

Emma Peel:
Adventure in Monte Carlo
aided and abetted by Jason King

by Caroline Miniscule



Emma Peel: Adventure in Monte Carlo

Chapter One

The file on Jason King

Jason King was a successful writer of spy novels when he was tapped to join Department S, a secret government agency dedicated to solving "impossible" crimes. He served in Department S for two years, from 1969-1970, before growing disenchanted with government work. Although he resigned from the service, the Department was loath to let him go and frequently drew him back into the fold by means of trickery. After 1973, however, they declined to use him again.

King is distinguished by a bouffant hairstyle, Fu Manchu moustache, and utter narcissism. He is attracted to women of all ages and appearances - although he prefers those who do not evidence an interest in "women's lib," and the surest way to gain his affections is to praise his books to the skies.

...File ends

Chapter One:

Emma, by Jason King

Jason King stepped out onto the rooftop café and paused by the door to light a cigarette. Whilst simultaneously taking a deep drag of the cigarette and returning the lighter to his pocket, he scanned the various tables to see if there was anyone of interest about.

Couple. Young couple. Elderly couple. Group of men and women...tourists...Italian by their gestures. Two men. Elderly couple. Well, well, well...who was that?

At the far end of the rooftop - her table practically at the edge of the roof, a woman sat alone. He could see only her back, as she faced outward, looking over the scenery below, but her brunette hair

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fell about her shoulders in a stylish wave. By the set of her shoulders he could tell that she was young. Relatively young, at any rate. She also seemed to be resting her chin on her hands as she gazed seaward.

Gazing contemplatively seaward... (Jason had a habit of processing everything he saw as if it was taking place in one of his books.)

Jason took a couple of steps to one side to get a better view, and caught his breath. What a lovely profile. She was in her early thirties, he estimated, with flawless features. She wore a short-sleeved white linen shirt and dark blue slacks...he clicked his tongue at this...he so preferred women to wear dresses. She'd obviously just had breakfast - a tray was pushed to one side of the table.

As he watched, she picked up a pen and tablet from the table and began to write. Almost immediately she stopped. She gazed out to sea again, tapping the pen against her teeth. Finally, she made a little moue of disgust and tossed both pen and tablet back onto the table.

Aha, thought Jason. Writer's block, if he'd ever seen it. Perhaps she'd appreciate some assistance from the famous author, Jason King.



It was 1973, and Jason King was the best-selling author of spy novels featuring protagonist Mark Caine. His photo decorated the back jacket of all his books - hair in a rather bouffant style, a Fu Manchu moustache. His only regret was that the photos were in black and white - and so his brown eyes, brown hair and deep tan didn't show up to their best advantage. Still, he was recognized all the time, which was as it should be.

Jason withdrew a notebook and pen from his own pockets and paused beside the table the aspiring writer.

"All the tables seem to be full," he said cheerfully in his perfect French. (He had been born in France of English parents, and had been traveling the world ever since - not

the least because tax difficulties at home made it impossible for him to return there for more than six months out of the year.)

"May I join you?"

She looked up at him, with her dark brown eyes under straight brows, and lovely lips that smiled

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only faintly as she gestured at the other chair.

Jason sat down and devoted his full attention to her. Her arms were tanned, with a smooth curve of bicep muscle which he found quite attractive. So many women had arms that were stick-figure thin! Her hands were well kept, with long, tapering fingers, but the nails were cut short. She wore no rings.

"My name's Jason King."

She smiled faintly, again, but it wasn't a smile of recognition, more's the pity.

"Emma... Knight."

She'd hesitated there. He wondered why. Newly married? Newly divorced? She couldn't be newly married - she wouldn't be sitting here on her own, let alone not wearing a wedding ring. So she must be newly divorced.

"You're English," he said, dropping into that language.

"Yes."

Jason took a drag on his cigarette. She was playing hard to get.

He gestured at the tablet before her.

"I see you're a writer."

"Yes."

He raised an eyebrow at her laconicalness..(is that a word, he asked himself mentally), but persevered.

"I couldn't help but notice that you seemed to be having difficulties. I saw you throw that pen down in disgust - an emotion I'm familiar with. Are you having writer's block?"

"I wouldn't call it writer's block," she said calmly. "I'm just...not in the mood to do any writing yet. It will come. I'll just sit here and enjoy the view."

"It is lovely, isn't it?" said Jason, running her eyes over her. But she wasn't paying attention to him and didn't notice this implied compliment. Instead, she was looking out over the scenery. He turned

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his own attention to it.

Below them stretched the Port of Monte Carlo. Dozens of piers stretched out into the azure water, and moored to each of these piers were dozens of luxury yachts. Across the harbor, hotels lined the beach. People dotted the white sand, stretched out in the typical pose of sun-worshippers every where.

"Have you been in Monte Carlo long?"

"No, not long."

This was turning out to be a real battle, but Jason was intrigued. He wasn't used to women ignoring him in this way, and the harder the chase, the more he liked it.

Suddenly, she leant forward, as her eye caught something on the quay below. Her eyebrows raised in what seemed to be astonishment.

"I don't believe it," he heard her murmur.

"Something the matter?"

She didn't take her eyes off whatever she was watching below. Jason turned to try to see what she was looking at. People - tourists - were walking to and fro. There was a man, getting into a taxi...could that be it?

She darted a quick look at him...an expression on her face that he couldn't quite fathom. Was she going to ask him for help? But then, she made a grimace, as if she had mentally dismissed his ability to help her. "I just saw someone I have to talk to," she said with a bright smile. "Do excuse me."

She stood up, and slung the strap of a small purse over her shoulder. And then, to his complete surprise, Emma Knight stepped over the short fence dividing the rooftop from the empty space beyond it, and then, jumped.

Jason blinked for a few seconds, then stood up and peered downward. Twenty feet below, the intriguing woman was just regaining her feet. She must have dropped and rolled in the soft grass. She must be a splendid athlete.

He watched her trot across the sward of grass in front of the café, and out into the street. She hailed a taxi - they were plentiful here - get into it, and it drove off.

Jason sat back in his chair, smoothing his moustache meditatively. A waiter appeared, and he ordered

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a large brandy. He felt the need of it.

Then his eyes fell upon the paper on the table. In her haste she had left her tablet behind.

Jason drew it towards him. He couldn't help but smile a little at the evidence of a writer without a clue. There were doodles of boats, of men in bowler hats, various geometric shapes, all surrounding a few words of text at the top of the page.

Obviously a title: Politics and Women in 20th Century Europe.

Jason was vaguely disappointed. Not another feminist! They were all the rage these days. It was so unnecessary. Perhaps he wouldn't bother with her after all.

A shadow fell over the table, and he looked up to see the maitre-d.

"The bill, messieur."

"I beg your pardon? I've only just started."

