the figure and can swear to it.’

‘Did the others believe it was a ghost?’

‘Well, one thing is certain and that is that no one in our party could have been playing the fool. We were all there together in the churchyard. Dee had made certain of that.’

‘It seems that she suspected trickery.’

‘I can’t think why. She certainly thought the monk we saw was a ghost. I wonder, now that— well, now that it’s happened, whether she was afraid of one of us, and that’s why she insisted on our staying together at Belaugh.’

‘I might accept your reasoning, Mr Crieff-Tweedle, if the two expeditions had been reversed, but the Belaugh manifestation took place the evening before you saw the monk in his boat, and I understand from Eiladh that no fewer than four people absented themselves from the Ranworth expedition, although, as a matter of fact—’

‘Did they? Oh, yes, so they did. David, Arcati and Pavy decided to spend Saturday evening in Norwich and Melrose had excused himself earlier in the day on a plea that he had to go to Cromer. I think my argument still holds good, though. As we were all there at Belaugh and all witnessed the phenomenon, I

suppose any fears or suspicions of trickery Dee may have entertained were dissipated. She was, however, very angry with the truants from the Ranworth outing. She was even put out by Melrose's defection.'

'Was she really put out, or was she playing a part?'

'I don't follow you, Dame Beatrice.'

'I will make myself clear. At the beginning of this conversation you stated that you thought the robbery which took place at your home while the party was in Norfolk was prearranged by your wife with the connivance and help of Melrose and his accomplices. If you are right, that means Mrs Crieff-Tweedle was perfectly well aware that Melrose was not a priest and that the story of his visit to Cromer to conduct a religious service was intended to deceive others, but not herself. In that case, her apparent mortification at his absenting himself from the Ranworth outing was a pose. Besides, if the monk in the boat was really Melrose playing a part, whom was it intended to deceive? Not your wife, obviously.'

'I'm afraid I'm not up to all these mental gymnastics, Dame Beatrice. If you have any theories, it would be kind of you to state them. You leave me quite bemused.'

'I hardly think I do. Either your wife knew all about Melrose, or she knew nothing about him. I have talked with Mr da Cunha and Madame Arcati—'

'Who is a young scallywag who lives on cheating and lies and chisels stupid women out of their money. That boy is incapable of telling a true and straightforward story.'

'So far as I was able to check his story it was almost true. He thinks, as you do, that Melrose was a member of a gang of thieves. Melrose may even have been the leader, leaving his men to carry out the actual burglary at your house while he kept the ghost-hunters in Norfolk. Now if your story that your wife connived at the burglary in order to claim the insurance money is true, Melrose was redundant and so were his schemes for raising ghosts.'

'Dee thought—I suppose she thought— that, as Melrose had attended the Hallowe'en party, he ought to be taken to Norfolk with the others. Everybody else went.'

Dame Beatrice wagged her head.

'Laura was at the party, so were the Croftons,' she said, 'and so was Laura's son.'

'Well, I suppose they were invited, but declined the invitation.'

'That would explain it, no doubt, but let us return to your story of your wife and the insurance company.'

'There is nothing more I can tell you about that. I've given you the facts and I must decline to discuss them any further. You call it my story, but it was her story all along the line. I shall inform the insurance people of the facts and ask the police to do their best to trace the missing goods.'

'There is no need to inform me of your plans in that direction. As I have already said, the robbery is none of my business unless it was the cause, whether direct or indirect, of your wife's death.'

'But that is exactly the case, Dame Beatrice. Poor Dee went into conspiracy with Melrose and they must have fallen out. Nobody knows where he went or what he did on the night my wife died. I am not even altogether convinced that she was murdered. I do think she and Melrose met at Burgh Castle. I do think they may have had an altercation. Dee seems to have quarrelled with everybody else that evening, so why not with him? He may have struck her and caused her to fall and hit her head on a piece of masonry; she herself may have taken a false step among the ruins and tumbled to her death. Why are we all so certain she was murdered? If young Pavy had not been found hanged, nobody need have

thought of murder at all in connection with Dee's death. Why should it not have been an accident?'

'Because the medical evidence is that she was strangled, I suppose,' said Dame Beatrice, leering at him. 'What happened, by the way, to your white handkerchief when you fell over the wall at Burgh Castle?'

'As though I have the least idea!'

'And do you adhere to the opinion you expressed to me at the beginning of this conversation that Eiladh, Tom Carpenter and his sister were responsible for your accident?'

'Oh, very well! Very well! I can think of no other explanation, that is all, but I'll give you best over that.'

'Thank you. By the way, the three young men did go to Ranworth. The only absentee in the end was Father Melrose!'

'The monk in the boat. I knew it!'

Chapter Seventeen
Lies and Evasions

'This time doth well dispense

With lovers' long discourse;

Much speech hath some defence,

Though beauty no remorse.'

Anon. — 'Now Winter Night'

'Dum thought that Tom and one of us set upon him at Burgh Castle?' exclaimed Eiladh. 'He must be mad! I suppose he doesn't think we did the same to Dee and murdered her in the process?'

'You gave me in one of your letters a very clear account of that evening. Can you add to it in any way? Here is the letter in question. Perhaps you will read it and then see whether there is anything more which I ought to know.'

'We told the police all about it, of course, when they asked us. I also told them what I thought really happened when Dum fell over that wall.'

'Am I to be favoured equally?'

'Yes, darling, for what it's worth. I think Dum did it himself. Fell over a broken part of the wall, I mean, and pretended he'd been pushed.'

'Why should he pretend that?'

'To impress Dee, of course. Apparently she had sent him out there to spy on us and make sure we turned up, so I suppose he thought a sensational report would please her.'

'But he never pretended that the ghost had assaulted him, did he?'

'No. I think he said poachers or an irate lover had tackled him, but now he sticks it on to us! He must be in a flap about something.'

'From what you know of Mrs Crieff-Tweedle, would her husband's story of an attack on him have

encouraged her to visit Burgh Castle alone? It seems a strange thing for her to have done if she believed that her husband had been set upon there.'

'That's a question I can't answer. I mean, in one sense, she wasn't alone, even if she thought she was, because her murderer was there. I think she went there with him.'

Eiladh was staying with her mother and Dame Beatrice at the latter's Stone House, for her work of cataloguing the Crieff-Tweedle library had come to an abrupt end with the death of Dee and the consequent upheaval resulting from that and the burglary. Liz Carpenter was there, too. She had not yet gone into private practice and thought it better not to join her partners until the publicity engendered by the murders and the newspaper accounts of the ghost-hunt had died down after what she hoped would be no more than a nine-days' wonder.

