

# DECEPTIVE MOTIVES

OR

A SYMPTOM OF DELIRIUM

BY

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OF CENTRETRUTHS DIGITAL MEDIA



CDM Prose

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### Biographical Note

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*Yet each man kills the thing he loves,  
By each let this be heard,  
Some do it with a bitter look,  
Some with a flattering word,  
The coward does it with a kiss,  
The brave man with a sword.*

Oscar Wilde

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## CHAPTER ONE: A BIRTHDAY FAVOUR

Julie Foster knew herself to be a beautiful woman, and so she was! Barely five-feet seven inches tall and of slender build, she looked every bit the ravishing blonde that Dennis Foster had considered her to be ever since that day, just over three years ago, when he first laid eyes on her at a party thrown by some university friends. This evening, she had determined to enhance her natural beauty with the aid of make-up and clothes which could only be described as tasteful, since it was her husband's thirty-eighth birthday and they had decided to go out to dinner together in the company of their best friends, rather than spend the evening indoors ... as they usually did on birthdays - her own not excepted.

Thus she carefully attended to her facial appearance in front of the dressing-table mirror, making slight textual adjustments to the pale-brown eye shadow as she sat in the calm glare of their brightly-lit bedroom. She felt quite proud of herself, as women usually do, for looking so beautiful and smelling so fresh. A bath had taken care of any impurities that clung to her skin and rendered it free of stain. What is more, she had relieved both bowels and bladder just prior to taking it, which meant that she felt even cleaner, not to say purer, to herself than would otherwise have been the case - a feeling which was very important to her, since she usually felt more pleased with herself when she knew that she was clean not only outside but, in a manner of speaking, inside as well!

Getting up from her seat in front of the dresser, she next turned her attention upon her clothes, checking to ensure that no stain or loose hair marred the purity of her sartorial appearance. Her white cotton dress, freshly dry-cleaned, was suitably spotless and, satisfied that everything else was equally blameless, she switched off the bedroom light and headed along the narrow corridor of their five-room flat to where her husband reclined, reading a newspaper and sipping cognac, on the sitting-room's velvet settee. He hardly looked up as she entered the room, for he was too engrossed in the sports pages. But when Julie informed him that she was ready to go out, he glanced at his watch and casually noted that, at seven-thirty, it was still too early to set off for the West End.

"But aren't we supposed to be meeting John and the others at eight o'clock?" she protested, slightly disappointed.

"Eight-thirty actually," he corrected, turning back to his paper. "Since

we're not going to have dinner till nine, I decided to postpone our rendezvous thirty minutes."

"Oh I see," said Julie, and she drew herself closer to the settee in order to scan the front-page headlines. "Well, I guess I'll just have to wait until you're ready, won't I?"

Dennis caught a fragrant whiff of his wife's perfume at that moment and, to her surprise, put his newspaper to one side. Then he cast her an appreciative glance, briefly scanning her dress and facial appearance, before finishing off the rest of his cognac in one lusty gulp. Next, to her greater surprise, he proceeded to run his free hand up-and-down the back of her dark-stockinged calf muscles, commenting on the pleasure it gave him to see her so nicely 'dolloed-up'.

Blushing faintly in spite of her self-confidence, she smiled down at him on reception of this compliment. It was a slight reward, after all, for all the trouble to which she had gone to perfect her appearance, and somehow she didn't have the inclination or nerve to move away.

"One wonders whether you're all dressed up for me or for someone else," he added, a touch cynically.

"For you of course," Julie automatically responded. "It's your birthday, remember?"

Dennis nodded his curly-haired head and smiled faintly through crowned front teeth. "Yes, and that being the case, I'm going to demand a special favour of you this evening," he remarked, putting his empty glass to one side.

"Oh?"

"I'm going to have your sweet little arse before we go out rather than after we come back, so as to experience you fresh and sober instead of stale and drunk for once!" He had got to his feet and was encircling her waist with his large hands, drawing their bodies together.

Instinctively, she made an effort to repulse him. For she was quite taken-aback by this sudden change in his demeanour. But he was too strong for her and proceeded to shower kisses and caresses upon her without further ado. He slid his hands down her back as his lips pursued hers, hunting them down and squashing them against the front of her sparkling white teeth as soon as he had ensnared them. Despite her misgivings, there was little point in resisting him, especially since it was his birthday and she was anxious not to spoil it for him. He would just have to have his way, if they were subsequently to go out to dinner together in anything approaching an amicable mood.

And so she gave-in to his caresses as he slid his hands down to her

rump and squashed her buttocks in a powerful grip, violently drawing her groin against him in a frenzy of newly-awakened lust. She felt his penis expanding under his jeans at this crush of groins and was less inclined to resist him now than before, especially since his hands had got under her dress and were seemingly pulling her buttocks apart, showing no respect for her panties but diving under them in order to get a firm grip on her flesh, as he wrenched the one buttock apart from the other with a ferocity which might have suggested he was intent upon tearing her in two rather than simply exposing her sex to his avid assault. But before he could get at the latter he would have to remove her panties, which is what he next proceeded to do as, lifting her clean off the floor with one hand, he grabbed hold of them with the other and tore them from her trembling body with all the savagery of his pent-up lust. She screamed as the pain of this forcible removal registered itself in her groin, but it was quickly eclipsed by the more familiar pain of penile intromission which followed hard in its swift wake as, clumsily unzipping himself, he thrust his newly-rampant organ into her with a powerful incisiveness that seemed like the thrust of a knife or sword, cleaving her in two. Entwined, they stumbled to the floor, and it was there that she discovered her womanhood afresh, as he thrust powerfully backwards and forwards with an almost maniacal determination to bring himself to a peremptory climax, his lips chasing hers while his hands abandoned her buttocks for the ample contours of her half-naked breasts, thumbs pressing and rubbing against their nipples with an eagerness that could only intensify their mutual pleasure.

