

the **LITTLE ENGINE**

that could *Kill*



a murder mystery for eight

**The Tennis Star**

## You are the Tennis Star

On Wednesday, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 1932, you and eight other passengers boarded a three-day express train from Bombay, India to Lisbon, Portugal. Unfortunately, one did not survive the journey. It is now up to you and the seven passengers left to decide who killed the eighth.

This is your story. It details your background, your current position in life, and your actions on the fated three-day express liner. **Read carefully**, because you have many key pieces of evidence that must be used in combination with the knowledge of other passengers to unmask and convict the murderer.

You will also find a map of the train, which includes any structure that a visitor to the train would notice **upon cursory inspection**.

### Ground Rules

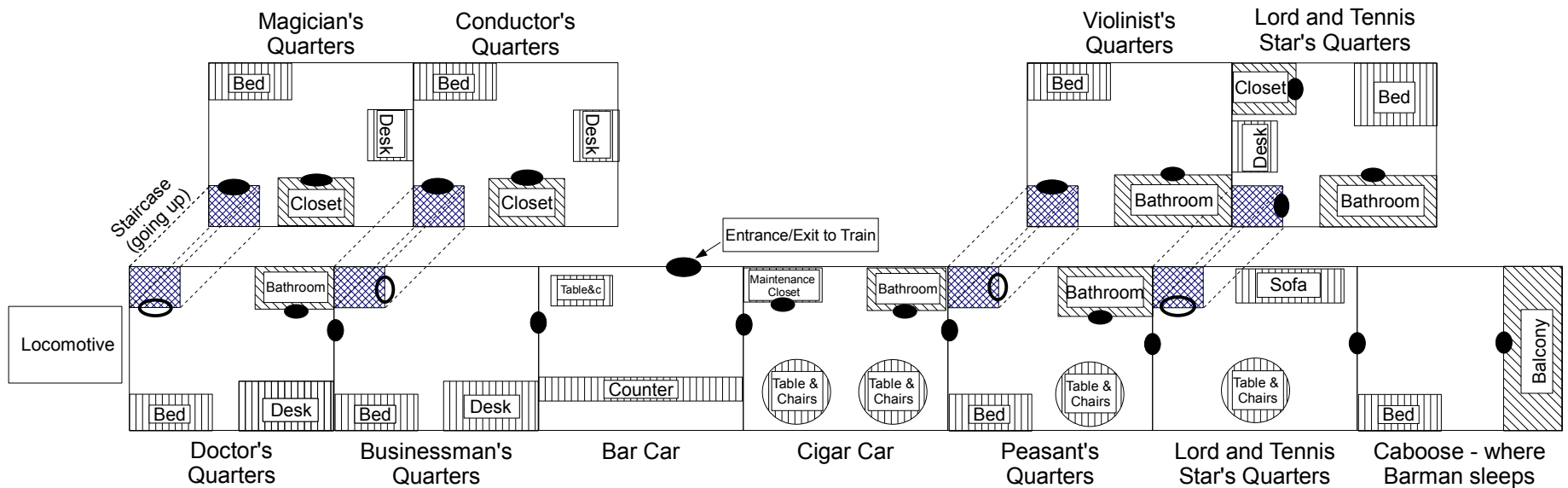
- Do not show this script to anyone else at any time.
- Please refrain from reading directly from the script when presenting evidence to others, unless you find it absolutely necessary.
- Play your character to some modest degree. You **need not** go to great efforts to mimic the character's personality - although it would be much more fun if you did - but **at least** speak as though you were your character (i.e. "I saw such-and-such an event" instead of "my character saw...", and so on).
- If someone asks you a basic question about your character that you should know (e.g. your age), but the information was not provided in your story, you may make something up - just as long as it's consistent with the rest of your story.
- This story contains historical falsities and devices of science fiction. **Take them for granted (but not anything else).**

### Lying

- **Lie with caution.** Your story interweaves with the stories of many other people who may know things about you that you might not think they know.
- You **may not lie** about the following things:
  - Something you heard someone else say.
  - An action you saw someone else doing.
  - Something that you saw someone else carrying.
  - A piece of background information about someone else, *unless you are involved in their background story.*
- You **may lie** about the following things:
  - Something that you said or did.
  - A piece of background information about yourself, *or about someone else if you were involved in their background story.*

## Map of Three-day Express Liner from Bombay to Toledo

- II -



### Notes:

● = door (swinging or doorknob style)

○ = open doorway

Locations of chairs, mirrors, and various other items are not given. Fill in the blanks using your story.

The setup is different in each person's room. The pricetags of each room are also different, but it's up to you to guess the relative cost of each.