"Your companion at this table. The young woman. She did not pay for her petit dejeuner. You will remedy this oversight, non?"

Jason plucked the bill out of his hand. "Oui."

The maitre-d bowed and walked away.

Jason ran his eye over the bill casually. She'd had only a cup of coffee and a brioche. Not the type of order from someone intent on defrauding café owners out of the price of a full meal. But had that been the meaning behind it all? Had she deliberately been waiting for someone to sit next to her, so that she could stick them with the bill?

Hardly. A 20-foot drop was not something to be undertaken likely - certainly not for the cost of a coffee and a brioche!

No...something was going on.

Idly, Jason flicked over another page of the tablet. And his cigarette froze on the way to his lips. Quietly, he completed its journey and took another long drag.

On this page, it seemed she'd had no problem writing text. But it was funny. A couple of sentences,

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with words formed out of letters that didn't spell English words. Below them, letters in blocks of five, stretching across the page.

It was as if she was trying to figure out some kind of cipher.

He turned more pages. Each page was full of such jumbles of letters. And apparently ineffective attempts to solve them.

Why would an English woman summering in Monte Carlo be trying to figure out page after page of codes?

Jason felt a thrill run through him. More than his interest in a beautiful woman was his interest in a beautiful woman with a secret. And if he was not mistaken - Emma Knight had plenty of secrets. He'd have to find out what they were.

Jason picked up his pen and pulled his own notebook towards him. He wrote down the title for his next novel.

Emma.



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Chapter Two

The file on Monte Carlo

The Principality of Monaco, a country in Western Europe located along the French Riviera between the Mediterranean Sea and France, is the most famous of the six "microstates" located in Europe. It is the world's most densely populated country and second-smallest independent nation; with a population of about 32,000 in an area of 485 acres.

The city of Monte Carlo is not the capital of Monaco - the country doesn't have one. It's just the most famous and wealthy city in the world. The permanent population is about 3000 - most of them incredibly wealthy immigrants from other countries - the city is a tax haven for wealthy individuals from all over the world.

In addition to its famous casino, Monte Carlo is home to the Formula One Monaco Grand Prix; the Monte Carlo Masters, and the Monte Carlo Car Rally.

...File ends

Emma, by Jason King
Chapter One continued

I.

Well, how to find her, thought Jason to himself.

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Chances were she was staying at the Grand Hotel - the hotel beneath this very café, and the hotel in which he himself was staying.



However...just to be on the safe side... Jason peered down at the handful of cabs parked along the streets. All of the cabs at the port used that square there as their "home base," just as only selected cabs were allowed to ply their trade at each hotel, at the casino, and so on. If he wrote down the numbers of all the cabs that were still parked down below, he could eliminate them from any future inquiries, when he would discover exactly what the lady had instructed her driver.

His eyesight was 20-20, but he couldn't see the license plates for all that. However, there was an easy solution. He pulled a pair of collapsible binoculars from an inside pocket of his jacket, and trained them on the cars far below, jotting down the numbers for ten cabs. That'd do to get on with.

Jason nodded to himself, and, finishing off his coffee, took his own l'addition to the maitre-d. He handed him both slips of paper. "Charge these to my room. #382. Jason King."

"D'accord."

II.

Jason never liked taking lifts in old buildings. He never quite trusted the machinery. So he trotted down the five flights of stairs to the ground floor of the hotel and strolled over to the check-in desk.

He spoke briefly and flatteringly to the girl there, before asking her if a Miss Emma Knight was registered.

She obligingly looked through their registration cards. "No, Jason, no Emma Knight."

"Look, would you be a dear, and call around all the hotels in Monte Carlo, and ask if she's registered anywhere else."

The girl pouted at him prettily. "I suppose I could do that, Jason, but..."

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He took her hand and brought it up to his lips. "You'll be doing me a tremendous favor, my dear."

She withdrew her hand with a smile. "Oh, very well. I will make calls as I have spare time throughout the day."

"You're a darling. I'll be back after lunch to check on your progress."

Jason walked out of the hotel, pausing by the door to light a cigarette. Was there any point in quizzing the cab drivers now? Perhaps...yes...prime them to be on the lookout for the driver he wanted to see.

Jason walked over to the taxi-stand, judging by eye where Emma Knight's cab had been in the string, and stopping at the one he judged to have been just behind it.

"The cab, just in front of you a few minutes ago," he began in fluent French.

The driver eyed him warily.



"A young lady entered that cab. Blue slacks and a white shirt. Did you notice?"

The driver smiled a lascivious smile. "Of course, m'sieu."

"Do you know the name of the cabby?"

"Of course. It was..."

"Yes?"

The driver held out a hand and rubbed two fingers together.

Jason smiled, withdrew a banknote from his wallet and handed it over.

"Pierre Javert. He is always here."

"I'd like to speak to him. Will you be seeing him later today?"

"Doubtless, m'sieu."

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"Will you have him call me? I'm at that hotel, the Grand. Have him ask for me at the desk, any time of the day or night."

"I shall tell him, m'sieu."

"Thank you."

III.

"The Grand Prix of Monaco is taking place on June 3, this year," Jason King told the microphone he held close to his mouth. His portable tape recorder was slung over his shoulder. "It is a Formula One race. The "Formula" in the title refers to the set of rules which all participants and cars must meet. The race takes place on a circuit built in the center of the city - it takes three weeks to construct the circuit...and it'll take a week to tear it down after the race is over. The race is in four days time."

Jason walked along the observer's platform, where the people of the city could watch the track being constructed.

"Jackie Stewart, the great Scottish racing driver, is retiring this year, so this will be his last Monaco Grand Prix. [Note to self - ask Nicola to see if Stewart would like to review the book when it's finished. An account of the race will be wonderful local color for my next Mark Caine adventure."

Jason turned off the recorder and tucked the microphone back into its slot in the carrying case. He had intended to spend the day tracking down some of the drivers who had already arrived in the city, but he couldn't get the mystery of Emma Knight out of his mind. He would return to the Grand Hotel and see if any of the two hares he'd set in motion earlier in the day had borne fruit.

Hares set in motion earlier in the day had borne fruit, he said to himself with a grimace. "Talk about a mixed metaphor. Oh well, never mind I'll come up with something better when I start writing it."

IV.

Yvette, the girl at the check in desk, was his first disappointment.

"I have called all the hotels, Jason, and she is not registered anywhere."

"Well, not registered as Emma Knight, anyway," thought Jason to himself. Perhaps that was the meaning behind her hesitation when he'd asked her her name earlier. Not that she'd recently been divorced, but that she was traveling under false colors and hadn't yet gotten used to her pseudonym.

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There was also no message from a cab driver named Pierre Jouvert, either.

Jason sighed and went up to the roof-top café to have lunch. This was out of character for him - he generally liked to sample new restaurants every day in his travels, but as long as he was here...

