



**TRUST**

**THE**

**SAINNT**

**LESLIE CHARTERIS**



# TRUST THE SAINT

FOREWORD BY MARTIN GATELY

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# THE ADVENTURES OF THE SAINT

*Enter the Saint (1930), The Saint Closes the Case (1930), The Avenging Saint (1930), Featuring the Saint (1931), Alias the Saint (1931), The Saint Meets His Match (1931), The Saint Versus Scotland Yard (1932), The Saint's Getaway (1932), The Saint and Mr Teal (1933), The Brighter Buccaneer (1933), The Saint in London (1934), The Saint Intervenes (1934), The Saint Goes On (1934), The Saint in New York (1935), Saint Overboard (1936), The Saint in Action (1937), The Saint Bids Diamonds (1937), The Saint Plays with Fire (1938), Follow the Saint (1938), The Happy Highwayman (1939), The Saint in Miami (1940), The Saint Goes West (1942), The Saint Steps In (1943), The Saint on Guard (1944), The Saint Sees It Through (1946), Call for the Saint (1948), Saint Errant (1948), The Saint in Europe (1953), The Saint on the Spanish Main (1955), The Saint Around the World (1956), Thanks to the Saint (1957), Señor Saint (1958), Saint to the Rescue (1959), Trust the Saint (1962), The Saint in the Sun (1963), Vendetta for the Saint (1964), The Saint on TV (1968), The Saint Returns (1968), The Saint and the Fiction Makers (1968), The Saint Abroad (1969), The Saint in Pursuit (1970), The Saint and the People Importers (1971), Catch the Saint (1975), The Saint and the Hapsburg Necklace (1976), Send for the Saint (1977), The Saint in Trouble (1978), The Saint and the Templar Treasure (1978), Count On the Saint (1980), Salvage for the Saint (1983)*



# TRUST THE SAINT

LESLIE CHARTERIS

SERIES EDITOR: IAN DICKERSON

 **THOMAS & MERCER**

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*To Audrey, for ten wonderful years*

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The text of this book has been preserved from the original edition and includes vocabulary, grammar, style, and punctuation that might differ from modern publishing practices. Every care has been taken to preserve the author's tone and meaning, allowing only minimal changes to punctuation and wording to ensure a fluent experience for modern readers.



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## FOREWORD TO THE NEW EDITION

Why, hello. You know, the moment you came in here I thought you were going to start reading this book. Saint fans have a certain look about them that it is almost impossible to conceal or mistake. It is the look someone has when they are searching for adventure. The sort of adventure which, although perhaps set in yesteryear, is still recognizably that of our world rather than one filled with, say, dinosaurs or dragons. There are times when one wants a proper Sunday Roast and nothing else, however fancy, will do—and you are holding the literary equivalent.

It's not easy to kick through that version of the "fourth wall" that exists between writer and reader. It's difficult to generate the necessary eye contact via the printed word. Harder still when I realize that what I write here is delaying you in reading some of the greatest Saint stories ever penned. Listen. I'm talking to you. This is important. I want to tell you about the time when I forgot to trust the Saint and why I won't ever allow it to happen again. It was June of 1999 and I'd not long since returned to London after a holiday in the United States. Yes, I'd had a couple of pints with my work colleagues in the Yorkshire Grey pub on the corner of Theobalds Road and Grays Inn and I was now heading home. I started to cross the road just as the lights were changing and broke into a run about halfway across the far lane. At that precise moment it felt rather like someone must've very accurately thrown a cricket ball at my leg. I sensed the impact about midway down my calf. I even looked back over the gutter to see if I could see the ball. A ball? On a busy London street? There was no ball, cricket or otherwise, to be seen. Could it have been a hubcap somehow torn loose from a car wheel—because now the sensation of impact had been replaced by a slicing feeling, as if a hunting knife were cutting all the way through my leg. It hurt so much and was so inexplicable that the only thing left to do was laugh out loud. At this point I became a stranger to normal rational and coherent thought. Except I knew I just wanted to be home.

Unfortunately, my leg no longer worked. It was rather like I'd been somehow instantaneously issued with an artificial leg. Now I knew how my childhood Action Men must've felt when the elastic bands inside them perished. My friends scant yards away in the Yorkshire Grey might as well have been on the moon. I wouldn't have tried to re-cross the road even if I had thought of it—which I didn't. My normal thought processes had been replaced with a sort of tunnel vision survival instinct. I was injured in a hostile environment and I had to make it out of there. I proceeded as best I could in the direction of Chancery Lane tube station like a refugee from Monty Python's Ministry of Silly Walks. Somehow, I made it onto a train and propped myself up in the corner by the door. Then my vision started to go. I was looking at the world through a layer of Golden Syrup. I convinced myself not to pass out, concerned that I might be mistaken for drunk. Ultimately, I arrived home, unlocked the door, and collapsed gently onto the hall tiles at the end of my endurance. I put off a trip to hospital until the following day, where I was diagnosed with a snapped calf muscle (by this time I could barely stand). Now, I made plenty of mistakes that night. You can have fun imagining how you would've coped better and differently later. The crucial thing is this: in the whole of the ten-week bed

rest/convalescent period I never once thought to read a Saint book. Not even when a buxom trauma clinic nurse wedged my foot into her cleavage, leaned forward, and bent it back to its normal position so that she could encase it in plaster. You would have thought that should have guaranteed some sort of epiphany, but no. And I really should have called on the Saint to divert me, especially when he had always been part of my life, let alone my reading list. One of my earliest memories is of starting to peel the red Saint sticker off the bonnet of my Corgi model Volvo P1800 and then thinking the better of it and leaving the sticker in place—I showed no such mercy to the figures in my Chitty Chitty Bang Bang model. They were soon decapitated. Poor old Caractacus Potts. Of course, my introduction to the Saint was via the ITC TV show starring Roger Moore. The appearance of the Saint in each first scene accompanied by the manifestation of his halo held me in an almost hypnotic thrall. If entire episodes had been comprised of variations on that first scene I'd have been perfectly happy. The Saint, like Ellery Queen, is a character comfortable with breaking the “fourth wall” (that same partition I was trying to kick down earlier) and frequently did so in those introductory sequences. Being directly addressed by a character in narrative possibly has a powerful effect on impressionable minds—on me at least, the effect was that I regarded the episodes as more than just stories. The TV set had become a window through which I was simply observing events in Simon Templar's life.

