

BACHELOR BODYGUARD

ACT ONE.

SCENE ONE.

THE OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDENT KYKACHOV. HE IS SITTING AT HIS DESK WITH W.P.C.ERIKA CORSANSKI ON HIS KNEE. THEY BREAK FROM A PASSIONATE KISS.

KYKACHOV: Pretty good, eh?

ERIKA: Not bad for someone of your age, but not likely to bring a woman's passion to boiling point

KYKACHOV: My age! In England they have a saying 'There's many a good tune played by an old fiddler.

ERIKA (REPRESSING LAUGHTER): Certainly appropriate in one respect, but in your shoes I'd not broadcast it.

KYKACHOV: I'll have you know one of my lady friends said my embraces reminded her of someone she'd seen in a television programme.

ERIKA: The Munsters?

KYKACHOV: One of these days, W.P.C.Corsanski you'll go too far, and instead of having a cushy job filling in and filing all those entirely unnecessary forms, you'll find yourself out on the beat again; and that's no picnic these days I assure you.

ERIKA: And when that times comes, my sweet, it will be my duty to report to the Chief Commissioner the contents of that book you keep locked away. I'm sure he'll be most interested in the accounts of the War Widows Fund.

KYKACHOV: You've seen it?

ERIKA: Of course. A girl has to have insurance.

KYKACHOV: How the devil did you open a locked drawer?

ERIKA: As the English also say, Love laughs at locksmiths.

KYKACHOV: I never should have allowed you to supplant W.P.C.Arkova.

ERIKA: Anna Arkova! She'd sell her soul for a meal from a Chinese takeaway.

KYKACHOV: She would not have told tales to the Commissioner.

ERIKA: Neither shall I unless forced to. Play ball with me and I'll be as quiet as a mute knicker fetishist in the lingerie department of Marks and Spencers.

THE TELEPHONE RINGS. KYKACHOV PICKS UP THE RECEIVER.

KYKACHOV: Yes, of course, my love. I'll send someone round right away. PAUSE. No, whatever you want will always be given priority. PAUSE. Frightfully busy as usual, HE RINGS OFF. Confounded woman! Anyone would think we have nothing else to do but settle her disputes with her neighbour.

ERIKA: Your wife, I presume?

KYKACHOV: Who else? Take my car and go and sort it out for her. I'm not sure if she was talking about her neighbour or his dog

ERIKA: Do I have to arrest anyone?

KYKACHOV: With our cells bursting at the seams with the ungodly of every description? Make it an on the spot fine,

ERIKA: Regardless of guilt?

KYKACHOV: Naturally.

ERIKA: Fifty fifty?

KYKACHOV: Sixty forty.

ERIKA: Skinflint. SHE EXITS HURRIEDLY.

KYKACHOV PRESSES A BUZZER. P.C.SLOVOTA ENTERS, KYKACHOV UNLOCKS A DRAWER IN HIS DESK AND EXTRACTS A LEDGER. WHICH HE OPENS.

KYKACHOV: Number 534.

SLOVUTA TAKES OUT A WALLET AND HANDS OVER SOME NOTES. KYKACHOV COUNTS THEM AND ENTERS SUM IN LEDGER.

KYKACHOV: Number 535. (PREVIOUS ACTION REPEATED) No increase?

SLOVUTA: The client says Levinski refuses to pay more until cannabis is replaced by the hard stuff.

KYKACHOV: How very unwise. Will those morons never learn? Steps must be taken to apply pressure.

SLOVUTA: Pressure, sir?

KYKACHOV: Pressure, Constable.

SLOVUTA: How, sir, with Levinski behind bars

KYKACHOV: You will arrest his wife and eldest son for being in league with foreign terrorists.

SLOVUTA: Without evidence, sir?

KYKACHOV: With evidence, you imbecile, which you will plant where it can be discovered when the house is searched.

SLOVUTA: But that, sir, would be a crime.

KYKACHOV: With everyone in authority feathering his own nest, at the country's expense, and an over opulent and unprincipled proletariat robbing the Government right left and centre, why shouldn't we make a little for our old age?

SLOVUTA: But sir...

KYKACHOV: You might not believe this, Constable, but I shall be forty on my next birthday.

SLOVUTA: You're quite right, sir, I don't believe it.

KYKACHOV (GIVING HIM A KEEN LOOK): If I did not know you for a congenital idiot, I might take that as an intentional double entendre.

SLOVUTA: Thank you, sir. Will that be all?

KYKACHOV WAVES HIM AWAY. SLOVUTA THINKING HE IS UNOBSERVED PULLS A FACE AT HIM AND EXITS.

KYKACHOV: (MAKING NOTE): Cut Slovuta's wages next week for dumb insolence.

KYKACHOV PRESSES BUZZER. DETECTIVE INSPECTOR DYRSIN ENTERS.

KYKACHOV (OPENING A FILE): Inspector Dyrsin, I see you have an unblemished record which might indicate (a) that you have high principles (b) that you are too clever to be caught. Which is it?

DYRSIN: I have done my best to conduct myself in accordance with the traditions of the Force, sir.

KYKACHOV (DRILY): Highly commendable. But I see you have not contributed to the War Widows Fund.

DYRSIN: Knowing there has been no war for three hundred years, I thought the Fund was an overlooked anachronism.

KYKACHOV: Centuries of peace are no guarantee there will be no future wars - particularly now the Prime Minister has practically committed the country to aiding America.