She wailed and moaned, as he rode her towards ecstasy, her hands involuntarily clawing at his back in response to the mounting pressure of clitoral stimulation. Her eyes began to roll and she was beginning to forget who or where she was, as she approached the thrilling destination towards which her husband was compelling her through the increasing urgency of his phallic thrusts. She had even forgotten that she was spurring him on more ardently with each thrust and that, from being wide apart, her legs had slowly climbed up his sides to a point where they were beginning to encroach upon his back and crush him in a python-like grip. But this was disturbing him and, fearing that he might lose his rhythm, he felt obliged to grab hold of them and hoist them up over his shoulders, as he drew nearer to the goal of his quickening ride. And, sure enough, he arrived with a flurry of rapidly spasmodic ejaculations which burnt the core of his member as they streamed through its narrow pulsating channel, to enter the much wider channel of Julie's gaping sex, which, convulsed in turbulent orgasm, could only reciprocate his climax in synchronous submission.

Proudly, he felt her spasms of sexual relief engulfing his own, as her eyes rolled more violently in confirmation of orgasmic fulfilment. Her body had become as limp as jelly, it seemed to be melting into his own, losing its density, becoming like wax in his hands. Ah, how good it felt to have her completely at his mercy like this, completely under his physical domination!

However, much as he had assuaged the brunt of his lust, Dennis was as yet nowhere near through with his sexual pleasures. For his penis was no less erect now that it had shot its fiery load than before and, taking advantage of the fact that he still held her thighs over his shoulders, he fiercely disengaged it from its temporary nesting-place and turned her onto her stomach, squeezing her breasts in both hands as he forced it between the gaping lips of her sex with a no-less incisive thrust than before, obliging her to renew the by-now familiar patterns of her moaning-and-groaning as much, seemingly, for his benefit as her own. It was in this rear-entry position, curiously enough, that he sometimes allowed himself the benefit of the spoken word, never in the more liberal one, and this occasion was to prove fruitful in that respect as, withdrawing his erection to a point where its tip rested against the tangled fleece which richly crowned her gaping sex, he threatened her with a number of unorthodox pleasures, boasted of what he had achieved, and even congratulated her on being such an accommodating wife, the possessor of such a 'ravishing hole'.

"I thought I was going to fuck the shit out of you," he went on, "but it appears your arsehole has remained in control of its burden after all, even with the weight of my cock to contend with."

It was modesty that prevented Julie from confessing she had no faecal matter in her at present, but she couldn't resist succumbing to a broad smile all the same, even though the creamy tip of Dennis Foster's rampant phallus was tickling her anus and causing her a slight discomfiture. She knew him well enough by now, however, to realize he was simply teasing her. For, in reality, he was averse to sodomy and only inclined to threaten her with a damn good 'rectal rogering' as a means of further asserting his sexual power over her. Where her anus was concerned, his principal interest lay in looking at and occasionally smelling it, as though to verify whether or not she had taken the trouble to wash and perfume it, which, incidentally, she usually had! Frankly, it quite astonished him to think that she could make herself fresh and sweet all over, not just in the obvious places, and if, from time to time, he gave-in to the luxury of applying his lips to her rear orifice, it was more from an overflow of gratitude for her beauty than from any inherent anal fixity.

If he had any specific perversions to confess to, however, they were more in the line of sexual curiosity or voyeurism. Such as that time he had requested Julie to take a kind of hollow dildo, rather like the cardboard core of a toilet roll, into her vagina. This cylindrical object once in place, he had then proceeded to push a tiny electric light-bulb on the end of a plastic wire along its length until, reaching the far end, its light gave him the necessary illumination with which to survey what he took to be the interior of her womb - a not particularly enlightening experiment, as it turned out, in that Julie wasn't pregnant and therefore subject to an expansion of the womb area. But he reckoned that he had learnt a little about the fallopian tubes which he didn't already know, at any rate, and so concluded the experiment to have been moderately successful. Months later, he wondered how he had ever brought himself to do such a crazy thing! But by then he had acquired certain other sexual foibles and slight perversions.