So, when I finally step out of your way and let you loose on these marvellous tales, do keep in mind that while “nothing ordinary happens to the Saint,” these extraordinary narratives are firmly rooted in our real world. If you only know the Saint from TV then the topless mud-wrestling and live sex shows of “The Helpful Pirate” may come as something of a surprise. The story may even seem daring for its time (just a couple of years after the Lady Chatterley trial). The con trick perpetrated in this story may strike you as unlikely, but it is modest in its scope and execution when compared to one that I'm aware of from my personal experience as a former junior functionary of the Serious Fraud Office. In the real world, two German con men rented former bank office premises in a West Country resort and purported to be a branch of a fictional German bank—they even had a working bureau de change in the lobby. They then took “advance fees” of many tens of thousands of pounds to process applications for loans—loans that would, of course, never materialize. The unfortunate victims were simply given worthless “banking instruments”—albeit with face values of millions—that had been cobbled together and laminated in the upstairs office. Mr Charteris could undoubtedly have spun these events into a superb yarn—might I suggest that “The Counterfeit Bank” would be a suitably Saintly title?

The understandably grumpy rhino from “The Bigger Game” reminds me of a rhino I once saw in a safari park. The tractor vehicle which I at first thought just happened to be cutting the grass in front of the rhino wasn't fitted with a grass cutter at all but rather with a concrete weight. Its purpose was to interpose itself between the tourists in their cars and the rhino if it decided to charge. The rather callow youth in the cab of the tractor had on his face a strange mixture of boredom and concentration. Our lives were in his hands...I hope he was being motivated and rewarded by more than just the minimum wage.

The “joker in the pack” in this collection of tales is “The Intemperate Reformer.” A wonderfully comedic collision of the Saint's world with the schemes of a very minor league bad guy who would not be out of place in a P. G. Wodehouse story. Nevertheless, I ached for his comeuppance and for civilization to be rid of the appalling soft drink that he was peddling. This story nicely evoked the bygone era of the British licensing laws, the purpose of which always seemed to be to deny you one alcoholic beverage just when you most seemed to need or deserve one. Normally after 10:30 p.m. on a Sunday, if I recall correctly. It could be very frustrating.

Now, I don't plan to tell you all about the stories in this book in the same way that I don't intend to break into your home and open all your Christmas presents. It just wouldn't be right. But I'

tell you that the final story in this volume is the one that means the most to me—it is “The Convenient Monster.” I went looking for the Loch Ness Monster when I was eleven years old. It’s tough to crack the mystery of Loch Ness while under close parental supervision, but I did my best. I met monster hunter Frank Searle, but then who didn’t? He was one of those monster hunters who were really just there to talk to the coaches full of tourists. His contributions to cryptozoology were photographing vaguely monster-shaped logs and producing dubious superimposed images of brontosaurus-like creatures swimming (yeah, right) in the loch. His was the ignominy of being included in a chapter entitled “The Fakers” in Nicholas Witchell’s book *The Loch Ness Story*. Nevertheless, his tourist-friendly vigil was the highly accessible real-world counterpart of Eleanor Bastion’s stakeout for the creature. By the way, I do feel a bit sorry for the dog in this story. I know I shouldn’t spoil the plot, but it does call to mind the dog that gets eaten by the shark in *Jaws*. I wonder if I was the only person in the cinema who spotted the familiar Volvo P1800 in the Amity Island car park and secretly hoped that Simon Templar would turn up and save the day. Back on topic, Mr Charteris also neatly reminds us that this is not the first time the Loch Ness Monster has met a Saint.

It’s time for the big reveal. You’re almost ready to start reading the stories that I’ve teased you with some of the details of—drinking from the fountainhead yourself instead of having the stories processed by the budget and sensibilities of the 1960s TV show of *The Saint*. But first you need to know this: sometimes history repeats itself and sometimes it doesn’t. When my Dad was sixteen he made a split-second decision at work to roll a heavy steel casting out of the way of a reversing truck rather than shout a warning to the driver. The casting spun around—like a coin, he says—and as it fell it gouged great clumps of flesh out of either side of his leg. He was laid up for ten weeks recovering and made it his business to read every Saint book then available. I congratulate him on his taste and good sense. He raised his son to be a Saint fan and any failings in that regard are mine, not his. I won’t let him down again. But neither you nor I have to wait for a nasty leg injury. Get all the Saint books. Read them. If you want to be entertained, always, always trust the Saint.

—*Martin Gately*



TRUST THE SAINT



# THE HELPFUL PIRATE

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There were a few people—a very few—within his tight circle of friends and almost astronomical orb of acquaintances, for whom the Saint would do practically anything. Including even things which under any other auspices would have excited him to violent and voluble revolt.