DYRSIN: Without the backing of the electorate and his party.

KYKACHOV: Time will tell, Inspector. In the meantime I have an assignment for you - one of the utmost importance. You are to replace Drashovic as Princess Olga's bodyguard.

DYRSIN: An unexpected honour, but not a particularly welcome one. knowing the Princess's erratic character.

KYKACHOV: The position calls for a man of integrity and devotion to duty. Drashovic, who was ordered to report every movement she made, allowed himself to be influenced by the Princess and failed to do so. Several of our W.P.C's have assured me you are as impervious as a eunuch to feminine wiles, so will not fall into that trap.

DYRSIN: In short, I'm to be a talebearing informer as well as a bodyguard.

KYKACHOV: As requested, incidentally, by the very highest authority, you will report to me daily in writing.

DYRSIN: Spying on his wife to keep His Highness informed is not a job I relish, but I suppose I have no option.

KYKACHOV: No. And if you are wise you'll not make assumptions regarding matters that do not concern you.

DYRSIN: When do I start?

KYKACHOV: Tomorrow morning you're to be at the Palace at nine and live there until further notice. You will have a free hand to make whatever arrangements you think necessary to ensure Her Highness's safety. How you cope with her tendency to kick over the traces is left to you, but whenever she leaves the Palace you are to know where and why she is going, whom she is going to meet, and as far as possible not let her out of your sight..

DYRSIN: Supposing she objects?

KYKACHOV: You will use everything short of physical violence to persuade her to change her mind.. Carried out successfully, Inspector, this mission could mean promotion for both of us,

DYRSIN: I'm inclined to think it would be as well to bear in mind what Shakespeare said about relying on the favour of princes.

KYKACHOV: To hell with Shakespeare. It is up to us, as they say in that benighted country which, before Comrade Stalin proved otherwise claimed him as its own, to make hay while the iron's hot.

BLACKOUT, END OF SCENE ONE.

SCENE TWO.

AN ANTEROOM IN THE PALACE ADJOINING THE PRINCESS'S SUITE. THERE ARE TWO DOORS, ONE GIVING ACCESS TO THE SUITE, THE OTHER TO A CORRIDORE. INSPECTOR DYRSIN IS WAITING FOR THE PRINCESS TO APPEAR. SHE ENTERS FROM HER SUITE WEARING A DRESSING-GOWN WHICH IS OPEN SUFFICIENTLY TO REVEAL HER UNDERWEAR

PRINCESS: Good morning.

DYRSIN: Good morning, Your Highness

PRINCESS: Do sit down.

DYRSIN: Thank you. BOTH SIT.

PRINCESS: Are you a married man?

DYRSIN: No, Your Highness.

PRINCESS: Attached in any way?

DYRSIN: No female attachments, and if I may anticipate your next question, no I am not.

PRINCESS: A matter of not finding it necessary to keep a cow, etc. as cynics throughout the ages have said.

DYRSIN: Your Highness, I fail to see the necessity for this line of questioning, but to satisfy your curiosity I will tell you that for me the pleasures of the flesh are subordinate to those of the mind.

PRINCESS: So you would agree with Kipling that 'a woman is only a woman, but a good cigar is a smoke'?

DYRSIN: Being a non-smoker, I would substitute 'a good book is a read'.

PRINCESS: I begin to get the impression, Inspector, that you are what the Americans call 'a stuffed shirt'.

DYRSIN: Your Highness shares the prerogative of the commonalty of this country of being able freely to express her opinion, although god manners might restrain some from expressing it so frankly

FOR A SECOND THE PRINCESS'S FACE REGISTERS ANGER WHICH SHE REPRESSES.

PRINCESS: I deserved that, Inspector , and apologise for impulsive rudeness.

DYRSIN: Your Highness is most gracious. I assure you I have been called worse things.

PRINCESS: No doubt you wish to discuss what further measures can be taken to ensure my safety .

DYRSIN: my predecessor having had bullet proof glass put in all your windows, my only suggestion at present is that a time lock be fitted to your door.

PRINCESS To imprison me for the night.

DYRSIN: To safeguard you against intruders.

PRINCESS: But what happens in an emergency - a fire or sudden illness?

DYRSIN: You ring an alarm, and I smash the door. To my suite across the corridor, I have already brought an axe.

PRINCESS: I assume you have to report my movements to your superiors? I know Inspector Drashovic was supposed to, and apparently paid the penalty for failing to include everything - at my request, I might add.

DYRSIN: It being my duty, albeit an unpleasant one, I shall be more thorough than Drashovic. On the other hand, if Your Highness will be open with me, I shall be prepared to use my discretion and not tell more than I think necessary.

PRINCESS: Am I to understand you are on my side?

DYRSIN: I am here to protect you. Regardless of what my superiors think, I consider your private life to be none of their business. Therefore, unless I find that you are consorting with terrorists, what of your activities I pass on each day will do nothing to further the schemes of anyone against you.

PRINCESS (PLAYFULLY) Be careful, Inspector, or you may find yourself under my spell.

DYRSIN: When I do, it will be time for me to resign. I'm sorry if that is unchivalrous.

PRINCESS: Do you not find me in the least attractive?

DYRSIN: Beauty such as yours must, for any normal man, have some magnetism.

PRINCESS: So even you think I am beautiful.

DYRSIN: The whole world acclaims it.