## The Tennis Star

You admire your reflection with a scowl for that is the best expression of self-admiration you can muster. A smile would imply contentedness and contentedness did not paint the *Mona Lisa* or sculpt the *Venus de Milo*.

A wrinkle tries to hide in the shadows of your brow. You catch it with your eye and expunge it with your hand. A spackling of primer and it is concealed. A brushing of powder and it is gone.

Of course, not every blemish is a fugitive in hiding. There are still the usual suspects marauding your face in plain sight – the slight strawberry mark on your cheek, the pimple above the chin, and the scar running down your upper lip to name a few.

The scar was a gift from your former husband. He is now former because he is now dead.

The tools of perfection are on sale at Harrods' for ten pounds a bottle. Eight if you purchase in bulk which also happens to be your preferred means of acquisition. It is preferred not so much for price but for quantity. An artist can only create so much as her palette allows.

You tilt the mirror. A recidivist offender of aesthetic virtue streaks across your forehead. It's become a familiar wrinkle, a hackneyed foe. You have all but named it. Hulga would be appropriate.

You estimate the trajectory of your approach and the velocity of minimal splatter. It is intuitive to your brain like positioning a cannon was to Napoleon's. You are ready. You are aimed.

You fire and the train bumps. You hit yourself in the eye with the powdered sponge applicator. Even Napoleon had his Waterloo.

You instinctively screech with the pain of defacement. The pain of nociception is only a secondary reaction.

Your husband grunts. It is most likely a calculatedly exaggerated demonstration of testosterone prompted by thoughts of his own impotence and apishly uttered from the compensatory desires of his defensive ego. He will have to compensate elsewhere, you think. A simple grunt will not cut it. Perhaps a diamond brooch will.

You fix the smattering of powder around your eye and re-aim the applicator. You hit the mark perfectly like Napoleon at Austerlitz.

"Honey," your husband asks. "Did you pack away my pen? Or is it still...festering away at the manor?"

You ponder his impotence and how it must be affecting his subconscious through a psychosexual regression. His inordinate desire for his pen and his puerile dependency on others to pack away his belongings would indicate a slippage into one of the more infantile stages of development.

Or so the Doctor has informed you. And the Doctor is an exceedingly educated man. You can tell by the way he makes love to you. He is sedate from kiss to climax.

You measure your cleavage by squeezing your breasts together and observing the displacement of fabric. Your eye is a better calibrator than any tape measure.

Your husband repeats his query. Repetition of speech is a symptom of neurosis. But you do not reveal to your husband your psychoanalytic diagnosis. It would certainly exceed his childish comprehension. And it might arouse unwanted suspicion of the affair between you and the Doctor.

"The pen, my Lord? Are you still working on that preposterous list of yours?"

## The Tennis Star

He has been writing down words he does not know ever since a paperback purporting to turn a common man gentle recommended he do so. If he were strapped for money, you would suggest he return the book and ask for a refund as a gentleman would not persist in spitting on floors and smoking corncob pipes.

“Yes, my glistening sugarplum, I believe I was until I noticed that I did not have my pen with me.” Glistening sugarplum -- You cannot decide whether his ostentatious flattery is meant to be sarcastic or earnest. Sarcasm would indicate that he is possibly progressing from the infantile to the juvenile stages of development. If so, it is time then that he learn the social benefits of personal responsibility.

“If every man were to look after his own pen, I believe we would not have any missing pen problems in London.”

“So you forgot it back home at the manor?”

“Change the personage of your pronoun and I believe you will have the correct answer.”

Personage – that will be next on his list after preposterous.

“The pen was forgotten at the manor.”

And to think that a man who cannot properly rearrange his pronouns could convince all of London that he is the right and proper Lord of Winchester. Soon the Americans will be selling us the Brooklyn Bridge, you think. And they might even throw in the Williamsburg and make it a real bargain.

You tie-back your shirt and hike up your skirt. You are ready for your two o'clock appointment.

“I believe my tendinitis is acting up again,” you say while grabbing your left arm and cringing noticeably. “It is a severe case – I fear I shall have to see the Doctor for a lengthy and intensive examination. I shudder to think that my young and promising career should be abruptly ended by the mere swelling of a sinew.”

“Don’t you serve with your right?” he asks. You are momentarily taken aback by his unforeseen show of astuteness.

“Yes, but I toss with my left.”

Scientific studies have shown left-handed individuals to exhibit a greater propensity toward neurosis. Your husband is left-handed. He is the rule and not the exception.