The worst he had ever done, he reflected, was to get Julie to shit into his hands - an event which he subsequently regretted more on account of the foul stench than the novel spectacle which the opening of his wife's sphincter had afforded him. Thereafter he always confined this experiment to his fantasy life, giving it an occasional place-of-honour in defiance of Dean Swift, whose reproachful face he would endeavour to conjure-up at the climactic moment. Contrary to the well-documented anti-faecal attitude of that madman, Dennis Foster's attitude to the fact that Julie shat was more usually one of contemptuous amusement than existentialist horror. He would occasionally tease her by averring that she got more pleasure from shitting than fucking, and would remark, in Lawrence Durrell's time-honoured phrase, that people were partly tubes of shit, no matter how attractive or intelligent they happened to be. "People will always be partly contemptible," he had once said to her, "so long as they're obliged to shit. For shitting is contrary to the spiritual life and a diurnal detraction from the dignity of man." And Julie had to concede that he had a point, although she knew enough about her seductive power over him to know that his spiritual life was neither particularly earnest nor advanced, and that he all-too-readily succumbed to fleshy temptations - so readily, in fact, that at times it was inconvenient to her, woman or no!

But tonight was scarcely an exception! For, unknown to Dennis, she had once again acquired a moral victory over him, obliging the smug dupe to abandon his spiritual preoccupations - admittedly not, in the form of reading the paper and drinking cognac, particularly elevated ones - and acknowledge her seductive power. For the past thirty minutes he had been her sexual slave, giving himself to her with an ardour worthy of classical



antiquity. She had taken his loving gladly; for it was highly gratifying to her, making her feel newly proud of herself and satisfied, moreover, that her campaign of seduction, laid from the moment she evacuated her bowels to the moment she put the final touches of eye shadow to her brows, had paid off, leading to an unequivocal, if at the time surprisingly swift, victory over Dennis Foster's spiritual life. He would think, in his masculine self-centredness, that he had got the better of her. But, in reality, it was her victory, and she knew it!

However, that victory wasn't to last long, in her estimation. For, with the termination of his carnal ardour and the chiming of eight from the nearby grandfather clock, she remembered that they were due to meet their friends in thirty minutes' time for dinner in the West End. Almost panic-stricken, she disengaged herself from the futile residue of her husband's attentions and staggered to her feet, before casting a nervous glance towards the room's solitary wall-mirror. Oh God, there was pink lipstick on her cheeks and the eye shadow had somehow got smeared all over her brow! Her hair was no longer presentable but tangled and greasy - in fact, positively dishevelled! So much the mirror told her. For she could see for herself that her stockings were no longer quite straight, and that her dress was slightly crumpled and stained. Worse, her new nylon panties were lying on the carpet, torn in two places, and her brassiere, no longer in its original position, was damp with her husband's saliva. Alas, her perfected appearance of a short while ago was ruined and, to such a deplorable extent, that she figured it would take her at least another thirty minutes to dress again, put her make-up to rights, and straighten out her hair, by which time they would be late for their rendezvous and in no question of having dinner at nine, as previously arranged! And, to cap it all, Dennis fucking Foster was still lying stretched out on the carpet, smiling to himself and showing not the slightest concern over their predicament. Really, birthday or no birthday, he might have shown some consideration for John and the others!

"Dennis, darling, it'll take me at least half-an-hour to put my appearance to rights," Julie protested on a note of unfeigned concern. "Which means that, if we're not to disappoint our friends, you had better phone them straight away and postpone our rendezvous till nine." She waited for him to make a move for the telephone or at least respond to her in some way. But, to her consternation, he continued to smile and lie where he was, showing not the slightest interest in her suggestion. "Dennis, did you hear me?" she pressed, raising her voice slightly.

"Naturally, my dear," he replied. "But there's no need for me to

contact them, because we're not going anywhere. I cancelled our engagement over an hour ago, on the grounds that I had a severe stomach ache and felt too sick for dinner. When I saw you all dressed-up and ready to leave, I decided to lie to you rather than disappoint you with what, in the circumstances, you would only have regarded as bad news. Besides, I wanted you to do me a birthday favour. Had you not thought we were going out, you would never have gone to the trouble to make yourself so attractive tonight. My birthday favour wouldn't have materialized, let alone been granted! However, now that it has, I have nothing further to ask of you." Having said which, he picked himself up off the floor, zipped-up his jeans, and returned to the settee where, helping himself to another drop of cognac from the main supply source on the adjacent table, he soon recommenced reading his newspaper.

For her part, Julie simply hurried back to their bedroom, on the verge of tears.

## CHAPTER TWO: ENCOUNTER WITH AN OLD FLAME

Peter Morrison had just dejectedly collected another rejected typescript from a cagey West End publisher and was feeling as glum as he usually did when confronted by such negativity, the fruit, he reckoned, of the extent to which most publishers had 'gone to the dogs' of heathenistic commerce. His small leather bag now contained three typescripts which the publishing establishment had seen fit to reject, largely, he suspected, because they were too ideologically progressive and hence insufficiently commercial to guarantee their publisher a substantial profit. It was becoming more than a little frustrating, especially as one knew that one was developing Truth to an unparalleled degree ... where the more important subjects in life, such as religion and culture, were concerned. One had no option but to accept the fact that one was a literary outsider for whom commercial criteria were anathema, a hater of the capitalist status quo, with its market slavery. No matter how much work one put into one's writings, no matter how technically or thematically accomplished they became, there was scant prospect of publication under the circumstances of continued market domination, least of all for somebody who was about as far removed from influential connections as it was possible to be, short of not being a human being at all, and a borderline if not confirmed misogynist, to boot! One was simply knocking one's progressive, unworldly head against a solid wall of commercial reaction. And Peter Morrison's head was severely bruised by now, after well over a hundred rejections of more than eighteen different typescripts! Verily, life was no easy or laughing matter. It was all too often an evil and troublesome affair!

