CHAPTER XIV

IN WHICH A ROLLS-ROYCE RUNS AMOK

Some ten minutes later he emerged from the bathroom carefully carrying a saucer in his hand. The girl's announcement that Number 13 had started at once had been received with a satisfied grunt, but he had spoken no word. And the girl, glancing through the door, saw him, with his shirt sleeves rolled up above his elbows, carefully mixing two liquids together and stirring the result gently with a glass rod. He was completely absorbed in his task, and with a faint smile on her face she went back to the sofa and waited. She knew too well the futility of speaking to him on such occasions. Even when he came in, carrying the result of his labours with a pair of india-rubber gloves on his hands, she made no remark, but waited for him to relieve her curiosity.

He placed the mixture on the table and glanced round the room. Then he pulled up one of the ordinary stuff arm-chairs to the table and removed the linen head-rest, which he carefully soaked with the contents of the saucer, dabbing the liquid on with a sponge, so as not to crumple the linen in any way. He used up all the liquid, and then, still with the same meticulous care, he replaced the head-rest
on the chair, and stood back and surveyed his handiwork.

"Look all right?" he asked briefly.

"Quite," answered the girl. "What's the game?"

"Drummond has got to sit in that chair," he returned, removing the saucer and the sponge to the bathroom, and carefully peeling off his gloves. "He's got to sit in that chair, my dear, and afterwards that linen affair has got to be burnt. And whatever happens"—he paused for a moment in front of her—"don't you touch it."

Quietly and methodically, he continued his preparations, as if the most usual occurrence in the world was in progress. He picked up two other chairs, and carried them through into the bedroom; then he returned and placed an open dispatch-case with a sheaf of loose paper on another one.

"That more or less limits the seating accommodation," he remarked, glancing round the room. "Now if you, cara mia, will spread some of your atrocious woollen garments on the sofa beside you, I think we can guarantee the desired result."

But apparently his preparations were not over yet. He crossed to the sideboard and extracted a new and undecanted bottle of whisky. From this he withdrew about a dessertspoonful of the spirit, and replaced it with the contents of a small phial which he took out of his waistcoat pocket. Then he forced back the cork until it was right home, and with the greatest care replaced the cap of
tinfoil round the top of the bottle. And the
girl, coming over to where he was working,
saw that the bottle was again as new.
“What a consummate artist you are, chéri!” she said, laying a hand on his shoul-
der.
The Reverend Theodosius smiled and passed
his arm round her waist.
“One of the earliest essentials of our—er
—occupation, my little one, is to learn how to
insert dope into an apparently untouched
bottle.”
“But do you think you will get him to
drink even out of a new bottle?”
“I hope so. I shall drink myself. But
even if he doesn’t, the preparation on the chair
is the essential thing. Once his neck touches
that—”
With an expressive wave of his hand he
vanished once more into the bathroom, return-
ing with his coat.
“Don’t you remember that Italian toxi-
cologist—Fransioli?” he remarked. “We met
him in Naples three years ago, and he oblig-
ingly told me that he had in his possession the
secret of one of the real Borgia poisons. I
remember I had a most interesting discussion
with him on the subject. The internal appli-
cation is harmless; the external application is
what matters. That acts alone, but if the
victim can be induced to take it internally as
well it acts very much better.”
“Fransioli?” She frowned thoughtfully.
“Wasn’t that the name of the man who had
the fatal accident on Vesuvius?”
"That's the fellow," answered the Reverend Theodosius, arranging a siphon and some glasses on a tray. "He persuaded me to ascend it with him, and on the way up he was foolish enough to tell me that the bottles containing this poison had been stolen from his laboratory. I don't know whether he suspected me or not—I was an Austrian Baron at the time, if I remember aright—but when he proceeded to peer over the edge of the crater at a most dangerous point I thought it better to take no risks. So—er—the accident occurred. And I gathered he was really a great loss to science."

He glanced at his watch, and the girl laughed delightedly.

"It will be interesting to see if his claims for it are true," he continued thoughtfully. "I have only used it once, but on that occasion I inadvertently put too much into the wine, and the patient died. But with the right quantities it produces—so he stated, and I saw him experiment on a dog—a type of partial paralysis, not only of the body, but of the mind. You can see, you can hear, but you can't speak and you can't move. What ultimately happens with a human being I don't know, but the dog recovered."

A quick double knock came at the door, and with one final glance round the room the Reverend Theodosius crossed to his desk and sat down.

"Come in," he called, and a small dapper-looking man entered.

