

with strangers in cafés, and then give them a big kiss when they leave! Why did she do it? What did she want?’

\* \* \*

He thought back to the café in Whistler, and the girl next to him at the table. Then he remembered something. He remembered a man at a table near them in the café. A tall thin man, about sixty years old. A man with very short white hair.

Nick didn't sleep much that night.

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### **A walk in the park**

The next day was Thursday. Nick stayed in his hotel room and wrote about mountains all morning. Then he drove to Stanley Park in the afternoon. He sat and read a book for an hour, then he went for a walk under the tall trees.

There was nobody here. It was quiet, and he could walk and think. He thought about Meg Hutson, and about the man with white hair. Did he know Meg Hutson? Did she know him? He remembered Meg Hutson's last words. *Drive carefully, Mr Hollywood.*

Why did she say that? Why did she call him Mr Hollywood? He didn't understand any of it.

Suddenly, he heard a noise.



*Nick turned and ran.*

He stopped. 'That was a gun!' he thought. 'There's somebody in the trees with a gun! There it is again!'

Then something hit the tree over his head.

'Somebody's shooting at me!' Nick thought. He turned and ran.

And somebody began to run after him.

Nick ran through the trees. There was no sun in here, and it was half-dark. And there were no people. Nobody to help him.

'I must get to my car,' Nick thought. 'Find some people . . . the police . . .' He ran on.

He could still hear the gunman behind him, so he ran faster. After three or four minutes, he stopped and listened.

Nothing. It was all quiet.

Nick was afraid. 'What's happening?' he thought. 'Why is somebody shooting at me? First a hand pushes me in front of a car, and now somebody's shooting at me!'

He waited another second or two, then walked quickly back to his car. He was very careful. He looked and listened all the time. But nobody came out of the trees, and nobody shot at him. Then he saw people – women with young children, some boys with a football, two men with a dog. He began to feel better. 'Nobody can shoot me now,' he thought. 'Not with all these people here.'

Ten minutes later, he was back at his car.

There was a letter on the window. Nick read it. It said:  
*I'm going to kill you, Mr Hollywood.*

\* \* \*

Nick drove to the nearest police station. He waited for half an hour, then a tired young policeman took him into a small room. Nick told his story, and the policeman wrote it all down.



*'How many people are there in this town with guns?'*

'So what are you going to do?' asked Nick.

'Nothing,' said the policeman.

'Nothing!' said Nick. 'But somebody shot at me, and—'

'Mr Lortz,' the policeman said tiredly. 'How many people are there in this town with guns?'

'I don't know,' said Nick. 'But . . .'

'You didn't see the gunman. Was it a man, a boy, a woman? Colour of eyes? Long hair, short hair? You don't know, because you didn't see anybody. Maybe it was an



old girlfriend. Maybe somebody doesn't like your travel books, Mr Lortz.'

'But what about the man with white hair in Whistler?' said Nick. 'The girl, Meg Hutson, called me Mr Hollywood in the café, and this man heard her. And now I get a letter to Mr Hollywood on *my* car. Who *is* this Mr Hollywood?'

'We all want answers to our questions, Mr Lortz,' the policeman said, 'but we don't always get them.'

Questions. But no answers.

Nick walked out of the police station and drove to his hotel. He was angry, and afraid.

'How did the man with white hair find me in Vancouver?' he thought. 'Did he follow me from Whistler? Is he following me now? Maybe he's staying at my hotel, too. In the next room. With his gun.'

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### The man with white hair

Nick stopped his car in front of the hotel. He looked carefully before he got out, but there was nobody with white hair near the hotel.

He half-ran through the hotel doors and went to the desk inside.

'I'm looking for a man with very short white hair,' he



*'It's very important. Please help me!'*

said to the woman behind the desk. 'He's staying here, I think. He's about sixty years old, and he's tall and thin.'

The woman did not look very interested. 'There are a lot of visitors in the hotel,' she said. 'Do you know his name?'

'No, I don't,' Nick said. 'He's, er, a friend of a friend, you see. He arrived in Vancouver yesterday, and I must find him. It's very important. Please help me!'

The woman looked at him. 'There are three hundred and fifty rooms in this hotel,' she said, 'and maybe thirty or forty men with white hair. How can I remember all their