Gripping his burden to his chest, the literary outsider crossed the busy road along which he had been dejectedly walking and turned down a side street towards the little restaurant where he usually ate lunch whenever he visited the West End on a typescript-delivering and/or collecting mission these days. It was a decent restaurant, the 'Three Lanterns', with a copious helping of tasty food at a very reasonable price. Greeks ran the place and, as he well-knew by now, Greeks were usually a generous people - unlike the English, with their stinginess and money-grubbing commercialism!

Ugh, how Peter Morrison loathed England! He hadn't made a single friend during the past eight years of his residence in the north London borough of Haringey, and neither could he reasonably expect to make any.

For one thing, he was too poor to regularly venture beyond the depressing confines of the overcrowded environment in which he languished, a prisoner of penurious circumstances, and, for another, he disliked London anyway, especially his part of it, instinctively equating it with something inherently alien to himself, a sort of quasi-lunar Protestant-dominated environment in which the madness of commercial materialism prevailed, and to which he, an Irish-born Catholic outsider, had been exiled by unaccommodating people, who weren't really of his calibre, several years ago. Besides, when one lives on a low income one can't afford to go to pubs or restaurants or cinemas or clubs on a regular basis, even if, by any chance, one wanted to, and neither can one afford to date women. One remains, if one is in any degree a cultural cut-above-the-common-philistine-herd, a lonely celibate. And a lonely, depressed, 'Steppenwolfian' celibate was exactly what Peter Morrison considered himself to be, despite his undeniably handsome appearance and relatively high intelligence.

To some extent, it was a combination of these and other qualities which had kept him solitary, since he regarded himself as both culturally and intellectually superior to most of the local people among whom he was obliged to live. Women were rarely attractive to him in Hornsey, a factor which further contributed to his solitude, since he was incapable of fancying a woman unless she was both beautiful and, more importantly, intelligent with it, as few of them in the neighbourhood ever were. And coupled to a negative response to an uncongenial environment, solitude inevitably led to depression, thereby strengthening the bars of the prison in which he morosely languished, forcing him, against his will, to lead a sort of psychologically crippled life.

Yet at least women could be beautiful in the West End, which was some consolation. There was usually at least one good-looking woman to be encountered every hundred or so yards, and sometimes more than one - women who either came from a different part of London or from outside it, and had the look, in consequence, of belonging to a superior milieu. Ah, but how tantalizing and frustrating such women could be! Sometimes he could hardly bear to look at them, so painfully conscious did they make him feel of what he ordinarily lacked. He hadn't even so much as kissed anyone in over nine years! Nine long years! Ah God, what deprivation and misfortune! What a way to live one's life, bereft of even the faintest shred of romance! To be sure, one had a right to feel sorry for oneself under *those* circumstances, to curse one's fate for keeping one poor and, most especially, to curse the bourgeois publishing establishment for preventing one's work from reaching a potential public. For, of course, there would be

a public for his work, Morrison sensed that much. There were always people who could be depended upon to take an interest in works which attacked capitalism for its competitive individualism and pointed the way towards a more civilized or, better, cultured future. But, not altogether surprisingly, such people were usually denied access to works of a progressive nature by the capitalistic publishers, who controlled the flow of typescripts in-and-out of their offices and only published what they felt would make them a profitable return at that juncture in time, discarding literary merit in response to pragmatic considerations of the kind that turned the world into a place where 'smartness', or 'cleverness', was conceived in terms of opportunistic relevance rather than in relation to the intrinsic artistic or philosophic excellence of any given work! The more progressive people were obliged to suffer the consequences of this deplorably immoral state-of-affairs, to make do with what they were supplied with or, assuming that was beneath them, to search further afield for more congenial publications elsewhere, perhaps scorning books altogether in favour of some more radical medium of literary dissemination which, in any case, would do greater service to the content and scope of their work than ever the overly liberal medium of books could, what with their rectilinear and other limitations that, certainly in the case of paperbacks, owed more to the earth than to any other-worldly transcendence of it. Sometimes they were lucky, sometimes not. All too often they became either embittered enemies of the capitalist status quo or defeated pessimists, refusing to accept that things could ever be any different.

Arriving at the 'Three Lanterns', Morrison ill-temperedly pushed his way through the crowded doorway where, as ever, people were queuing to pay their bills and, seeing that the upstairs part of the restaurant was full, he quickly descended the stairs to the basement. Once there, he straight away established himself at an empty table and gratefully disburdened himself of the seemingly ever-increasing weight of his typescript-laden bag, putting it to one side of himself on the elongated leather bench which stretched beyond his table to the adjacent ones on either side. Almost immediately a waiter descended on him with bill-pad in hand and, after a brief scrutiny of the menu, he nervously ordered curried beef, which was about the cheapest thing on it. Then he poured himself a glass of water and took a casual look round the tables in order to ascertain the approximate nature of his fellow-diners. It was pretty crowded down here too, for the most part with people in suits and dresses, but it didn't take him long to recognize the face of a young woman seated at the table almost exactly opposite his own. For a

moment, he thought his eyes were deceiving him. But there was nothing about the sudden increase in the pace of his heart, or the equally sudden nervousness in his hands, which would have confirmed that supposition! Rather, these all-too-real physical factors combined to assure him that the woman with whom he had so tragically fallen in love some nine years ago, the only woman with whom he had ever been deeply in love, was now sitting no more than a few yards away, and talking to a female companion who sat in front of her. Amazed, he continued to stare at her, forgetful of the glass of water he held in his trembling right hand and only conscious of the extraordinary beauty of this woman whose love he had sought in vain, all those years before.

