

The Secret Adversary

By AGATHA CHRISTIE

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CHAPTER XVI—Continued.

"But on the Sunday afternoon a message was brought to the house. They were all very disturbed. Without their knowing, I listened. Word had come that he was to be killed. I needn't tell the next part, because you know it."

"She paused. "Then the papers," said Sir James slowly, "are still at the back of the picture in that room."

"Yes," the girl had sunk back on the sofa exhausted with the strain of the long story.

Sir James rose to his feet. He looked at his watch.

"Come," he said, "we must go at once. You have been followed here—not a doubt of it. When we leave the house we shall be followed again, but not molested, for it is Mr. Brown's plan that we are to lead him. But the Soho house is under police supervision night and day. There are several men watching it. When we enter that house, Mr. Brown will not draw back—he will risk all, on the chance of obtaining the spark to fire his mine. And he fancies the risk not great—he will enter in the guise of friend!"

Tuppence flushed, then opened her mouth impulsively. "You know who Mr. Brown is, don't you?"

"Yes," said Sir James gravely. "I have been morally certain of his identity for some time—ever since the night of Mrs. Vandemeyer's mysterious death."

"Ah!" breathed Tuppence.

"For there we are up against the logic of facts. There are only two solutions. Either the choral was administered by her own hand, which theory I reject utterly, or else—"

"Yes?"

"Or else it was administered in the brandy you gave her. Only three people touched that brandy—you, Miss Tuppence, I myself, and one other—Mr. Julius Hershelmer!"

Jane Finn stirred and sat up, regarding the speaker with wide, astonished eyes. Springing to her feet, she cried out angrily:

"What do you mean? What are you trying to suggest? That Mr. Brown is Julius? Julius—my own cousin!"

"No, Miss Finn," said Sir James. "Not your cousin. The man who calls himself Julius Hershelmer is no relation to you whatsoever."

CHAPTER XVII

Mr. Brown.

Sir James' words came like a bombshell. Both girls looked equally puzzled. The lawyer went across to his desk, and returned with a small newspaper cutting, which he handed to Jane. Tuppence read it over her shoulder. It referred to the mysterious man found dead in New York.

"As I was saying to Miss Tuppence," resumed the lawyer, "I set to work to prove the impossible possible. The great stumbling-block was the undeniable fact that Julius Hershelmer was not an assumed name. When I came across this paragraph my problem was solved. Julius Hershelmer set out to discover what had become of his cousin. He went out West, where he obtained news of her and her photograph to aid him in his search. On the eve of his departure from New York he was set upon and murdered. His body was dressed in shabby clothes, and the face disfigured to prevent identification. Mr. Brown took his place. He sailed immediately for England. Since then he had been hand and glove with those sworn to hunt him down. Every secret of theirs has been known to him. Only once did he come near disaster. Mrs. Vandemeyer knew his secret. It was no part of his plan that this huge bribe should ever be offered to her. But for Miss Tuppence's fortunate change of plan, she would have been far away from the flat when we arrived there. Exposure stared him in the face. He took a desperate step, trusting in his assumed character to avert suspicion. He nearly succeeded—but not quite.

"Now we're ready. I know better than even to suggest going without you, Miss Tuppence."

"I should think so indeed!"

Sir James' car drew up at the corner of the square and they got out. A policeman produced a key. They all knew Sir James well. The three entered the house, pulling the door to behind them. Slowly they mounted the rickety stairs. At the top was the ragged curtain hiding the recess where Tommy had hidden that day. Tuppence had heard the story from Jane in her character of "Annette." She looked at the tattered velvet with interest. Even now she could almost swear it moved—as though someone were behind it. Supposing Mr. Brown—Julius—was there waiting.

Impossible of course! She must not give way to this foolish fancying—this curious insistent feeling that Mr. Brown was in the house.

Hark! What was that? A stealthy footstep on the stairs? There was someone in the house! Absurd! She was becoming hysterical.