The same maitre-d who had been on duty for breakfast was there for lunch. His eyes lit up as he saw King.

"M'sieu King. You will notice the adjustment to your bill at the end of your stay?"

"I will? Why?"

"The young lady, you remember, with whom you shared the table this morning. She returned a few minutes ago, and apologized for leaving without paying her bill. I said that you had paid it, and she insisted on reimbursing you."

"How kind of her," said Jason warmly. (He was indeed touched. He hadn't expected her to do such a thing.) "But how long ago was this?"



"Just a few minutes ago. Perhaps half an hour."

"Is she staying in this hotel, then?"

The maitre-d shrugged gallically. "She paid cash to me. And I have just taken it off your bill. Now, what can I get you for lunch?"

Jason placed his order absently.

If she had returned...had she returned in a different cab? Why hadn't Jouvert contacted him? Well, perhaps he'd picked up another fare straight away. One mustn't be paranoid or impatient in these matters. There was still the afternoon and evening to go. He'd track down Jouvert soon enough.

V.

Jason King spent the rest of the day speaking to various racing car drivers. He returned to the Grand

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Hotel around 8 o'clock, taking a cab because his feet - encased as they were in snake-skin boots - ached from all the walking. He had picked up a paper - fresh off the delivery trucks - to read on the journey. The headline caught his eye.

Cab driver drives into harbor, drowns

A cold chill ran down Jason's gut. His eyes moved to the first paragraph.

Yes...it was as he suspected. The cab driver had been Pierre Jouvert, and he'd driven full speed into the harbor at around 3 pm that afternoon. Witnesses reported that another car had been chasing his. That one did not stop, but continued on its way.

There had been no passengers in Jouvert's cab at the time.

Jason took a deep breath, and then lit a cigarette. His death was too much of a coincidence. It had to have had something to do with Emma Knight.

And if it did...chances were she was on the run now, from God knew what villains. He had to find her...help her.

Playtime was over, he thought grimly, as he waited for his cab to wend its way through the streets toward his hotel. Now, things were serious.

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Chapter Three

You Can't Go Home Again

The file on 1973: Events of January - February

January

January 3 - CBS sells the New York Yankees to a syndicate led by George Steinbrenner.

January 14 - The Miami Dolphins defeat the Washington Redskins 14-7 in Super Bowl VII to complete the NFL's only Perfect Season.

January 20 - U.S. President Richard Nixon is inaugurated for his second term.

January 22 - Roe v. Wade: The U.S. Supreme Court overturns state bans on abortion.

January 27 - U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War ends with the signing of the Paris Peace Accords.

February

February 21 - Libyan Arab Airlines passenger Flight 114 is shot down by Israeli fighter aircraft over the Sinai Desert, who suspect it is an enemy military plane. Only 5 of 113 survive.

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I.

Emma Peel sat alone at a table just beside the entrance doors to the Milano restaurant. She'd requested the table deliberately - her back was to the wall, and she'd be able to see anyone who entered the restaurant before they saw her. And she'd be able to make a quick exit if she had to.

Precautions that she never thought she'd have to take again, but due to the event of this morning...

She caught sight of her reflection in the mirror that lined the wall on the other side of the large room, and stared at it, as if she'd never seen it before.

Unbidden, a voice rose in her mind. "You can't go home again." She'd come to Monte Carlo as Mrs. Emma Peel, and she'd more than half expected to leave it as Emma Knight, but...

Emma lifted a glass of champagne in a toast to her solitary reflection. "No...you can't go home again."

It was 8 pm., and she was dining alone. She'd come to Monte Carlo alone, and she intended to stay alone, now and for the next six months, if not longer.

It was a new experience. She'd never been on her own before.

First there had been her parents, always there when she needed them while she was growing up. Then they had died in a car accident and she'd become head of Knight Industries...but within months she'd married test pilot Peter Peel. Would she have found that quick wedding to have been a mistake...if they'd been together for more than six months? Or would everything have

been so different...what sort of a person would she be now...?

She shook her head quickly. Too late to think about that now.

Six months. That's all the time they'd had together until he disappeared whilst test flying a plane over the Amazon jungle. Even then she hadn't been alone, at least not for long. Within weeks, she'd met secret agent John Steed, and spent three years in close partnership with him...saving the world...

And then Peter had returned, and like the dutiful wife that she'd wanted to be, she had returned to him, leaving Steed behind.

She had wanted things with Peter to be exactly the same as they had been...but they weren't. She'd changed too much...and she didn't want to change back. After six months of stilted co-habitation,

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they'd decided on a trial separation.

She needed to think things through.

She had no need to work. A millionaire, she had a steady income coming in from the business that now ran smoothly without her. But work was a joy, not a burden, and in any event one must keep active - something Peter hadn't wanted to accept. Or rather - it was which activities she chose that he'd seemed to have problems with...

So she'd decided to "get outta town," spend some time as a roving journalist, contributing articles to the many magazines that one of her subsidiary companies published, and she'd decided to start with an investigative report into the luxurious tax haven of Monte Carlo.

Only to see someone that she thought had been dead for over a year. A fellow agent, who'd supposedly died in a car crash. But unlike her prodigal husband, that man's body had been found - albeit burned to a crisp. Identification had been made via dental records. That was the thing - identification had been made. And yet she'd seen him getting into a taxi not five hours ago.

She'd reacted instinctively - jumping off the roof and running for another cab. She spared a smile at the thought of what her table companion must have thought of her.

II.

Her driver had been marvelous...she smiled at the memory of it.

"You are a James Bond girl, eh?" he'd asked, in a rapid-fire monologue of questions that left her no time to answer. "Or the Princess, in charge of the Network? A secret agent on the trail of a master criminal? Always I have dreamed of such a moment as this...trailing the desperate criminals in my little cab...what has he done...broken the bank at the Casino, perhaps?"

"No, I..."

But he'd merely pressed on with his monologue.

"We are passing through many historic districts, madame," he'd commented finally, while the tires squealed as he took a corner on two wheels. "Shall I describe them all to you?"

"Perhaps another time, Pierre," she'd told him with amusement. "Right now I want to concentrate on that cab in front of us."

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“Yes, yes, never fear. I do not.... Sacre bleu!” He stomped on the brakes as a lorry cut them off. Several precious seconds went by as the lorry did, and then several more seconds as Pierre leaned out of the window and hurled abuse at its driver as it proceeded, unheeding, up the road.

Emma had peered around anxiously, to no avail. The other cab was gone.

“Do not distress yourself, madame,” Pierre said airily. “You forget I know the driver of that cab. It is Phillippe Reynaud. When he returns to his space at the port - that is our...how you say... home base... I will ask him where he take his passenger.”

“Pierre. That’s marvelous! Such an easy solution.”

“Of course! I will ask him...and then I will tell you. How can I get in touch with you?”