Yes, it was Julie all right, what with that unmistakably cultured and self-confident voice, but now more beautiful than ever, her blue eyes brighter and her blonde hair blonder than when he had last seen her. Oh God, what a tragedy it had proved to be for him, not having secured her love and taken her as his girlfriend, if not, eventually, his wife! No other woman had come to take her place in his affections since that magical moment when he had fallen in love with her at Victoria Station on his way home from work, one fateful evening in March or April 1972, during the days when he used to commute up and down from Surrey by train. And hardly a day had passed, in the meantime, when she had not entered his thoughts at some time, no matter how briefly, or played a star role in his fantasy life. At times it seemed as though he would go mad from thinking about her, so tight a grip did her beauty still have on him. She was like a Solonge de Clede for him and he was her hapless Grandsailles, loving from a distance. No wonder he was still alone! It appeared that only a certain type of woman could please him, and that once such a woman had got an emotional hold on him he was incapable of taking an interest in anyone else. There was more than a passing comparison not only with Dali's fictional characters, but with Dante's factual reality in his life and experiences. Had not Julie become a kind of Beatrice for him throughout these solitary, celibate years?

Inevitably, his curiosity aroused her attention and in some degree obliged her to reciprocate. He blushed violently and lowered his eyes in shame, though not before he had noticed that she, too, had recognized him and was becoming subject to more than a hint of emotional confusion. Indeed, her expression betrayed a momentary astonishment. But she had recognized him, of that there could be little doubt, and, in spite of the intervening years, was prepared to offer him a modest smile by way of acknowledgement. His blush deepened, though not before he had returned

the compliment and made an attempt at acknowledging her table companion, who, with some reluctance, had half-turned around to see who or what had attracted Julie's attention. However, the arrival of his dinner precluded him from getting to his feet and worming his way into their conversation - a thing he might have felt obliged to do under different circumstances. For Julie was not now the woman she had appeared to be a few minutes ago, prior to his appearance on the scene, but had become strangely self-conscious and seemingly absorbed in her meal. He thought maybe she was regretting that she wasn't alone at table. For he knew that she had always liked him, in spite of his failure to secure her love. He still believed her excuses, all those years ago, about already being engaged to be genuine, and wasn't prepared to accept that he had been coldly snubbed. Besides, it was usually possible to tell when a woman fancied one, and he had been given little cause to doubt that his desire for her was the converse side of her desire for him, being but one side of a two-way reflection. There was always a basic logic to love, which made it natural for the attractiveness of the persons involved to be mutually acknowledged. Comparatively rare was the fate of the man whose tastes were not subject to a reciprocal response!

Meanwhile Julie had finished her meal and was doing what she could to keep her attention to herself; though Morrison could see that his presence in front of her was still causing her a degree of emotional confusion. He wondered if he oughtn't to carry his dinner over to their table, but somehow that seemed out of the question, especially with the other woman there. He had always been shy and reserved, in any case, and never more so than in the company of female strangers! There seemed to be no alternative but to sit still and pretend that Julie wasn't there. Yet she wasn't making this easy, what with her furtive glances and the occasional comment that passed between the two women. On the contrary, it was becoming steadily harder. So much so that when, less than five minutes later, they both got up from their table and slowly headed towards the stairs, it was quite impossible for Morrison to restrain the impulse to follow suit. Grabbing his leather bag, he staggered up from his table, leaving the curried beef less than half-eaten, and followed them up the stairs. He had waited several years for the opportunity of seeing her again, and now that it had so unexpectedly arrived, he wasn't going to let it slip away from him that easily. Rather, he wished to renew their tenuous links of the past and, if possible, acquire what he had lacked all these years - namely a girlfriend.

But Julie appeared not to want to make the task very easy for him. For she was already half-way up the stairs in close pursuance of her

companion. Only when she reached the top of them did she cast a brief glance over her shoulder, in order to verify whether she was being followed and, when this became evident, succumb to a faint smile, accompanied by a fresh wave of embarrassment. For his part, Morrison was as nervous and self-conscious as he had ever been, but, at the same time, strangely detached, like he had some imperative task to attend to which had to be accomplished whatever the consequences. That task was made more imperative now as he, too, reached the top of the stairs and stood immediately behind her, behind that tantalizing rump and wavy-blond hair which had caused him so much frustration in the past! Today, as luck would have it, Julie was dressed in a pair of tight-fitting pink cords which more than amply emphasized the curvaceous outlines of her highly seductive behind, making it difficult for him to restrain the impulse to reach out a hand and caress it. But restrain himself he did, if only because he was holding his leather bag in one hand and searching for some money with the other, in order to pay the bill or, at any rate, expenses (since he had left his table before the waiter could hand him one) at the door. His tongue, however, was quite free, and he used it to stammer a few words to the effect that he hadn't seen her for a long time.