You stand and flatten your skirt feeling your thighs through the thin layer of flax. They are as firm as marble and just as cold. You press against them and savor the resistance. A pregnant woman’s thighs give like globs of cottage cheese.

You walk to the door with a practiced bounce to each step. Your pink skirt flirts with the black lace hiding your nether regions but goes no further. A masterpiece hints at – but rarely reveals – its most intimate secrets.

Your husband requests an unsavory favor of you revealing his latent oral fixation. He then hacks up a wad of phlegm and displays it on the floor. It jiggles obscenely like a lactating breast awaiting the greedy lips of some unwanted progeny. You are disgusted and refuse him closing the door definitively behind you.

You pass through the Peasant’s car. It smells faintly of rotten mushrooms though no one else is there.

## The Tennis Star

In the Cigar car, the Magician and the Businessman are advertising their homoerotic desires with thick clouds of enshrouding smoke. You part the shroud and enter.

As suspected, each is satisfying his oral fixation with a cigar. They would probably refer to it simply as “smoking” choosing to ignore the inconvenient subtleties of their behavior.

The Magician has a pile of photos on his lap and the Businessman is staring into the eternal ether perhaps dreaming about what could have been between the Magician and himself had they been born into the promiscuity of Ancient Greece.

You quickly depart this Freudian love fest and enter the Bar car where you order a tall glass of water and a diuretic. You chug the water and down the coffee. It is strong and unsweetened, and you regret that you did not have more time to relish every bitter sip.

The Barman is hunched over the counter reading something. What, you ask. “Papal edicts,” he says. You continue walking.

You shimmy past the Peasant who is walking in the opposite direction across the Businessman’s suite. His greasy hand swoops under your skirt and squeezes your rear. It feels warm and moist like a freshly discarded placenta. Your rear instinctively tightens and shrinks away.

You giggle demurely though. It will only make him more covetous and you more desirable.

He pulls out a rope capped at each end with black rubber and points his chin at the Businessman’s bed.

You worry his hand has stained your unmentionables.

“Now, Mr. Peasant, this is a civilized train.”

You lean over dangling the bait inches from his eyes and shaking your finger disapprovingly. He snaps at them with both hands but you pull back just a little quicker. He is still flailing at the air as you skip to the Doctor’s with breasts unsullied.

You are not surprised that two hanging sacks of adipose tissue could frenzy the Peasant like a couple bags of gold. You know that you are a commodity in the market of carnal desires. So a little advertising -- via a flash of black lace or an alluring giggle -- can only increase demand and augment your value.

The water and coffee work like a charm. You sit on the toilet and relieve yourself onto the test strip and into the bowl. You flush, leave, and take a deep breathe. The Doctor’s bathroom smells strongly of formaldehyde.

“It will require an hour or so wait before we can be certain of the result,” the Doctor says while holding the strip under the overhead light.

“So it is settled then.”

“It is settled. I have already filled your prescription as a precautionary matter. You are aware of the legal ramifications?”

“Yes – Sadly I am.”

The Doctor’s chin has never looked so chiseled as it does under the harsh tones of the laboratory light. And he has never looked so professional as he does now wearing his horn-rimmed glasses and furrowed his brow under a smattering of loose locks. For a moment, you do not regret giving yourself to him on the first night of train ride. You only regret that he was so distracted by his studies. All in all, it would have been more pleasurable if he had left *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* on his desk instead of bringing it into the bed. There was no need for him to read a passage after every thrust.

## The Tennis Star

"Is your husband aware of the situation?" the Doctor asks. He pulls small a small of pills from his desk and places it in your palm.

"No – I do not plan on telling him. He's impotent, you know."

"Hmm, that would be difficult to manipulate. Could you convince him it is a miraculous conception -- a new Son of God who has been conceived on the Lisbon Express?"

You shake your head. Your husband's been a realist ever since the war.

The Doctor hands you the vial. "If you follow these directions, there will be no need to inform anyone of our affair."

The label reads in the Doctor's meticulous hand, "ABORTION PILLS. TAKE ONLY ONE. Will cause immediate death to user if taken in high doses."

You thank him with a lingering peck on his stiff lips. "You have saved my career," you murmur while massaging his bony shoulders. It is really his chin that you found so irresistibly appealing.

And the Doctor has certainly saved your tennis career although you were never particularly well known for your backhand – or forehand – for that matter. Myrna Rosenbaum, a withered old hag from the *New York Post* with a nose two sizes too big and a brain two sizes too small once critiqued your contributions to the game noting that when you play the men in the crowd stop following the ball in favor of your skirt.

