

“The Third Man” by Graham Greene [B2]

Il celebre autore inglese ha firmato la sceneggiatura di uno dei migliori film noir di sempre. La storia, ambientata nell'Europa del dopoguerra, fa riflettere sulla natura sfuggente della verità.

An atmospheric thriller about friendship and [betrayal](#), The Third Man is set in Vienna after the Second World War. British author, journalist and [former](#) intelligence officer Graham Greene was employed to write a [screenplay](#) for the film and the [novella](#) he produced to do so became an instant classic of crime fiction.

OCCUPIED VIENNA

A narrator, later revealed to be a British military officer called Calloway, begins by [musing](#) on Vienna's [fall from grace](#). The Austrian capital is occupied by four Allied powers: Britain, the United States, France and the Soviet Union, and there is a tense relationship between them. The city's impoverished inhabitants [rely on](#) the black market to survive. “I never knew the old Vienna before the war with its Strauss music, its glamour and easy charm [...] I really got to know it in the classic period of the black market [...] Vienna doesn't really look any worse than a lot of other European cities. Bombed about a bit [...] Holly Martins, an American, came all the way here to visit a friend of his. The name was Lime, Harry Lime.” “Non ho conosciuto la Vienna d'anteguerra, con la musica di Strauss e il suo grande fascino. [...] Mi è diventata familiare nel periodo del mercato nero. [...] Vienna non è ridotta peggio di altre città europee distrutte dai bombardamenti. [...] Holly Martins. È venuto qui a trovare un amico: Harry Lime”. Holly Martins is a writer of [pulp-fiction](#) Westerns who arrives in Vienna [penniless](#). He quickly learns, however, that his childhood friend Harry Lime has died in a car accident. At Harry's funeral he meets Calloway, who says that Lime was a criminal. “– He was about the worst racketeer that ever made a dirty living in this city.” “— Era uno dei più sporchi campioni del mercato nero che si siano vigliaccamente arricchiti ai danni di questa città”.

LIME'S CRIMES

Convinced that Lime's crimes were minor ones, Martins talks to people who knew him. An actress called Anna Schmidt says she was close to Lime. A man called Kurtz tells him that he and another friend carried Lime to the side of the street after the accident. But then the porter at Lime's apartment tells him that he saw a third man help carry the body away... Then, the porter is murdered! Martins confronts Calloway. "– I suppose it wouldn't interest you to know that Harry Lime was murdered? And there was a third man there [...]" – I'm not interested in whether a racketeer like Lime was killed by his friends or by an accident. The only important thing is that he's dead. Go home Martins, like a sensible chap [...] – As soon as I get to the bottom of this, I'll get the next plane. – Death's at the bottom of everything, Martins. Leave death to the professionals." "—Non vi interessa che Lime sia stato assassinato. C'era un terzo uomo. Ma sembra non vi interessi. —Non importa che uno come Lime sia morto in un incidente o ucciso da complici. L'importante è che sia morto. Vada a casa, non si metta nei guai. —Finita questa storia, prenderò il primo aereo. —Alla fine di tutto c'è la morte. Lasci che se ne occupi chi è esperto."

HARRY'S CAT

Calloway tells Martins that Lime was stealing penicillin from military hospitals, diluting it, then selling it on the black market, thus injuring or killing countless infants. Horrified, Holly decides to leave. However, he sees Harry's cat lurking near Anna's apartment, and someone watching him from the shadows... it is Harry!

THE FERRIS WHEEL

Martins agrees to meet Lime and they ride a ferris wheel called the Wiener Riesenrad. Lime shows just how callous he has become. "– Victims? Don't be melodramatic. Look down there. Tell me, would you really feel any pity if one of those dots stopped moving forever? If I offered you twenty thousand pounds for every dot that stopped, would you really, old man, tell me to keep

my money, or would you calculate how many dots you could afford to spare?" "—Vittime? Non essere melodrammatico, Rollo. Guarda laggiú. Sentiresti davvero della pietà se qualcuno di quei puntolini neri si fermasse... tutt'a un tratto... per sempre? Se ti dicessi che puoi avere ventimila sterline per ognuno dei puntolini che si ferma, mi diresti davvero, vecchio mio, di tenermi per me il mio danaro... cosí, senza esitare? O non cercheresti di calcolare, invece, quanti puntolini potresti riuscire a mettere insieme?". Martins agrees to help Calloway catch Lime, but Anna warns Harry of the set-up. Lime tries to escape through Vienna's extensive [sewer tunnels](#), but the police are closing in...

TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY

The Third Man was filmed in Vienna in 1948 during a brief period of peace between the Second World War and the [onset](#) of the Cold War. The film featured actors Joseph Cotten as Holly Martins and Orson Welles as Lime. It won an Oscar and the Golden Palm at Cannes Film Festival. But while it was a triumph in Britain, in Vienna, a city still dealing with its [troubled](#) past, it was viewed as a tragedy.

Glossary

- **lurking** = aggirarsi, stare in agguato
- **callous** = cinico, insensibile
- **onset** = scoppio, inizio
- **screenplay** = sceneggiatura
- **novella** = racconto
- **musings** = riflettere
- **fall from grace** = caduta in disgrazia
- **pulp-fiction** = narrativa popolare, di consumo
- **penniless** = senza soldi
- **ferris wheel** = ruota panoramica
- **betrayal** = tradimento
- **countless** = innumerevoli
- **sewer tunnels** = rete fognaria
- **troubled** = travagliato, problematico
- **rely on** = affidarsi, dipendere da
- **ride** = salire, fare un giro
- **former** = ex, già