“I’m at the Grand Hotel. Leave a message for me at the desk. Mrs. Emma Peel.”

“I shall, Madame. I shall be the Watson to your Holmes, eh?” and he’d laughed cheerfully.

“Well, I think I’ll get out here...” she peered into her purse for money, and remembered for the first time that she had not brought her tablet with her. She’d left it on the table at the Grand’s roof-top café. She needed that tablet.

“On second thought,” she said briskly, “I’ll return with you to the hotel.”

III.

She’d breathed a sigh of relief to see the same maitre-d as before, and she gave him her most charming smile.

“Messieur, I am so ashamed. This morning I left without paying for my breakfast.”

“It is all right, madame,” he’d said cheerfully. “M’sieu King, he paid it for you.”

“Did he? How kind of him.”

“Oh, Mr. King, he is a gentleman. You must have heard of him. He is the creator of Mark Caine.”

Emma shrugged her shoulders. She didn’t read much non-fiction.

“He is better than James Bond,” the maitre-d said enthusiastically. “The bookstore in the lobby

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carries all his books - in French translations of course. You should look at them.”

“Yes, I will. Now, tell me...did he by any chance turn in a tablet that I’d left on the table.”

“No, madame, he did not.”

“Ah, well. Anyway, I can’t let him pay my debts for me. If you’ll give me the bill...”

The maitre-d searched through his tickets, and took out one. He glanced at the bottom line before handing it to her. “Not very much, for a coffee and a brioche.”

Emma scanned the bill, and saw the writing across it.

Jason King, Room 382.

She handed over the money.

“Merci, madame. I shall remove this from M’sieu King’s account.”

Emma had left the roof-top café and went immediately to room #382. She knocked briskly. No reply.

Well, she’d stop by later.

Emma returned to the harbor, and sought out the MonteCarlo Sailing Club, where she proceeded to rent a sail-boat. She didn't feel like setting up appointments to talk to bankers today...that could wait until tomorrow. She felt like tasting the freedom of the seas. And indeed, she spent the rest of the day sailing close to the coast of the French Riviera...enjoying the sun and the wind and the intricacies of coaxing more knots of speed out of the little boat.

She returned to shore and, her appetite burgeoning, went immediately to the Milano for dinner, as it was a restaurant that catered to the yachting crowd, and it was not necessary to dress formally to dine there.

Finally, she walked back to her hotel, and stopped on the corner to pick up a newspaper. She paused to read the headlines.

Cab driver drives into harbor, drowns

Oh, no...

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Emma read the article quickly, standing there at the street corner, fingers crumpling the pages with the force of her grip - then she looked up and stared blindly at the taxis still waiting at their stands for possible customers.

His death was her fault. She should have seen how eager he was, how convinced that he was playing some kind of game. He must have done more than ask the other cab driver a simple question...he must have tried to snoop. And been killed for his pains.

This was what came of letting amateurs get involved in serious business. She wouldn't make that mistake again. She'd discover what was going on, without involving anyone else. And poor Pierre Jouvert would be avenged.

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Chapter Four

The file on 1973: Events of March - May

March

March 7 - Comet Kohoutek is discovered.

March 8 - In the 'Border Poll', voters in Northern Ireland endorse remaining in the United Kingdom. Irish nationalists largely boycotted the referendum.

March 17 - Queen Elizabeth II opens the modern London Bridge.

April

April 3 - The first handheld cellular phone call made by Martin Cooper, who conceived the phone, in New York City.

April 4 - The World Trade Center officially opens in New York City with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

April 6 - Pioneer 11 is launched on a mission to study the solar system.

April 17 - The German counter-terrorist force GSG 9 is officially formed.

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April 17 - Federal Express officially begins operations.

May

May 1 - An estimated 1,600,000 workers in the United Kingdom stopped work in support of a Trade Union Congress "day of national protest and stoppage" against the Government's anti-inflation policy.

May 3 - The Sears Tower in Chicago is finished, becoming the world's tallest building.

May 5 - Secretariat wins the Kentucky Derby.

May 14 - Skylab, the United States' first space station, is launched.

May 17 - Watergate scandal: Televised hearings begin in the United States Senate.

May 19 - Secretariat wins the Preakness Stakes.

May 22 - Ethernet is invented by Robert Metcalfe.

May 25 - Skylab 2 (Pete Conrad, Paul Weitz, Joseph Kerwin) is launched on a mission to repair the Skylab space station.

...File ends

June 3, 1973

Emma Peel wended her way through the long lines of blackjack tables that ran from one side of the room to the other. She carried a champagne glass in one hand, from which she sipped occasionally, and a handful of jetons (or betting chips) in the other. A black mink stole covered her bare shoulders and set off her white gloves and white evening gown. Formal dress was de rigeur at the Casino of Monte Carlo.

She paused occasionally at a table to watch the play - invariably half the players would lose the hand, while the other half would win. And each half generally alternated with each new hand. Emma would suppress a shake of her head as she walked away.

Emma had never understood why people played blackjack, or chemin de fer, or poker, any other card game that depended more on luck than skill. Oh, of course those people with fantastic memories (such as herself, though she did say it), who could "count cards," perhaps had a slightly better chance

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of winning...but overall it was a mug's game. Give her a decent game of bridge any day.

Emma hadn't intended to go back out into the city that night, but after reading the news about poor Jouvert, she'd decided she wasn't yet ready to retire to her room.

She walked out of the blackjack pit and into an adjacent room, which featured roulette and craps, and once again commenced her stroll around the tables.

She was looking for someone, though she didn't really expect to find him. But if he was alive...he'd been a great one for the gambling tables. No matter what he was doing in any city, if there was a casino there, that's where he would invariably be found. "Where the casino is, there are eagles gathered," she paraphrased to herself. "And vultures." She watched a tuxedo-clad man push a stack of 100-franc-jetons onto the number 24 on the betting table, watched the roulette ball spin, saw him half-rise from his chair in anticipation as it seemed the ball was heading straight toward 24, and saw him sink back in despair as it fell into the adjacent slot. He uttered a brief profanity, stood up from the table with a jerk and strode away.

"And fools," she thought, controlling that shake of the head again.

She wouldn't find him in this room. Emma thought. Roulette and craps - two of the silliest games for anyone to play -ever.

The chair in front of her was still empty. With a smile twitching her lips, Emma sat down. "Hey ho," she thought to herself. She'd risk a few francs.

The croupier called for everyone to place their bets. Emma placed a one franc-jeton on the 24, and on the two numbers on either side of it, 16 and 5. She wasn't surprised when the ball followed the same trajectory as in the previous spin, and this time landed right in 24. The croupier pushed 36 francs worth of jetons at her.

Emma gathered her winnings and rose.

"Masterfully done," said a voice behind her. A deep, rich voice that she'd been impressed with this morning...it had belonged to the man at her breakfast table. The author of the Mark Caine spy stories. Jason King.