PRINCESS: Then tell me why my husband prefers the Countess Dalbrizzi

DYRSIN: Not being in His Highness's confidence, I am unable to express an opinion.

PRINCESS (DRILY): How very diplomatic!

DYRSIN: It has been rumoured that Edward the Eighth of England abandoned more beautiful lovers because Mrs.Simpson provided something his mother failed to give him.

PRINCESS: My husband despises me for being immature.

DYRSIN: Then surely the remedy rests with you.

PRINCESS (SHARPLY): So you agree with him?

DYRSIN: Your Highness, it was you not I that mentioned immaturity.

PRINCESS: But you damn' well think as he does!

DYRSIN: Before more words are spoken we both may on reflection regret, I suggest we review today's schedule.

PRINCESS: At ten I have to do my celebrated Princess Diana act and visit a new wing at the hospital, which means cutting short my daily work out at the gymnasium. A frightful bore, but awfully good for my image. After that I have to open the Seamen's Mission building.

DYRSIN: There are no seamen in this country.

PRINCESS: The Government in its wisdom foresees the time when, due to flooding, there will be, and already have placed a contract with the Home Secretary's brother-in-law for two cruisers.

DYRSIN: A navy in mountainous terrain two hundred and fifty miles from the sea? How are they going to reach the water?

PRINCESS: The Prime Minister's son-in-law runs a haulage firm.

DYRSIN: And your next engagement?

PRINCESS: At one my husband and I are to have lunch with Their Majesties.

DYRSIN: This afternoon?

PRINCESS: Officially I'm to be at the Royal Opera House the whole afternoon to see a rehearsal of a new ballet choreographed to celebrate the treaty recently signed with the United States in which we agree to support them in their war against tyranny.

DYRSIN: With what? Three renovated Spitfires, six Sherman war surplus tanks and the Czecrekovian Boy Scouts?

PRINCESS:: Not enjoying the confidence of the Minister of Defence, I am unable to express an opinion on the subject.

DYRSIN: *Touché*

PRINCESS: I have, however, arranged for my secretary to deputise for me while I relax in the forest with Squadron Leader Mikail Zhaborev. He has a hunting lodge there and wants to show me his lepidotera collection.

DYRSIN: Does he know that under Clause 642, Sub-Section 81 of the law abolishing the slaughter of rodents, the killing of moths and butterflies is a punishable offence

PRINCESS: How absurd.

DYRSIN: The Statutes Book is overflowing with crack-brained laws - many copied from the English to please a few cranks regardless of the general effect. Parents not permitted to chastise their own children, for instance. Imbecilic. But to return to your changed plan I shall, of course, have to inspect the lodge to see if there are any booby-traps. This I can do while you are at lunch. Then, after escorting you to the lodge, while Your Highness absorbs the wonders of nature, in the vicinity I shall study the local flora and fauna, and forget the Squadron Leader's existence.

PRINCESS: Inspector Dyrsin, I have a feeling you and I are going to get on extremely well

BLACKOUT, END OF SCENE TWO.

SCENE THREE.

A ROOM SIMILAR TO THE ANTEROOM BUT WITH TWO COMFORTABLE CHAIRS AND A BOOK CASE. DYRSIN WITH HIS JACKET OFF IS READING. HE RISES TO ANSWER A KNOCK ON THE DOOR, AND OPENS IT TO ADMIT IGOR POTAPOV, THE PRINCE'S EQUERRY.

POTAPOV: I apologise for disturbing you at this hour, Inspector. I had to wait until the Princess was locked in her room.

DYRSIN: I imagine you have come on a matter of some importance, sir.

POTAPOV (PRODUCING A BOX OF CIGARS): His Highness requested me to give you these.

DYRSIN: I appreciate His Highness's kindness.

POTAPOV: Knowing you to be a man of discretion, he asked me to approach you on a matter of great delicacy.

DYRSIN: Regarding the Princess, I presume?

POTAPOV: No doubt you will have heard rumours concerning the strained relationship now existing between the Prince and his wife.

DYRSIN: I have a vague idea I did hear something of that kind, but paid little attention to it. As an officer of the law I deal with concrete facts, not rumours.

POTAPOV: Quite so. Quite so.

DYRSIN: Am I to understand His Highness wishes me to trace the source of these rumours?

POTAPOV: Not exactly, Inspector.

DYRSIN: In what way then am I to have the honour of serving the Prince?

POTAPOV: It is, as I said, a delicate matter. Actually he thought there might be certain information concerning the Princess's activities you feel should not be included in your official reports.

DYRSIN: My orders, sir, were to make them completely comprehensive.

POTAPOV: Let me put it this way. His Highness does not entirely trust the Superintendent, so he would like you to use your initiative and, omitting certain things, pass the information to him through me.

DYRSIN: The information he requires being..?

POTAPOV: Come, Inspector, you are a man of the world. Surely it is not necessary for me to be more specific.

DYRSIN: You must realise, sir, that should my superior suspect me of withholding information, my position in the force would be in jeopardy.

POTAPOV (FEELING FOR HIS WALLET): You will not find His Highness unappreciative. In fact he instructed me to give you...

DYRSIN (WITH A RESTRAINING GESTURE): With due respect, sir, not until the Prince is satisfied with the information I supply.

POTAPOV (RISING TO LEAVE): Where in the whole of Czecrekovia would I find such integrity? HE SHAKES DYRSIN'S HAND AND EXITS.