Your former husband – the original Lord of Winchester – read it to you with his morning coffee. "Was it at the Hamptons' tournament?" you asked him. "There I was sporting a flamingo rah-rah with a ruffled hem. It was positively delicious." The next day he slashed your budget for fashion and hired the "Great One" to remove the so-called kinks in your stroke. That was four years ago

The Hamptons is where met your current husband. He was an electrician then – an American veteran from the Great War – fixing a busted fuse in the players' locker room. You were changing. It was love at first sight.

You cram the pills deep under tubes of lipstick and emergency pads into a well-concealed corner of your pink handbag. It is 2:58 and you leave the Doctor to interpret the test results on his own.

The Businessman's suite is empty and you pass into the Bar car. Only the Barman is behind the counter. No one else is there. You ask for a High Ball. He smiles and says he would serve no other drink to a Tennis Star. His dimpled chin looks awfully cute under the playful shadows of his black leather fedora. And his Italian accent reminds you of your home back in Brooklyn.

He talks about life as a Barman. How no one ever talks to him unless they're passing money across the counter. He jokes about the Businessman and his absurd demands. That he wants steak and eggs with the steak cooked one way and the eggs another and – and – you forgot the rest. He sounds so sad throughout – so unforgettably sad.

You ask him about his dreams and discover he has a castration complex. You explain it to him and one bawdy pun leads to another. Before you know it, you are lying on the floor behind the counter with the Barman -- dimples showing -- on top of you. And to think it all started so innocently with a discussion of High Balls.

## The Tennis Star

He repeats Latin prayers as he makes love to you. He starts a baritone and ends a soprano. You cup your hands over your ears. “Can any man on this train copulate properly?” you ask yourself.

You allow him to finish his business without a prophylactic. You have your pills and – anyway – fully pleasing barmen often results in complimentary drinks. Or at least it has at the Waldorf.

“What does one thousand six hundred and eighteen stand for?” you ask. It is tattooed above his left hip.

“It’s not a number. It’s a verse. Matthew 16:18. ‘I say to you that you are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.’ That church is the Catholic Church and those gates of Hades are the Protestants. I look down there whenever I need a little inspiration in my war against the heathens.”

The service bell rings on the counter and the Barman buttons his shirt. The bell rings a few more times before he reaches the collar. He puts his finger against his lips and tells you to shush. With the other hand, he motions for you to stay hidden under the counter.

“Where were you?” It’s more roar than voice. It’s the sound of a man who can probably orgasm without reciting Freud or recanting Gregorian chants.

The Barman says something about bad backs and grapefruit juice but you don’t have the patience to listen to his whines.

You quietly wiggle into your lace and flax. You pull down your shirt and tighten it again. The top few buttons pop open and you keep it that way. You fluff your hair, smooth your skirt, and wait for the man to leave

The virile man shouts about testicles and platters. A moment later you can hear the rear door shut. The Barman stoops down and gives the “all-clear” sign. It is delivered in a rather unorthodox manner. It seems that a quick grab of the breasts is supposed to signal that potential danger has passed.

You slap him across the face. He has already had his fun. You have allowed him a thorough sampling of your pleasures. You will not permit him to cheapen you with a superfluous and unsolicited grope. He must be taught that favors are to be performed before he receives another taste of heaven.

The elimination of the Doctor would be an excellent first favor. Perhaps you will suggest it to him when he is not so obviously aroused.

You stand up and a hideous clown face stares up at you from the shiny countertop. That sloppy Guido must have smeared your make-up with his roving tongue. He deserves another slap but he might enjoy the second too much.

You skip off to the Doctor’s not forgetting to put a bounce in every other step. The showing of a little black lace might distract eyes from the now exposed pimple that has set-up-shop above your chin.

“Am I –?” You ask the Doctor unable to pronounce that reprehensible word.

He nods his head solemnly. “One pill a day for three days,” he says.

The Conductor is descending the stairs into the Businessman’s quarters. He smiles at you and you fetchingly turn away with hair dashing across your face. His hand brushes your backside and you continue to the Bar car. You wonder if he saw your pimple.



## The Tennis Star

The Barman is behind the counter cleaning a mug. He winks as you pass and says he'll see you at eight. Maybe that will be an appropriate time to suggest the replacement of arsenic for salt in the Doctor's shaker. You put an extra bounce in your step.

In the Cigar car, the Magician hisses at the Businessman "You should see what I can do with a rope." They have progressed from oral fixation to sodomy in the matter of hours, you think. If only your husband could move through stages of development so quickly. Perhaps he would be capable yet of bearing him heir. You shudder. You prefer that he remain impotent.

Your husband and the Peasant are playing cards in the latter's car while the Violinist is playing "Greensleeves" with cheerless bow strokes.