She turned briefly towards him, smiled, but made no comment upon what was, after all, a self-evident admission.

"You do remember me, don't you?" he asked, feeling pathetic.

Again she turned and smiled. "Am I supposed to?" she evasively replied.

"Well ..." He hesitated on the verge of an explanation, not knowing where to begin. It was evident that she wasn't particularly happy to see him after all - possibly owing to the presence of her female companion or perhaps even his down-at-heels look. "You might recall that I ..." But again he couldn't bring himself to continue and, to his dismay, blushed crimson. Meanwhile her companion had paid her bill and she was next in line. He didn't have time to say anything further to her, under the circumstances, but nonetheless edged a little closer, so that they were almost touching and he could distinctly smell the scent of her hair, despite the immense variety of conflicting aromas in the room.

"Next please," beckoned the white-coated waiter on the till, and now it was Morrison's turn to pay, which he reluctantly proceeded to do, albeit with a shaky hand in view of the state of near arousal to which the close proximity of Julie's body had brought him. She, however, had left the restaurant in silence, leaving him staring out onto the pavement while he waited for his change.



Not to be rebuffed, he hurried out after her, determined to follow whichever way she went, and was more than a trifle surprised to discover her standing to one side of the entrance, ostensibly staring into the window of an adjacent shop. Her companion, however, was walking on down the street, apparently having decided to go her separate way. It didn't take much imagination for Morrison to grasp that they had probably arranged to split-up in order to allow him to renew his acquaintance with Julie and, basing his next move on that supposition, he walked over to where she was standing and smiled a tentative but engaging smile at her. "Yes, what a long time it is since we last met," he remarked, without further ado. "You were still a student then, if I remember correctly."

"A teacher now," Julie admitted, in a soft though firm voice.

"Oh, really?" It came as quite a surprise to the literary outsider, who could hardly disguise his relief at getting a reply. Her subject, he remembered, was geography, so doubtless she was teaching that now. "And where?" he wanted to know.

"In London," was all she would say, which quite puzzled him. "And what are you doing?" she asked in due course.

"Oh ..." he hesitated, blushing anew "... I'm a writer actually. Have been so for a number of years - since 1976 in fact." He almost regretted having said this. For he had still not found a publisher several years on, as confirmed by the typescripts in his leather bag.

"My, so that's what all this is about, is it?" She was eyeing the bag in question.

"Yes," he shamefacedly replied, hardly daring to look. "These are the typescripts of three recent novels."

She looked at him suspiciously, almost mockingly, and then turned her attention towards the shop window again. "Who's your publisher?" she wanted to know.

He felt a lump in his throat and a sort of sick feeling in the pit of his stomach. "Unfortunately, I haven't acquired one as yet," he managed to confess, averting his eyes from her. "My attempts to find one have met with no success."

"What, since 1976?"

"Regrettably."

She looked slightly concerned, if not worried. "But how do you manage to survive?" she asked.

"I have a part-time job," he lyingly replied, fearing that if he told her the shameful truth about being on the dole and officially unemployed, she would simply walk away.

"And presumably that leaves you enough free time to write, does it?" she conjectured.

"Yes, three whole days a week, plus some time at the weekends," he admitted.

"But don't you find it depressing, being alone so much?" she remarked.

"Sure it is," he conceded, grimacing slightly in spite of himself. "But one learns to live with that fact and to carry on as best one can, since one can't very well write in company or with other people hanging around one all the time, you know. A writer's lot is mainly solitary, in any case. Though, for me, solitude is largely a consequence of exile in this city, not to mention country, and of not having very much money to live on."

Julie blushed in spite of herself and quickly lowered her eyes. She felt momentarily sorry for him, since she could tell that he wasn't bluffing. "Don't you have any friends at all?" she asked, curious to discover something more about his private life.

"None whatsoever," he confessed. "I lost the last friend I had about eight years ago, when circumstances beyond my control obliged me to leave Surrey and move to London. Since then, apart from a brief stay at my mother's flat during my first year in London, I've lived entirely alone."

Julie could hardly believe her ears. "No wonder you're depressed!" she exclaimed. "One can't live alone all that time and not suffer the consequences." Frankly, she was almost afraid of him. For he suddenly seemed, on the face of it, more like a monster than a human being. To be sure, there was always an element of self-defence in ordinary people that drove them to scorn those more unfortunate than themselves, rather than to help them or show compassion towards them, and she was beginning to feel the pressure of this ignoble element now, as she stood beside him, as beside an outcast from society who was likely to be more of an enemy than a friend. Maybe he was no longer capable of friendship, in any case? She didn't know how next to speak to him and was surprised when she heard him ask her if she wouldn't like to come back to his bedsitter, since it was cold standing out here on the pavement and, anyway, they could talk better in private. It was an offer which also caused her a degree of trepidation. For she didn't know whether she could trust him to behave decently or considerately if she did by any chance accept his invitation, especially since he couldn't have invited all that many people to visit him in the past. Nevertheless, since she had no specific plans for the afternoon (it being the first week of the Christmas holidays), she felt vaguely attracted to the idea, if for no other reason than simple curiosity. "Where exactly do you live?"

she at length asked, blushing faintly.