One addiction that he especially despised was the fad for antiques. He could admire and love an old house for its own sake, but he was incapable of understanding anyone who would build a house today in good or bad imitation of the architecture of a bygone age. He could respect the furnishings of a genuine old house when they were its natural contemporaries, without necessarily wanting to live with them himself, but he could only wax sarcastic about dislocated decorators, professional or amateur, who put period furniture in a steel-and-glass skyscraper apartment:

*“If the Georgians had been convinced that it wasn’t smart to build anything but fake Elizabethan, there wouldn’t have been any Georgian architecture for other monkeys to imitate. If Louis Seize had refused to park his ischial tuberosities on anything but an Henri Quatre chair, there wouldn’t be any Louis Seize furniture for the fake factories to make copies of. In fact, if everyone had spent his time gazing adoringly backwards, we’d still be sleeping on stone cots in nice cozy caves. I was born in the twentieth century, and I don’t see anything wrong with living with its better experiments.”*

He might have added that although he had been called the twentieth century’s brightest buccaneer, he had not found it necessary to leap around in thigh boots and ear-rings, with a cutlass between his teeth, but he still had some quite unpredictable modesties.

The bitterest focus of his prejudice, however, centered on the proliferation of the smaller shops that deal in the smaller items, the merchants of bric-a-brac rather than furniture, and their patrons.

“There’s one on every other street in Europe, down to the smallest village,” he had said. “If the non-edible contents of every trash can and junk pile for the last five centuries had been hidden away by gnomes, I doubt if the hoard would be enough to stock them all. There must be secret production lines that would make Detroit look like a medieval handicraft studio, running day and night to pour out enough antiques to meet the demand. And everywhere you can get to by jet plane or jalopy there’s some beady-eyed tourist sniffing for a treasure that all his predecessors have overlooked. He wouldn’t know a genuine William and Mary silver sugar-bowl from an early Woolworth, but so long as he’s told it’s more than two hundred years old he wants it. And if he’s a she, which most of them are, she doesn’t even want it for a sugar-bowl. She can see just how it could be re-modeled into the most darling lamp. And when she finds the most darling old lamp, she knows just how it could be eviscerated to make the cutest sugar-bowl. If Aladdin had run into one of them, the Arabian Nights would have been full of screaming genies.”

Yet there he was, Simon Templar, in exactly that type of shop on the oddly-named ABC-Strasse in Hamburg, Germany, saying to the proprietor, “I was looking for some of those old Rhine wine glasses, the kind that spread out from under the bowl to the base, so that they stand on a sort of inverted ice-cream cone instead of a stem.” He drew the shape in the air with both hands.

“Ah, yes, I know what you mean. They are called Römer glasses.”

“Do you have any?”

“I am sorry, not at the moment. The old ones are quite rare.”

“So I’ve heard. But I’m not worried about the price. Someone I want to do a special favour for

is crazy about them, but he's only got two or three. I'd like to be able to give him a set. And the rarer and more valuable they are, the more he'll be impressed."

While the Saint, when it was necessary to play the part, could assume an aspect of proud or unprincipled poverty that would evoke a responsive twang from any normal heartstring, his usual appearance, fortunately or unfortunately, suggested a person who was so far on the other side of having been born with a silver spoon in his mouth that he must have been seriously shocked when he first learned that gold spoons were not standard issue. It was not merely the over-all excellence of his tailoring and accessories, for they were too superlative to be ostentatious. It was perhaps primarily an air, an attitude, the easy assurance of a man who has had the best for so long that he no longer demands it: he simply expects it.

The dealer was a broad-beamed portly burgher whose name, according to the legend on the shop window, was Johann Uhrmeister. He had receding sandy-gray hair and pale blue eyes which appraised the Saint as expertly as they would have rated any marketable relic.

"I should be glad to look around for you, sir. If you will leave your name—"

"Templar," Simon told him truthfully.

Germany was one country where he did not think he had earned much publicity, certainly not in recent years, and he did not expect his surname to elicit any reaction there, at least by itself. There were none from Uhrmeister as he wrote it down.

"And where are you staying?"

"At the Vier Jahreszeiten."

"If I can find any, I will let you know. How long are you staying here?"

"A week, maybe."

"It is your first time in Hamburg?"

"Yes."

Herr Uhrmeister turned and picked up a booklet from a stack on an inlaid table which was mainly burdened with a large and horrible gilt clock. The cover described it concisely as An Introduction to Hamburg. He gave it to Simon.

"Please take one of these, with our compliments. It may help you to enjoy your stay. And I hope you will be lucky in your search."

"Thank you," said the Saint.

He continued his quest through the remainder of the afternoon, on the same street and others, patiently ticking off the names of the shops on a list he had made from a classified directory before he started on the undertaking after lunch the previous day, and by closing time he could conscientiously claim to have tried them all. After having been half destroyed by the saturation bombings of 1943, the city had not only rebuilt itself but had succeeded in re-stocking its antique emporia almost as completely as its newest department stores. But in spite of the surprising roster of the former, the supply of "Roman" glasses (which is the literal translation of the name, though it would be harder still to find a prototype in Italy) had apparently lagged far behind that of other venerabilia, or else their rarity was not exaggerated. At the end of his pilgrimage he had seen two slightly chipped but probably authentic specimens, which did not match, and a line of crude souvenir reproductions emblazoned with corny colored decals of local scenery, and had a more empathic if not more respectful comprehension of those dedicated souls who did that sort of thing from their own enthusiasm and for their own pleasure.

It had been, he thought, an effort of extraordinary nobility, probably unprecedented and, he devoutly hoped, not soon to be called for again—a more profoundly heroic performance, for him, than taking on a half-dozen armed gorillas barehanded.

But he was also a little footsore and extremely thirsty, and the alleviation of these conditions

seemed more important for the moment than voting himself awards for altruism.