David da Cunha had had no such inhibitions, but had published the photographs (far fewer than Dee would have desired) which he had taken of the various locations and (without their knowledge and consent) of the members of the Wroxham party. These last, incidentally, had interested the police very much, for, in spite of his clerical disguise, Scotland Yard had recognised the portraits of Father Melrose. A snap of him in the casual clothes which he had worn occasionally in Norfolk had confirmed some previous suspicions that here was a man with a criminal record.

All the members of the expedition had been closely questioned, but the heaviest guns in police artillery had been reserved for him and, although he was not in custody, a close watch was being kept on all his movements and he was subjected to the sudden, unheralded descents upon his lodgings of Detective Chief Inspector Rees, who was in charge of both cases, for the police believed that the murders of Pavy and Mrs Crieff-Tweedle were connected with the robbery.

'But if she went to Burgh Castle with her murderer,' said Liz, referring to Eiladh's last remark, 'that narrows it down to two people.'

'No, it doesn't,' said Laura. 'You're thinking of Melrose and Dum Crieff-Tweedle, aren't you? As I see it, though, it doesn't narrow it down at all.'

'Well, Eiladh, Tom and I didn't go,' argued Liz, 'and the Bylands had gone home.'

'There is no proof that they had,' said Dame Beatrice. 'I have spoken to them. Professor Byland admits that, although they went to the railway station, there is no proof that they took a train and certainly no proof that they arrived that evening at the terminus.'

'I suppose they went to their own house, so what about their servants? Can't they swear to them?'

'My impression is that Professor Byland would have said so, had that been the case. He admits to having no alibi for the evening in question.'

'What do you suppose they did, then?'

'They may have nursed their colds in a London hotel. Their departure from the Crieff-Tweedle bungalow must have been taken almost on the spur of the moment as a result of their quarrel with Mrs Crieff-Tweedle and it would have been much easier, burdened as they seem to have been with heavy colds, to have made a simple journey direct to Liverpool Street, put up for the night and gone on to Oxford on the following day.'

'But, if they did that, they've got an alibi,' argued Liz. 'The police have only to look at a hotel register. They'd have had to book in.'

'Yes,' agreed Dame Beatrice, 'but if that is what they did, Professor Byland will have mentioned it to the police.'

Liz gazed at her in perplexity, but Dame Beatrice's yellow countenance, inscrutable as that of a Chinese, told her nothing at all.

'So what about Arcati and da Cunha?' she asked. 'Their alibis depend only on one another, don't they? If you're going to suspect the Bylands, you might as well suspect those two boys. If they're in collusion their alibi doesn't amount to a hill of beans.'

'How right you are,' said Dame Beatrice. 'Equally, of course, Mr Crieff-Tweedle and the Bylands may have been in collusion, for there was only one car at their bungalow—'

'And neither of the Bylands can drive and, now I come to think of it, Dee must have taken the car herself,' said Eiladh. 'Why didn't we think of that before?'

'I did think of it,' said Dame Beatrice. 'I could not envisage Mrs Crieff-Tweedle's walking from her bungalow to the hotel for dinner when she had a car at her disposal.'

'Well, it was raining that night, I remember,' said Liz, 'so you're doubly right. The Kojak bungalow was downstream quite a piece. She'd have had to walk a long way up the service road, cross Wroxham bridge and then get to the hotel. She'd have got soaked and she certainly wasn't wet when we met her at dinner. Yes, she must have brought their car, so where does this story of Dum driving the Bylands to Wroxham station come in?'

'The word was not used, but I inferred it during the conversation I had with the professor and his wife. I noted particularly their statement that Mr Crieff-Tweedle "took" them to the station. By the way, were the bungalows on the telephone?'

'Dee's was. Ours and David's were not. I think she'd worked out the bungalows with that in mind.'

'But, at the beginning, when she first formulated her plans, I thought you told me that the bungalow occupied by herself, her husband and the Bylands—'

'And, as it turned out, also by Father Melrose… Oh, I see. He told her about the telephone. Of course, if that bungalow was a sort of thieves' kitchen, it would have to be on the telephone, wouldn't it?'

'The importance of the telephone, so far as this enquiry is concerned,' Dame Beatrice pointed out, 'is that it could have enabled either Mr Crieff-Tweedle or the Bylands to call up a taxi-cab, and I have no doubt that is what they did. The expression "took" need only indicate, therefore, that Mr Crieff-Tweedle accompanied the Bylands to the station and paid the cab.'

'Are you going to have another go at them?' asked Laura. 'They seem to have been a bit cagey over it all.'

'I shall convey my impressions to Mr Rees, as I have promised to do. He will deal with the Bylands as he thinks fit.'

'He'll be able to trace the cab, anyway, if they did hire one,' said Laura. 'The Norwich people can be put on to that; but why couldn't the Bylands have told you they went off in a hired car?'

'Possibly it did not occur to them to do so, dear child. It is a common human error to believe that because one knows something which has no conceivable importance in itself, other people know it too. It is, in a way, analogous to what the schoolmistress of an over-large class once said to me. "I place myself where every child can see me," she observed. "If they can see me, they assume that I can see each of them." '

'Good thinking,' commented Laura, 'especially when applied to the little stinkers in the back row.'

At this moment Dame Beatrice's servant announced the arrival of Detective Chief Inspector Rees. The two girls and Laura drifted out and the jovial Welshman engulfed Dame Beatrice's yellow claw in a

large, hard hand.

‘They are all lying, see?’ he said, as though the fact — if it was a fact — delighted him. ‘No truth in any of their statements so far.’

‘Well, if they are not lying,’ said Dame Beatrice, motioning him to an armchair, ‘they are certainly evading telling the whole truth.’

‘So long as you know, then.’

‘I do not know, but, in my experience, most people do evade telling the whole truth. They are afraid, often with reason, that the whole truth may lead to misunderstandings and they only wish to be misunderstood when it leads to their advantage. To persons involved in a matter of murder, that can seldom appear to be the case. There are conspiracies of silence and a tendency to keep personal peccadillos, like skeletons, securely locked in cupboards.’

‘If you think that way,’ said Rees, ‘you are not going to be shocked and surprised by what I have found out, Lady bach, from the Norwich people. Our people I mean.’

‘Your kindly air and gentle words, Chief Inspector, lead me to suppose that someone in whom I take a sympathetic interest has, in vulgar parlance, blotted her copybook. Since my interest in all the other personages of the drama is more academic than affectionate, I take it that you are referring to Miss Eiladh Gavin. As you saw when you came in, she is on these premises. I take it you would wish to question her.’

‘If no inconvenience, then.’

Summoned to the presence, Eiladh said: ‘There is nothing else I can tell you.’