She turned and gave him a brief smile. He wore a black tuxedo, with a frilly white shirt. "Mr. King."

"Oh, Jason, please. And I hope I may call you Emma. You're looking very lovely this evening."

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"Thank you."

She wished she could return the compliment, but although she quite liked his slenderness, and the ramrod straightness of his back, and the voice, the bouffant hairstyle and the Fu Manchu moustache did nothing for her. She knew it was the coming style...but just because something was in style was no need to embrace it, in her opinion.

"I see you've finished your champagne. Would you like another?"

"Thank you."

She accompanied him to the bar, and waited while he purchased two glasses of champagne from the bartender.

"Thank you for paying my bill this morning," said Emma, accepting one of the glasses. "I apologize for leaving you in the lurch, as it were."

"Oh, don't give it another thought," said the author. "Did you find your friend?"

"No," said Emma. "No, I didn't."

"He must have been a very good friend, for you to go to such lengths to try to catch up to him."

Emma glanced at him, but he was innocently sipping champagne. She shrugged and took pains to smile ruefully. "I know it was a bit foolish of me, but I've always been impulsive. It was someone I'd known in my university days. We were always doing outrageous things back then, and I'm afraid I just...regressed for a moment."

"I see."

"By the way, I left my tablet behind. Did you pick it up, by any chance?"

"Yes. It's in my room at the Grand. Are you staying there?"

"Ye-es," Emma said.

"You don't sound very sure."

She looked at him. He was smiling, and devouring her with his eyes, and concentrating on her absolutely. Oh, he was smooth, all right, and as self-confident as any man she'd ever seen, up to and

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including John Steed. She'd have to scotch this - she didn't want anybody hanging around while she investigated a possibly-defected agent, and murderer or murderers unknown.

"I wasn't very truthful with you this morning, Jason," she said demurely. "You see..my real name is Emma Peel. Mrs. Emma Peel. I'd been going through a bad patch with my husband...and came here to be alone. But...he's coming here tomorrow. I don't know if he'll want to stay there, or if he'll want to whisk me away on a second honeymoon. He can be as impulsive as me, sometimes."

"I see." He reached into his pocket and drew out a gold cigarette case. He offered it to her, and she shook her head. Long fingers withdrew a cigarette, tapped it on the case, and inserted it into his mouth. Cigarette case returned, gold lighter produced. He lit the cigarette and took a deep drag.

"Well, I'm pleased for you, of course, but I must say I'm disappointed for me."

Emma took a sip from her champagne. At the same time, her eyes looked past Jason King and down the corridor and she saw that long-thought-dead agent, deep in talk with another man. Both in tuxedos. Both clearly about to go into the casino.

Quietly, quickly, Emma slid around the booth so that she was sitting with her back towards that walking dead man. Unfortunately, she was now sitting side by side with Jason King.

"Emma," he said in a delighted tone of voice.

A sudden rush of longing for John Steed rose in her. It was all very well to be working alone...but Rioridan - for that was the name of that walking dead man - knew what she looked like and would invariably cut and run if he caught sight of her. Of course, he knew Steed as well...but Steed would be able to call someone to get to the casino to shadow him.

She knew no one in Monte Carlo. She'd have to shadow him on her own. She had driven her rental car to the Casino, just in case she did come across someone she'd need to follow, and had some sets of spare clothing in the boot - slacks, shirts and boots better for running and jumping in than this evening gown.

But...how to get rid of Jason King? She didn't want to place him in danger. He was clearly a dandy who liked to live vicariously through his super spy protagonist, but in the real world he would probably collapse like a house of cards at the first harsh word.

She had to get rid of him.

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Chapter Five

The file on Roulette

There are two types of roulette wheels. The European version has a single 0, in green, and whenever the ball travels around the wheel and falls into the green, any and all bets on the table - from straight up on the numbers to odd, even, red, black, 1st, 2nd or 3rd twelve, and so on, are swept away. In the United States, there are two greens on the wheel - 0 and 00. The way in which the numbers are distributed around the wheel varies according to how many 0s there are, but of course they always alternate between red and black..

The individual who sends the ball spinning on the wheel is called the croupier. He (or she) has two minions standing on either side the table with long paddles, in order to push the winnings onto the appropriate square for the winners - if any - to collect. A jeton straight up on a number pays 36 - 1. Split between two numbers pays 18-1. Split between four numbers pays 9-1. Other, safer bets pay less well.

...File ends

Emma: Chapter Two, by Jason King

Jason King was not one to spend evenings in his hotel room, except on those occasions when he had a deadline to meet.

On this particular evening, he'd decided to go to the Monte Carlo Casino, and to that end, donned

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a tuxedo, counted out a few thousand francs which is all he would allow himself to chance at the tables, and then went out to the portico where he had the doorman summon a taxi for him.

He did not ask the driver anything about the late Pierre Jouvert - he would tend to that kind of questioning in broad daylight. In any event, the night drivers probably had little to do with the daytime drivers. Also, the driver had his radio on a station playing the new Pink Floyd album, Dark Side of the Moon, and Jason rather enjoyed the music.

He walked into the Casino, and paused just inside the entrance door to light a cigarette. The foyer was crowded with people milling about, trying to decide into which room...or restaurant...they wanted to go. The vaulted ceiling rose high above them. He looked up at it and spared a few seconds to enjoy the gorgeous architecture.

Jason stopped at the Change desk to convert his francs into jetons, and then walked into the Salle l'Europe, which contained all the card games such as blackjack, chemin de fer, baccarat and so. But mostly...blackjack.

And once again he paused at the door, this time to let his eyes scan the crowd and see if there was anything interesting to be seen. It was rather difficult with the crush of tuxedo clad men and evening gowned women, in all shapes and sizes. Each table had six chairs in front of it, and at least that many people standing behind it, watching the action.

Except there...in the corner...under a sign that said "No smoking." There was a lone player there.

Jason took a deep drag on his cigarette. By the time he made it all the way to that "No smoking" corner, he'd have finished it. With any luck, the lone player there would leave, giving him the opportunity to be the lone player. He preferred that to having to play with a group - whose knowledge of the game might be suspect.

The quickest way to that table was straight down the central lane...but there was also the most crush of people there. He'd sidle around the side...

The lone player had not left the blackjack table by the time he'd arrived, but he elected to play there anyway. When he was down a thousand francs, he left the table, in need of a drink. As he walked toward the bar, his eye caught sight of Emma...Knight, looking gorgeous and sophisticated in mink stole and evening gown.

He followed her as she left the Salle de l'Europe, and walked into the Salle Blanche which had the roulette and craps tables. Surely she would not be foolish enough to play one of those games?