—At the snug downstairs bar of the Vier Jahreszeiten—the Four Seasons Hotel, as the tourists prefer to render it—a long well-iced Peter Dawson and water soon began to assuage his most urgent aridity, an upholstered stool took the load off his metatarsals, and in a matter of minutes he had revived to the extent of being accessible to the standard civilized distractions.

“Not very nice weather, is it?” he remarked to the aloofly efficient bartender.

“No, sir,” said the bartender pleasantly, but with the same aloof sufficiency, and left it at that.

It was evident that he either had been schooled against fraternizing with the customers or had no basic urge to do so beyond the fullest requirements of civility, and Simon felt no need to make a Herculean labor of changing that pattern of life. He pulled the Introduction to Hamburg from his pocket and began to read it.

It was much the same as any other guide-book of its type, except that it was free from any of the fractured English commonly found in such publications, which usually seem to have been prepared by some ambitious local school-teacher too jealous of his infallibility to submit to revision by a native-born Englishman or American. A note on the title-page said, “Translated by Franz Kolben,” but Mr. Kolben’s style sounded more like Milwaukee than Heidelberg. Otherwise its thirty-two pages contained the usual descriptions of churches, museums, and monuments, listings of restaurants and cabarets, and a brief history of the town from the settlement established by Charlemagne in 811 AD.

Simon Templar was not much of an aficionado of pure historical history, as you might call it, but here there was one paragraph which caught his eye as inevitably as a white nylon jig hooks a mackerel:

Pirates controlled the Elbe until 1402, when Klaus Störtebeker, the greatest, of them, was captured and beheaded on the Grasbrook. What happened to the treasure he extorted in gold and silver and jewels is still a mystery. He is said to have hidden a map of its whereabouts in the base of a pewter goblet on which he carved his initials suspended from a gallows, but it has never been found.

The Saint sighed invisibly. Perhaps it was an encouraging symptom of inexhaustible youth that he could still feel a quickening of the pulse at such a romantic image. Yet there was a somber index of maturity in the fact that he was content to pigeonhole it as an amusing legend, instead of being inspired to set out on the trail of the clue.

Nevertheless, Franz Kolben, who had created the myth entirely out of his own head, would have felt highly complimented by the tribute to his invention.

Simon read through to the end of the brochure without finding anything else of comparable interest. In the meantime a young woman had come in and sat down at the other end of the short counter. He had glanced up automatically, and noted with pleasure that she was blonde and shapely on both face and figure: it would have been easier to label her “a girl,” but she had the confidence of the mid-twenties and her outfitting had been assembled with well-seasoned sophistication. He was too old a hand to stare any longer, but had heard her order a champagne cocktail in English that had an American intonation but still seemed to have a slight Germanic accent. He had philosophically refrained from speculating any further. No doubt she would soon be joined and abducted by some upper-echelon American salesman on the European circuit, or some equally crass Rhineland industrialist—or something similarly cut, dried, and pre-emptive. He was a long time past building daydreams on her obvious foundations.



But now, as he put the pamphlet back in his pocket and gave her another studiously casual glance, he found her looking directly at him with a candor which disclaimed all such prior commitments.

“Would you help me?” she said.

He smiled with just the right degree of diffidence—not eagerly enough to look like a bumpkin but not so distantly as to be discouraging.

“Tell me how.”

“Are you on your own here? I mean, do you have a wife with you, or anything?”

“Not even anything.”

“I only ask,” she explained, “because I don’t want to give you a problem because of mine.”

He was a trifle puzzled.

“You mean you have a husband—or something?”

“Oh, no. If I had, I wouldn’t have to do this. I have a problem because I want someone to go out with for the evening, and I don’t know anyone here. I don’t want you to take me out and pay for everything, because that would give you the wrong idea. But I can’t offer to pay, because that would insult you. Would it be all right if we went Dutch?”

If that was the local line, it at least had an element of novelty. Now that it was permissible to scrutinize her more thoroughly, however, he was able to observe that her dress was smartly but soberly tailored, and she wore none of the usual coloration of a professional lady of the evening. Perhaps that also was a local custom—but what could he lose by going along with it a little farther?

“Let me buy a drink, anyhow,” he said, “and we could sit down and talk it over.”

Until then they had been the only two customers, but now a trio of Italian salesmen had come in and were piling on to the intervening barstools, noisily debating their designs upon the Common Market. The Saint’s new acquaintance moved quietly to a table in a corner, where he joined her. The disinterested bartender brought the drinks, and Simon listened to her.

“I know this must all sound a little crazy, but I’m a tourist too, and I’ve heard that there’s a street here which is much wilder than Montmartre, and I wanted to see it, but I can’t go there alone.”

“Hardly, from what I’ve been reading,” he agreed. “And you want someone to chaperone you on a sightseeing tour of the dens of iniquity.”

“Could you stand it? I’m curious, that’s all, and a woman is so handicapped in some ways, if she is a little respectable.”

“I shall treasure the implied compliment,” he murmured. “And I’d be delighted to see the sights with you. I must admit that I’m curious too, even if I’m not as respectable as I look.”

With his rakehell profile and impudent blue eyes, this was a statement of highly questionable validity, but she refrained from taking issue with it. Although her pink and white and flaxen allure was happily not built upon operatic proportions, she seemed to have a certain Wagnerian solemnity which was a piquant contrast to what she was proposing.

“And you are free tonight?” she asked. “Or would you prefer another time?”

“Tonight. If we put it off, you might lose your curiosity—or your nerve.” His gaze continued to analyze her shrewdly but not antagonistically. “But if you won’t mind my asking, what kind of tourist are you? You speak English perfectly, but you still have just a little accent, and a way of putting things—!”