Your husband is winning splendidly. You can tell by the hefty piles of gold that have accumulated on his side of the table. Somewhere at Saks Fifth, a diamond brooch is awaiting your neck.

You rush through the car with your head bowed and your hair covering your face. Your smeared make-up will surely trigger unwanted connections even between his dull synapses.

You crash into what feels like a soft pillow. You look. It is the Peasant's rear. He is slapping it and laughing like a mongoloid.

Your husband grabs your wrist and pulls you close. Hollywood noir has taught you the one acceptable excuse for a woman's dishevelment. You imagine cradling your child in your arms. His puckered lips sucking on your once supple bosom – now sagging from months of milk production. The tears flow naturally.

You stare into his eyes fluttering lashes between tears.

"How was the appointment?" he asks.

"Tiring," you say. "This whole damn world can be tiring sometimes."

You deliver your line like Lauren Bacall awaiting outstretched arms of Humphrey Bogart. Only there are no outstretched arms. And your husband is no Humphrey Bogart. And Lauren Bacall is a drunken no-good tramp with an ugly nose and would not know a diamond from a cubic zirconium even if she were given two guesses.

He releases and you scurry off in a fit of curls and crocodile tears.

The B Altman and Company clock above your dressing table says it's 3:40. You agree.

You dig through your handbag and pull out the pills. You open the canister and spill a few into your palm. Each is shaped like the hull of a u-boat and just as gray. The bow and stern are sharp as razors and prick at your palm. They do not look nearly as friendly as the amphetamines you swallow dry before important tennis matches or late nights on the town. Perhaps these would be better ground and consumed with a meal.

You return the contents to the canister and stuff it deep in your lingerie drawer. It is hidden, along with your pack of diaphragms, somewhere in a mix of black panties and red bras. Your husband has yet to finger your rubbers in two years of marriage. It is doubtful he will find the pills in one week's journey.

Touching all those undergarments makes you feel dirty. You twist the knobs and pull the lever. The shower is scalding warm – the temperature required to remove the layers of cosmetics.

You have not taken a bath since your previous husband's charred remains were found in the tub alongside his Elektrolux toaster. It was too grotesque a departure for a man of such exceeding benevolence. He had, after all, purchased you tennis lessons with "The Great" Claude Boucher – an

appellation that did not quite hold between the sheets or on the table in the clubhouse, for that matter.

You do not close either the door or the show curtain. Bathrooms have conjured such morbid thoughts since the accident – thoughts that are eased by an unobstructed view of the adjoining sitting room.

That excuse has, at least, been sufficient for your husband. You have not told him of the sensual tickle you feel knowing that at any moment a man – maybe even the virile man from the bar – might stroll in and bask in the unexpected delight of having filched a glance of your hidden goodies.

A man strolls in but he is neither unexpected nor virile – he is your husband. He swats you on the rear and his hand makes a loud wet smack. You have been firming your glutes.

You cry out as if he has surprised you with his lecherous snap of the wrist. You cry out because you might need him to eliminate the Barman if that loose-tongued Guido flaps about your morbid designs for the Doctor.

Your husband straddles the toilet. You hear the unsteady tinkle of a man whose defective prostate has been assaulted by the steady demands of a voluptuous wife. The sound reminds you of sour-breathe and disappointment. You deafen your ears clogging them with water and soap until the ringing commences. The tinkle has stopped. The ringing abides.

It was unfortunate your dead husband had desired an heir. The toaster never would have been dropped if he had not wished you to break your hips and rip your loins pushing a nipple-sucker into existence.

You had suggested a simple flavoring – perhaps a soupcon of arsenic – be dashed upon his soup. But *he* insisted upon a toaster – typical for the unimaginative tastes of an electrician. Soupcon must not have been on his preposterous vocabulary list at the time.

For the remainder of your shower, you contemplate the fashion season and whether you should experience it in Paris or endure it in New York. You ask yourself if Myrna Rosenbaum could still possibly be alive. Paris, you decide on the off chance she is.

The water is cool and growing cold. It signals the completion of your bathing. Never have you left a warm shower.

Glass shards sprinkle the tile floor of the bathroom. You did not see them until you felt a sharp pang of the foot. Your husband must have clumsily dropped one of your mirrors and been too cowardly to inform you. He could have at least had the decency to clean his own mess.

You hop pigeon-toed into your sitting room avoiding most of the visible shards and locating the rest. You sit in the nude and from the naughty tickle grows a thrilling itch. Will that virile man find you or will you have to find him? The former would be much more exciting.

