

# MASTERS OF The Parachute Mail

by PETER BENEDICT

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## CHAPTER IX (Continued) "YOU KNOW A PLACE?"

Peggy leaned forward upon her elbows on the table. She answered deliberately: "What do you think? Ever tried to get this sort of thing through the Customs? How I got away with the twenty-odd I had on me is more than I know; and even for those I had some awful moments. No, after these six are gone, I'm finished, unless I can contact some sort of supply here in London. Don't tell me there must be one. Don't I know it? But how to get it, when I'm still practically a stranger here, is a bit of a problem."

"Can't your boy-friend help you out?" asked Corrie, with a sly smile.

Peggy laughed. "He doesn't know I indulge. I hadn't the faintest notion how it would be received here, so I've strangled it down as much as I could. No, somehow I don't think Peter—What a lovely name it was for indulging an American accent of synthetic creation! Turn the T almost into a D, and there you were with that fascinating slurred R at the end. Made for the job of sounding engagingly U.S. 'I don't think he would feel what you might call sympathetic to the falling. He has no vices, poor lamb. No real full-blooded ones, anyhow. He wouldn't understand about poor Mary Jane."

She patted her handbag affectionately. "It's hopeless, isn't it? Mary Jane is my best friend, she makes life worth living, she puts the cockcrow in the dawn, and the dazzle in the evening; and I've practically lost her. How am I going to live without my crazyweed? It's the only decent way of taking the stuff, too. The sniff is a filthy habit; and how can a girl go about with an arm mottled with syringe pricks. No, the smoke's the only way, and I'm down to my last six. Gosh, it makes me wish I'd stayed in the States. I knew where to get it on demand there."

"Expensive habit, isn't it?" said Corrie, watching her speculatively still, with eyes narrowed in her face.

"Expensive? I wonder! Wait until you've had it for three years, and missed your whiff for three weeks or so, and see if you think it a high price when someone says: 'Here you are—a tenner a time.' I've gone slowly, as you can guess. I've held down my supply to the minimum I can take, but I don't see how I'm to live without it. If only I knew how to set about finding a supply in London! Or how to find someone who could tell me the rest." She shrugged her shoulders.

"Ah, well, what's the use? It isn't your worry, and I'm sorry you found out about it. Just forget it. Let's go and look at miniatures, shall we?"

She half-rose from her chair. Corrie did not stir. Instead she said suddenly, and very softly: "Wait a moment! I think I might be able to help you. Sit down again—just for a moment."

"How—again—can you help me?" But Peggy sat down again, slowly, tolerantly, to hear what childish confidence might follow. Strangely she felt older than Corrie, so much more successful had been her strategy.

"I said I'd never indulged, and it's true. But I have lived in London all my life, and my acquaintance is somewhat wide. I don't go about with my eyes closed."

"You know a place —"

"Where you can get what you want—at a price. As a matter of fact, I have been there at least once, and it certainly looks innocent enough. It's a club called the Green Scorpion, in a cellar under a warehouse off Oxford Street."

"How do I get to it? Does one have to be an initiate, or something?"

"No one who wasn't an initiate or sent by one would even know it existed. You take the narrow passage past Sabel's perfume shop, any time after eleven at night until round about three in the morning, and you'll find a door on your right, in the warehouse wall, with a faint light above it. The green scorpion is on the faint light; you'd never notice it in daylight. The club's underneath: the usual dance and cabaret facilities—maybe a little more respectable looking even than usual. But when you go—, if you go —"

**Vital Password**

"You'll see a table to your left as you go in, in an alcove by itself, probably with a curtain of beads shutting it off from the room. That's how it was when my friend took me on our adventure in search of cocaine. The table

will be laid for two—at least, I think that's usual. Anyhow, you go to it, and sit down there. One of the waiters will promptly come and tell you that the table is engaged. People who aren't in the know, of course, don't give the right answer to that. I suppose the club has to protect itself as well as it can. Anyhow, those who do give the right answer get what they want. Any sort of illicit supply they care to ask for, I believe, though I've never tested it."