‘Can nor will, then? Can’t or won’t? Look you, I’m asking for help, see? What would your da say if he knew you were obstructing his police force? Put you across his knee, perhaps?’

Eiladh laughed.

‘That was a long time ago,’ she said.

‘Never too late for a sensible action! Now, see you, only a little help I am asking; just a matter of tidying up the loose ends, see?’

‘Well, you can ask,’ said Eiladh, ‘but I don’t promise to answer, mind.’

‘What did Mr Tom Carpenter do and where did he go when he left you and his sister in the bungalow and went off in a car on the night Mrs Crieff-Tweedle was killed?’

Eiladh turned very pale.

‘But he wasn’t away from the bungalow anything like long enough to get to Burgh Castle,’ she said. The Chief Inspector dropped his jovial manner.

‘For your own sake, tell me what I want to know,’ he said. ‘Each and every one of you who went to Norfolk with Mrs Crieff-Tweedle is still under suspicion. The daughter of your father must surely realise that! We have to eliminate, eliminate, eliminate, until we have only one person left. That one is the one we want. Come, now! No more of this nonsense, girl bach! Where did he go, eh? We can check, you know.’

‘I don’t know where he went, and that’s the truth. I don’t know how you found out, but Tom did leave the bungalow that evening. We came away after dinner at the hotel and we all needed a drink pretty badly and there was nothing but a half-pint can of beer in the bungalow, so Tom volunteered to go out and get something, that’s all. No harm in that, is there?’

‘And how long was he gone?’

‘I don’t remember, and I don’t know where he went. He came back with two or three bottles and a lot more beer for himself—he prefers beer to wine or spirits —and that’s all I know.’

‘Would you say he was gone longer than half an hour?’

Eiladh looked at Dame Beatrice but obtained no help.

‘Well, yes, I suppose so,’ she answered. ‘He had to get the car started and then cruise around until he found an off-licence open, I suppose, or a pub with a jug and bottle department. It could take quite a lot of time.’

‘What did you and Doctor Carpenter do while he was gone?’

‘Chewed the fat a bit, I expect.’

‘What about, then?’

‘Well, Dee—Mrs Crieff-Tweedle—had been making some—well, some remarks.’

‘Derogatory, perhaps?’

‘Well, sort of, but she was like that. Liz minded more than I did, I think. That’s why Tom went out for the drinks. He thought she needed cheering up, although I think she’d swallowed her hard feelings as soon as we’d stopped her packing her bags and wanting to leave.’

‘And after Mr Tom had gone out and you girls had had your grouse about Mrs Crieff-Tweedle?’

‘Liz and I played Scrabble.’

‘An absorbing pastime, yes, indeed. So you did not notice the passage of time, then?’

‘No, we didn’t. But I can tell you one thing,’ said Eiladh, showing a flash of spirit and speaking in her usual confident tones, ‘and that is that Tom wasn’t out nearly long enough to pick up those bottles, get to Burgh Castle, track down Mrs Crieff-Tweedle, murder her and get back to the bungalow before— well, by the time he did get back.’

‘But I thought you did not remember when that was.’

‘I don’t, but it was well before half eleven because the radio was still on.’

‘And you were still playing Scrabble!’

‘Yes. I’m one of those morons who likes background music. It helps me to concentrate.’

‘Well, well, it takes all sorts, they say! I wish you had told me, all the same.’

‘Told you what?— Oh, that Tom went out that night? But we thought nothing of it, really we didn’t. We knew why he’d gone and although we didn’t bother to ask him where he’d got the drinks, well, we didn’t think it mattered. I repeat, if you want to hear it all over again, that, wherever he went, it was not to Burgh Castle to murder Dee Crieff-Tweedle.’

‘Ah, but, you see, Miss bach, we have given up believing that the poor woman was murdered at Burgh Castle. More likely nearer the bungalows.’

‘But the body—I mean, she was found at Burgh Castle.’

‘Bodies are not always found where they were murdered, no, indeed,’ said Rees. ‘Found in very strange places they are, more often than not, see?’

‘Do you mean she was dead before— well, before she was taken to Burgh Castle?’

‘Yes, indeed.’

‘But—well, I mean—where?’

‘Ah now, that would be telling, wouldn’t it? Another word maybe I’ll have with Mr Carpenter, then.’

Eiladh looked so apprehensive that Dame Beatrice cackled. Rees rose to go. Eiladh said desperately,

‘You don’t—you can’t suspect Tom of anything like that! I’m sorry I didn’t tell you he went out that night, but it never really occurred to me—well—perhaps it did, only—only you can’t really blame me, can you?’

Rees turned at the door.

‘So if anything else you have not told me should come to your mind,’ he said, ‘you will be sure to mention it, won’t you? One thing to comfort your heart, then. Mr Carpenter himself told me he had been out that night, so we knew, see? But you should have mentioned it at the time you told me that you three did not go to Burgh Castle, but went back to the bungalow. No harm done. Just a warning.’ Eiladh could have killed him.

Tom came to the Stone House on the following afternoon and found Eiladh and his sister having a knock-up on Dame Beatrice’s tennis lawn. Eiladh dropped her racquet and ran to him. Tom held her at arms’ length and said:

‘I’ve seen Rees, so I came right over. Why didn’t you tell him I’d been out that night, you little idiot?’

‘How could I, after I knew about Dee? He might have jumped to the most frightful conclusions.’

‘Not he. You really should have come clean to him, you know.’

‘Of course I shouldn’t. And now I’ve told him lies.’

‘The devil you have! What lies?’

‘I told him I didn’t know how long you were gone, and that the radio was still on when you got back. Both lies! Of course I knew exactly how long it was—and far too long for anybody who was only supposed to be chasing a bottle of booze. How on earth could I tell him that you were out for over three hours?’

‘You’re a loyal little fathead, but, speaking as one of their number, I must insist that, when the police question you, you should tell them all you know, not just the bits you think will keep somebody else out of trouble.’

‘What do you mean?’

‘What I say.’

‘I mean—about speaking as one of them?’

‘You didn’t really think I was an architect, did you?’

‘Well, you said you were, and Liz said you were, and I must say you put on a pretty good act with your study of flint-work and knowledge of old churches and all the rest of it. I suppose Liz really is your sister? What with your lies and my own, I don’t feel I know where I am.’

‘Oh, yes, Liz is my sister. Sworn to secrecy about my real job, of course, but that’s one thing about doctors, they’re so used to keeping secrets that you can trust them absolutely. As for your first point, well, we do our homework.’

‘So what exactly is your job?’

‘Special Branch. I’m one of your father’s bright young men. Conspiracy and fraud mostly, with a spot of forgery and secret codes thrown in.’