Jane had gone straight to the pleasure of Marguerite. She unhooked it

with a steady hand. The dust lay thick upon it, and festoons of cobwebs lay between it and the wall. Sir James handed her a pocket-knife, and she ripped away the brown paper from the back. . . . The advertisement page of a magazine fell out. Jane picked it up. Holding apart the frayed inner edges, she extracted two thin sheets covered with writing!

No dummy this time! The real thing!

"We've got it," said Tuppence. "At last."

Sir James took it, and scrutinized it attentively.

"Yes," he said quietly, "this is the ill-fated draft treaty!"

"We've succeeded," said Tuppence. There was awe and an almost wondering unbelief in her voice.

Sir James echoed her words as he folded the paper carefully and put it away in his pocket-book, then he looked curiously round the dingy room.

"It was here that our young friend was confined for so long, was it not?" he said. "A truly sinister room. You notice the absence of windows, and the thickness of the close-fitting door. Whatever took place here would never be heard by the outside world."

"You feel—as we all feel—THE PRESENCE OF MR. BROWN, Yes?"—as Tuppence made a movement—"not a doubt of it—MR. BROWN IS HERE."

"In this house?"

"In this room. . . . You don't understand? I AM MR. BROWN. . . ."

Stupefied, unbelieving, they stared at him. The very lines of his face had changed. It was a different man who stood before them. He smiled a slow cruel smile.

"Neither of you will leave this room alive! Shall I tell you how it will be? Sooner or later the police will break in, and they will find three victims of Mr. Brown—three, not two, you understand, but fortunately the third will not be dead, only wounded, and will be able to describe the attack with a wealth of detail! The treaty? It is in the hands of Mr. Brown. So no one will think of searching the pockets of Sir James Peel Edgerton!"

There was a faint sound behind him, but, intoxicated with success, he did not turn his head.

He slipped his hand into his pocket. "Checkmate to the Young Adventurers," he said, and slowly raised a big automatic.

But, even as he did so, he felt himself seized from behind in a grip of iron. The revolver was wrenched from his hand, and the voice of Julius Hershelmer said drawlingly:

"I guess you're caught redhanded with the goods on you."

The blood rushed to the K. C.'s face, but his self-control was marvelous, as he looked from one to the other of his two captors. He looked longest at Tommy.

"You," he said beneath his breath. "You! I might have known."

Seeing that he was disposed to offer no resistance, their grip slackened. Quick as a flash his left hand, the hand which bore the big signet ring, was raised to his lips.

"Ave, Caesar! to morituri salutant," he said, still looking at Tommy.

Then his face changed, and with a long convulsive shudder he fell forward in a crumpled heap, whilst an odor of bitter almonds filled the air.

CHAPTER XVIII

A Supper Party at the "Savoy."

The supper party given by Mr. Julius Hershelmer to a few friends on the evening of the 30th will long be remembered in catering circles. It took place in a private room, and Mr. Hershelmer's orders were brief and forcible. He gave carte blanche—and when a millionaire gives carte blanche he usually gets it!

The list of guests was small and select. The American ambassador, Mr. Carter, who had taken the liberty, he said, of bringing an old friend, Sir William Beresford, with him, Archdeacon Cowley, Dr. Hall, those two youthful adventurers, Miss Prudence Cowley and Mr. Thomas Beresford, and last, but not least, as guest of honor, Miss Jane Finn.

To most people the 29th, the much-heralded "Labor Day," had passed much as any other day. Speeches were made in the Park and Trafalgar square. Straggling processions, singing the "Red Flag," wandered through the streets in a more or less aimless manner. Newspapers which had hinted at a general strike, and the inauguration of a reign of terror, were forced to hide their diminished heads. The holder and more astute among them sought to prove that peace had been effected by following their counsels. In the Sunday papers a brief notice of the sudden death of Sir James Peel Edgerton, the famous K. C., had appeared. Monday's paper dealt appreciatively with the dead man's career. The exact manner of his sudden death was never made public.