You air dry on your bed until a quarter to five when you grow bored waiting for Prince Charming. The banality of nudity is overlooked in so much contemporary erotica, you think. In your novel, everyone will be clothed – the men in tight thongs and the women in silk bras and lace panties. The delight aroused by the novelty of the idea will surely outweigh the awkward mechanics of clothed copulation.

With those thoughts in mind, you rummage through your lingerie drawer looking for a stunning duo of red bra and black panty. High cut or low? Full cup or demi? Low and demi should excite the Barman into submission. You put them on.

## The Tennis Star

You feel through the contents of the drawer again. There are the diaphragms, but where are the pills?

You flip over the drawer and everything spills softly onto the floor. You do not hear the sharp crack of a glass canister against ceramic tile. After all these years, could your husband have succumbed to suspicion and searched the contents of your most intimate drawer digging for evidence of an extramarital affair?

Extramarital would, of course, be a misnomer for your bouts of moral slippage. The root of the word – marital -- implies a marriage between you and the current Lord of Winchester. Neither church nor state possesses any evidence to substantiate that implication. Nor does either have filed a certificate to document your previous husband's passing. Rather, both institutions believe you to be married -- bound to the previous Lord of Winchester whom, according to their records, is a living, breathing being whose last financial interaction involved the purchase of two train tickets to Lisbon.

In any case, your pills are missing. And a cursory glance of the room reveals two additional missing items. The bra and panties worn today and soiled by the Barman have been stolen from your suite– purloined to satisfy some autoerotic desire. It would seem a superfluous theft on the part of your husband who already has unlimited access to your undergarments.

The evidence would indicate a man consumed by the fear of castration. A man who requires the chaffing snugness of a dainty feminine undergarment to assure his doubting subconscious that his testicles do indeed exist.

The missing abortion pills pin a religion to the perverted crook. He must be a Roman Catholic.

The culprit is almost too obvious. All signs point to the Barman.

The train halts. The time is 5:03. "Pont de Muerte," a man shouts – probably the Conductor – a few minutes later. You coyly fold your arms accentuating your abundance of cleavage and testing the strength of your bra's stitching. It holds, but the Conductor never peeks upstairs.

You dress yourself and paint your face with the same fastidious care exhibited earlier.

Roughly twenty minutes after its arrival, the train departs the morbidly named station. The unexpected lurch jostles your hand and the black cosmetic pencil etches a crooked hook from your brow down to the corner of your eye. You leave it there. It lends you a devilish look.

You cannot find your hot pink lipstick and must use a cooler shade. It's still hot. And it's still pink.

The amphetamines resemble little green peas and you fill your palm with more than a pod's worth. You chew on them grinding the peas down to a talcum-like powder as you flutter your polished nails dry. You swallow hard. The pulpy mass goes down reluctantly.

Within minutes, your thighs are energized by the stimulants. You leave your room and walk briskly towards the Bar car.

The Peasant is seated alone at his table playing cards and slapping wildly at the deck. He is playing a game of solitaire and still managing to lose badly. The respect you once had for your husband's poker skills dwindles. The only man your husband can beat is a man who cannot even outsmart himself.

## The Tennis Star

The Cigar car is empty as well. You flurry your way through and hope all the passengers are not seated around the bar.

But they are not. The Violinist and the Barman are the only two in the car. The Violinist is sitting at the counter and the Barman is talking to her -- probably peddling the same sorrowful tales reeking of testicular insecurity.

You grab her by the arm and rip her from the counter. Her lithe figure is no match for your muscles strengthened by years of serves and strokes. Soon she is locked in the Cigar car and you and the Barman have the counter to yourselves. You use the counter to rest your clenched fists and nothing more.

"Listen, you Papist scum, if you ever want another fucking I'd recommend you hand over the pills right now." You extend your hand and fiddle your fingers miming your desire for the pills. They are stiffened with anger and fiddle about as fluidly as an arthritic monkey's.

"We'll talk about it at eight, tush. Unless you're too busy moaning." He slaps at the table like a marionette with a mongoloid working the strings. "Until then, why don't you just have another highball. It'll be on the house."

He mixes the drink and scoots it across the counter. You let it keep scooting right off and onto the floor where it shatters into pieces like the cheap glass that it is.

You stare at him unbelievably. How could a man so juvenile manage so successfully to foil your plans?

"Oh, don't look so upset tush. The International Tennis Association still doesn't know about your amphetamines. At least not yet --"

He bends over the counter and drops his voice an octave or two singing out the words like the decrescendo of some unbearable Gregorian chant. "Of course, that could all change if you get the abortion."