‘So I’ve got to marry a policeman!’

‘You could oil out on a plea of misrepresentation of fact, I suppose.’

‘Oh, well, with Daddy in the business and my mother secretary to Dame B. and Dame B. spending half her time chasing after murderers, I suppose I may as well muck in. But what put you into this particular kettle of fish, this ghost-hunt lark?’

‘Neither your father nor Dame Beatrice thought much of your going off to the wilds with this particular gang, so I was given two assignments. One was to keep an eye on you and Liz—’

‘Oh, indeed!’

‘The other was to keep track of Melrose and his doings. The architect manœuvre was to allay suspicion when I wanted to be off on a toot of my own. Not that it brought in much gravy. I’ve trailed Melrose all I can, but I’ve got nothing we can act on.’

‘You knew Melrose was a criminal, then?’

‘Not until I met him as a member of the party, but my father took a scunner at him at Hallowe’en. Doctors, besides being good repositories for secrets, are pretty shrewd at summing people up, you know, and he got a hunch that Melrose—that’s not the chap’s name, of course, but he’s collected so many aliases during his career that we hardly know what to call him— that Melrose was a bit bogus.’

‘But you weren’t briefed originally to keep an eye on him?’

‘No, only on you and Liz.’

‘Thanks very much! I should have thought we were old enough to keep an eye on ourselves!’

‘Don’t beef. It wasn’t my doing. I’m only a poor, downtrodden, destitute boy under orders from the top brass. Of course as soon as I met Melrose, I realised that here was a man with a record as long as my arm, so I reported to headquarters and was briefed. Unfortunately I didn’t get the goods on him. I’m certain he was behind that robbery at the Crieff-Tweedle place, but there isn’t the shadow of proof. I know he didn’t pull off the actual job himself, but I’m sure he spotted the possibility of the ghost-hunt as a means of keeping the Crieff-Tweedles off the scene. Beyond that, I’ve got nowhere, although our chaps have arrested the rest of the gang, except for one we believe was Melrose’s liaison man in Norfolk, and we’ve got the loot back. They hadn’t had time to dispose of it. A servant went back to pinch some roses out of the garden, peered in at the french windows and realised the house had been burgled, so raised the alarm. The method pin-pointed the gang.’

Rees made short work of the Bylands.

‘Myself again, you see, Professor,’ he said genially when he was shown in. ‘Now what is all this nonsense you have talked and the evidence you have kept back, look you, when you spoke to me and to Dame Beatrice?’

‘Do take a chair, Chief Inspector,’ said Mavis Byland nervously. ‘I’ll leave you two together.’

‘No, no. Please stay, Mrs Byland,’ said Rees. ‘What I have to say concerns you as much as your husband.’ He settled himself and took out notebook and ball-point. ‘Well, now, let us see how we got on last time. Ready for some corrections we are, then?’

‘I really have nothing more to say,’ declared Professor Byland. ‘I would give you further help if I could, but I have no idea who murdered Mrs Crieff-Tweedle or Mr Pavy and your visits harass me and

embarrass my wife.'

'Little I have to say to either of you this time, sir. You won't mind answering a few pertinent questions, will you?'

'Not so long as they are pertinent.'

'Here we go, then. Now you told the same tale to Dame Beatrice as to my sergeant and myself. One point in your favour, see?'

'I object very strongly to that remark!'

'Ah, well, can't expect English police manners in a poor Taffy of a Welshman, can you?'

'Please get your questioning over.'

'Very good, then, but no lies, let me warn you.'

The professor stood up.

'For that, if it were not for your official standing, I would order you out of my house, Chief Inspector! Be so good as to come to the point.' He sat down again.

'Why, Professor, did you lead us to think that you left from Wroxham station on the evening of Mrs Crieff-Tweedle's death?'

'But we did!' cried Mavis Byland. 'Of course we did!'

'Then why were you recognised and identified at Norwich station three days later?'

'But we couldn't have been!'

'I think, Mavis, my dear,' said her husband, 'that, unless the Chief Inspector puts a direct question to you, you had better leave this interview to me. Now, Chief Inspector, who was your informant?'

'In the first place, you might say it was Dame Beatrice. She thought it strange, in her female (never mind the ditches, just jump to a conclusion) way, that neither at Wroxham station nor anywhere else, including your own home, was there anybody you could ask to come forward and speak for you that you were in such and such a place at such and such a time.'

'We had bad colds and were well muffled up,' said Mrs Byland. 'Nobody would have recognised us.'

'Oh, Mavis!' moaned her husband.

'You were in Norwich at the time of Mrs Crieff-Tweedle's death, then?'

'We must have been, but I assure you that we knew nothing about it until we read the newspaper reports.'

'So now perhaps we can have the facts. Such nice little things, facts, wouldn't you say, you being a man of learning and understanding?'

'Oh, very well; but I don't suppose you'll believe me.'

'There is nothing like giving it a trial, is there, then?'

'Oh, well, here goes. We had had this very unpleasant exchange with Dee Crieff-Tweedle and felt that it would be impossible to accept her hospitality any longer. On the other hand, there were still a few days of the promised fortnight to run and we were anxious to complete our study of the birds and plants of Norfolk. After Dee had gone off in the car to dine with the others in Wroxham, therefore, we packed our things, telephoned for a taxi—'

‘From where, sir?’

‘Oh, there was a telephone in Father Melrose’s annexe.’

‘Was he there?’

‘No. No, he wasn’t actually there.’

‘But you could get in?’

‘Well, as to that, I’m afraid I picked the lock. It wasn’t a patent lock, you see; just an ordinary padlock. I really felt I had to get to the telephone, or, of course, I wouldn’t have done it.’

‘Of course not. And a taxi came for you?’

‘Yes, after some delay. It came from Norwich. There is a fleet of them there. I thought I would be sure to get one from a big concern like that, even on a wet and nasty evening.’

‘Where was Mr Crieff-Tweedle at this time?’

‘In the bungalow nursing his cold.’

‘In bed?’

‘Well, not when we left. He saw us off.’

‘Did he know you were going to Norwich?’

‘No, I did not mention it. I suppose he concluded we were leaving for home from Wroxham.’

‘And you saw nothing of Mrs Crieff-Tweedle?’

‘Not after she left to take dinner with the others at the Wroxham hotel. May I ask, Chief Inspector, how you can be sure that we were identified on Norwich station three days later?’

‘Certainly, if it interests you. You were seen by one of the attendants at the Castle Museum. He was on the station too, see? You asked him some questions when you were in the museum on the previous day and he remembered you as being greatly interested in the ornithological section and especially in those large panoramic views they have there, showing the animals birds and plants in their native habitat. I’m a bit of a bird-watcher myself in my spare time and I was sure that you would have visited the museum during your stay in the county, so I paid it a visit myself and got this man to talk.’