“Of course. I’m half German. I was born in Munich. My mother was an American, but when the last war came she stayed here with my father. But she would talk only English to me, so I never forgot it. Sometimes when I come in a place like this I forget which language I should be talking.”

“But you said you were a tourist here.”

“You make me feel so foolish—like someone from Chicago who must admit she’s in New

York for the first time. But in Europe everyone hasn't always been everywhere."

"Nor has everyone in America," said the Saint consolingly. "In fact, there are several people in New York who've never been to Brooklyn."

"I'd like to go to New York. And Brooklyn, too—I think I'd feel much more at home there than in Hamburg, with all I've heard about them and seen in American movies."

"Do you still live in Munich?"

"Yes. I work there, for a shipping company. So I'm answering letters from America all the time." It seemed to remind her of a formality that had so far been omitted from their informal acquaintance. "My name is Eva."

He wondered whether this limited identification was another accepted local discretion or her own idea. But by falling in step without questioning it, he could conveniently by-pass his own perennial problem.

"Mine is Simon."

She was a pleasant companion in spite of her incongruous seriousness, and the Saint was especially contented to have acquired her at that hour, for he hated to eat alone. His friend had recommended the new penthouse restaurant atop the Bavaria Brewery, overlooking the port, and presently they took a taxi there to lay a foundation for the night's work.

"We must have eel soup," she said as they considered the menus. "It's one of the things Hamburg is famous for. Unless the idea shocks you?"

"What else goes into it—besides eels?"

"Vegetables, and herbs, and a sort of little dumpling, and prunes."

"It sounds frightful," he said, "But I'll make the experiment, if you want to."

Actually it turned out to be completely delectable, in an offbeat sweet-sour way. Afterwards they had the Vierländer Mastgeflügel, a tender broiled chicken, and a bottle of Dienhard's Hanns Christof Wein of '59—that greatest year of the decade for the vineyards of the Rhine. And under the combination of mellowing influences their acquaintance warmed and ripened. She didn't become unexpectedly stimulating and exciting, but she was absorbently easy to be with.

They sat beside one of the long plate-glass windows commanding a panorama of docks and warehouses and their associated machinery to which night and artificial lights lent an obviously meretricious but seductive glamor, and once when an attentive head waiter came by, Eva gestured outwards and asked, "What is that?"

"It is all part of the harbor of Hamburg. Just over there it is called the Grasbrook Hafen."

Simon sat up.

"Not the place where good old Klaus Störtebeker got it in the neck—if I may use the expression?"

"Yes, that is the same place. But it would have looked much different then."

"What are you talking about?" Eva asked, as the head waiter moved on.

"An old-time pirate in these parts," said the Saint. "I was reading about him in a guide-book just before we met. He left a buried treasure somewhere, too."

"How romantic." Her cornflower-blue eyes danced with more animation than they had previously revealed. "Tell me about it."

He brought out the little book and read her the passage which had captivated him.

"But I'm afraid," he concluded, "that if you want to get rich quick you'll have to think of something faster than looking for a goblet with a gallows on it."

"I suppose so." She was almost crestfallen, as if the goblet had been on the table and a commiseration had whisked it away with the soup plates. "There are no adventures of that kind any more."

Of all men alive, few could have produced better grounds to contest that assertion, but for the

moment Simon Templar preferred not to cite them. Instead, he said, "We'll have to do the best we can with our own adventure. Is there anything special you want to see on the Reeperbahn?"

"Everything."

"That might be a rather wide order."

"I've heard they have women who wrestle in a tank full of mud."

"Well, that might be a fairly romantic start," he admitted. "I guess we could try that for an hour's d'oeuvre, and play it by ear from there."

The Reeperbahn in Hamburg (which once meant "The Street of Rope-Workers") has long since lost its nautical connotation, except as regards the transient sailors who have made it the essential symbol of their port of call. It has become to Hamburg what Montmartre became to the tourist in Paris—who has no relationship with the Parisian. Along its few short blocks and up some of the side streets which lead off it is clustered a variety of establishments catering to the most generally deplored forms of human indulgence which even the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah might have contemplated with some respect. "But unlike those classic citadels of depravity, the Reeperbahn, which was also destroyed by fire from the heavens delivered by the air raiders of World War II, has risen again from the ashes with still more reprehensible vigour and the added modern advantages of coruscating neon.

There is available every gratification traditionally craved by the male animal on a toot, from the brassy ballroom to the dim-lighted cabaret, from the costumed chorus to the table-top strip-tease, from the extrovert's parade of flesh to the introvert's pornography, literate or pictorial, still or motion picture, with companionship from overdressed to undressed, with all the necessary alcohols to make everything enticing, if you take enough of them—or, if you are harder to intoxicate, and want to seek just a little harder, more costly but more powerful narcotics. It is all there, with the effort of search scaled down to the minimum which any aspiring debauchee should be able to muster, or he should give up and stay home. Everything from the oldest sensations to the newest variations—down to such exotic eccentricities as the principal attraction at the Jungmühle, where they had agreed to start their sampling.

Simon and Eva sat at a front table in an auditorium like a small converted theater, in which the side walls near the stage were smeared and stained with peculiar splash marks which suggested that past performers had pelted an unappreciative audience with unsavory tokens of their indignation, instead of being thus showered themselves by dissatisfied spectators according to the antique custom. The reality and actuality of this wild hypothesis was promptly concretized by a servitor who arrived with two large sheets of plastic and politely but matter-of-factly indicated that they should be tucked on like oversized bibs before even ordering anything spillable.

"I shall drink beer all the time," Eva said rather primly. "It's the cheapest thing to order, and it's always safe even in the worst places, and we shouldn't get drunk in the first dive or two we try."