"Number 13, sir," said the new-comer briefly, and the other nodded.
"I am expecting a man here shortly, 13," remarked the clergyman, "whose voice I shall want you to imitate over the telephone."
"Only over the telephone, sir?"
"Only over the telephone. You will not be able to be in this room, but there is a bathroom adjoining in which you can hear every word that is spoken." The other nodded as if satisfied. "For how long will you require to hear him talk?"
"Five or ten minutes, sir, will be ample."
"Good. You shall have that. There's the bathroom. Go in, and don't make a sound."
"Very good, sir."
"And wait. Have Giuseppi and Number 10 come yet?"
"They left headquarters, sir, just after I did. They should be here by now."

The man disappeared into the bathroom, closing the door behind him, and once again the Reverend Theodosius glanced at his watch. "Our young friend should be here shortly," he murmured. "And then the single which he seems so anxious to play can begin in earnest."

The benign expression which he had adopted as part of his rôle disappeared for an instant to be replaced by a look of cold fury.
"The single will begin in earnest," he repeated softly, "and it's the last one he will ever play."

The girl shrugged her shoulders.
"He has certainly asked for it," she remarked, "but it strikes me that you had better be careful. You may bet on one thing
that he hasn’t kept his knowledge about you and me to himself. Half those young idiots that run about behind him know everything by this time, and if they go to Scotland Yard it will be very unpleasant for us, mon chéri. And that they certainly will do if anything should happen to dear Hugh.”

The clergyman smiled resignedly.

“After all these years, you think it necessary to say that to me! My dear, you pain me—you positively wound me to the quick. I will guarantee that all Drummond’s friends sleep soundly in their beds to-night, harbouring none but the sweetest thoughts of the kindly and much-maligned old clergyman at the Ritz.”

“And what of Drummond himself?” continued the girl.

“It may be to-night, or it may be to-morrow. But accidents happen at all times—and one is going to happen to him.” He smiled sweetly, and lit a cigar. “A nasty, sticky accident which will deprive us of his presence. I haven’t worried over the details yet—but doubtless the inspiration will come. And here, if I mistake not, is our hero himself.”

The door swung open and Drummond entered.

“Well, Carl, old lad,” he remarked breezily, “here I am on the stroke of time with the bag of nuts all complete.”

“Excellent,” murmured the clergyman, waving a benevolent hand towards the only free chair. “But if you must call me by my Christian name, why not make it Theo?”
Drummond grinned delightedly.

"As you wish, my little one. Theo it shall be in future, and Janet." He bowed to the girl as he sat down. "There's just one little point I want to mention, Theo, before we come to the laughter and games. Peter Darrell, whom you may remember of old, and who lunched with us to-day, is sitting on the telephone in my house. And eight o'clock is the time limit. Should his childish fears for my safety and my wife's not be assuaged by that hour, he will feel compelled to interrupt Tum-tum at his dinner. I trust I make myself perfectly clear."

"You are the soul of lucidity," beamed the clergyman.

"Good! Then first of all, there are the diamonds. No, don't come too near, please; you can count them quite easily from where you are." He tumbled them out of the bag, and they lay on the table like great pools of liquid light. The girl's breath came quickly as she saw them, and Drummond turned on her with a smile.

"To one given up to good works and knitting, Janet, doubtless, such things do not appeal. Tell me, Theo," he remarked as he swept them back into the bag—"who was the idiot who put them in Snooks' desk? Don't answer if you'd rather not give away your maidenly secrets; but it was a pretty full-sized bloomer on his part, wasn't it—pooping off the old bomb?"

He leaned back in his chair, and for a moment a gleam shone in the other's eyes, for
the nape of Drummond’s neck came exactly against the centre of the impregnated linen cover.

“Doubtless, Captain Drummond, doubtless,” he murmured politely. “But if you will persist in talking in riddles, don’t you think we might choose a different subject until Mrs. Drummond arrives.”

“Anything you like, Theo,” said Drummond. “I’m perfectly happy talking about you. How the devil do you do it?” He sat up and stared at the other man with genuine wonder on his face. “Eyes different—nose—voice—figure—everything different. You’re a marvel—but for that one small failing of yours.”

“You interest me profoundly,” said the clergyman. “What is this one small failing that makes you think I am other than what I profess to be?”

Drummond laughed genially.

“Good heavens, don’t you know what it is? Hasn’t Janet told you? It’s that dainty little trick of yours of tickling the left ear with the right big toe that marks you every time. No man can do that, Theo, and blush unseen.”

He leaned back again in his chair, and passed his hand over his forehead.

“By Jove, it’s pretty hot in here, isn’t it?”

“It is close everywhere to-day,” answered the other easily, though his eyes behind the spectacles were fixed intently on Drummond. “Would you care for a drink?”
Drummond smiled; the sudden fit of muzziness seemed to have passed as quickly as it had come.