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Mindful of the events of the day, Jason hung back and merely watched what transpired. He witnessed her win - impressed with her single economical bet - obviously made to a plan- and the fact that she was prepared to take her winnings and walk away from the table - a characteristic that was not common among gamblers.

"Masterfully done," he told her.

She turned and her eyes widened slightly as she saw him. He was five foot ten...she was of a height with him with her high heels...so she must be about five foot eight without her shoes. Her eyes were a deep brown.

"Mr. King," she said with a smile, one a little larger than any she'd graced him with at the breakfast table that morning.

"Oh, Jason, please." Jason said with all his charm. "And I hope I may call you Emma. You're looking very lovely this evening."

"Thank you."

He dropped his eyes and saw that her champagne glass was empty.

"I see you've finished your champagne. Would you like another?"

"Thank you."

She accompanied him to the bar, and stood beside him while he purchased two glasses of champagne from the bartender. Although he was concentrating on the bartender, he noticed out of the corner of her eye that she seemed to be looking for someone...her eyes scanned the room and flicked on occasion to the entrance.

He lifted the glasses off the counter and handed one of them to Emma.

"Thank you for paying my bill this morning," she said, taking the glass and taking a sip. "I apologize for leaving you in the lurch, as it were."

"Oh, don't give it another thought," Jason told her warmly. Then...as innocently as possible: "Did you find your friend?"

"No," the woman said shortly. "No, I didn't."

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"He must have been a very good friend, for you to go to such lengths to try to catch up to him."

She glanced at him, but he kept an innocent expression on his face and sipped his champagne.

She lifted her shoulders in a shrug and smiled ruefully.

"I know it was a bit foolish of me, but I've always been impulsive. It was someone I'd known in my university days. We were always doing outrageous things back then, and I'm afraid I just...regressed for a moment."

"I see," said Jason, concealing his amusement. Did she really think he'd believe that story?

"By the way, I left my tablet behind. Did you pick it up, by any chance?"

"Yes. It's in my room at the Grand. Are you staying there?"

"Ye-es," the woman said. She didn't sound very sure.

"You don't sound very sure."

She looked at him with melting brown eyes.

"I wasn't very truthful with you this morning, Jason," she said in a demure tone. "You see..my real name is Emma Peel. Mrs. Emma Peel."

Damn.

"I'd been going through a bad patch with my husband...and came here to be alone. But...he's coming here tomorrow. I don't know if he'll want to stay there, or if he'll want to whisk me away on a second honeymoon. He can be as impulsive as me, sometimes."

Could she possibly be telling the truth? Well...too soon to put her on the spot. Give her enough rope.

"I see," he said.

Jason reached into his pocket and drew out a gold cigarette case. He offered it to her, and she shook her head. He helped himself to one, lit it, and took a deep drag. Smoking always helped crystallize his thinking.

"Well, I'm pleased for you, of course, but I must say I'm disappointed for me."

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She took a sip from her champagne. He liked the play of the light on her lipstick as she brought the glass to her lips. As he watched, he saw her eyes look past him. He saw them widen, only slightly, and then, to his utter surprise, she had slid around the booth so that she was sitting knee to thigh to him.

"Emma?" he said, appreciatively.

"Oh, sorry," she said, quickly. She scooped a few inches away from him. "I was getting a cold draft down my neck."

"I'm surprised you could feel it, with that lovely stole around your shoulders."

He put his arm around her shoulders, rearranging the stole. He saw her lips twitch.

"Thank you," she said. "It's much better now."

She placed her glass on the table and steepled her fingers, bumping her lower lip in an incredibly attractive fashion.

She was thinking. It was so attractive to see a woman trying to think.

"Well, she said briskly. "There you have it, Jason. My husband is coming tomorrow so I think it's best if I have an early night. I'll leave you, then. If you wouldn't mind, just drop my tablet off at the desk, and I'll pick it up tomorrow morning. Would you mind? That way I'll be able to pick it up and won't have to bother you any more."

"Oh, it wouldn't be any other bother. Why don't I come with you now?"

The merest shade of an expression of vexation crossed over her face, quickly replaced by an embarrassed smile.

"No, no. I'm sorry, Jason, but I'd feel much more comfortable if I didn't see you again. I'm sure you understand what I mean."

If he hadn't had his suspicions of her, he would have been prepared to believe that what she meant was that she was physically attracted to him and couldn't bear to be near him anymore, since she'd hoped to get back with her husband. That happened all the time, actually.

She was doing her best to get rid of him.

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"May I call you a cab," he said as he walked with her towards the exit.

"No, I brought my car. I have a rental."

"Well, I'll walk you to your car, then."

She smiled, so charmingly. "Thank you."

They walked through the car park, her high heels clicking in the silence. The car park was well-lit, it was practically as bright as day.

He stood by as she unlocked the door and slid into the car, and then closed the door behind her. He waited as she started the engine, and then returned her wave as she drove out of the exit to the car park and turn left.

Instantly, Jason ran toward the exit, skidded to a stop, and peered to the left. As he had suspected, her car, a white Peugeot, was not driving at such a clip that it's driver was looking to leave the premises. She was looking for a place to park so that she could keep an eye on the main entrance - which was also the main exit - to the casino.

Jason lit up a cigarette and puffed thoughtfully as he watched her find a spot and parallel park with an economy of moves.

So...she was up to something. Waiting for someone. And didn't want his help. Well, that was too bad - she was going to have it regardless. Time to end this foolishness and confront her with what he knew.

Jason sauntered casually towards the Peugeot, came up on the passenger's side, gripped the handle, and attempted to open it so he could slide into the seat and present her with a fait accompli.

But she'd locked the door and he tugged at it ineffectually.

Effect ruined. Typical.

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Chapter Six

The file on the events of 1973: June 1 - 3

- June 1 - The Greek military junta abolishes the monarchy and proclaims a republic.
- June 3 - A Tupolev Tu-144 crashes at the Paris air show; 15 are killed.

...File ends

Emma Peel looked over and recognized Jason King. She gritted her teeth in frustration. She should have known. She should have just knocked him out and stuck him in a cupboard for the rest of the night - that would have simplified things.

She leaned over and pulled up the door lock with a snap, then settled back with resignation. (Temporary resignation, it must be said. When she caught sight of the first handy cupboard...)

Jason made himself comfortable in the passenger's seat.

"Look, let's stop playing games," he said. "I saw you jump off the roof, get into a taxi, and follow another taxi...somewhere. I also know that your taxi driver is dead - killed when he ran his car into the harbor."

He paused.

"Do go on," said Emma. "It's fascinating."

"You know the rest. You saw someone at the casino tonight, whom you intend to follow. He's

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obviously a dangerous individual - you'll need some help.'

"And you intend to give me that help?'

He raised an outraged eyebrow at her. "I do know something of this kind of thing. Mark Caine..."

"Jason, I appreciate that you've written dozens of novels where Mark Caine confounds the criminals of all continents. I'm sure they're very good. But..."