DYRSIN: Not in yourself, you wily devil. His Highness needs my help. Like hell he does! HE SETTLES DOWN TO READ. ANOTHER KNOCK TAKES HIM TO THE DOOR TO ADMIT THE COUNTESS CORA DALBRIZZI. SHE IS WEARING AN OPERA CLOAK.

DYRSIN (PUTTING ON HIS JACKET) ; This is an unexpected honour, Countess.

COUNTESS (SITTING WITHOUT INVITATION): I hope you will forgive me for coming during your off duty hours; but I have come to warn you, Inspector.

DYRSIN: Really? Against what, or should I say whom?

COUNTESS: The woman you are here to protect.

DYRSIN: You astonish me, Countess. Why should a warning be necessary?

COUNTESS: Because, Inspector, she will involve you in intrigue against His Highness, which ultimately will lead to your downfall.

DYRSIN: A very serious accusation. Have you any proof?

COUNTEE: None at present. That, the Prince expects you to supply. Take my word for it, beneath her captivating personality lies a very treacherous woman.

DYRSIN: A quality, madam, not lacking in your character.

COUNTESS (FURIOUSLY): How dare you! The Prince shall hear of this!

DYRSIN: Not from you; or, I'm sure he will be interested to learn the Countess Dalbrizzi was at one time a strip tease performer, born Vera Dobson in the East End of London. Father unknown.

COUNTESS (LOSING HER REFINED ACCENT) How the bloody hell did you discover that?

DYRSIN: From a tip given to me unofficially by a frier at Scotland Yard who had watched you rise into the aristocracy via three, or was it four marriages - one being to a French marquis who had been inside for fraud, and lastly to a count who is a dipsomaniac who at present is in a Swiss sanatorium.

COUNTESS: Why unofficial?

DYRSIN: Because he knows corruption in the police force over here is even greater than it is in his country.

COUNTESS: So what are you going to do about it?

DYRSIN: Nothing.

COUNTESS: Nothing?

DYRSIN: If Prince Ferdinand has no more sense than to associate with someone before having their credentials thoroughly checked, that is his concern. My brief does not include preventing gold diggers from getting their claws in him.

COUNTESS (WITH A RETURN TO HER HIGH HORSE): Your rudeness is intolerable, Inspector!

DYRSIN: You should hear me when I'm really trying. It would make your dyed hair curl..

CURTAIN, END OF ACT ONE.

ACT TWO.

SCENE ONE.

THE SAME ROOM THREE MONTHS LATER. IT IS NEARLY MIDNIGHT. DYRSIN IS POURING A NIGHTCAP PRIOR TO GOING TO BED, HE IS IN HIS DRESSING-GOWN OVER PYJAMAS> HE EXITS TO BEDROOM. THE DOOR BURSTS OPEN AND THE PRINCESS'S LADY-IN-WAITING, CONTESSA PETACCI, ENTERS HURRIEDLY.

CONTESSA (IN GREAT AGITATION): Inspector! Inspector!

DYRSIN (ENTERING FROM BEDROOM TOOTHBRUSH IN HAND AND TOWEL OVER HIS SHOULDER): Contessa Petacci. What has happened?

CONTESSA: It's the Princess. She's gone out. I thought you should know.

DYRSIN: Out? But that is not possible. She's locked in her bedroom until six a.m.

CONTESSA: I saw her from my window. I suppose I should have told you when you came. There's a secret way out from her room which leads to the rear courtyard

DYRSIN: Did Drashovic know of it?

CONTESSA: I'm almost certain he did.

DYRSIN (PUNCHING HIS LEFT PALM): I should've checked - not taken his word.

CONTESSA: I doubt if you would have found it. Others have searched in vain.

DYRSIN: Has she taken her car?

CONTESSA: Yes.

DYRSIN: Do you know where she might have gone?

CONTESSA: Probably to a disco. She was dressed very informally.

DYRSIN: Would any of the night staff have seen her leave?

CONTESSA: Knowing the way many of them occupy their time with what I believe is known as the 'rough trade', smoking cannabis, or watching pornographic films, I would say it is most unlikely.

DYRSIN: Well, there's nothing to be done about it - only hope she'll not be recognised. If she is, the consequences could be serious - another lever for the people who wish to overthrow the Monarchy. And, of course, disastrous for me.

CONTESSA: As bad as that?

DYRSIN: Definitely. It was the irresponsible behaviour of its younger members that brought about the fall of the House of Windsor. Apparently they failed to realise that royalty has to pay a price for all its privileges. A certain mystique has to be maintained. The moment they are born, they cease to be ordinary human beings, and must be trained to be worthy of their exalted status.

CONTESSA: You postulate an ideal, Inspector.

DYRSIN: In this day and age, Contessa, if kings and queens are not entirely to disappear, that is the picture they must present to their subjects.

BLACKOUT TO INDICATE PASSAGE OF TIME

THE SAME ROOM. IT IS UNOCCUPIED. IT IS ILLUMINATED ONLY BY MOONLIGHT. THE PRINCESS APPEARS OUTSIDE THE WINDOW WHICH SHE TAPS REPEATEDLY UNTIL DYRSIN APPEARS IN HIS DRESSING-GOWN. HE SWITCHES ON THE LIGHT, SEES THE PRINCESS, AND WAVES HER AWAY. WHEN SHE REMAINS, HE ADMITS HER.

DYRSIN: What the devil are you doing here?