"And what is the right answer?"

"Mere Colibri. It doesn't matter how you give it—just mention the phrase and the world—the marijuana world—is yours."

"You've saved my life," said Peggy, with an enthusiasm carefully subdued, so that the excitement of her voice might not carry to any other inhabitant of the balcony. "I can't tell you—and you can't guess until you've experienced it—what it is to be without the stuff. I'll go. Of course I will! I think I can remember it all. Oxford Street, Sabel's shop, the narrow passage, the warehouse door; then inside, the lonely table on the left, and Mere Colibri. Right?"

"Admirable! I wonder if I should have told you?" Corrie pondered virtuously, her chin upon her hand, breathing slow wreaths of blue smoke, sweet-scented and tenuous. "Well, it's hardly my piddin to be nurse to you, is it? And the dive is there to be used, after all. Naturally, they expect all transactions to be entirely confidential; but how could you let them be anything else? The whole thing is a criminal offence in this country."

"If you can trust anyone with a secret," said Peggy drily, "it should be the person whose life depends on it being kept. Heavens, I need the place. I carry the stuff now. Why should I do anything to smash the only source of supply I know? I can shut my mouth as tight as anyone." They rose together, contented both with a job of work well done. "Thanks again! It shall be counted unto you for virtue. Hadn't we better go and look at miniatures? If I haven't side-tracked your mind too utterly with my troubles?"

Apparently she had not. They looked at miniatures. They had achieved a cool intimacy which had its own separate interpretation for each of them. Corrie had, most obviously to Peggy's mind, more than a casual interest in possible trade for the Green Scorpion. Her face sharpened to an edge like an axe when the question of supply raised its head. There was money in it for her; and her "at a price" would be at a big price for Peggy, adapted to the supposed degree of her wealth. Her first hesitations had been designed purely as precautionary measures, but she was satisfied now. Why not, when she had seen and recognized genuine crazyweed?

And now all that Peggy wanted was to get rid of her, which she did at length with mutual expressions of gratitude and affection, and perhaps some genuine interest on Corrie's side, as well as on Peggy's, for the cynical little American had her charm. As soon as Corrie was out of the Malbro, Peggy swooped upon the telephone, and rang up Peter at his flat, where he had, as far as she could judge, been sitting with his hand upon the receiver for half an hour, for the first thing he said was: "At last! How did you make out?"

"Come over and hear. I've got plenty to say to you."

"What's the chief thing you have to say?" asked Peter.

"Eureka! I've found it!"

## CHAPTER X ATTACKING THE SCORPION

"I'm coming with you," said Peter firmly, when he was told of the Green Scorpion project.

"I'm sorry," said Peggy, and meant it, "but you can't."

"Why not? It's a public club, isn't it?"

"For initiates, yes. But the fact is—and I'm sorry I gave the lady to understand that I haven't betrayed my private vice to you. I think I conveyed the impression that I was sincerely fond of you—"

"And are you?" asked Peter, with the hint of his smile popping out at her, and back in a moment, before she could take exception to it.

"—and that I had no wish to soil your innocence, or at least your opinion

of mine. So you see, you'd be the last person I should take with me. I didn't think of the implications at the time. I was simply acting for all I knew."

"And you seem to have made a job of it," admitted Peter. "Well, then, if I can't come, I shall put a plain-clothes man in the place to-night, to keep an eye on you, and to make a note of what happens, just in case. And I myself will have a casual look round the other side of the block while you buy your filthy marijuana. I'm afraid you'll have to buy it now; there's nothing like being consistent."

"You can do something else, too," said Peggy meekly.

"What's that?"

"Pay for them. Because I can't, I expect they'll be the dickens of a price."

"The man's part," said Peter resignedly, and fumbled for his pocket-book. "There goes another item on 'Expenses' if all goes well."

The expedition offered, as far as Peggy could see, no danger, and certainly no need of a bodyguard; but it might be as well to have someone there who knew the underworld of which she was so abysmally ignorant, and could note down any suspicious frequenters of the Green Scorpion for future reference. For the rest, she felt completely independent as she strolled round the corner of Sabel's invisible curved glass window at half-past eleven that same night, and half-swallowed, Jonah-like, into the dark inside of a monster.