"Thank you—no," he answered politely. "In your last incarnation, Theo, you may remember that I did not drink with you. There is an element of doubt about your liquor which renders it a dangerous proceeding."

"As you will," said the clergyman indifferently, at the same time placing the bottle of whisky and the glasses on the table. "If you imagine that I am capable of interfering with an unopened bottle of Johnny Walker, obtained from the cellars of the Ritz, it would be well not to join me." He was carefully removing the tin foil as he spoke, and once again the strange muzzy feeling swept over Drummond. He felt as if things had suddenly become unreal—as if he was dreaming. His vision seemed blurred, and then for the second time it passed away, leaving only a strange mental confusion. What was he doing in this room? Who was this benevolent old clergyman drawing the cork out of a bottle of whisky?

With an effort he pulled himself together. It must be the heat or something, he reflected, and he must keep his brain clear. Perhaps a whisky-and-soda would help. After all, there could be no danger in drinking from a bottle which he had seen opened under his very eyes.

"Do you know, Theo," he remarked, "I think I will change my mind and have a whisky-and-soda."
His voice sounded strange to his ears; and he wondered if the others noticed anything. But apparently not; the clergyman merely nodded briefly, and remarked, “Say when.”

“When,” said Drummond, with a foolish sort of laugh. It was a most extraordinary thing, but he couldn’t focus his eyes; there were two glasses on the table and two clergymen splashing in soda from two siphons. Surely he wasn’t going to faint; bad thing to faint when he was alone with Peterson.

He took a gulp at his drink and suddenly began to talk—foolishly and idiotically:


His voice trailed away, and he sat there blinking stupidly. Everything was confused, and his tongue seemed weighted with lead. He reached out again for his glass—or tried to—and his arm refused to move. And suddenly out of the jumble of thoughts in his brain there emerged the one damning certainty that somehow or other he had been trapped and drugged. He gave a hoarse, inarticulate cry, and struggled to rise to his feet, but it was useless; his legs and arms felt as if they were bound to the chair by iron bands. And in the mist that swam before his eyes he saw the mocking faces of the clergyman and his daughter.

“It seems to have acted most excellently,” remarked the Reverend Theodosius, and Drummond found he could hear quite normally;
also his sight was improving; things in the room seemed steadier. And his mind was becoming less confused—he could think again. But to move or to speak was utterly impossible; all he could do was to sit and watch and rage inwardly at having been such a fool as to trust Peterson.

But that gentleman appeared in no hurry. He was writing with a gold pencil on a letter pad, and every now and then he paused and smiled thoughtfully. At length he seemed satisfied, and crossed to the bathroom door.

"We are ready now," Drummond heard him say, and he wondered what was going to happen next. To turn his head was impossible; his range of vision was limited by the amount he could turn his eyes. And then, to his amazement, he heard his own voice speaking from somewhere behind him—not, perhaps, quite so deep, but an extraordinary good imitation which would have deceived nine people out of ten when they could not see the speaker. And then he heard Peterson's voice again mentioning the telephone, and he realised what they were going to do.

"I want you," Peterson was saying, "to send this message that I have written down to that number—using this gentleman's voice."

They came into his line of vision, and the new arrival stared at him curiously. But he asked no questions—merely took the paper and read it through carefully. Then he stepped over to the telephone, and took off the receiver. And, helplessly impotent, Drummond
sat in his chair and heard the following message spoken in his own voice:

"Is that you, Peter, old bird? I've made the most unholy bloomer. This old bloke Theodosius isn't Carl at all. He's a perfectly respectable pillar of the Church."

And then apparently Darrell said something, and Peterson, who was listening through the second ear-piece, whispered urgently to the man.

"Phyllis," he went on—"she's as right as rain! The whole thing is a boss shot of the first order. . . ."

Drummond made another stupendous effort to rise, and for a moment everything went blank. Dimly he heard his own voice still talking into the instrument, but he only caught a word here and there, and then it ceased, and he realised that the man had left the room. It was Peterson's voice close by him that cleared his brain again.

"I trust you approve of the way our single has started, Captain Drummond," he remarked pleasantly. "Your friend Peter, I am glad to say, is more than satisfied, and has announced his intention of dining with some female charmer. Also he quite understands why your wife has gone into the country—you heard that bit, I hope, about her sick cousin?—and he realises that you are joining her."

And suddenly the pleasant voice ceased, and the clergyman continued in a tone of cold, malignant fury.