"You're sure they're very good? You mean you haven't read them?"

"I'm afraid not."

"Not even one?"

"I've kept meaning to..." (She was lying, but if it would soothe him...

"I shall give you a copy of A Page Before Dying, as soon as we return to the hotel. It's a masterpiece."

"Thank you."

"So, who is this man we're waiting for, anyway?"

Emma sighed. But, it could do no harm to tell him the story.

"About a year or so ago, two ...friends of mine, Mike Riordan and John Drake, were in a car crash in London. The car burst into flames and they were burned to a crisp. Identification of the bodies was made by dental records.

Well...Mike Riordan was the man I saw this morning...and again tonight."

"Fascinating," murmured Jason thoughtfully.

"I thought so."

"And the reason why you just won't go up to this man and ask him about the car crash?"

Emma raised an eyebrow of her own. "Would Mark Caine do that?"

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"No, you're quite right. If this individual has come back from the dead - there could be so many reasons. Insurance fraud to name the most obvious.'

Emma nodded. "Exactly."

Or defection to the other side, to name the most terrible she said to herself. Riordan and Drake? Could John be alive also? This was what was haunting her. Riordan she had only known slightly. Drake, slightly more. She'd liked him. Could he be alive? Could he have defected? No..surely not John.

"So I just want to follow him - see where he goes, see what he does. At the moment I'm simply in search of information. You see...I'm a journalist. This could be quite a scoop for my magazine."

"Ah," said Jason, understanding now. He well knew that journalists would sacrifice anything and everyone for a story.

Well," he continued, "Surveillance work can be so boring when there's only one. And four eyes are better than two."

"If you insist," Emma said - though in the back of her mind –until we come the first handy cupboard.

They sat in silence for some minutes, then Emma commented, "Your French accent is very good. I noticed it this morning."

"Thank you." he said, with a delighted smile. Emma catalogued this. Jason was as susceptible to flattery as any woman– it was a rather endearing quality.

"I was born in France...some years ago." he continued. "My father was an English diplomat, my mother was French. We traveled all over Europe, and I have an ear for languages. I can speak four fluently, and get by in another three."

"Impressive."

"Thank you," he said again. "And what about you?"

"Oh, I know a smattering of words, in several languages. Tourist phrases, you know."

"And is your husband really coming tomorrow, or did you say that just to put me off?"

Emma smiled. "I am married.'

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Jason looked at her, started to say something, then seemed to think better of it, and shrugged.

"So what are you doing in Monte Carlo?" she asked him. She didn't want him to ask her what she was doing there. The less he knew about her the better - even if it was just in her legitimate profession as a journalist. And she knew he would be quite happy to monopolize the conversation by telling her about himself. And she was right.

Which wasn't to say that he didn't share some fascinating and funny stories. She quite enjoyed the next half hour--for all that her eyes continued to watch the entrance/exit to the casino.

And then finally... "There he is."

"And he's coming right for us."

"Yes."

Swiftly, Emma twisted and put her arms around Jason's neck. To her surprise, he did not take advantage of his position, and though he put his arms around her, he confined his kissing to her shoulders. After all, they had to make it look like there was an innocent - well, relatively innocent - reason why they were just sitting there..

Emma kept her eyes open, and saw Riordan walk past.

"Okay," she said, straightening.

Jason settled back as well, smoothing his moustache. He was smiling beneath his hand, she knew it.

"How much of a lead are you going to give him?"

"He's heading for the taxis. If he takes one, we'll follow. If he keeps walking...we'll walk."

"I hope he keeps walking," said Jason. "It's such a ..."

He stopped. Riordan was going to keep walking. He had walked past the last cab at the stand.

"Hey ho," said Emma with resignation, getting out of the car. Jason followed suit.

"He must be staying nearby," said Jason, quietly, as they walked along. "There are three large hotels in that direction. You're not clicking."

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"I beg your pardon?"

"Your high heels. They're not clicking on the pavement."

"Oh. No, I changed them to tennis shoes as soon as I'd gotten settled in front of the casino. Just before you turned up."

"Still, we'd better hold hands, just in case he looks back and sees us."

Emma gave him one of her patented glances, but took his hand nevertheless. His hand gripped hers gently, his skin was warm...pleasant.

They were not alone on the sidewalk - a straggle of people were going to and fro. Nevertheless Riordan was easy to keep in sight. He lounged along, clearly in no hurry. Emma remembered this behavior of old. Brisk walking was not at home to Riordan - which made his sudden bursts of speed - when the occasion demanded it - seem all the faster.

Finally, he turned and walked up the steps into L'Hotel Aiglon.

Without hesitation, Emma and Jason continued walking past.

"I can go no further," Emma began...

"So I should follow him in and find out his new name, if any?"

"If you would."

They stopped and, for the benefit of any watching eyes, he raised her hand to his lips and kissed it. "I'll be back in a few minutes."

He turned and trotted up the steps into the hotel, while Emma strolled on a few more meters and sat on the steps of a neighboring establishment.

She watched a few people walk past, listening to their voices, their accents. British, French, Italian, even Americans - a white man and a black man, striding along, talking about the quality of tennis in Monte Carlo.

She looked at her watch. It had been fifteen minutes. Jason should have been back by now.

Emma had a bad feeling about this.

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She'd have to do something...dressed as she was in evening gown and tennis shoes.

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Chapter Seven

The file on Kelly Robinson and Alexander Scott

Kelly Robinson is a "tennis bum," he travels around the world playing tennis with the wealthy, in return for food and lodging. He participates in tournaments as well, and has been ranked in the Top 20 for the last three years. This is thanks to his trainer, Alexander Scott, an African-American. Robinson looks uncannily like the actor Robert Culp, and Scott resembles Bill Cosby. P

It has been rumored that Robinson and Scott are actually operatives for the American government, but this has never been proved.

...File ends

Emma - Chapter Three, by Jason King

My dear Nicola (wrote Jason King to his publisher),

I hope you get this letter...my captor has promised me that whatever my fate (he is currently waiting to hear from a colleague what that fate should be), he will send this letter to you. As long as I mention no names, and give no descriptions of people, he stresses.

I'll summarize how I got here...

This morning I was wandering around the Harbor of Monte Carlo and people-watching, and I saw

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an individual enter a taxi. His appearance gave me the idea for a character ...I won't describe him or the character he would have played, but he would have made a splendid villain, almost as good as George in my *The Death of Rats*. ...

[That was probably too obviously a planted clue, Jason thought – that his prospective assassin resembled, in features, the character George in his masterpiece *The Death of Rats*. Well, leave it for now and put more subtle clues in later. Perhaps he'll only do his censoring via a black felt-tip pen and some of the clues will survive. What's the time? How long is that woman going to wait for me to reappear before she calls the police? Although what they can do...never mind...there is plenty of time...Just need to stoke the old brain cells. He lit a cigarette and went back to the letter.

