spilled a pool of blood athwart the kerb. A closed car was there, its tail-lamp towards us. I stopped my cab a few yards from the hotel, paid it off, and hastened towards the car. As I drew near I discerned a shape immobile in the driving-seat. "Here I am!" I cried softly.

The figure at the steering-wheel did not move, but at that moment a shadow seemed to detach itself from the gloom under the house walls. A short, square-shouldered man, with a large moustache, stepped up to me. He laid a finger to his bowler. "Fräulein Dunbar?" he said politely in German.

His matter-of-fact tone disarmed me: I took him to be a messenger from Druce. "Yes," I said. Then I started, for two other men had appeared noiselessly at my elbow.

"We are the police," said the first man. "You must come with us to Headquarters."

I sprang back. "The police?" I repeated. "Why? What have I done?"

"False registration," was the curt reply, as the speaker flung open the car door. "Get in with her, you two: I'll sit next to Fritze...."

They hustled me into the car, and we were whirled away over the gleaming asphalt.

CHAPTER XIX
THE CROUCHING BEAST

If there be any courage in my composition, it is of that common brand which asserts itself only when confronted with the inevitable. And there was something essentially finite about the two large and stolid plain-clothes men who bore me company as the limousine sped quickly through the streets.

In the first shock of my arrest I was angry rather than
scared. Angry with myself for having walked thus blindly into the trap. I suppose my good fortune in emerging unscathed from the unexpected encounters of the evening threw me off my guard.

An endless chain of arc-lamps shining milkily among a central avenue of trees, a blaze of light from the pavements told me that we were crossing Unter den Linden. On the farther side we seemed to be immersed at once in a network of dim streets. As we glided along I tried to review my position.

What exactly had Grundt against me? Definitely, only this tiresome business of the false registration. He knew, of course, that I had spent the day in Berlin; but—for the present, anyhow—he could have no evidence that I could see as to how I had passed the time.

From Druc’s account of what had taken place after my flight from Bale’s, it was pretty obvious that my brief appearance there had not been discovered. What about my trip to the Hohenzollern-Allee? Here, too, it seemed to me, the scales were depressed in my favour. The Prince was clearly ignorant of the Abbott business and of my part in it: otherwise, on running into me at Schippke’s that unsavoury young man would have lost no time in handing me over to the authorities. Yet Clubfoot had certainly gone to the Hohenzollern-Allee to tell the Pellegrini what had happened at Schlatz. I could only suppose that the Prince had left the flat without seeing Grundt again, for, if he had heard Clubfoot’s story, he would most assuredly have mentioned my visit.

As for the Pellegrini, I could not believe it was she who had betrayed me. The fact that she had left her lover in ignorance of Clubfoot’s suspicions of me, and the state of terror in which I had seen her that night, were abundant corroboration of Druc’s theory that she had kept her affair with Abbott a secret from Grundt. Her manner had
shown me that she was racked with anxiety lest Clubfoot should learn the truth, namely, that, on the evening of that fateful 5th of July, Abbott had been in her apartment, and that she was desirous, above all things, of getting rid of me, the only person who could give her away. I imagined I could rely on her to keep her princeling quiet. As long as these two held their tongues, Clubfoot could have no suspicion that I had been to the flat.

And Druce. What had become of him? I had seen no car in the Mauer-Strasse other than the one which was now bearing me towards a fate unknown. Yet Druce was not the sort of man to leave a friend in the lurch. Couldn’t he have stayed to warn me?

I felt a faint stirring of my old misgivings. He had recovered the blue envelope: I was of no further use to him now. Might he not be glad to be quit of an embarrassing accomplice? He might even have sent word to the police . . . but I could not believe that of him. And yet it was he who had fixed the rendezvous: he—the thought made my cheeks flame—who had suggested that I register in a false name . . .

The stopping of the car put an abrupt end to my fruitless searchings. The rays of a street-lamp, falling through the glass, picked out the foliage of a box-hedge. A gate creaked, and the car, moving forward, swung round the short curve of a gravelled drive and drew up outside a low porch. In the glow from the head-lamps I was aware of a dark house, with gables overhanging like a Swiss chalet, that rose above it.

I had expected to be taken to some large public building, a Berlin equivalent of Scotland Yard, not to a suburban villa, as this seemed to be. I hung back as one of my companions in the car stepped out and held the door expectantly. “Bitte schön!” he said politely.

The front door was already unlatched. It brought us
into a nondescript lobby, where a stained-glass lantern, 
pendant from a chain, striped with bars of sparse-coloured 
light a great stove, white and pompous as any tomb, and 
some dusty antlers forlornly impaled upon the walls. 
Here they kept me while the man who had ridden on the 
box tiptoed away with creaking boots, presumably to give 
otice of our arrival. An oppressive stillness rested over 
al; and my companions conversed in hoarse whispers, 
as though fearful to break the spell. I felt myself borne 
down by a presentiment of evil.

After a little wait a door, gaping suddenly, rent a bright 
rift in the gloom at the lobby's end. The man with the 
creaky boots stood and beckoned. As they thrust me for-
ward I caught a glimpse behind him of a sort of cubby-hole, 
with desk and typewriter, and a second door beyond. This 
the messenger, without knocking, opened, disclosing an inner 
portal, sheathed in baize, which swung inward at his push.