He told her.

"Well, if you promise not to detain me beyond four o'clock, as I have a friend to meet later this afternoon, I think I can accept your invitation," she informed him, doing her best to sound grateful. Her heart was beating fiercely while she spoke, partly because it seemed to her a betrayal, implicitly or otherwise, of her husband, whom she had never been unfaithful to before. Perhaps, however, now was the time, bearing in mind the deceitful nature of his behaviour towards her on Saturday evening, when he had led her on under false pretences and then forced himself upon her in such a callous manner? Of course, she couldn't be sure that this Peter Morrison had sexual ambitions in mind, though it seemed unlikely, if he still fancied her, that he would remain content merely with conversation for very long. After all, he evidently wasn't the kind of guy to go out of his way to establish purely friendly relations with anyone. There had to be some ulterior motive and, as she now knew, he had no shortage of serious problems - not least of all where sex was concerned!

Despite her surface misgivings, however, she realized, deep down, that she was agreeing to his proposal not only out of simple curiosity or, indeed, the desire to avenge herself on Dennis Foster, but, more significantly, as a means of atoning, in some degree, for all the suffering she had unwittingly inflicted upon him in consequence of his unrequited love. She felt that a sacrifice of some kind on her part was long overdue, especially now that the Christmas spirit had taken hold of her and made her more willing to befriend someone. Besides, it seemed to her that it was partly her fault that he was now in the fix he was in, hiding away from people, and women in particular, out of a fear that he might get dragged into another unrequited love-affair, and have to suffer the bitter consequences all over again.

### CHAPTER THREE: MIND OF AN OUTSIDER

All through the years of his enforced exile in London, as he still preferred to think of it, Peter Morrison had lived in bedsitter accommodation - a fact which he mortally loathed and never ceased to regret. His neighbours, in each of the old tenements he had inhabited, were for the most part obnoxious to him, especially the nearest ones, who lived either overhead or underneath or right next-door, as the case might be. He had never established friendly relations with any of them, and this was also a source of regret to him. To be surrounded, all the time, by people one despised - ugh! how loathsome such an experience was for him. How he had wished, on various occasions, that there was someone living in close proximity to him whom he could regard as a kindred spirit and fellow-intellectual. Yet there was never anyone, seemingly, but the lumpen proletariat around him, and so he had been obliged to turn his back on them and become increasingly introverted and solitary. He regarded himself, not entirely without justification ... in view of his provincial background, both in Surrey and, before that, in Hampshire, as effectively *déclassé*, an intellectual outsider isolated amid the urban proletariat, forever doomed to a life of solitude tempered not only by personal suffering, such as depression and poor health generally, but by the impersonal suffering caused by the steady barrage of noise and insults his neighbours inflicted upon him, wittingly or unwittingly, in the course of their simple pleasures. There could be no question of one's identifying with their interests and behaviour! Culturally speaking, his was a world apart from theirs, though, unfortunately, a world brought all-too-close to their one by his neighbourly proximity to them in three successive bedsitters. Their world, revolving around the television, the radio, the stereo, or the video-recorder, all-too-frequently encroached upon his studious and literary one, making it necessary for him to plug his ears with wax in order to minimize the painful disturbances to which their various noises gave rise.

Ah, how one suffered through the ears! There were times when he wished he were deaf, so that he could forget about the damn neighbours and get on with his studies in peace. Times, too, when he reflected that it would have been better had man been endowed, at birth, with a tiny switch on the side of his head which enabled one to switch hearing on-and-off at will, as the occasion demanded. Being partly of diabolic origin, however,

nature had not supplied any such device, and so one was obliged to tolerate whatever crude noise came one's way - assuming one hadn't taken the sensible precaution of plugging-up with wax. For his own part, Morrison was prepared to believe that 70-80% of his impersonal sufferings were directly or indirectly related to noise, and that, without hearing, life would be almost agreeable. Almost! Because then one would be deprived of the sound of great music, not to mention the possibility of listening to the sounds, sexual or otherwise, of an attractive woman's voice every once in a while.

Returning to his bedsitter with Julie, it was indeed the sound of her voice that he was particularly conscious of, so pleasant was it for him to be hearing her speak again, after so many years. How sick and tired he had grown of proletarian voices, of cockney accents laced with vicious expletives and snide denigrations! Whenever he ate lunch at the local café, there would always be a group of men there whose conversation was copiously laced with swearwords of an explicitly sexual nature. His cultivated sensibilities would be offended by their coarse words and banal phrases, and he would turn away from them in disgust, filled with a kind of Trotskyite loathing for their incessant vulgarity. Paradoxically, however, he had come to understand the logic of the proletariat's particular choice of swearwords and to regard it, not altogether unreasonably, as manifesting a basic moral superiority over the upper classes.

Of course, he knew himself to be essentially upper-middle-class in his moral sensibilities, and thus subject to the occasional use of words such as damn, bloody, bastard, and so on. But, having lived so long in a proletarian environment, he could to some extent empathize with the employment of such typically proletarian expletives as 'cunt', 'fuck', 'fucking bastard', 'cock-up', etc., which testified, whether or not their users realized the fact, to a contempt for sex. J.B. Priestley had himself remarked somewhere that, in using such words, the people concerned were 'coarsely contemptuous' of their sexual relations, and, by God, how true that statement was!