PRINCESS: (OBVIOUSLY UPSET): I'm in trouble, inspector. You must help me.

DYRSIN: Your Highness. I am off duty and I'm not interested. As far as I'm concerned, you are locked in your rooms. Go back there the way you came out and allow me to sleep.

For three months I have abetted your assignations with various men, and you show your gratitude by engaging in this escapade which, if it becomes public, might well ruin my career.

PRINCESS: That is one of my problems. The door will not open from the outside as it has in the past. Presumably my husband has had the mechanism altered.

DYRSIN: Then spend the night with the Contessa. She knows you have been out.

PRINCESS: If that were all, I'd not be here.

DYRSIN: You've wrecked the car?

PRINCESS: I think I've killed a young man.

DYRSIN: With the car?

PRINCESS: With a bottle.

DYRSIN (OPENING THE DOOR): I don't want to know. I've not seen you since you retired. Go to the Contessa's room and say nothing.

PRINCESS: You don't understand, I was recognised.

DYRSIN (MAKING AN EXASPERATED GESTURE AND INDICATING SHE SIT) Tell me exactly what happened as succinctly as possible.

PRINCESS: I went to a disco, confident that in this wig I'd not be recognised. I'd done it twice before. This time the son of one of our footmen thought he recognised me, and was about to broadcast it, so I hit him with an empty bottle and escaped before anyone realised what had happened. I should have realised my watch and perfume would make me conspicuous among people who could not afford either:

DYRSIN: Did anyone see the car?

PRINCESS: Not as far as I know. I parked it quite a distance from the hall.

DYRSIN: Thank God for that.

PRINCESS (DESPONDENTLY): What am I to do, Inspector? What am I to do?

DYRSIN: You could pray the man you struck is not dead, which is quite likely. Some parts of the skull can take really heavy blows and not be seriously damaged. Using an empty bottle, you may have knocked him out. That being the case, I may be able to rectify the damage you have done. If not, this will help to undermine the Monarchy.

PRINCESS: Oh no!

DYRSIN: For years it has been living on borrowed time.

PRINCESS: What do you intend to do?

DYRSIN: Initially I must ascertain if your victim still lives. If he does, tomorrow I shall contact a Woman who owes me a favour - an actress who has been including you in her stage impersonations. Dressed as you are now, she will frequent the disco taking care to let the habitués know who she is. She will, of course, need to borrow your watch, wig, and perfume.

PRINCESS: And the footman's son..?

DYRSIN: I do not anticipate any trouble from him. Even if convinced you were there, by this time he will have realised that for his father's sake he had better keep it to himself

PRINCESS: What happens if he is dead?

DYRSIN: I shall be faced with an ethical dilemma, to which at present Do I, for the sake of keeping Their Majesties on the Throne, become an accomplice to manslaughter, or do I reveal what I know and let the Law take its course?

PRINCESS: Does not my fate influence you at all?

DYRSIN: What I feel for you at the present moment, Your Highness, were better left unsaid.

THE PRINCESS BURIES HER FACE IN HER HANDS.

BLACKOUT. END OF SCENE ONE.

SCENE TWO.

THE ANTEROOM LATER THE SAME DAY.

THE PRINCESS PACES RESTLESSLY. DYRSIN ENTERS/

PRINCESS: Well, Inspector?

DYRSIN: Your Highness may relax. Your victim, apart from a headache, is alive and well. His friends thought he was drunk, and he had the sense by that time not to disillusion them.

PRINCESS: Thank God.

DYRSIN: Elspeth, the impersonator, is quite willing to do as I suggested,

PRINCESS: She will, of course, want to be paid?

DYRSIN: No fee was mentioned, but I suggest you allow her to keep the watch. An excessive price for her services, but warranted by the circumstances.

PRINCESS: She'll not talk?

DYRSIN: If she does I'll have her banned from every theatre in the country or deported. But I don't think that will be necessary. She possesses what the Americans call 'class', which is more than can be said for the performers who, since skiffle found its way across the Atlantic, have dominated and debased the light entertainment world.

PRINCESS: I recall you called John Lennon the High Priest of Humbug, and said the man who shot him did the world a service. – an opinion with which I do not agree. I shall not, however, start an argument; in fact I feel so grateful for what you have done for me I feel an urge to kiss you.

DYRSIN: That, Your Highness, would necessitate my requesting my superior to relieve me of this assignment and send a W.P.C. instead.

PRINCESS: On what grounds?

DYRSIN: Sexual harassment.

PRINCESS (LAUGHING): Inspector, you really are too good for this world.

DYRSIN: The preservation of my professional persona demands it.

PRINCESS: Could you not just for a moment let me see Ivan Dyrsin the man?

DYRSIN: The revelation would serve no purpose.

PRINCESS (SEDUCTIVELY): I could forget I am a princess'

DYRSIN: Regrettably Your Highness has one that too often already.

PRINCESS: There are times, Inspector Dyrsin when I would like to hit your head with a bottle – a full one.

DYRSIN: When you do, Princess, I hope it will be a vintage worthy of the occasion. HE CONSULTS HIS WATCH. Is it not time we set out for the polo ground?

PRINCESS: I suppose we'd better. No doubt the Countess Dalbrizzi will be there watching my husband display his equestrian skill and posing for the press photographers.

DYRSIN: Not this time. The Countess left early this morning.

PRINCESS: Do you know why?

DYRSIN: Wifely concern for her sick husband no doubt.