Indeed, several of the cabbies interested me, and I decided to do some research among them all - as is to be expected from any author who desires to put verisimilitude in their work.

Well, later on in the day one of the drivers drove his cab into the harbor and drowned, and that kind of put me off writing any kind a story featuring cab drivers. I'm rather sensitive, as you know.

Well, that's the way the plot crumbles.

Then, tonight, I was playing black jack at the Casino and not doing very well, so I decided to leave, and walk back to my hotel, the Grand. As I walked along, I saw in front of me a passenger who had been in one of those cabs, and I decided that perhaps I had abandoned my plot too precipitously. I decided to follow that man, just as a common exercise from an author who is concerned about verisimilitude.

[Perhaps he was over-doing the emphasis on his quest for verisimilitude, but that had been his story when he'd been caught and he was sticking to it.

As you know, I like to put myself in the character of Mark Caine, and see if my ideas/solutions, etc. will work.

So, I was following this man, purely as an exercise, and followed him into the hotel...I'll leave that nameless, as per my instructions! My captor is quite the little Napoleon and I shan't disobey him!

[Another too obvious reference...although his captor was British and not French and so might not know the history behind the hotel's name – L'Aiglon. He would have to hope so.

As I entered the lobby, I saw that it was empty of guests, but that a beautiful woman was behind the counter. As is my habit, I went over and chatted with her. I don't need to explain to you my charm, Nicola. Suffice it to say, she was soon telling me the name of the man who'd entered the lobby just

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before I had done so, and what the number of his hotel room was.

Now at this point I should have left, I admit it. My exercise was complete and it was a success. But then the dear girl made a remark that caused me to think perhaps I should extend my exercise a bit further.

She asked me if I were part of the company that Mister... Let's call him Mister X, Nicola... that Mister X was expecting that night.

"I didn't know he was having a party," I told her. "But I certainly wouldn't mind attending it. Any celebrities? Drinks?"

"No celebrities. But I think...(she looked from side to side, even though there was no one in the lobby) I think he has private poker games up there. One time he came downstairs with another gentleman and said something about losing all his chips...something like that."

Anyway, Nicola, I decided that I'd just take a brief stroll through the hallway, just on principle, before returning to my own hotel room to start work on my book. Perfectly innocent.

So I took the stairs up to the top floor, which is where my quarry's room was, and just started to stroll down the hallway...when a door opened behind me and before I knew it, I was knocked unconscious.

For innocently walking down a hallway! I do not blame myself at all for being in this little predicament!

My captor has explained that the whole top floor is given over to him and his organization, and that anyone who walks on this floor who is not recognized is knocked unconscious. I must say that I think that behavior is very reckless, and foolish. There might be any number of innocent reasons why someone is walking around the top floor of a hotel. Typically the best-furnished floor in the hotel, it must attract lots of innocent curiosity.

So here I am, sitting in this room. My captor has made a phone call, and is now waiting to hear back. He has very kindly provided me with brandy, however, and has no objection to my smoking.

[At this point, there was a knock on the door, and a woman's voice called out in French, "Maid service. Monsieur, I have the towels you requested."

Jason felt a sudden chill - he recognized that voice. It was Emma. Why hadn't she called the police? What was she doing?"

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His captor - Riordan, swore under his breath, and aimed his gun at the door.

"It's just the maid," Jason barked out. "For god's sake, man. She says she's brought towels."

Riordan glared at him. "Okay. My gun goes in my pocket. You stay where you are. If you move - she'll get it, and then you. Understand?"

"Completely," Jason said calmly.

"And don't go talking French at her. You say anything to her that I don't understand, she gets it, and then you."

Riordan opened the door wide. Emma Peel walked in. She was dressed in a maid's outfit - frilly cap, white apron over black dress, and sturdy white shoes. She was also carrying an armful of towels - so many that they obscured her face.

"Allo, messieur...your towels."

"Right. Put them in the bathroom."

"Where else do you think she'd put them?" Jason asked sourly.

Riordan darted a furious look at him, as Jason had expected. And obviously as Emma expected, because she dropped the towels, stepped forward, grabbed Riordan's gun hand in both of hers, and raised it to her mouth. She bit, hard. Riordan screamed and dropped the gun. Emma kicked it toward Jason, then twisted and karate-chopped Riordan across the throat.

He fell backward, gasping, white-faced, staring at her.

"Emma?"

"Riordan."

She stepped forward. He attempted to punch her - despite the fact that Jason had now picked up the gun, and Emma twisted past the blow, and kned him in the groin. He folded over.

She knelt beside him, grabbing hold of his tie with one hand and tightening it.

"Where's John Drake?" she demanded.

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"...Village..." choked Riordan. "The Village."

"The Village? What's that?"

"It's where...agents who retire...go."

"What are you talking about? I've retired."

"It's where...unhappy agents who retire...go."

"Where is it?"

There was the crash of a gun shot from the doorway, and Riordan went limp, a bullet through his forehead.

With the speed of light Jason twisted and shot at the figure in the doorway. He also didn't miss.

They looked at the bodies ruefully.

"We'd better get out of here," said Jason. "These walls and floors are amazingly thick, but someone must have heard those shots."

"Yes," said Emma, very quietly. "Let's go."

Jason folded up his letter and put it in his pocket. Then he followed her out into the corridor. They didn't speak again until they were outside the hotel, walking back towards Emma's car.

"So you're an agent," said Jason.

"A retired agent," said Emma, absently.

"Thank god you're not an unhappy retired agent."

She glanced at him. "Yes..."

"You're going to track down this Village, aren't you?"

She shrugged. "I don't know what I'm going to do yet. What are you going to do?"

"I have a novel to write."

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"You better be careful, Jason. Mention anything about this Village...you'll upset somebody."

"Ye-es."

They got back to the car and Emma drove toward the hotel. They rode in silence. Emma Peel was thinking back over her years risking her life to serve her country...Steed had spent his whole life serving his country...and this is how they were repaid...well, how some of them were repaid.

And John Drake was there. Still alive. In the Village.

She was going to find this Village. She was going to find John Drake. And she was going to get him out.

Emma parked in the carpark, and she and Jason walked into the hotel.

"Would you like a nightcap?" asked Jason.

"No, thank you, Jason. I have an old friend I need to get in touch with. I'll be leaving Monte Carlo tomorrow."

"Yes, I thought you would."

"Thanks for your help."

"Such as it was."

Emma smiled, and stepped forward, and kissed him on the cheek. Then she turned and walked away.

Jason watched her walk out of his life. Then he turned and went to his own room. He sat down in front of his typewriter, removed the letter he'd been writing earlier, and began to type. Soon he was engrossed in his creation, and the incidents of the night were forgotten.

THE END