‘Well, Chief Inspector, you can understand that, having crossed swords with Mrs Crieff-Tweedle on what turned out to be the evening of her death, we were not anxious for it to be known that we were still in Norfolk, so I’m afraid we fabricated this tale about going home. But I should be glad to know how Dame Beatrice reached her conclusions and passed them on to you. She did not simply jump to them, I feel sure.’

‘Oh, that!’ said Rees, in great good humour. ‘Yes, indeed. Well, it goes back, you see, to this business of your allowing her to think that Mr Crieff-Tweedle took you to the station, which indicates Wroxham station. She could not see why he should have done that. There was no car available because Mrs Crieff-Tweedle had taken it, so why should he, with his bad cold, take the trouble to accompany you in a taxi? It had only to drop you at the station and return to its base. Dame Beatrice is a lady who likes things to make sense, look you, and your story did not make sense at all.’

‘So I suppose you will now investigate this new story of ours.’

‘Ah, that, no. We have already looked into it, see? We only wanted to get you to confirm it without too much prompting. Now I would like you to make a statement please. I will give you the headings from my notes if that will help you.’

‘I’m not sure that that is orthodox procedure. I don’t remember seeing it done like that on the BBC

‘But what has orthodox procedure to do with a little help between friends, boyo? Still, write it in your own words, if you prefer it that way.’

‘May I ask whether there is any danger of our being charged with any kind of offence, Chief Inspector? If so, I wish my wife to be completely exonerated and shall brief my lawyers to that effect.’

‘No offence has been committed, boyo; nothing but evasive action taken. Everybody is entitled to a little bit of that in time of danger.’

Chapter Eighteen
Till Truth Make All Things Plain

‘For hord hath hate, and climbing tickelnesse,

Preese hath envy and wele blent overal;

Savour no more than thee behove shal;

Work wel thyself that other folk canst rede;

And trou the shal delivere, hit is no drede.’

Geoffrey Chaucer—Balade de Bon Conseyl

‘I hate Rees,’ said Eiladh to Liz Carpenter. ‘I’m not sure I don’t hate you, too. You might have dropped me just a hint that Tom is a policeman.’

Liz laughed. Dame Beatrice said: ‘You are not the only one of his suspects to dislike Mr Rees. Laura took a telephone call from the Bylands this morning. They appear to have shared your experience of having to confess to something which Mr Rees already knew. His next victim, no doubt, will be Mr Crieff-Tweedle again.’

‘Surely poor old Dum couldn’t have any need to tell lies,’ said Eiladh. ‘I know people will say—I’ve said it myself, I expect—that he had the best motive of anybody for putting Dee out of the way, but he couldn’t have killed her. He didn’t know she was going to be alone, either at Burgh Castle or anywhere else. He wasn’t at that last dinner. He would have assumed that some of us would have been with her, wouldn’t he? After all, we three and David and Arcati were at that dinner. Dum couldn’t have known that the two boys had slunk off to a pub and that we three would take umbrage at Dee’s remarks and come back to our bungalow instead of going on the ghost-hunt.’ She looked around her circle. ‘Is there a flaw in my reasoning?’

‘If there were, we wouldn’t dare say so,’ said Liz.

‘When I talked to Mr Crieff-Tweedle,’ said Dame Beatrice, ‘some of his assertions were, to say the least, surprising. We need to remember, too, that, after the departure of the Bylands, he was alone in the bungalow.’

Dum himself, at his now reappointed house, for the police, having traced the storage place the burglars had used, had restored all the property to its rightful place, was facing some searching questions from Rees. Rees had a copy of Dame Beatrice’s notes open on the table in front of him and to the badly-frightened bereaved he was turning a damned disinheriting countenance, although that, in itself, could

not alter the fact that Dee's Will left everything to her husband.

'Now, sir,' said Rees, 'there are some strange assertions you have made to a reliable witness. Perhaps you will be good enough to tell us whether you are prepared to stay by them. Yes, indeed, some strange assertions they are. Now, then.' He nodded to his sergeant who, seated at a small table at a modest distance from inquisitor and victim, was ready with his notebook.

'If you mean Dame Beatrice,' said Dum attempting a light tone, 'well, what was said was between herself and me. There were no others present at the interview and I am sure that her sole object was to protect Miss Eiladh Gavin who, like everyone else in our party, is under suspicion of causing, of causing—well, of causing the death of my wife.'

'That is quite correct, but Dame Beatrice was good enough to let us have an account of the interview, because she is a lady who likes intelligent answers to intelligent questions, and she found some of your answers very difficult to swallow. Not to offend you, mind!'

'She couldn't have heard me correctly.'

'Well, isn't that why we're here, the sergeant and myself, to put right anything which seems to be wrong? Yes, indeed.'

'But you're already biased in favour of Dame Beatrice's story, are you not, Chief Inspector?'

'We are only biased in favour of the truth. Now, if you are ready: we don't like to bustle our witnesses.'

'So I am a suspect, am I?'

'The words are out of your own mouth, boyo, but they are dead right, for all that.' He glanced around the beautifully-furnished room. 'Very gratified I am that you got all your property back safely. Not so clever those thieves, were they?'

'I suppose not. Thanks, anyway.'

'All in the course of duty. Now you told Dame Beatrice that your wife conspired with the robbers to take away all that good stuff so that she could claim on the insurance. Correct?'

'Well, what else could I think? She had organised this ridiculous ghost-hunt, got all the servants out of the house, neglected (I imagine) to notify the local police that the house would be empty, seen to it that somebody had a set of keys, made sure that all the burglar alarms were disconnected—'

'Granted that these things appear to be a matter of fact, the other fact remains that you yourself could have seen to all these matters and had the benefit of the insurance yourself.'

'If you think that, you didn't know my wife! I am not above telling you, Chief Inspector, that I was no more than a pawn on her chessboard. Still, pray go on.'

'You told Dame Beatrice that your wife was much in need of money—'

'Dee told me so.'

'And that she was prepared to diddle the insurance company in respect of property which she had arranged to have stolen while she was sky-larking with the spirit world in Norfolk.'

'Well, that's what I thought. If I was wrong I'm sorry.'

'Now that her Will has been proved, there is ample evidence that, apart from these treasures which have been restored to the house, your wife was still a very wealthy woman.'

'I didn't know that. She pleaded poverty and I believed her. If you had seen the food we ate and which, to my shame, we offered our guests, you would have believed her, too.'

‘With whom would she have conspired to have the robbery committed, then?’