PRINCESS (WITH A MIRTHLESS LAUGH): Do you also believe in fairies?

BLACKOUT. END OF SCENE TWO.

SCENE THREE.

KYKACHOV'S OFFICE. HE AND DYRSIN ARE PRESENT, THE LATTER'S LEFT ARM IS IN A SLING.

KYKACHOV: I called for this interview on account of all the current rumours.

DYRSIN: Rumours?

KYKACHOV: That Princess Olga may have attended a disco and been involved in a brawl

DYRSIN: Utterly impossible. My charge is locked in her suite from the time she retires – usually at eleven- until the following morning.

KYKACHOV: Are you sure there is no concealed passage by means of which she could come and go without your knowing?

DYRSIN: Superintendent, I would staked my reputation that it would be impossible for her to go out and come back by any means other than the door opposite mine

KYKACHOV: So these rumours are, as they say in that 'septic isle set in a something sea' are a lot of old cobblestones.

DYRSIN: As usual, your flair for *le bon mot* is most appropriate.

KYKACHOV (GIVING HIM A SUSPICIOUS LOOK): Occasionally, Inspector you remind me of Rumpole

DYRSIN: Well, both of us are in our different ways in the same business. Which reminds me that someone in the Force is still running a protection racket

KYKACHOV (HASTILY): Leave it to me, Dyrsin, I personally will look into it. Oh, by the way, I must congratulate you on saving the Princess's life.

DYRSIN: Thank you.

KYKACHOV: Who else in the Force, apart from me, would have thrown himself in front of her as a shot was about to be fired?

DYRSIN: Actually I can claim little credit for it. The instant I saw the glint of sunshine on metal my movement was reflex action.

KYKACHOV: A splendid effort nevertheless..

DYRSIN: A pity the crowd acted before our men could prevent his being killed . Alive we might have discovered to which organisation he belonged..

KYKACHOV: Everything possible is being done to find out.

DYRSIN: A pity we're short of men.

KYKACHOV: I suppose you've heard His Majesty is going to award you the Order of the Green Scorpion, First Class?

DYRSIN (SHRUGGING): Yes, I heard.

KYKACHOV: You don't sound very appreciative.

DYRSIN: I'm not actually. Between ourselves, in my opinion awards lost their value when low class nonentities began to receive them – obviously a vote catching ploy.

KYKACHOV: You'll not refuse it?

DYRSIN: N. It will be a memento of the hours I spent with the most beautiful, most exciting and most capricious woman in Czecrekovnia .

KYKACHOV: 'Lady', Inspector, 'lady'.

DYRSIN: About that I have distinct reservations.

BLACKOUT. END OF SCENE THREE

SCENE FOUR.

DYRSIN'S ROOM. HE AND POTAPOV ARE PRESENT.

POTAPOV: His Highness thought you might be able to account for the sudden departure of Countess Dalbrizzi.

DYRSIN: Did she not receive news of her husband?

POTAPOV: No message came from that quarter or any other.

DYRSIN: Then I've no idea.

POTAPOV: We know she came to see you, and thought there might be a connection.

DYRSIN: I fail to see what. Actually she was concerned regarding His Highness's safety and wanted my opinion of the existing measures taken to protect His highness.

I assured her of their adequacy.

POTAPOV: had you met her in the past?

DYRSIN: I never even saw until she came to this country.

POTAPOV: Quite frankly and strictly *entre nous*, I am not sorry she has gone.

DYRSIN: Really?

POTAPOV: I always thought her not quite de rigueur. You may have noticed it?

DYRSIN: In a conversation, sir, that lasted under ten minutes, I scarcely had time to observe any finer points. She seemed quite charming.

POTAPOV: By the way, we've not had a report from you since last I spoke to you.

DYRSIN: For the simple reason that nothing untoward has taken place.

POTAPOV: No nocturnal excursions?

DYRSIN: Not unless Her Highness has practised astral projection. How could there be with a time lock on her door?

The Prince is relying on you to ensure she does not find a way.. You know of what resourceful females are capable.

DYRSIN: Only too well. Machiavelli was not in the same league.

BLACKOUT END OF SCENE FOUR

SCENE FIVE

THE ANTEROOM. RITSON ENTERS FROM PRINCESS OLGA'S SUITE. HE CARRIES A SMALL SILVER TRAY AND LOOKS PLEASED. WHEN CROSSING TO EXIT HE DROPS FROM HIS POCKET A BOOK WHICH LIES UNNOTICED. DYRSIN ENTERS, SEES THE BOOK AND PICKS IT UP THE PRINCESS ENTERS.

PRINCESS (SNATCHING BOOK): Where did you get this?

DYRSIN: It was lying on the carpet.

PRINCESS: It is mine.

DYRSIN: It thought it unlikely an Englishman would own Alexis Piron's *Ode to Priapus* in the original French, particularly these days when one fifth of the population of his country are illiterate.

PRINCESS: Ritson worked in Paris for three years.

DYRSIN: Does that excuse an interest in soft pornography?

PRINCESS: You know the book?

DYRSIN: I know of it, and believe the author in later life regretted having written it, Not the sort of thing to lend a young man.

PRINCESS: I did not say I'd lent it to him.

DYRSIN: I deduced it from his expression when he left here.

PRINCESS: A veritable Sherlock Holmes, are you not?

DYRSIN: An up-to-date one – minus pipe, hypodermic syringe, and deerstalker hat.