His breath smells like a whiskey sour that has been left out in the sun too long.

"When I get done with you, you'll regret ever having said that," you warn him remembering the charred remains of the other man who tried to stick you with a baby.

"When you get done with me, the only thing I'll regret is not having worn a condom, Herpes Lips." He slaps the table like his puerile moniker is of the highest sublimity since "Call me Ishmael."

You bite your lower lip self-conscious of the pimple. The Doctor has assured you it is the product of overactive sebaceous glands and not the byproduct of bacterial fecundity.

You leave the Bar car in a silent huff. It is best not to argue with a fool, as a disinterested observer will be incapable of discerning the difference. There are no observers, but you still prefer not to sully your words with the Barman's swinish ears.

You traipse to the front of the train looking for your husband. Your husband has killed for you before. And if he does not wish to be imprisoned on account of murder and royal imposture, he will kill for you again.

The Barman is a zealot -- a religious fanatic -- so inculcated by papal doctrine that he has subordinated his innate carnal desires to the whims of church doctrine.

The pills cannot be curried from him by your threats of sexual abandonment. He has made that clear. Nor do you wish to know the fate of those pills. They have probably been incinerated

## The Tennis Star

like a perverted holocaust before the ceramic eyes of the Virgin Mary -- as if she never got a little from Joseph or the twelve apostles.

You have always found Peter to be oddly attractive. The key he holds to the Gate of Paradise has struck you as overtly phallic.

You acknowledge the recovery of the pills from the Barman to be a failed endeavor. In light of this dark pall, you must refrain from having the Doctor bumped until he can refill your prescription.

But it is the Barman's blackmail that concerns you most. You are the Tennis Star. If he alerts the association and they, in turn, ban you from the court, you will become nothing. Your identity will be lost in a series of endless litigations. You might be referred to in passing as the Jail Star, but that would elicit a whole slew of unwanted connotations.

Your high heels click militantly against the tile floor. The Businessman's suite is empty and his bed is disheveled. In his place lies a gigantic lump of flamboyant red sheets. The sheets yelp at you, but you pay them no heed. You have more pressing concerns than a pile of barking sheets.

You walk to the brink of the Doctor's door, but cannot convince yourself to enter. You cannot allow the Doctor to see you displaying such a choleric personality. He will attribute it to an Elektra complex and force you to sit through another chapter of his therapeutic drudgery.

You turn swiftly and your skirt spins like Fortune's wheel. It's been spinning up nothing but trouble lately.

The Papist is no longer behind the counter of the Bar car. You hope that he has been crushed by the wheel of Fortune and is lying dead and dusty in a corner of this train.

You press your heels into the soft rug of the Cigar car. They press well until they trip over your husband who is sprawled on his stomach tapping the floor senselessly. You flop on top of your husband and the two of you lie back-to-back and cheek-to-cheek. Your husband flips you over and pulls you into the supply closet with its door agape.

Your husband is wearing his trench coat dirtied with mud from the Argonne Forest. There some men lost their lives. There your husband lost his mind.

You climb on top and straddle his hips. It is the same position you took when you suggested the elimination of your former husband. Only his hips have weakened and you feel more give this time.

"You are going to have to help me handle the Barman," you say. "I think he knows too much."

"I do not consort with spies," he says turning sideways and rolling you off.

He must be experiencing another of his blasted flashbacks. God only knows what sort of murderous thoughts are swamping his subconscious.

You cup your hand around his ear and whisper, "I am not a spy. I am your wife." You flutter your tongue in his ear on the open-mouthed vowels. If you market your assets properly, you might be able to borrow another murder from him.

You open your blouse and let your breasts sway with the give and take between track and wheel.

"Do to him what you did to my husband," you implore climbing on him until you can feel the dig of his buckle.

"I've already taken care of him."

## The Tennis Star

Could it be? Could it be that your husband deluded by thoughts of military grandeur has killed the Barman like he would a Kraut in the trenches? If he has, you must persuade him to return to his room immediately and escape the suspicions from the other passengers.

You fear that should he be arrested for manslaughter, he might plea-bargain and expose you as an accessory to the murder of your belated husband. You did, after all, suggest that the old man be poisoned. And you did lend him your shovel to make room for the old man's corpse under the tool shed. And you did agree to take him into the manor so he could assume the duties of Lord and assume you as his wife though the good people of Winchester never knew the difference. Nor did the good people of Scotland Yard. None of them had ever seen the reclusive old man's face. The lecherous electrician from the Hamptons simply took the name and became the face of Winchester.

"Come with me back to the room," you beseech him while rocking back and forth. You hope the urgency of an arousal will awaken him from his flashback.