The room into which, at his silent bidding, I passed 
was dark save for a blur of light thrown downward by a 
reading-lamp on a desk in the centre. The desk, a massive 
roll-top affair, backed on the door, and of the lamp nothing 
but the glass shade, gleaming like a great green eye, was 
discernible. Its reflected light, spread about the room, 
glinted on one side upon book-shelves tiered to the ceiling, 
and on the other was lost in a band of starry night-sky 
which, above a dark mass of foliage, hung like a drop-scene 
between the two wings of a tall casement window folded 
back against curtains. Somewhere in the distance a dog 
barked, and the thumping of the city trams was faint in 
the room. The rest was stealthy silence.
The door by which I had entered sighed as it was softly 
shut. I realised that my guards had remained outside. 
I glanced cautiously about me. It seemed incredible that 
they should have left me there alone with that open win-
dow inviting escape. Buoyed up with sudden hope, I
took a step forward, and then my heart suddenly seemed to stop beating. For, as the further side of the desk came into view, I became aware that a man was sitting there: I could see the top of his head on a line with the green lamp-shade, a mass of stiff bristles, iron-grey. No need to look twice: I knew at the first glance who it was, just as I had known by instinct to whose house they brought me, just as I recognised the raucous voice that now fended the eerie stillness.

"I should not try the window, Miss Dunbar," it said. "The night air of Berlin is not healthy. . . ."

And on that the massive form of Grundt rose up from behind the desk.

Once more I was impressed by the man's tremendous personality. He radiated authority. The room was spacious, high of ceiling, too, but he seemed to fill it like a procession. He was smiling, as though in welcome, but the cruel, yellow fangs his parted lips unbared robbed his smile of all kindliness, and the hard glitter of his eyes belied any friendly intention. For the rest, his features were blankly impassive—deliberately impassive, it seemed to me—as though he wished by sheer will-power to bludgeon me into submission before unfolding what was in his mind.

He indicated a chair near the desk. "Bitte. . . ." The tone was formally polite; but he was watching me from under his shaggy, ape-like eyebrows as I crossed the room. As I sat down I saw his hand move to the lamp, which he manipulated so that my face was in its indirect radiance. His features remained in shadow.

By this I was almost distracted with fear. And yet the issue before me was perfectly plain. I had to find a reasonable explanation, if not a valid excuse, for that false registration. Irrelevant ideas floated aimlessly through my mind like straws whirled about the head of a drowning man. Vainly, even as he might, I snatched at
them and found them, even as he, unavailing when in my grasp. I tried to collect my thoughts; but they seemed to flee me in wild confusion under the baleful, unrevealing scrutiny of the man at the desk.

Yet when at length he spoke his tone was not unfriendly:

"Two days ago at Schlatz," he said, in his grating voice, "Dr. von Hentsch gave you a piece of advice. Do you remember?"

I tried to say something; but the words would not come. He took my silence for obstinacy, for he went on, though in the same level tones: "It would be foolish on your part to attempt to hide anything from me, Fräulein. And you have been sufficiently foolish already...." He picked up a pair of horn spectacles which lay on the large and littered desk, and adjusted them on his nose. Then, taking a file from the top of a pile of similar folders, he opened it and consulted one of the papers it contained.

"At Kemper's Hotel, in the Mauer-Strasse, this evening, you registered in the false name of... um... Maria Hübel," he resumed. He held forth a slip. "You will not deny that this is in your handwriting, I presume?"

And without waiting for me to reply, he spread out his enormous hairy hands before him and went on:

"False-registration is a very serious offence in Prussia. Punishable by imprisonment under the Penal Code. Our German prisons are not pleasant places, Fräulein Dunbar. Our methods are not dictated to sentimental Ministers by dithyrambic playwrights. We make gaol so damnably uncomfortable that no prisoner ever wants to get back. Corporal punishment, I believe, is still in force for unruly prisoners. For women as well as for men." His shoulders shook in a spasm of silent mirth. "And you are a very unruly person. J'wohl..." He paused. "I don't think... I don't think you'd care about the Frauen-Gefängniss, my dear." He swung round unexpectedly,
his great eyebrows drawn together in a frown. "But it's where you 'd be at this moment if, out of deference to the good Dr. von Hentsch, I had not had you brought here. Now," he demanded, suddenly stern, "what's the meaning of all this nonsense?"

I had only one weapon to my hand, a woman's weapon, and I used it. After all, men were all alike; and it was not the first time I had had to wheedle myself out of a scrape. Besides, under the paternal tone he adopted with me, I seemed to discern a sort of sympathetic interest: well, perhaps sympathetic is not quite the word; benevolently appraising, let me say, as though, not too critically, he were summing me up. I was foolish enough to imagine it showed that he was not entirely insensible to the other sex.