PRINCESS: But not the self-esteem.

DYRSIN: Justifiable, Your Highness. When one is the master of one's trade.

PRINCESS: Time to change the subject, I think. How is your arm, Inspector?

DYRSIN: Healing, your Highness, but still painful.

PRINCESS: Are you satisfied with the treatment? We could get a specialist for you.

DYRSIN: Thank you, but I am sure he could do no more than is being done to heal a flesh wound.

PRINCESS: I shudder when I think the bullet was intended for me. One knows the possibility of being assassinated always exists, but one never seriously anticipates its happening.

DYRSIN: The Superintendent thinks it was an isolated incident, but intends to increase vigilance. They have learnt was a released psychopath.

PRINCESS: Is that your opinion?

DYRSIN: Unless further evidence is found, I have to agree. Incidentally, I feel it my duty to warn you not to become too familiar with your English new butler, Rickson.

PRINCESS: I hardly think my relationship with the servants comes within the parameter of your duty, Inspector.

DYRSIN: Strictly speaking, it does not, But undue familiarity these days may be misinterpreted by a man of twenty-one.

PRINCESS: Have you anything against him?

DYRSIN: Nothing. His record is excellent. It is, however, a fact of life that people now lack the respect for royalty which was instilled when I was young. How many royal servants cherish the presents they are given? Today they idolised the wrong people – footballers, pop groups – and the schools no longer teach loyalty to the Crown.

PRINCESS: So?

DYRSIN: Kindness on your part might give him ideas above his station, especially as in the near future he will undoubtedly be conscripted into one of the armed forces. The inevitability of which might well affect his attitude to his present job.

PRINCESS: Do you really think we shall be involved in a war?

DYRSIN: Obviously the Government does, judging by the number of factories now preparing to adapt themselves to make armaments.

PRINCESS: I thought the party in power had a reputation for its pacifism?

DYRSIN: Its members are split on the issue. Unfortunately that jackass we have for a Prime Minister evidently aspires to be a war lord. By backing the United States we automatically become a target for their enemies, which may leave us only two options - either join a pre-emptive strike or wait for something horrific to land from the air. At present we do not know of what they are capable of sending.

PRINCESS: Surely the United Nations inspectors concluded no atomic or biological weapons had been stockpiled?

DYRSIN: sadly those gentlemen are no match for a dictator with whom Stalin and Hitler were novices.

PRINCESS: I suppose you think we should have remained neutral and concentrated on eliminating terrorists.

DYRSIN: Definitely, for we are not equipped to deal with both

PRINCESS (SIGHING): We live in a topsy turvy world, Inspector.

DYRSIN: According to the latest scientific reports it may not last beyond the end of this century.

PRINCESS: A sobering thought.

DYRSIN: With the Western World in its present state, already a sink of iniquity and getting worse every day, perhaps it is time to wipe the slate clean. With the Four

Horsemen emerging from the wings, the possibility of that occurring is by no means a remote one.

PRINCESS: Do I detect a hint of Mid West bible thumping?

DYRSIN: At least the threat of hell fire kept many would be sinners on the straight and narrow path.

PRINCESS: From which I have to confess I again have deviated – with dire consequences this time.

DYRSIN: Is this another S.O.S., your Highness?

PRINCESS: I doubt if you can help, I am, as St.Mark delicately put it, with child.

DYRSIN: The Squadron Leader's?

PRINCESS (AFTER HESITATING): The butler, Kevin's.

DYRSIN (MAKING AN EXASPERATED GESTURE AND PATENTLY TRYING TO CONTROL HIS ANGER< WALKS TO THE WINDOW AND STANDS WITH HIS BACK TO THE PRINCESS

PRINCESS: Well..?

DYRSIN: What can one say in the face of such crass irresponsibility?

PRINCESS: I need help, not well deserved reproaches.

DYRSIN: I am not an obstetrician.

PRINCESS: Please, for the sake of the monarchy if not for me!

DYRSIN (AFTER A MOMENT'S THOUGHT): A discreet abortion would seem to be the obvious solution, I know a nursing home where your incognito would be preserved,

PRINCESS: Not only against my religion , but my principles also.

DYRSIN: This is hardly the time for either to be considered, However, the alternative would be for your husband to believe the child is his.

PRINCESS: When her never enters my bed?

DYRSIN: That obstacle must be overcome. He must, willy nilly be compelled to spend the night with you.

PRINCESS: I fail to see how.

DYRSIN: Firstly, he must be brought to your room at night by a carefully worded message from you. I understand it is customary for him to be far from sober by nine p.m., so it should not be difficult for you to entice him to take a glass of wine into which you will have put something I shall give you. When he loses consciousness, I will come and help you to undress him and get him into your bed, In the morning it will be up to you to convince him intercourse took place, even if it means a reconciliation.

PRINCESS: It sounds easy, provided I can think of a suitable message, which will be rather difficult seeing that at present we are not speaking.

DYRSIN: That I must leave to you.

PRINCESS: You will be taking a big risk for me, Inspector. Why?

DYRSIN: Because I wish to obviate another royal scandal, and mainly, I suppose, where a beautiful woman is concerned, I like all men am a damn' fool.

PRINCESS (TRIUMPHANTLY): At last! The Achilles heel! I had begun to think I'd never find it!