"I suppose that's a sound approach," said the Saint, with respect.

The superannuated discard of a travelling opera company who had been sentimentally vocalizing on the stage bowed off, with the muted approval of the congregation; a tarpaulin cover was removed from what might have been a shallow orchestra pit, revealing that it had been converted into a kind of wading trough paved with moist brown mud; the spotlights brightened, and two women entered from opposite wings and met in the center of the stage, draped in vivid satin robes which they threw off as the loudspeakers identified them. Underneath they wore only bikini trunks and their own exuberant flesh and glands. The formalities having been complied with, they seized each other by the hair and fell into the tank with a juicy splash.

Thereafter it was much the same as the traditional ballet popularised in the commercial guise of wrestling by hundreds of artistes of the grunt and grimace and groan, except that these performers not only had an opportunity to illustrate the more delicate and sensitive feminine approach but had a

shallow quagmire of lusciously textured sludge to do it in. This gave them a few extra vulnerable targets to kick, twist, and gouge, and an additional weapon to bring into play. While one of them was attempting to suffocate the other by grinding her face into the mud, she could suffer the indignity of having her panties pulled down and stuffed with the same goo and when not so intertwined they could throw gobs of it in each other's faces, which if inaccurately aimed might splatter the scenery or the onlookers—which explained the spray flecks on the walk and the considerately furnished bibs. By the time this tender choreography had run its course both the exponents were decently covered from crown to toe with a succulent coating of gunk, and their sex appeal was almost equal to that of two hippopotami emerging from a wallow.

Simon, dividing his clinical attention between the grappling amazons and Eva, was somewhat nonplussed by her reaction, or the lack of it. She seemed to be neither startled, nor shocked, nor disgusted, nor embarrassed, nor morbidly fascinated by these revelations of the infinite range of female grace and tenderness. The most you could have said, based on her outward placidity, was that she was mildly amused. It was none of the obvious responses that he would have expected of a woman so bent on experience that she had to pick up a stranger in a bar to facilitate it.

“Shall we sit out another minuet?” he inquired. “Or should we move on?”

“I think we should try something else,” she replied with the same demure detachment. “Do you know—you won't believe me—I've never seen a strip-tease?”

“I believe that can be easily remedied,” he said, with the same gravity.

The German strip-tease follows much the same pattern as the American original, but with characteristic efficiency it moves much more briskly towards the essential objective, which is that the teaser should strip. In the opinion of many students, this leads to what might be paradoxically called decent haste in the peeling. The esoteric stimuli of the bump and grind have never enslaved many addicts in Europe, but to replace that allure the German ecdysiast has the advantage of a law which permits her to expose every last square centimetre of her person provided she does not wiggle it. Therefore with studious legality even the G-string is twanged off during a momentary blackout before the final climax, or not even bothered with in incidental tableaux, and the uncomplicated connoisseur of nudity can be assured of one hundred per cent satisfaction.

On and around the Reeperbahn, the problem is not to find a place that features this kind of entertainment but to decide which one to patronize. Each of them has its panegyrist outside to buttonhole the passer-by and extol the lewd delights within. The first such temple of voyeurism that Simon picked at random, however, failed so drably to live up to its eulogy that he could not quite make himself accept it as a single and final sample of what the town could offer in that line, and he himself suggested one more try. Their next gamble was the Colibri, and there the density of the crowd which happily shared its tables on a basis of vacant chairs rather than acquaintance indicated that it relied less on a barker outside than on a clientele that knew its way around. The supposition was rapidly justified: the exhibitionists averaged younger and comelier, and disrobed with a continuing celerity that would have given even a jaded sultan no cause for complaint.

But Eva watched this with no perceptible difference from the way she had viewed the lamentable display in the preceding joint—without horror or excitement, but with a sort of tepid amusement that narrowly escaped the suspicion of boredom.

“Is it what you expected?” he asked, when she caught his eyes on her instead of on the latest playful grouping of naked maidens.

“More or less.”

“You don't seem to get much of a kick out of it.”

“Did you expect me to? A normal woman shouldn't get much of a kick out of watching other women undress, should she?”

“I was wondering why you were so keen to do it.”

—“To know just what people mean when they talk about these shows, and what it is that they go to see. You see, I’m really terribly innocent, and yet a woman hates to be called unsophisticated. But I can admit it to you, because you don’t know any of my friends, and after this I shall know as much as they do.”

He was certainly not qualified to confirm or contest that, but it was a divertingly novel approach. He said, “Now what would you like to add to your education?”

“I’ve heard there’s a street of little houses, where the girls sit in the windows or make bargain at the doors.”

There was such a street, or alley, and they obtained directions to it without difficulty, but at the half-barricaded entrance they were barred by a stodgily correct Polizist.

“Very sorry,” he said in English, recognizing automatically that only foreigners attempted this transgression. “Not for ladies. Men only.”

“How silly,” she pouted as they walked away after a brief futile argument. “There are women in there already, aren’t there?”

“But only on business,” Simon pointed out. “I can understand how they could resent being stared at like specimens in a zoo by other women who’d never done that kind of work. But perhaps you didn’t know that it can be work.”

She gave him a sharp defensive glance, which he blandly pretended not to notice. He seemed to be merely looking around for some other potential source of the sophistication she wanted.

“There must be some way for a man to meet a girl that is not so cold-blooded,” she said at last. “You must have had some experience in that way. I can’t see you going in that closed street to buy a woman. But what else would you do?”

He forbore from mentioning that he had not done so badly by just sitting at the bar of a first-class hotel. They were at the corner of another turning, down which the darkness was splintered by a blazing frontage of all-purpose brilliance topped by a vertical arrangement of fluorescent tubes which spelled the name Sübersack.