The edge of the blackness was sharp, like the edge of a knife; she walked into it, and was lost. Small in Sylvia's voluminous furs, beautifully got up and polished to a brittle beauty which went well with the hour, she felt herself to be sincerely Eleanor Vandeleur, an American woman of the world in search of crazyweed to keep her fires burning as brilliantly as ever... for at least a little time. Here there was a silence which was eerie, and only the small green shape in the lit glass above the clumsy warehouse door upon her right to break the monotony and suggestiveness of the darkness.

She was not sure whether one knocked, or not. She tried the door, and it gave and she walked in. Where Peter was now she had no idea; no doubt somewhere prowling round the rear premises of this club, and making notes for its destruction later on.

They had shared a taxi to an innocent rendezvous in Oxford Street, and in the brief darkness and contact inside they had been stricken suddenly silent, she could not conceive why. There had been things she had wanted to discuss with him; there had been cautionary speeches he had prepared for her; yet neither of them had said a word until they had parted, and then it had only been a hurried: "Be careful what you say!" and a quick: "Don't go far away. I shall want you to be fairly close, just... well, just in case."

And here she was, the warehouse door soundlessly and eerily closing itself behind her, a short passage before her, and a blank end which announced where the steps leading downward began. The light here was subdued but competent; and she memorized as she went everything about that brief passage.

There was one door in it, a small, flat, discreet door upon the right, coyly tucking itself into the wall as if to impose upon the curious the conviction that it led nowhere, that it was hardly a door at all. She passed it, and came to the head of the steps, and as she descended the first wave of music, still faint and elfin, came up to her from behind another door at the foot. This, too, swung at a touch, and she entered the Green Scorpion.

Peter had told her, in a particularly talkative moment, that her entrances were superb. She liked to think that this one, made for the first time alone, was no exception. But certainly there was nothing in the long, straggling room into which she came, to awe or alarm her in any way.

She stood just inside the doorway, Sylvia's furs gathered about her, the gauze veil of her Juliet cap swaying faintly before her face, and looked round with calm interest. A queer place! A place which seemed never to have made up its mind which style of decoration it would really affect. Corners of it hesitated between China and Japan, discreet table cut off from

table by grotesque screens and bead curtains which swung and swished upon their reeds as the waiters passed and repassed. Bits of it were pure Harlem, horrible in chromium and enamel, other bits, with blue and white check tablecloths and fat brown pottery, belonged to the pseudo-German bier-gartens of the cheaper and more affected restaurants.

When we were examining recruits for overseas service it frequently happened that a young chap would have a very rapid heart. Even after having him rest for a few minutes to get over his natural nervousness or anxiety, the heart would still be very rapid—90 to 100 beats per minute.

We would then make further tests because a rapid heart is one of the definite signs of goitre, and to send a gaitious patient overseas was not fair to the man nor the country. Therefore, we had him put his arms out in front in line with the shoulders with fingers extended. If the fingers trembled noticeably fine tremor—we felt that to be another sign of goitre. The usual eye signs were also investigated. He was asked questions as to shortness of breath, ability to sleep, whether or not there was less of weight and others. There was of course no time to make a metabolism test—which shows whether or not the thyroid gland is overactive.

However, it is now agreed that any one with an "anxiety state" of mind may likewise have a rapid heart rate, be very nervous, restless, tire easily, and, unless thoroughly relaxed at time of the test have an increased metabolism rate and be less able to withstand heat.

If goitre is the cause of the symptoms there will be found a mild physical nervousness, a tremor of the hands (not always present), a persistently rapid heart, an increased food intake (as opposed to lack of appetite in the anxiety state) and yet loss of weight; less ability to withstand heat; an increased rate of metabolism which has been checked carefully more than once.

In the anxiety state the above symptoms will not always be present unless of course the anxiety is always present and becomes chronic.