‘With that villainous priest, I suppose. I never took to the chap from the very beginning, never trusted him, but it was no use saying so to my wife.’

‘Let me put another proposition to you, then. Is it certain that any fraud on the insurance company was contemplated at all? We share your suspicions of Melrose —not his real name, of course, neither is he a priest—and we believe he contrived to take a copy of the keys to the house while he was staying here, and that he disconnected the burglar alarms. But it was you who claimed from the insurance company.’

‘But my wife—’

‘Your wife had been dead for some days when the claim was made, see?’

‘Well, what did you expect me to do? I knew the stuff was insured, I hadn’t any money— Dee, my wife, kept my allowance down as low as she decently could — the Will took time to prove and meanwhile all things of value had been taken out of the house.’

‘It was wrong of you to blacken your dead wife’s name to Dame Beatrice. Not a beautiful action at all. You see, there is no trace of anything which could show that your wife had any intention of defrauding the insurance company or of her collusion with Melrose.’

‘She thought the world of the fellow. Still, I may have been wrong in what I assumed.’

‘If I might make a suggestion which will not please you, but which Dame Beatrice thinks is the truth, it would be this: are you certain that your wife did not attempt to let your local police force know that the house would be entirely empty while the party was in Norfolk?’

‘She’d quarrelled with the local police over a dog the beaks ordered to be destroyed. I’ve told you that.’

‘So we understand, but we also think that a lady such as your wife would have put the safety of her treasures above the life of an obviously savage dog. I put it to you, boyo, that the police were not notified because you yourself, although asked to do so, failed, for once, to carry out your wife’s instructions. Having, quarrelled, as you say, with your local police force, she was unwilling to ask a personal favour of them, so she instructed you to contact them. You did not do it, did you?’

‘That doesn’t make me a party to the robbery!’

‘True enough, although it doesn’t look too good for you, does it? You see, one of your servants heard her mistress give you your instructions—I believe your wife had a penetrating voice—but your local inspector is certain that he had received neither a visit nor a telephone call.’

‘Oh, Lord!’ Dum groaned and spread appealing hands. ‘Upon my soul, Chief Inspector, I clean forgot. Then when Dee asked me, after we got to Norfolk, whether I’d let the police know that the house would be empty, of course I swore I had. Any husband would have done the same. I would have phoned them up there and then from our bungalow — Melrose’s annexe was on the telephone—but I did not know the number.’

‘A short letter or a telegram, then?’

‘Are you mad, Chief Inspector? That woman never let me out of her sight.’

‘Except when she sent you to Burgh Castle on the evening when you met with your accident, of course. Have you forgotten your accident, then?’

‘Hardly a time when one could write letters or send telgrams. Besides, I should think the burglary was already under way by then.’

‘We know it would have taken them the best part of a week to strip the house the way it was stripped,

so no doubt you are right about that. Now to another point, if we may, and sorry I am to keep you so long.'

'I'm in your hands, it seems,' said Dum, bitterly.

'Not to notice, but please be of help if you can. Not our way to harass people unnecessarily.'

'You can say that again!'

'Very painful this for you, yes, indeed, but grateful for your co-operation you'll find us. Better in your own interests to be frank, see?'

'Oh, all right! Carry on.'

'Well now, you seem to have told Dame Beatrice that you warned your wife not to go alone to Burgh Castle.'

'Of course I did. I knew only too well what had happened to me there.'

'What reason had you to think that she might contemplate going there alone, then? It was the night of her death, remember.'

'There is no need to remind me of that!'

'So what would have put such an idea into your head?'

'Well, I knew the Bylands and myself were not going to be present at the dinner and that Melrose was about some business of his own, and the young men had proved very unstable and selfish the whole of the time, so I put no faith in the idea that they intended to carry out this particular commitment.'

'There remained Dr and Mr Tom Carpenter and Miss Eiladh Gavin. Surely they had proved faithful enough?'

'Oh, yes, of course they had. I had some idea that it was their horse-play which pushed me over that broken wall, though. However, Dame Beatrice thought not.'

'Why should you suppose they would play truant on that particular night?' asked Rees, ignoring Dum's last remark.

'Well, it was raining,' Dum said feebly, 'so I thought they might not go.'

'Was it raining when you saw Professor and Mrs Byland off in their taxi?'

'I don't remember. Oh, all right, I didn't warn my wife not to go.'

'That's better, then. Hindsight is often sent to mislead us, yes, indeed. You also told Dame Beatrice that nobody had a foolproof alibi for the time of your wife's death. So you knew when she died, did you? That makes you a lot cleverer than the doctors, doesn't it?'

'Oh, for heaven's sake stop hazing me, Chief Inspector! Maybe I did try to fox Dame Beatrice. I'm afraid of her.'

'Only those with a guilty conscience would say that of a very nice lady. As to deceiving her, well, you would have to get up very early in the morning to do that. What did you do when you had said goodbye to Professor and Mrs Byland?'

'I took two more aspirins and went to bed.'

'Do you think your wife really believed in ghosts, I wonder?'

'Not until that wretched Hallowe'en party when all those ghost-stories were told and Melrose came back to the house to say he'd seen the ghost of a dog.'

‘Oh, he said that, did he?’

‘Yes, and Dee thought she recognised it as the ghost of her dog which had been put down by order of the magistrates.’

‘What? In the garden, or whatever, of a place to which the dog had never come? Melrose must have wanted the ghost-hunt very badly, don’t you think?’

‘I don’t know. He didn’t claim it was the ghost of Dee’s dog. I think he was only adding to the Hallowe’en atmosphere. Perhaps he thought it was a way of expressing thanks for hospitality. The ghost-hunt, I am sure, was entirely Dee’s idea.’

‘Who murdered your wife, Mr Crieff-Tweedle?’

‘Really, Chief Inspector, I have no idea. If anybody is to be caught and punished, I would like it to be Melrose. I couldn’t stand the fellow,’ said Dum, trying to smile.

‘But we have no more evidence against him than against yourself so far.’

‘Then there are David and Arcati.’

‘A complete alibi in both cases, as proved.’

‘Then what about the Bylands? They’d had a terrific row with Dee before she went off alone to that dinner.’

‘Ah, yes, she went alone to the dinner. I suppose she took the car?’

‘Of course she did. I mean, she must have done. The car wasn’t there when the Bylands were ready to leave. That’s why they had to call up a taxi.’

‘Oh, you knew they called a taxi, did you?’

‘Of course. The driver came to the front door of the bungalow and said there was a taxi for them. Besides, I know Byland went out to the annexe to phone.’

‘And found it empty?’

‘How do you mean?’