“If I were a sailor on the loose,” he said, remembering bygone days in far-off ports when he had been little more than that, “I’d probably try my luck in a joint something like that.”

The inside was as stark and garish as the outside. There was no attempt at décor, merely a practical provision of seats and tables. Girls and women in street clothes that made no pretension of glamor, and ordinary-looking men of mostly middle and lower ages in even more undistinguished tailorings, stood around or sat and drank and/or eyed each other and/or danced in a minimum of empty floor space to the rhythms of a juke box.

Simon and Eva sat on a bench in a corner and ordered more beer. A peripatetic artist of curiously ageless aspect came by, whipped out a pair of nail scissors, and snipped away at a piece of plain paper which, unfolded, separated, and swiftly pasted to two plain white cards, became a mirror-pair of their two silhouettes in black cut-out. The likenesses were extraordinary. Simon registered his appreciation with largesse which was apparently excessive, for the artist beamingly began snipping again. The scissors twinkled and flew, and out of their quicksilver nibbling came another mirror-pair of silhouettes, only this time it was a pastoral whimsy, a boy and a girl and a fawn framed in a woodland bower, all filigreed in a couple of minutes with a delicacy and truth of line that many a competent draughtsman would have been glad to achieve with a pen in half an hour. The snipper presented those shadowgraphs as a reciprocal bonus, with a smile and a bow, and went away, but for Simon Templar, who had his own peculiarly slanted scale of values, this was the happiest highlight of the evening so far.

“I think this is rather dull,” Eva said.

The Saint by that time was beginning to feel unwontedly adaptable.

“What would you suggest next?” he asked.

“There are special movies, aren’t there, which are only shown privately?”

“There are such things. But I don’t think you’d like them.”

“Then we can walk out. But I’d like to know why I didn’t like them.”

“They mightn’t be so easy to find. Even around here, they’re probably illegal.”

“At least we can inquire.”

“And expensive.”

She opened her eyes wider.

“But we agreed to go Dutch. Are you running short? Or do you think I wasn’t serious?” She opened her bag and took out a small wad of currency held in a clip, from which she pulled three hundred-mark notes. “Here—when we settle up, you give me the change, if there is any.”

Simon put away the deposit unblushingly, with the impersonal courtesy of a banker. They went out again, and he said, “I suppose one of those touts on the Reeperbahn could tell us what the chances are.”

“Let’s go this way.” She pointed. “It looks like a nice sinister street.”

He thought that its sinister air was probably only an illusion compounded of grime and bad lighting, but he automatically set himself on the alert for any flicker of a shadow or whisper of sound that would give split-second warning of a sneak attack. It seemed rather far-fetched to imagine that she would have gone through such a long and roundabout routine merely to set him up for a rendezvous with a mugger, but he had survived far beyond any reasonable expectation for a man of his proclivities largely because he never completely ruled out any such possibilities, however remote. But at the same time taking the likelier line that there was no such sordid anticlimax in store, he was trying to decide at what point he should set a limit to the depths of depravity to which a gentleman could properly escort a scientifically inquisitive lady, whilst toying with his own scientific temptation to find out how far she would go before calling off the experiment.

And then all these avenues of speculation dead-ended suddenly and electrifyingly as they came down to within a few yards of the Reeperbahn again, without any incident, and yet Eva abruptly stopped in her tracks and clutched the Saint’s arm as if she had been confronted by a rampaging ogre.

It was nothing so spectacular that she pointed at, however. Nothing but the window of a side-street pawnshop, located there to accommodate patrons of the main drag who might find themselves temporarily embarrassed for the wherewithal to prolong a promising spree. Inside the window were spread and stacked and suspended the weird miscellaneous pledges of uncounted revellers who had moved on and left their collateral unredeemed, every conceivable form of security from cuff-links to clarinets.

And near the center of the window was a tarnished pewter goblet.

On which were crudely carved the initials “KS.”

Suspended, Simon saw, as Eva dragged him closer, from the scratched outline of a gibbet...

“That’s it, isn’t it?” she breathed. “The goblet that it tells about in your guide-book!”

“It couldn’t be,” he said mechanically.

“But it is! It’s exactly like the book describes it—the initials, the gallows, every thing!”

The Saint stared at it. He couldn’t go on arguing with what she said. And yet he was in the same state of incredulous shock that must stun anyone who sees the number of his ticket listed as the winner of some National Lottery or the Irish Sweep. It was the thing that everybody has day-dreamed of but recognized realistically that it will never happen. And yet, even more inescapably than a bolt of lightning, it has to strike someone, somewhere.

But in this instance, the chronicler must now reveal, the lightning was no electrical

phenomenon. It was the stroke of genius of Franz Kolben, perhaps the most financially successful though inglorious author that Hamburg has ever known. A little belated background may here be necessary. Mr Franz Kolben (who formerly preferred to be known as “Frank”) was, as the Saint had somewhat intuitively divined, in fact a born native of Milwaukee, USA, an off-sprout of German immigrants who had raised him bilingually with better motives than he had ever applied to this advantage. Leaving home as soon as he could dispense with its fringe benefits, young Frank had found employment in a modern furniture factory in Grand Rapids, from which he graduated to a more exclusive atelier in Chicago which fabricated equally modern antiques. From there, since he was an ambitious and go-ahead type with wits as sharp as any chisel, it was another logical step from the manufacturing to the retailing side, which not only paid better but offered more scope to his developing ingenuity, and enlarged his vision from the limited area of phony period furniture to the entire field of bogus antiquity. He was in a fair way to becoming the beardless wonder of the racket in that region when the draft finally netted him and unfeelingly transmuted him from an operator to a number in an operation.