"You rat! You damned interfering young
swine! Now that you’re helpless I don’t mind admitting that I am the man you knew as Carl Peterson, but I’m not going to make the mistake he made a second time. I underestimated you, Captain Drummond. I left things to that fool Lakington. I treated you as a blundering young ass, and I realised too late that you weren’t such a fool as you looked. This time I am paying you the compliment of treating you as a dangerous enemy, and a clever man. I trust you are flattered.”

He turned as the door opened, and the man who had telephoned came in with two others. One was a great, powerful-looking man who might have been a prize-fighter; the other was a lean, swarthy-skinned foreigner, and both of them looked unpleasant customers. And Hugh wondered what was going to happen next, while his eyes rolled wildly from side to side as if in search of some way of escape. It was like some ghastly nightmare when one is powerless to move before some dreadful fragment of the brain, only to be saved at the last moment by waking up. Only in Hugh’s case he was awake already, and the dream was reality.

He saw the men leave the room, and then Peterson came over to him again. First he took the little bag of diamonds out of his pocket, and it struck Hugh that though he had seen the other’s hand go into his pocket, he had felt nothing. He watched Peterson and the girl as they examined the stones; he watched Peterson as he locked them up in a
steel dispatch-case. And then Peterson disappeared out of his range of vision. He was conscious that he was near him—just behind him—and the horror of the nightmare increased. It had been better when they were talking; at least then he could see them. But now, with both of them out of sight—hovering round the back of his chair, perhaps—and without a sound in the room save the faint hum of the traffic outside, the strain was getting unbearable.

And then another thought came to add to his misery. If they killed him—and they intended to, he was certain—what would happen to Phyllis? They’d got her too, somewhere; what were they going to do to her? Again he made a superhuman effort to rise; again he failed so much as to move his finger. And for a while he raved and blasphemed mentally.

It was hopeless, utterly hopeless; he was caught like a rat in a trap.

And then he began to think coherently again. After all, they couldn’t kill him here in the Ritz. You can’t have dead men lying about in your room in an hotel. And they would have to move him some time; they couldn’t leave him sitting there. How were they going to get him out? He couldn’t walk, and to carry him out as he was would be impossible. Too many of the staff below knew him by sight.

Suddenly Peterson came into view again. He was in his shirt sleeves and was smoking a cigar, and Hugh watched him sorting out papers. He seemed engrossed in the matter,
and paid no more attention to the helpless figure at the table than he did to the fly on the window. At length he completed his task, and having closed the dispatch-case with a snap, he rose and stood facing Hugh.

"Enjoying yourself?" he remarked.
"Wondering what is going to happen? Wondering where dear Phyllis is?"

He gave a short laugh.

"Excellent drug that, isn't it? The first man I tried it on died—so you're lucky. You never felt me put a pin into the back of your arm, did you?"

He laughed again; in fact, the Reverend Theodosius seemed in an excellent temper.

"Well, my friend, you really asked for it this time, and I'm afraid you're going to get it. I cannot have someone continually worrying me like this, so I'm going to kill you, as I always intended to some day. It's a pity, and in many ways I regret it, but you must admit yourself that you really leave me no alternative. It will appear to be accidental, so you need entertain no bitter sorrow that I shall suffer in any way. And it will take place very soon—so soon, in fact, that I doubt if you will recover from the effects of the drug. I wouldn't guarantee it: you might. As I say, you are only the second person on whom I have tried it. And with regard to your wife—our little Phyllis—it may interest you to know that I have not yet made up my mind. I may find it necessary for her to share in your accident—or even to have one all on her own: I may not."
RUNS AMOK

The raving fury in Drummond’s mind as his tormentor talked on showed clearly in his eyes, and Peterson laughed.

“Our friend is getting quite agitated, my dear,” he remarked, and the girl came into sight. She was smoking a cigarette, and for a while they stared at their helpless victim much as if he was a specimen in a museum.

“You’re an awful idiot, my Hugh, aren’t you?” she said at length. “And you have given us such a lot of trouble. But I shall quite miss you, and all our happy little times together.”

She laughed gently, and glanced at the clock.

“They ought to be here fairly soon,” she remarked. “Hadn’t we better get him out of sight?”

Peterson nodded, and between them they pushed Drummond into the bathroom.

“You see, my friend,” remarked Peterson affably, “it is necessary to get you out of the hotel without arousing suspicion. A simple little matter, but it is often the case that one trips up more over simple matters than over complicated ones.”

He was carefully inserting a pin into his victim’s leg as he spoke, and watching intently for any sign of feeling.