On the other hand, the bourgeoisie, in living closer to nature in their suburban houses, generally had more respect for sex, which is, after all, a natural act, and consequently refrained from the use of swearwords expressing contempt for it. Yet this, ironically, struck Morrison as representing a lower and inferior attitude to that expressed by the typical proletarian, who was only too ready, at times, to accuse someone of being a 'fucking bastard', i.e. a bastard who fucks, or a 'fucking cunt', i.e. a cunt which fucks or, alternatively, a cunt for fucking, and other such variations on an accusatory theme. The proletariat, instinctively or otherwise, could

see the sexual act and parts of the body as being intrinsically low and were prepared, in consequence, to brand them with words designed to emphasize that lowness. Not so the bourgeoisie, who had a much greater respect for such matters, and would have been ashamed to use anything stronger than 'bastard' or 'bloody'. And so it generally was with Peter Morrison, though he had on one or two past occasions given way to stronger denigrations of his neighbours when circumstances had obliged him to lose his temper and hurl retaliatory abuse at them - either directly or, more usually, through their walls. Afterwards he would regret it, but that was only to be expected. He could never quite evade his idealistic conscience!

Julie's voice fell silent, however, as soon as they reached the house where Morrison lived, whether because she was becoming nervous at the fate she imagined probably lay in store for her or because of some other reason, he couldn't quite decide. Perhaps it was simply the derelict appearance of the old tenement itself, which now disgusted or depressed her? Yes, he had often felt that way himself when approaching it. There could be no question of one's identifying with the building or even the street as a whole, no possibility of one's thinking: 'This is a community I'm an integral part of, and this is where I'm proud to live!' No, absolutely not! All one could be conscious of, apart from a feeling of shame, was the thought that one was simply isolated here, an outsider blown in from the provinces by adverse circumstances who couldn't pretend that he had been brought-up in such a street or had any real respect for it. It was all somehow alien, other, distasteful. And one was obliged, through poverty, to endure it, to live with it willy-nilly. One was, in a very real sense, its victim. Just as, in living in a single bedsitter among noisy neighbours, one was a victim of the lumpen proletariat. No question of one's loving them, under those circumstances! One's socialism, largely forced upon one through environmental conditioning, could only be tempered by a loathing of their condition, by the hope that one day it would be replaced by something higher.

And so we needn't be surprised if Peter Morrison felt ashamed to be living where he was and, partly on that account, disinclined to invite such women as would ordinarily have appealed to him back to his room. The thought of dragging a well-spoken, cultured young lady (assuming he could have found one in the local milieu) up the dismal stairs, past the scratches and dirt on the walls, along the bare floorboards of the carpetless corridor, and into his dingy room, with its dirty walls, battered furniture, stained ceiling, grimy windows, tattered carpet, etc., was too humiliating to bear for long, and had always precluded him from making the experiment. So,

needless to say, had the fact that, once there, she would have been subject to both neighbour and environmental noises, including, in the latter case, the malignant barking of several nearby dogs, the screaming of vicious kids - not children! - in the next-door alleyway, the hammering of nearby workmen, and a whole host of often indescribable disturbances which would have contributed, he felt sure, to their mutual humiliation and disgrace!

But as if that wasn't bad enough, there was the even worse prospect, so far as Morrison was concerned, of having his conversation and actions overheard by the nearest neighbours, whose close proximity to him behind their all-too-thin walls, under his floor in the ground-floor room or above his ceiling in the attic room, would be bound to inhibit him and make him feel unpleasantly self-conscious, what with his classy accent and studious interests. He couldn't even bring himself to play classical music or modern jazz through his stereo speakers these days, but, partly because he was afraid to draw more noise from his neighbours than he already had to endure, and partly because he didn't want to unduly emphasize his cultural superiority over them, habitually employed headphones for the purpose, thereby keeping his musical tastes to himself.

Alas, what a pity that the downstairs neighbours couldn't do the same! How often he had to endure the regular thump-thump-thump of exceedingly banal bass parts to tedious rock or pop songs which the young couple underneath habitually played, the volume of their radiogram at a level guaranteed to disturb even someone half-deaf! Why, he wondered, did responsible adults and irresponsible adolescents have to share the same house? Surely a law prohibiting the indiscriminate mixing of such disparate age-groups in lodging houses or other communal buildings would have saved people like himself a great deal of unnecessary hardship? Yes, but like it or not, there were a thousand-and-one other non-existent laws which could have been brought into existence expressly for that purpose too, but which, thanks or no thanks to the existing political state-of-affairs in the country, failed to materialize. That was simply the way of things!

Fortunately for Peter Morrison on this occasion, however, the room into which he led his female captive wasn't subject to the intrusion of any such external noises but, to his great relief, almost deathly silent. Even the huge shaggy dog, a few houses away, was uncharacteristically quiet, probably because he was dozing or sleeping. Good, let sleeping dogs lie, as the saying went. Too often people did their damndest to disturb them! "Well, this is it," he said with an air of enforced ...