Tommy had been right in his forecast of the situation. It had been a one-man show. Deprived of their chief, the organization fell to pieces. Kramenin had made a precipitate re-

turn to Russia, leaving England early on Sunday morning. The gang had fled from Astley Priors in a panic, leaving behind, in their haste, various damaging documents which compromised them hopelessly. With these proofs of conspiracy in their hands, aided further by a small brown diary taken from the pocket of the dead man which had contained a full and damning resume of the whole plot, the government had called an eleventh-hour conference. The labor leaders were forced to recognize that they had been used as a cat's-paw. Certain concessions were made by the government, and were eagerly accepted. It was to be Peace, not War!

But the cabinet knew by how narrow a margin they had escaped utter disaster. And burnt in on Mr. Carter's brain was the strange scene which had taken place in the house in Soho the night before.

He had entered the squalid room to find that great man, the friend of a lifetime, dead—betrayed out of his own mouth. From the dead man's pocket-book he had retrieved the ill-omened draft treaty, and then and there, in the presence of the other three, it had been reduced to ashes.

England was saved!

And now, on the evening of the 30th, in a private room at the Savoy, Mr. Julius P. Hershelmer was receiving his guests.

Soon the supper party was in full swing, and with one accord Tommy was called upon for a full and complete explanation.

"Tommy's been the goods this trip! And, instead of sitting there as dumb as a fish, let him banish his blushes, and tell us all about it."

"Hear! hear!"

"There's nothing to tell," said Tommy, acutely uncomfortable. "I was an awful mug—right up to the time I found that photograph of Annette, and realized that she was Jane Finn. Then I remembered how persistently she had shouted out that word 'Mar-

guerite'—and I thought of the pictures, and—well, that's that. Then of course I went over the whole thing to see where I'd made an ass of myself."

"Go on," said Mr. Carter, as Tommy showed signs of taking refuge in silence once more.

"That business about Mrs. Vandemeyer had worried me when Julius told me about it. On the face of it, it seemed that he or Sir James must have done the trick. But I didn't know which. Finding that photograph in the drawer, after that story of how it had been got from him by Inspector Brown, made me suspect Julius. Then I remembered that it was Sir James who had discovered the false Jane Finn. In the end, I couldn't make up my mind—and just decided to take no chances either way. I left a note for Julius. In case he was Mr. Brown, saying I was off to the Argentine, and I dropped Sir James' letter with the offer of the job by the desk so that he would see it was a genuine stunt. Then I wrote my letter to Mr. Carter and rang up Sir James. And then I got a bogus note from Tuppence—and I knew!"

"But how?"

Tommy took the note in question from his pocket and passed it round the table.

"It's her handwriting all right, but I knew it wasn't from her because of the signature. She'd never spell her name 'Tuppence,' but anyone who'd never seen it written might quite easily do so. Julius had seen it—he showed me a note of hers to him once—but Sir James hadn't! After that everything was plain sailing. I sent off Albert post-haste to Mr. Carter. I pretended to go away, but doubled back again. When Julius came bursting up in his car, I felt it wasn't part of Mr. Brown's plan—and that there would probably be trouble. Unless Sir James was actually caught in the act, so to speak, I knew Mr. Carter would never believe it at him on my unsupported word—"



"It's Her Handwriting, All Right!"

"I didn't," interposed Mr. Carter, ruefully.

"That's why I sent the girls off to Sir James. I was sure they'd fetch up at the house in Soho sooner or later. I threatened Julius with the revolver, because I wanted Tuppence to repeat what he said to me, so that he wouldn't worry about us. The moment the girls were out of sight I told Julius to drive like hell for London, and as we went along I told him the whole story. We got to the Soho house in plenty of time and met Mr. Carter outside. After arranging things with him we went in and hid behind the curtain in the recess. The policemen had orders to say, if they were asked, that no one had gone into the house. That's all."

And Tommy came to an abrupt halt. There was silence for a moment.

"By the way," said Julius suddenly, "you're all wrong about that photograph of Jane. It was taken from me, but I found it again."

"Where?" cried Tuppence.

"In that little safe on the wall in Mrs. Vandemeyer's bedroom."

"We all kept back something or other," said Tuppence, thoughtfully. "I suppose secret service work makes you like that!"