‘Melrose wasn’t there? He had not returned from wherever it was he went?’

‘I think Byland would have mentioned that.’

‘It wasn’t locked up, then? The annexe, I mean.’

‘I have no idea. I didn’t go over there with him.’

‘But you saw the Bylands off?’

‘Only from the front door. The taxi, of course, was in the service road round at the back. I saw them off, then I took my aspirins and went to bed, and that really is all I can tell you.’

‘I expect your wife was disappointed that you did not attend the dinner.’

‘I really was far too unwell to go. Besides, it would have been very anti-social to spread my germs.’

‘There’s a nice thought, then. Well, thank you for your help. I’ll see myself out.’

A few minutes later a servant showed the Chief Inspector in again.

‘I do beg your pardon for intruding upon you again, but there is just one thing.’

‘Indeed?’

‘Yes, indeed,’ said Rees, emphasising the inflection with which South Wales stresses those two words. ‘Just one more question if I may, then.’

‘Oh, go on, go on, and then perhaps you’ll leave me in peace.’

‘We have a plan of the bungalow named Kojak. It looks as though the bedroom which you and your wife occupied—and the Bylands’ bedroom, for that matter— had windows which overlooked the back garden. The back garden was very small. Agreed?’

‘Yes, of course. Only a few yards separated the back windows of the bungalow from the service road.’

‘That being so, after you had taken your aspirins and gone to bed, did anything disturb you at all?’

‘Well—this is going to sound ridiculous.’

‘Not if it accords with a theory which Dame Beatrice has propounded to me and which, so far, she has not repeated to anybody else.’

‘Oh, well, this won’t be the same thing, I’m sure. You see, I had just settled down in bed when I could have sworn I heard my wife’s voice in the back garden. What is more, I thought I had heard a car pull up.’

‘Your own car?’

‘Oh, as to that, I had no idea. Most of the people who rent those bungalows have cars. I thought nothing of hearing one pull up until, as I say, I thought I heard my wife’s voice.’

‘Oh, yes? Surprised, were you, to hear it?’

‘Yes. Your own voice suggests that you want to know what I did. Well, all I wanted was a bit of peace, so I pulled the bedclothes well up round my ears and made up my mind that if she came in to see how my cold was getting on, I was going to pretend to be fast asleep.’

‘And did she come into the bedroom, then?’

‘No, she did not. Nobody came into the bungalow at all. Soon after that, the aspirins got to work, I suppose, and I did fall asleep. It was not until the morning, when I found she hadn’t breakfasted, that I began to wonder what had happened.’

‘At what point did it occur to you that your wife had never come home that night?’

‘I wasn’t convinced—not really convinced—until I knew her body had been found.’

‘You thought you heard a car pull up at or near the bungalow, and you thought you heard your wife’s voice. Did anybody seem to be with her? Did you hear another voice and did you hear the car start up again a bit later on?’

They were leading questions. Dum took time to consider them before he replied:

‘No, to both your suggestions. I’d had some whisky, you know, and then the aspirins and, as I told you, I bundled myself up in the bedclothes so that my ears were covered. I didn’t want to hear my wife’s voice. I rather disliked her voice, you know. So I muffled myself up and she did not come into the room after all, so I soon went to sleep. As to the person she could have had with her, if, indeed, she had anybody at all, it might have been any of the others or even somebody talking across from the next bungalow. I am convinced now that she did not come home at all.’

‘I suppose you have no idea of the approximate time that you thought you heard your wife’s voice in the garden?’

‘Approximate time? Well, not really. The Bylands took some half hour or so to finish their packing

after Dee had gone off to dine, and then we had some whisky for our colds and there were the farewells and I apologised as best I could for Dee's behaviour to them, and then there was Byland's phone call and a fairly long wait for the taxi and then I had another whisky and got ready for bed—say about another twenty minutes to half an hour—and, of course, I'd only just got into bed when I thought I heard the car then her voice.'

'Adding all that up, then, can you give an estimate of the time?'

'Only roughly, of course. I suppose it would have been in the region of ten o'clock or a little later.'

'And at what time did the party begin their dinner at the hotel?'

'Oh, it got later as the days went on. Dee grew impatient of the time we had to spend waiting until it was dark enough, in her opinion, for the ghosts to put in an appearance, so, in the end, we were beginning our dinner at about eight-thirty and not exactly hurrying over it, you know.'

'Of course not. Who would hurry over a good dinner? Well, now, you know that Dame Beatrice, who is psychiatrist to the Home Office, has been taking a great interest in the case on behalf of Miss Eiladh Gavin. Eiladh! Isn't that a pretty name, now?'

'Oh, get on, Chief Inspector!'

'Well, strange this, but neither of them believes that you were attacked at Burgh Castle on that Tuesday night. You will remember that Tuesday night, won't you?'

'I've already admitted that I may not have been attacked, but I certainly fell off a broken part of the wall.'

'But your wife was attacked and her body was thrown over the wall.'

'Well, of course, or so it appears.'

'Yet you say you heard her voice outside the bungalow on the night of her death.'

'It was only my fancy.'

'Oh, no, it was not your fancy. She was there, and she was there not so very long before she was murdered. You were not the only one to hear her voice, no, indeed. Your neighbours heard it, too. A big, strong, carrying voice she had, I believe.'

'We had nothing to do with our neighbours.'

'Indeed you had not. That wouldn't stop their ears, though, would it? Not like the deaf adder of Scripture, are they?'

'I know nothing about them, but if my wife did return to the bungalow before she went to Burgh Castle, there is only one person she would have been talking to, and that's the priest, Melrose. And if it was Melrose, well, then, priest or no priest, there's your murderer, Chief Inspector.'

'Oh, no, that won't do. That won't do at all, look you. We had a tail on Melrose that night, and the name of the tail was Detective Inspector Tom Carpenter of the C.I.D.'

'What!'

'Yes, indeed. Tailing Melrose he was, most of the time he was in Norfolk, and he had a tip-off that evening, see? So after dinner he went out, pretending to buy bottles of wines and spirits—oh, such wickedness, to be sure!—but really he went to Norwich and found Melrose, but could prove nothing. So he pulled him into Norwich police station, see, and Melrose was there all night to answer questions about the murder of the play-actor Pavy. We have got nothing on him yet, but we hold two of his gang

for the Crieff-Tweedle robbery, and hard luck if we can't round up the rest of them on a charge of conspiracy and murder. All in it, you see, all the lot of them, and all bloody liars.'

'Well, I hope you do round them up, of course, but, if it wasn't Melrose with my wife, who was it?'