Dulcie used to say I had no heart because I would not encourage poor Bill Bradley. I never was sentimental, anyway; and that was why, I suppose, I discovered for myself at Schlatz that sentimentality is the strong suit with all German men. The Prince had described me as a "sweet little morsel"; and I resolved to play up to the rôle. So I gave Dr. Grundt a soulful look and, playing with my handkerchief, said rather sniffily: "It was very silly of me, I know. But I promised Dr. von Hentsch to go straight back to London; and I didn't want him to know I'd stopped in Berlin. . . ."

Clubfoot grunted. "So? And why did you stay in Berlin, may I ask?"

I dabbed my eyes. "A friend of mine was coming up from Schlatz this afternoon. I'd promised to dine with him...."

The big man clicked chidingly with his tongue: you know, the noise that Nursie makes to a naughty child.

"Very foolish. Who was this friend?"

"One of the officers from Schlatz. . . ."

He laughed drily. "So I imagined. What's his name?"

I hesitated. "It won't get him into trouble, will it?"
"A Prussian officer would know better than to make himself accessory to a falsification of documents. . . ."
"Must I give the name?"
"Certainly, if you wish me to verify your story."
"It was Lieutenant Linz," I said.
He made a note on a block. "And where did you dine?"
"At Schippke's. . . ."
I spoke without thinking. Not that I could have avoided answering the question! But I felt I had blundered when I saw his hand, playing with the pencil, suddenly become motionless, though the expression on his face never changed. He knew, I remembered then, that the Pellegrini was at Schippke's: he had telephoned her there. Never mind, I could count on the fair Floria not to give me away. . . .

He made another note and ripped the sheet from the block. He must have rung some concealed bell, for the door opened without warning. The messenger was the man with the bloodless face and huge, tawny moustache who had accompanied him that morning to Bale's. He took the slip without speaking and disappeared.

There was a little silence in the room. Clubfoot's hairy hand dipped into a cigar-box on the desk. I have never seen the simple operation of lighting a cigar performed with such an 'air of ferocity. It was an enormous cigar, and there was something tigerish about the way his strong teeth fastened upon it, and bit off the end which he spat, disgustedly, far into the room. He emitted a deep grunt of satisfaction as, having lit up, he lolled back in his chair and blew a cloud of smoke into the air.

"So you wanted to dine with your officer friend, ch?" he remarked, and with a thrill of hope I noticed that his tone was quite jocular. "Well, well, perhaps there's some excuse for you. Splendid young men, our Prussian lieutenants, nicht wahr, Fräulein?"
I murmured I thought they were very nice.

"And so the Herr Leutnant took you to Schippke's, did he, the dog!" he observed waggishly. "A young German girl would not dine alone there with a man. Liebes Fräulein, aren't you a little unconventional?"

"Herr von Linz is a gentleman," I rejoined. "Besides, we are used to our liberty in England...."

He smiled his grim smile. "Evidently...." With a thoughtful air he shook the ash from his cigar into the waste-paper basket. "Some of your compatriots are inclined to be promiscuous in the choice of their gentlemen friends. Only to-day I heard of a young English girl being seen here in Berlin in company with a notorious criminal at one of the lowest haunts in the city, the resort of thieves and...."

He broke off as, without warning, the door facing him opened. A stout woman, with a pasty face, stood irsolute on the threshold. Clubfoot's hot and savage eyes seemed to burn holes right through me as he looked at me and from me to the door.

"Don't stand there like a fool!" he roared at the woman. "Come in, verdammt, and tell me if this is the girl you saw this morning!"

The woman closed the door behind her gingerly, and stepped into the circle of light.

It was Frau Hulda from the Café zur Nelke.

She had donned her finery for the street; a hard straw hat, a blue feather boa, a short black jacket. Her thin lips were pressed together, her shifty eyes round with apprehension.

"Is this the girl?" snapped Grundt.
She nodded impressively. "Jawohl...."
"You're sure....?"

Her glance swept me, contemptuous, from head to foot.
"I'd know her anywhere. We wondered what she was
doing in the café in her fine clothes with that low-down actor. I said to the ladies who work with me, after she and her feller had gone: 'Girls,' I said, 'as God is my judge,' I said, 'she's . . .'

But Grundt had heaved himself up and hobbled across to the window. "Bartsch!" he called out into the night. A voice spoke back: "Herr Doktor?"

"Stay beneath the window and keep your eyes open, verstanden?"

"Ist gut, Herr Doktor!"

Clubfoot slammed the window and turned about. He pointed at me with a commanding gesture. "Search her!" he said to the woman.

I sprang forward, my every instinct in revolt. "I won't have it, . . ." I cried.

"Another word from you," rasped Grundt, rounding on me savagely, "and I'll do it myself!" He swung round to Frau Hulda. "You've been in gaol. You know how it's done. And don't overlook the linings!"

He limped cumbrously from the room.

CHAPTER XX

THE PHOTOGRAPH

When I set out to write my story, I meant to put down each successive phase of my adventure just as it happened. But the feeling of nausea which brought me nigh to fainting, as that evil harpy laid her damp and pudgy hands on me, comes over me again now, more than four years after, in the country peace of this dear land of ours, and I cannot bring myself to think, much less to write, of that sickening ordeal. . . .

And then Clubfoot was back again, leaning on his stick.