Mr. Carter rose to his feet. "I will give you a toast. The Joint Venture which has so amply justified itself by success!"

It was drunk with acclamation.

"There's something more we want to hear," continued Mr. Carter. He looked at the American ambassador.

"I speak for you also, I know. We'll ask Miss Jane Finn to tell us the story that only Miss Tuppence has heard so far—but before we do so we'll drink her health. The health of one of the bravest of America's daughters, to whom is due the thanks and gratitude of two great countries!"

CHAPTER XIX

And After.

"That was a mighty good toast, Jane," said Mr. Hershelmer, as he and his cousin were being driven back in the Rolls-Royce to the Ritz.

"The one to the Joint Venture?"

"No—the one to you. There isn't another girl in the world who could have carried it through as you did. You were just wonderful!"

Jane shook her head. "I don't feel wonderful. At heart I'm just tired and lonesome—and longing for my own country."

"That brings me to something I wanted to say. I heard the ambassador telling you his wife hoped you would come to them at the embassy right away. That's good enough, but I've got another plan. Jane—I want you to marry me! Don't get scared and say no at once. You can't love me right away, of course, that's impossible. But I've loved you from the very moment I set eyes on your photo—and now I've seen you I'm simply crazy about you! If you'll only marry me, I won't worry you any—you shall take your own time. Maybe you'll never come to love me, and if that's the case I'll manage to set you free. But I want the right to look after you and take care of you."

"Oh, Julius!"

"Well, I don't want to hustle you, Jane, but there's no sense in waiting about. Don't be scared—I shan't expect you to love me all at once."

But a small hand was slipped into his.

"I love you now, Julius," said Jane Finn. "I loved you the first moment in the car when the bullet grazed your cheek. . . ."

In the meantime the Young Adventurers were sitting bolt upright, very stiff and ill at ease, in a taxi.

They sat very straight and forebore to look at each other.

At last Tuppence made a desperate effort.

"Rather fun, wasn't it?"

"Rather."

"Another silence. "I like Julius," essayed Tuppence again.

Tommy was suddenly galvanized into life.

"It has been fun, hasn't it, Tommy? I do hope we shall have lots more adventures."

"You're insatiable, Tuppence. I've had quite enough adventures for the present."

"Well, shopping is almost as good," said Tuppence, dreamily. "Think of buying old furniture, and bright carpets, and futurist silk curtains, and a polished dining table, and a divan with lots of cushions—"

"Hold hard," said Tommy. "What's all this for?"

"Possibly a house—but I think a flat."

"Whose flat?"

"You think I mind saying it, but I don't in the least! Ours, so there!"

"You darling!" cried Tommy, his arms tightly round her. "I was determined to make you say it. I owe you something for the relentless way you've squashed me whenever I've tried to be sentimental."

Tuppence raised her face to his. The taxi proceeded on a course round the north side of Regent's park.

"You haven't really proposed now," pointed out Tuppence. "Not what our grandmothers would call a proposal. But after listening to a rotten one like Julius's, I'm inclined to let you off."

"You won't be able to get out of marrying me, so don't you think of it."

"What fun it will be," responded Tuppence. "Marriage is called all sorts of things, a haven, and a refuge, and a crowning glory, and a state of bondage, and lots more. But do you know what I think it is?"

"What?"

"A sport!"

"And a d-d good sport, too," said Tommy.

[THE END.]

IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL

Sunday School Lesson

(By REV. P. B. FITZWATER, D. D., Teacher of English Bible in the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.)

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LESSON FOR DECEMBER 9

THE OUTREACH OF THE EARLY CHURCH

LESSON TEXT—Acts 8:4-8; 14:17; 25. GOLDEN TEXT—"Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."—Acts 1:8.

PRIMARY TOPIC—Philip Telling About Jesus.

JUNIOR TOPIC—The Gospel Spreads to Samaria.

INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR TOPIC—The Gospel Spreads Through Persecution.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT TOPIC—Expanding Missionary Vision and Activity.