"If the cause of the anxiety is chronic, and he will complain of his body symptoms but not of his mind or mental symptoms. It may not occur to him that his mind, his anxiety, is causing the body symptoms; there are cases where deep anxiety—shock—has brought on true thyroid trouble, goitre."

You can thus understand why trying to make sure which ailment is present—goitre or the anxiety—may take considerable time.

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## Ordeal Is Over For Small Athenia Survivor



Still cheerful after a harrowing experience which tried to the limit the endurance of her elder companions, this little victim of a German torpedo is turned over to a Red Cross nurse by a member of the City of Flint's crew in Halifax. Crew members did all in their power to make more than 200 survivors comfortable in the freighter's crowded quarters.

table by grotesque screens and bead curtains which swung and swished upon their reeds as the waiters passed and repassed. Bits of it were pure Harlem, horrible in chromium and enamel, other bits, with blue and white check tablecloths and fat brown pottery, belonged to the pseudo-German bier-gartens of the cheaper and more affected restaurants.



## That Body of Hours

(by James W. Barton, M.D.)

### Anxiety State and Goitre Have Many Similar Symptoms

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## New Defense Reduce Danger from the German U-Boats

### Submarines Developed Little in Past Twenty-Five Years.

"That the submarine is a deadly menace is a fact that no commander of an opposing fleet can blink. Oddly enough, that the submarine is not so much a danger in 1939 as it was in 1914 is also indisputably true," writes Commander Edward Ellsberg, U.S.N., retired. He is an authority on the submarine—salvager of the sunken S-51, and author of the book, "On the Bottom." Contributing to the Philadelphia Record, he says:

"Submarines have developed little in 25 years. Diesel engines, their surface motive power, are more refined, more reliable, more powerful. But the boats themselves are not in essence very different from what they were at the end of the World War, hardly any safer for crew against normal cruising hazards when submerged (as the Squalus, the Thetis and the Phenix have recently proved) and no such remarkable improvements as we have seen in two decades in aircraft have taken place in submarines. And the submarine's weapon, the torpedo, is practically where the World War left it—accurate only at relatively short range."

**Depth Bomb Effective Answer**

"But while the submarine as a weapon has been nearly at a standstill, the means of defense against it have radically improved. The depth bomb, which at the beginning of the World War was unknown, is more widely available and easily fitted to any improvised warship.

"Convoy methods for merchantmen, which proved the best safeguard against torpedoes, will unquestionably be adopted quickly, forcing any U-boat to undergo the grave danger of being sunk by warships before it can get at its prey. And finally the means of detecting and tracking down, submerged U-boats have improved immensely.

"John Holland, the designer of our earliest adopted type of submarine, felt that his boat was vulnerable and invincible, for once submerged and invisible, how could any enemy either attack or trace it?"

"To the first problem, the depth bomb has supplied a deadly answer. To the second, that of detection, modern scientific developments in sound and in radio amplification have gone a long way in providing a solution."

**Too Dangerous to Defy a Convoy**

"The same remarkable electrical hookups which can pick an infinitesimal vibration from the ether and magnify it into a volume of deafening sound in a radio if desired, have applied to submarine detection gear, made the problem of spotting a submerged U-boat from its propeller vibration and internal noises vastly simpler than it was some 20 years ago. And the submarines know it."

"The dangers of getting within listening distance now of destroyers loaded down with depth bombs and equipped with the newer listening sets are extreme—we will not again see submarines with impunity playing hide and seek with surface warships charging aimlessly over the surface while the submarine below selects its victim from a huddled convoy."

Toronto Telegram.—Grasping after sugar is not confined to housewives. Despatch says Ottawa is filled with agents seeking war orders.

Toronto Telegram.—A scientist predicts the man of the future will walk on all fours. Well, at least a fellow can keep his feet on the ground.

## Doing of Duty Vital to the Preservation of Freedom

Duty Sometimes Unpleasant and a Curb on Freedom.