'Well, not to surprise you, of course, but the neighbours say it was you yourself. You opened the front door to her. You had not gone to bed. You were having a bit of a soak, see, and she found you alone and began to upbraid you for being —well, a great pity that whisky has such a strong smell, wouldn't you say?'

'I had a bad cold.'

'Yes, indeed. Was it the bad cold that made you become heated in argument, or was it the whisky? Something made you take her by the throat and strangle her. It was you who took her dead body to Burgh Castle in the car she came back in, wasn't it?'

'So there it is, then,' said Rees to Dame Beatrice. 'We have arrested and charged him and sorry I am to do it, for driven to it he was, you might say, and, of course, diminished responsibilitity because of the whisky. Dr Carpenter diagnosed the hangover, if you remember. How he ever got his wife's body into the car and remembered to tie the handkerchief round her neck and then get the car to Burgh Castle and back to Wroxham, where we found it abandoned near the railway station as though she had gone off by train, we shall never know. He must have walked back to the bungalow from there. You were quite right, ma'am. When she found she was left alone at the hotel after dinner that night, she decided to abandon all thought of Burgh Castle and drove straight back to the bungalow in the rain.'

'And there, you think,' said Eiladh, 'she found him alone and soaking up the whisky and began lambasting him and he suddenly saw red and strangled her. Serve her jolly well right! Poor old Dum!'

'You need not feel so very sorry for him,' said Dame Beatrice. 'I have no doubt at all that murder had been in his mind for some time. The real climax came when she sent him alone to Burgh Castle that night to spy upon you and the Carpenter brother and sister. He pretended that he himself had been attacked so as to prepare the ground if ever he had an opportunity to kill his wife under, so to speak, protection of the ghosts. Up to that point, of course, it was wishful thinking. He could not have known how neatly matters were going to fall into his hands on the night he killed her.'

'Well, I'm still sorry for him,' said Eiladh. 'She was perfectly beastly to him and in public, too, which really is unforgivable.'

'And of course, he must have known he was her heir,' said Dame Beatrice dispassionately. 'Crippen was also a victim of his wife's unkind tongue and that in public, too, but it was his infatuation with Ethel le Neve which led to murder. There is always a last straw and I think that, in Edward Crieff-Tweedle's case, the straw was made of gold and was correspondingly heavy.'

'I don't care,' said Eiladh stoutly. 'If Dee hadn't been so beastly to the Bylands, the bungalow wouldn't have been empty except for Dum that night, and if she hadn't been so beastly about Tom and me, we three would have gone with her to Burgh Castle, rain or no rain. It was all her own fault that she was murdered."

'Oh, domestic victims of murder always contribute towards their own deaths,' said Dame Beatrice. 'That they asked for it is a truism. The same applies (although his was not a domestic murder) in the case of Salathiel Pavy. There were at least two of the Melrose gang assisting in the ghost business and Pavy, who had been co-opted, had learned enough of their activities to be in a position, or so he thought, to blackmail them. He escaped from them at Horning, but, while Melrose took Mrs Crieff-Tweedle's party on that round trip so that she did not get to St Benet's Abbey that night, his two henchmen strangled Salathiel when he left the hotel to obey their telephone call and strung him up in

imitation of the murdered monk.’

Chapter Nineteen
Brother Pacificus

‘No Will o’ the Wisp mislight thee

Or snake or slow-worm bite thee,

But on, on thy way,

Not making a stay,

Since ghost there’s none to affright thee.’

Robert Herrick —‘The Night-Piece to Julia ’

It was late autumn and cold on the Broads. The sedges were withered, the reeds rustled uneasily in a sharp east wind and strings of wild duck took echelon flight across a pale, unfriendly sky. The cruiser, motor-driven, turned into the dyke which led to Ranworth Broad.

‘I can’t think why you wanted to come back to these haunted waters,’ said Hamish to his sister. Eiladh, at the controls, did not reply. The boat moved slowly down the narrow channel and reached the open water before she answered.

‘Tom didn’t want me to come,’ she said, ‘but we’re not married yet and I wanted to see Ranworth church.’

They moored and went ashore. The church was open. They climbed the tower and came out on to the leads. Eiladh walked to the battlemented parapet and looked down and around. Below her, Broads, rivers and marshes were as small as a picture map of the surrounding countryside.

They descended into the body of the church. Before the beautiful fifteenth-century painted screen, with the Archangel Michael, in all his glory of wings and halo, predominant among the decorative saints, a man was kneeling. He was not quite bareheaded, for he seemed to be wearing on the back of his head a small, round, white cap, such as prelates of the Catholic church affect.

He must have heard the brother and sister come in, for he rose from his kneeling position and stood aside to give them room to look at the screen. By the time they had examined it—and they took their time—he had disappeared, but after they had come down from the little room where the Ranworth Missal or Sarum Antiphoner, the second great treasure of the church, was housed, he was back on his knees again in front of the screen and, delicately, appeared to be touching it.

‘I suppose it’s all right?’ Hamish murmured to his sister. ‘I mean, he isn’t doing any harm?’

Eiladh did not reply. They dropped their offerings into the box provided and she led the way out of the south porch and back to their boat. Near it was another boat, an unwieldly, flat-bottomed craft on which a small white dog was keeping guard.

‘Well, that wasn’t here when we came,’ said Hamish. ‘Queer-looking old tub. The dog isn’t taking any notice of us. He’s waiting for his owner to turn up. Some native of the place, obviously.’

‘The man who was kneeling in the church,’ said Eiladh.

‘Can’t be. The man was in the church before we got there, and this boat wasn’t here when we went

ashore.’

A sound, not of footsteps, but of quiet whistling, caused them to turn round.

Approaching them was a man in a long, sack-like garment with a dark hood, rather like that of an anorak, covering his head.

‘Good evening,’ said Eiladh. ‘Didn’t we see you in the church just now?’

‘I fare to touch up that old screen now and again,’ said the man. ‘My little Caesar wait for me. Come you along then, bor,’ he broke off, addressing the dog. He spoke with the ascending, seemingly questioning accent of the countryside. Then he splashed through the shallow ripples to his boat, stepped aboard, seated himself beside the dog and began to pull across the Broad towards the dyke. The brother and sister watched his slow but steady progress. They found they were holding hands.

‘So the little white cap was really a tonsure,’ said Eiladh, very quietly, ‘and I knew his dog would be white, not black like the other one.’

‘Eh?’ Hamish released her hand.

‘Well, look!’

The clumsy boat had reached the middle of the Broad. As they watched, it melted into air and was gone.

‘You have to speak to them first,’ she said. ‘That’s why he was able to tell us what he was doing in the church.’

‘What the devil are you talking about?’

‘Not the devil; the ghost of Brother Pacificus,’ said Eiladh.