I. The Gospel Spreads to Samaria (Acts 8:4-8; 14:17; 25).

1. Philip Preaching the Gospel in Samaria (vv. 4-8). Following the stoning of Stephen the enemies of the Lord were more active than ever in their efforts to stamp out the new faith. With Saul as their leader they dragged from their homes and imprisoned those who confessed Christ, but the Devil overreached himself. In this, for this scattered the believers everywhere, and they preached the Gospel as they went. The time had now come for the witness-bearing to extend beyond Jerusalem and Judea as the Lord had commanded. The Lord permitted the persecution so as to scatter them.

2. Peter and John Visit Samaria (vv. 14-17; 25). When the Apostles heard of Philip's work in Samaria they sent two of their best men to encourage it. These men had discernment to know that the spirit had not yet fallen upon the believers, so they laid hands upon them and the Spirit was given them. These Samaritans were really converted, regenerated, but had not yet been filled with the Spirit. In this they were like many church members today without the Spirit's gift.

3. Philip Preaching to the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:30-40). In the conversion of the eunuch we see the Lord's work still broadening. The Gospel was first preached to the Samaritans who were nationally on the borderland between the Jews and the Gentiles. This Ethiopian was in all probability a Gentile, a proselyte to the Jewish faith. In his conversion we see the work reaching afar, even on its way to the ends of the earth. By divine direction Philip left his great work in Samaria and was directed to the eunuch. The Spirit of God directed him to go and join himself to the chariot of the Ethiopian. The coming together of these two men in the desert was providential. (1) The eunuch's employment on the way. He was reading the Word of God. (2) The absolute need of a preacher. The eunuch was reading the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, one of the clearest testimonies of the Messiah in the Old Testament, yet was unable to understand it. The one thing needed in the salvation of men is for the saved man to bring the message to the unsaved. (3) The message of Philip was Jesus. He began at the Scriptures and preached Jesus. The central theme of the preacher's message should be Jesus. (4) The eunuch baptized. As a consequence of Philip's preaching the eunuch proposed baptism. Men who accept the message of salvation in Christ naturally demand baptism.

II. The Conversion of Saul (Acts 9:1-30).

The great apostle of the Gentiles is now laid hold of by the Lord Jesus and made a flaming evangel of the Cross to the whole world. We thus see the Lord making ready for the wisest dissemination of the Gospel of His grace.

III. The Gospel Spreads to Asia Minor (Acts 9:31-15:35).

1. Peter at Joppa (Acts 9:32-43). On his tour of evangelizing Peter came down to Joppa and lodged with Simon, a tanner. This shows the widening of his sympathy in that a Jew was willing to lodge with one of such an occupation.

2. The Conversion of Cornelius (Acts 10). In the conversion of this Gentile and the coming of the Spirit upon him, the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile was broken down. The way was now open for the further outreach of the Gospel.

3. Paul's First Missionary Journey (Acts 13, 14). The Spirit of God now came upon the church for the definite purpose of preaching the Gospel to the whole world. Paul and Barnabas with John Mark went out preaching the Gospel through the provinces of Asia Minor.

4. The Conditions of Gentile Salvation Settled (Acts 15:1-35). Before the Gospel could be preached to the whole world the dispute in the church over the condition of Gentile salvation had to be settled, so a council was held at Jerusalem in which these conditions were clearly settled.

In the Light of the Bible.

Dr. A. C. Dixon is quoted as having said: "We have been studying the Bible in the light of modern scholarship. The time has come for us to study modern scholarship in the light of the Bible." Quite a correct observation!—Southern Methodist.

In Christ's Society.

"Ten minutes spent in Christ's society every day, aye, two minutes, if it be face to face and heart to heart, will make the whole day different."—Heidelberg Teacher.

The Kitchen Cabinet

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Waitin' for de sunshine
When de sky is gray;
Whinin' and a plinin',
Fol de bides to go away;
See de water trickle,
Down de window pane;
Wish dat it would hurry 'long
An' neber come again.

Wishin' for de rain storm
When de drought comes roun';
Wonder why dat sunshine keep
A-dryin' out de ground;
Eater stop dat kickin',
Doean't help a bit;
Kin' o' weather what you has
Is all you's gwinter git.