(From The Montreal Star)

For generations Englishmen have cherished the idea of freedom and have held that the idea of duty is one of the binding and cementing things of life. "England expects every man to do his duty" to the end that he may be free. They have cherished the idea of freedom as a thing beyond price. They struggled and sacrificed that they might gain it and hand it down unscathed to their children. And they have creditably succeeded. Achieved liberty is said to be one of the chief ethical results of advancing civilization. Hardly anything will annoy freedom-loving peoples so much as the necessary restraints which are imposed upon their personal freedom in wartime.

England has made the grim decision to war against the threat of enslavement and oppression. The issue which involves the British Empire is clear. The struggle is only incidentally over territorial rights. The real question is whether liberty-loving nations are to be permitted to pursue their normal processes of living or are they to have hanging over them the threat of enslavement? It is a question whether the freedom so laboriously achieved in five thousand years of painful advancement towards civilization is to go down before crass totalitarian materialism.

The love of freedom, and the tenacity of will which strives to maintain the freedom of the human spirit, are the mightiest weapons opposing modern totalitarian armaments. The war will necessarily impose restraints upon personal freedom. A people who have come to regard freedom as a part of the order of Nature must willingly arrogate to the State the right to curtail and limit luxuries, extravagances and even necessities of life in the fight to uphold their liberty. This becomes duty.

The idea of duty is a large part of the ethics of the average, ordinary, honest man. Duty is a grim word, with little in it to allure. There are tragic hours in life when the gravest aspects of duty cannot be ignored, when duty is a mangled figure standing with sword in hand. It is the least painful of these occasions when the choice comes between some pleasure long planned, anticipated, and desired, and some duty unexpected, unpleasant, but imperative. Imagine a father who, through years, has planned that his only son shall succeed him in business or profession having to submit to the unexpected decision of his son that he must face the imperative call of his country. A half-interest in the business with a substantial deposit to the son's credit in the bank, the father suggests, but the son says: "Father, you know how much I love and honour you, how truly I love my mother, but do you not see I have a duty to my conscience that neither money nor partnership in business can nullify?" So the father must stand aside and wait the son's decision. That decision may mean a Calvary.

Sometimes there comes the choice between duty and friendship or between duty and popularity. That choice often opens a clear vista to Calvary and the Cross. Dr. Parker says: "Duty done is the soul's fireside." But duty is never done. The fact is that never until life is done, and perhaps not even then, does one come to the end of his duty; that, never save in a temporary and relative sense, can one say: "I have done my duty." The rich young ruler, having kept all the tables of the law, had to be taught that there

Better work follows the pause that refreshes



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are heights of service and of sacrifice which are written in no law, which are imperative duty, notwithstanding. "There is something truly infinite in duty; it is a religion that can never be enclosed," says Dr. Martineau. "We pitch our tent upon its boundary field, and as we survey it, we detect an amplifier realm beyond."

It is hard for those who are in the thick of the conflict, drawn one way by conscience and another way by the love of comfort or pleasure, to see duty in the same calm, clear light. Perhaps all that can be expected from the standpoint of actual life is that the sunnier side of duty will offer encouragement and consolation in the knowledge that our duty and happiness have indeed been one.

In times of great sorrow this discovery is sometimes partially made. It frequently happens that after a severe loss, sorrowful souls have been thankful for the urgent duties which their very sorrow brought with it. Life has to go on. These demands have to be met. The insistence of duty, under such circumstances, is itself an escape and a consolation. Thus duty reveals its richer, gentler side, and instead of being a taskmaster is a comforter and friend.

New York Post.—There are 4,000,000 types of insects that more or less plague mankind, but we'd be satisfied if they would abolish the mosquitoes.

## MEN LOVE GIRLS WITH PEP

If you are peppy and full of fun, men will invite you to dances and parties. BUT if you are cross, listless and tired, men won't be interested. Men don't like "quiet" girls. When they go to parties they want girls along who are full of pep. So in case you need a good general system tonic, remember for 3 generations one woman has told another how to go "smiling thru" with Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound. It helps build up more physical resistance and thus aids in giving you more pep and lessens distress from female functional disorders. You'll find Pinkham's Compound WELL WORTH TRYING!

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