DYRSIN, REALISING HE HAS BEEN TRICKED, GIVES HER AN ANGRY GLANCE AND EXITS WITHOUT A WORD. ALONE< THE PRINCESS LAUGHS MOCKINGLY.

BLACKOUT END OF SCENE FIVE

SCENE SIX.

KYKACHOV'S OFFICE, HE HAS A BLACK EYE AND A PLASTER ON HIS FOREHEAD. ERIKA ENTERS AND GASPS WHEN SHE SEES HIS FACE,

ERIKA: You've got a black eye, my love.

KYKACHOV: I know I have. I also have stitches under this. HE TOUCHES THE PLASTER,

ERIKA: Your wife?

KYKACHOV (NODDING): Her mother saw me leaving your flat the night before last and duly reported it,

ERIKA: I'd have expected you at least to be able to defend yourself. You have bragged of your skill at Kung Fu.

KYKACHOV: She took me by surprise. The moment I entered the house, without saying a word, she kned me below the belt Then, before I could straighten up she gave me what is known as 'the old one two'. HE ILLUSTRATES BY PUNCHING THE AIR.

ERIKA: And what happened to her?

KYKACHOV (DARKLY): Nothing yet, but I'm working on it.

ERIKA (NOT SERIOUSLY): I could get you a knee-capping job done at a reasonable price.

KYKACHOV: Appropriate – with the punishment fitting the crime, as Gilbert and Hammerstein put it. But no, something more subtle is what I have in mind.

ERIKA: I'll leave it to you, mastermind.

KYKACHOV: For the foreseeable future you'll have other things to occupy your mind.

ERIKA: Such as?

KYKACHOV: Acting as Princess Olga's bodyguard, You'll be taking over from Dyrsin who has tendered his resignation.

ERIKA: Why me?

KYKACHOV: Because Dyrsin particularly recommended you.

ERIKA: I was under the impression he didn't like me.

KYKACHOV: I don't think he does. What he actually said was that only anyone as crafty, unprincipled, and unscrupulous as you would be a match for Her Royal Highness.

ERIKA (SARCASTICALLY): I wonder if she is as complimentary about him?

KYKACHOV: In a letter to the Commissioner she requested him to do his utmost to persuade Dyrsin to cancel his resignation.

ERIKA: Ha!

KYKACHOV: What does that mean?

ERIKA: I means, my darling, hanky panky and what I've always expected. Ex-Inspector Dyrsin is a dark horse.

BLACKOUT END OF SCENE SIX.

SCENE SEVEN.

THE ANTEROOM. THE PRINCESS AND THE COMTESSA ARE PRESENT.

PRINCESS: What is your opinion of W.P.C.Corsanski?

COMTESSA: She seems very efficient

PRINCESS: Too damned efficient, She has reported to Kykachov and through him to my husband every move I've made since she took over from Dyrsin.

COMTESSA: Am I to infer she is not so understanding as the Inspector?

PRINCESS: Understanding! I might as well be in a convent!

COMTESSA: Such a pity the Inspector's wound forced him to retire.

PRINCESS: Wound. That was a cover up. Actually I drove him to it.

COMTESSA: But I thought...

PRINCESS: His expressed indifference to me as a woman piqued me to such an extent that I was foolish enough to trick him with a lie into admitting he was not.

COMTESSA: I'd not have thought, Your highness, he would be so sensitive.

PRINCESS: Men like Dyrsin have hidden depths. No woman can hope to understand them.

COMTESSA: Have you any plans for having Corsanski removed?

PRINCESS: On what grounds, and to what purpose? His place would be taken by another blabbing bitch.

COMTESSA: A little discreet largesse perhaps..?

PRINCESS: I had thought of that, but decided I dare not do it. It might be the sort of move the Prince is waiting for me to make, or give that unspeakable Kykachove an opportunity for blackmail. No, Comtessa, I have made my bed, and must lie on it regardless of discomfort. PAUSE. If only my bedroom window were lower...EXULTINGLY. I have it! Rapunzel!

COMTESSA: A name with which I am not acquainted, Your Highness.

PRINCESS: Did no one ever read to you the fairy story of the princess imprisoned in a tower, who let down her hair to enable her rescuer to climb up? All I need is a rope ladder which you will get for me.

COMTESSA: Would that not be far too dangerous? A fall from that height could be fatal.

PRINCESS: It's not for me to descend, but for the Squadron leader to come up. SHE LAUGHS. Did not one of the English Cavalier Poets say: 'Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage'?

BLACKOUT END OF SCENE SEVEN.

SCENE EIGHT.

THE OFFICE OF ZALCZAK, PROPRIETOR OF THE SUNDAY HERALD NEWSPAPER. ZALCZAK IS SEATED AT HIS DESK. DYRSIN IS SEATED ON THE OTHER SIDE.

ZALCZAK: It is rumoured that your injured arm is not the only reason for your resignation from the Police.

DYRSIN: No comment.

ZALCZAK: But you are prepared to sell your story dealing with your time as Princess Olga's bodyguard?

DYRSIN: At the right price.

ZALCZAK: Shall we say half a million?

DYRSIN: I have had better offers from the Messenger and Weekly Post

ZALCZAK: 600,000?

DYRSIN: Not enough.

ZALCZAK: 800,000?

DYRSIN: Nine.

ZALCZAK: You drive a hard bargain, Dyrsin

DYRSIN: I'm a hard man, Zalczak, and what is more, Achilles heels are expensive items.

FINAL CURTAIN.