GOOD THINGS WE LIKE

If one is fortunate enough to have a few mushrooms and sweetbreads, by combining the two a most tasty dish will result. Sauté the sweetbreads in a little butter until well cooked—five minutes will suffice. Melt two tablespoonfuls of butter, add three tablespoonfuls of flour, and pour on gradually one cupful of chicken stock. Clean, parboil and cut into dice the sweetbreads. Reheat the sauce, add the sweetbreads and mushrooms and season well; add one-fourth cupful of whipped cream and one-half teaspoonful of beef extract. Add a dash of lemon juice and serve in tumbale cases or covered with buttered crumbs in ramekins. If the latter, brown in the oven and serve hot from the dishes.

Date Fluff-Duff.—Stew a cupful of stoned dates until tender. Put through a colander, and mix with a cupful of sugar that has been sifted with a teaspoonful of cream of tartar. Beat the whites of five eggs until stiff, adding a pinch of salt, and when perfectly stiff add the yolks of two eggs and whip again. Mix lightly a little at a time with the dates and sugar and place in a buttered baking dish. Sprinkle the top with finely chopped nuts and bake fifteen minutes. Serve with whipped cream.

Salad Rolls.—Scald one and one-half cupfuls of milk, add one-fourth of a cupful of sugar, one-half cupful of butter, one-half-teaspoonful of salt; when lukewarm add one-half yeast cake; when this is dissolved add four cupfuls of flour. Mix thoroughly and add the whites of two eggs beaten stiff. Cover and let rise, turn into buttered gem pans made in small biscuit, three in each; have the pans half full. Let rise and bake in a hot oven. These are called cloverleaf rolls.

A haze on the far horizon,
An infinite tender sky,
The ripe rich tints of the cornfield,
And the wild geese sailing high;
And all over lowland and upland
The blaze of the goldenrod;
Some of us call it Nature,
And some of us call it—God.

—William Caruth.

THINGS WE ALL LIKE

A salad is always in season and a new one is always welcomed.

Carlton Salad.—Separate French endive, clean, drain, and chill. Cut cold cooked beets into slices, then into rings and fancy shapes. Arrange pieces of endive through the best rings; arrange on crisp lettuce allowing two rings and five shapes to each portion. Serve with French dressing and sprinkle each with chopped walnut meats.

Apple Salad.—Apples are so good and of such good flavor at this season that apple salad should be served often. Take two cupfuls of diced apple, a small slice of finely minced Spanish onion, a half-cupful of finely diced dates and season well with a good rich boiled dressing. Serve on lettuce leaves.

Luncheon Stuffed Eggs.—Cut hard-cooked eggs in halves lengthwise. Remove the yolks and mash them, add half the amount of deviled ham and enough melted butter to make of the consistency to shape. Make into balls the size of the yolks and refill the whites. Form the remainder of the mixture into a nest. Arrange the eggs in the nest, pour over one cupful of seasoned white sauce. Sprinkle with buttered crumbs, and bake until the crumbs are brown.

Apple Dessert.—Wash, core and peel eight large apples, leaving a belt of skin an inch and a half wide around each. This helps to keep them from losing their shape when cooked. Place in a casserole and fill with rice and raisins mixed together, using one-half cupful of cooked rice and one-fourth cupful of seedless raisins. Pour over them two cupfuls of hot maple syrup and bake until the apples are tender. Serve either cold or hot.

Almond Pudding.—Cream four tablespoonfuls of butter, add one-third of a cupful of sugar, one-half cupful of molasses and two eggs well beaten. Mix and sift one and one-half cupfuls of flour, one-half teaspoonful of soda, one-fourth of a teaspoonful of cinnamon and one-fourth teaspoonful of salt; add alternately with one-half cupful of milk to the first mixture, then add three-fourths of a cupful of blanched, roasted and finely chopped almonds. Turn into a buttered mold and steam two and one-half hours. Serve with whipped cream.

—Nellie Maxwell