A brusque push of his forearm says otherwise knocking you from your erotic perch. "I must stay and complete my mission," he declares.

You huddle in the corner and weep. If only the virile man were here to coax your husband back to his room before he blabbers all he knows to Scotland Yard. If only the virile man were here so you could grab him by his haunches and ride him back to the manor away from a dead barman and a neurotic husband.

The forward door of the cigar car snaps shut.

You button the blouse and wipe away the tears. The virile man is somewhere on this train, and you intend to find him.

You leave the closet and shut the door behind you. With the door closed, your husband's incriminating ramblings will be limited to an audience of one. And an audience of one is covered by the right against self-incrimination.

The Peasant is not in his car and the table is clean of gold and cards. It is 5:50 PM. You return to your car, sit on your bed, and wait for the virile man to show. You bend your limbs into a variety of revealing positions but none hasten his arrival. Despondent you read *The Origin of Species*. Darwin knows exactly what men desire.

An hour passes and you are reading about the perfect cylindricality of insects' burrows. It prompts thoughts of your husband who is still festering in a burrow of his own. Perhaps autophagy has set in and he is an innocuous puddle of amino acids and carbons. But that is not very likely.

You leave your room for the closet of the cigar car to fetch your wayward spouse. The Barman's corpse is sure to have been found by now and the cars swept for culprits. Your husband would top that list.

The Peasant is still absent from his room. You pity the host that has entertained that guest for the past hour.

The Cigar car is empty and you rap lightly upon the closet door. The rug is soaked and your footfall bubbles the liquid to the surface. It is a tawny color like dirty water.

You ask your husband to quit his foolishness and get to bed. Sleep is the best cure for psychosis.

The lights go out and a muffled voice attempts to imitate your husband's.

## The Tennis Star

“I command you to come in here, honey, and make love. I repeat, come in here, honey, and make love.”

These are not the weak rasps of your husband, and you tell the man so. The voice is far too strong, too rich, too --. It is the voice of the virile man.

You open the door in the hopes of obeying his bawdy commands. All your hopes, all your dreams – A fist meets the pimple under your chin.

You awake. The gendarmes are huddled around you while one wan-faced officer pats you rapidly on the cheek. You are lying on the floor of the Cigar car with a terrible headache. The last memory you have is the auditory recollection of that virile voice.

The gendarmes help you to your feet. Your posterior half is cold. That tawny water has soaked it thoroughly.

They lead you to the table where the Magician, Conductor, and Violinist are already seated.

The Peasant's rope is on the table. The rope is bloody and inky. The ends are still capped.

A sharp crack sounds from outside the train. A few minutes later the Peasant strolls in with a hole in the center of his burlap frock. The hole is bloody and inky.

The gendarmes search the frock and produce a pen which they place on the table. It has a sharp golden point rouged over with blood.

The wan-faced gendarme leaves to the aft of the train. He returns cradling a poodle in his arms. The poodle's legs remain stiff and straight as the gendarme drops it in a dusty corner. The dust moves. The poodle doesn't.

A gendarme pushes the Doctor through the forward door and escorts him to the table. Moments later, your husband is pushed through the rear door. A gendarme gently slides the plumbing pipe from the loose grasp of your husband's right hand and places it on the table alongside the rope and the pen. Your husband looks as happy to be here as he does fashion season in Paris.

Half an hour or so later, the Businessman is dragged in shouting “I'll choke him. I swear – I'll choke that man.”

He is wearing the clothes of a homeless man and smells just as bad. You make a mental note to never invest in anything he recommends.

The gendarme speaks. He says that France has found judges to be corrupt and juries to be inept. Justice is becoming for the French an impossible ideal unable to be implemented from the crooked benches of its more crooked courts.

The country has left justice in the hands of you eight passengers. It is your duty to reach a verdict. It is your duty to make France proud again.

A vote can be taken at any time in secret or by a show of hands. In order to reach a verdict, the vote of conviction must be no more than one vote shy of unanimity.

France will only accept one guilty party. And that guilty party must be sitting at the table. Anything less will reflect shame and dishonor upon the good people of France.

Upon the arrival of an acceptable verdict, the murderer will be swiftly, and -- the gendarmes assure you -- brutally disposed off.

The decision before each of you is a simple interrogative. Who killed the Barman?

Is Myrna Rosenbaum still writing, you wonder? You pray she never gets wind of this.

**NOTE TO READER: DO NOT ASK US IF YOU WILL KNOW THAT YOU ARE THE  
MURDERER. ALL THE NECESSARY INFORMATION HAS BEEN PROVIDED.**