World War II had reached its supposedly glorious conclusion about the time Sergeant Kolben had finally convinced the arbiters of his destiny that his knowledge of German entitled him to an occupation billet in Europe rather than a combat assignment in the Pacific. To his indescribable chagrin, he had presented his case so convincingly that no subsequent effort could change his orders, and in due inexorable course he found himself in Hamburg, a very small cog in the Military Government, replacing some lucky veteran with enough points to be heading for home and honorable discharge.

With all his faults, however, Frank Kolben had never been a quitter, and he wasted less time than many more honest men in unprofitable pining. His background and knowledge inevitably trended him in one particular direction, and when he detected one of the earliest traders to come out of hiding in the act of selling a battle-happy GI a piece of cheap china guaranteed to be genuine old Dresden lovingly cached through blitz and krieg, he knew he had it made. What might have begun and ended in the less talented hands as a rudimentary exercise in blackmail, blossomed under Frankie’s green-hungry thumbs into an industry which may have mulcted the warriors homing from its range of more hard-earned dollars than any temptation but sex. To this day, there are probably few communities in America where you could not find some spurious souvenir of German liberation which Kolben had helped to produce.

But there came a time at last when all the well-heeled buyers had been repatriated, and even Master Sergeant Kolben was eligible for discharge, and Frankie found to his astonishment that he was not yet ready to go home. He had done all right and he had evolved notions of doing better, and he had also formed a sentimental attachment which satisfied all his desires in that zone. He decided to stay on, and his hunch was right. Very soon the free-spending soldiery was replaced by prosperous German industrialists from the Rhineland and the South, and then they in turn were diluted by the first venturesome trickle of civilian tourists from former enemy countries, a trickle which swelled rapidly into a tide, which washed up a regular supply of suckers on the doorstep of Frankie’s very satisfied partner—whose name, we need no longer conceal, was Uhrmeister.

The Introduction to Hamburg had been one of Frankie’s sublimest inspirations, and he had worked hard on it, despite the fact that he had cribbed practically all its information from other publications. The labor of assembling, rearranging, and paraphrasing the material sufficiently to evade suit for infringements of copyright had been surprisingly arduous, for he had no natural literary inclination, but it was fully rewarded by the opportunity to inject the one sentence which was completely and incontrovertibly original with him: “He is said to have hidden a map of its whereabouts in the base of a pewter goblet on which he carved his initials suspended from a gallows,

but if has never been found.”

—“Where did you read this, Franz?” asked Uhrmeister when he saw the manuscript—he could never get used to addressing his associate, who spoke German as well as he did himself, by anything but the German name. “I lived here all my life, and this is the first time I heard it.”

“I made it up, Papa,” Frankie admitted cheerfully. “But it is the most important thing in the book. Remember, to almost any tourist, a guide-book is like gospel. He may not believe what you tell him—but everything he reads in a book, he believes. So when you see a likely mark, you don’t tell him anything. You give him the book.”

Herr Uhrmeister, who was no dummkopf, but who had questioned why he should invest in the printing of a guide-book superficially like any other guide-book but to be dispensed gratuitously in certain locations without even mentioning the name of his shop, began to catch on.

“Now, we must begin to make these goblets.”

For some time they had sold very well indeed, if not like hot cakes, perhaps more appropriate like gold bricks, as they appeared in other places not ostensibly connected with Herr Uhrmeister’s establishment on ABC-Strasse, at preposterously inflated prices which were seldom questioned by buyers in a panic to get away with their purchase before anyone else saw it and outbid them, or the vendor realized what he was parting with.

The fact that the bases of the goblets, when cut into or broken open, proved to contain nothing but dust and air, did not constitute fraud under any statute, and in any case the hardihood of a buyer who would have brought formal complaint about having been cheated out of what he hoped to cheat the seller was practically inconceivable. Probably there was not one in a hundred who even suspected that he had been more than just unlucky. Nevertheless, after a while Frank Kolben’s restless mind perceived where the wheeze was falling short of its maximum potential pay-off, and went back to work to remedy that...

“If that’s Klaus Störtebeker’s own original goblet,” Simon persisted, “why is it still there? Why hasn’t someone else seen it and bought it before this? If it comes to that, why is the pawnbroker selling it?”

“Perhaps he hasn’t heard the story,” Eva responded. “Why should a little pawnbroker know everything? Why should everyone who passes know it? If we had passed last night instead of tonight, before you read that book, would we have known? At least I am not going to laugh at it and go away!”

She released his arm with a movement that was almost like throwing away something that had become distasteful, and turned to the door of the shop. It opened for her with a loud jangling of bells, the lights had always been on inside, and through the window Simon could see the presumable proprietor shuffle out through the curtains behind the counter at the back—an old man whose trade had plainly left him no illusions and even less patience with anybody who expected him to harbor on. The shop was apparently still open, ready to finance anyone who came by with acceptable security.

By the time Simon caught up with Eva inside, she already had the proprietor at a disadvantage in the less familiar aspect of buyer-seller relations, for such places.

“Are you crazy?” she was saying in German. “Three hundred marks—for a battered old thing like that?”

“It is very old,” said the shopkeeper, like a recitation. “Perhaps of the fifteenth century.”

“Then it is so much more second-hand. I will pay two hundred.”

“That is absurd, gracious lady. Perhaps two hundred and ninety...”

Simon picked up the goblet and examined it more closely. Judging by its weight, the stem and base seemed to be hollow, but they were solidly plugged at the bottom. He studied the construction and the sealing while the haggling ran its predestined course.

“Two hundred and forty, then. Not a pfennig more!”



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