“Why, I remember once,” he continued conversationally, “that I was so incredibly foolish as to replace the cork in a bottle of prussic acid after I had—er—compelled a gentleman to drink the contents. He was in bed at the time, and everything pointed to
suicide, except that confounded cork. I mean, would any man, after he’s drunk sufficient prussic acid to poison a regiment, go and cork up the empty bottle? It only shows how careful one must be over these little matters.”

The girl put her head round the door.

“They’re here,” she remarked abruptly, and Peterson went into the other room, half closing the door. And Drummond, writhing impotently, heard the well-modulated voice of the Reverend Theodosius.

“Ah, my dear friend, my very dear old friend! What joy it is to see you again. I am greatly obliged to you for escorting this gentleman up personally.”

“Not at all, sir, not at all! Would you care for dinner to be served up here?”

Someone to do with the hotel, thought Drummond, and he made one final despairing effort to move. He felt it was his last chance, and it failed—as the others had done before. And it seemed to him that the mental groan he gave must have been audible, so utterly beyond hope did he feel. But it wasn’t; no sound came from the bathroom to the ears of the courteous sub-manager.

“I will ring later if I require it,” Peterson was saying in his gentle, kindly voice. “My friend, you understand, is still on a very strict diet, and he comes to me more for spiritual comfort than for bodily. But I will ring should I find he would like to stay.”

“Very good, sir.”

And Drummond heard the door close, and knew that his last hope had gone.
Then he heard Peterson's voice again, sharp and incisive.

"Lock the door. You two—get Drummond. He's in the bathroom."

The two men he had previously seen entered, and carried him back into the sitting-room, where the whole scheme was obvious at a glance. Just getting out of an ordinary invalid's chair was a big man of more or less the same build as himself. A thick silk muffler partially disguised his face; a soft hat was pulled well down over his eyes, and Drummond realised that the gentleman who had been wheeled in for spiritual comfort would not be wheeled out.

The two men pulled him out of his chair, and then, forgetting his condition, they let him go, and he collapsed like a sack of potatoes on the floor, his legs and arms sprawling in grotesque attitudes.

They picked him up again, and not without difficulty they got him into the other man's overcoat; and finally they deposited him in the invalid's chair, and tuckled him up with the rug.

"We will give it half an hour," remarked Peterson, who had been watching the operation. "By that time our friend will have had sufficient spiritual solace; and until then you two can wait outside. I will give you your full instructions later."

"Will you want me any more, sir?" The man whose place Drummond had taken was speaking.

"No," said Peterson curtly. "Get out as
unostentatiously as you can. Go down by the stairs and not by the lift.”

With a nod, he dismissed them all, and once again Drummond was alone with his two chief enemies.

“Simple, isn’t it, my friend?” remarked Peterson. “An invalid arrives, and an invalid will shortly go. And once you’ve passed the hotel doors you will cease to be an invalid. You will become again that well-known young man about town—Captain Hugh Drummond—driving out of London in his car—a very nice Rolls, that new one of yours—bought, I think, since we last met. Your chauffeur would have been most uneasy when he missed it but for the note you’ve left him, saying you’ll be away for three days.” Peterson laughed gently as he stared at his victim.

“You must forgive me if I seem to gloat a little, won’t you?” he continued. “I’ve got such a large score to settle with you, and I very much fear I shan’t be in at the death. I have an engagement to dine with an American millionaire, whose wife is touched to the heart over the sufferings of the starving poor in Austria. And when the wives of millionaires are touched to the heart, my experience is that the husbands are generally touched to the pocket.”

He laughed again even more gently and leaned across the table towards the man who sat motionless in the chair. He seemed to be striving to see some sign of fear in Drummond’s eyes, some appeal for mercy. But if there was any expression at all it was only a faint mocking
boredom, such as Drummond had been wont to infuriate him with during their first encounter a year before. Then he had expressed it in words and actions; now only his eyes were left to him, but it was there all the same. And after a while Peterson snarled at him viciously.

"No, I shan't be in at the death, Drummond, but I will explain to you the exact programme. You will be driven out of London in your own car, but when the final accident occurs you will be alone. It is a most excellent place for an accident, Drummond—most excellent. One or two have already taken place there, and the bodies are generally recovered some two or three days later—more or less unrecognisable. Then when the news comes out in the evening papers to-morrow I shall be able to tell the police the whole sad story. How you took compassion on an old clergyman and asked him to lunch, and then went out of London after your charming young wife—only to meet with this dreadful end. I think I'll even offer to take part in the funeral service. And yet—no, that is a pleasure I shall have to deny myself. Having done what I came over to do, Drummond, rather more expeditiously than I thought likely, I shall return to my starving children in Vienna. And, do you know what I came over to do, Drummond? I came over to smash the Black Gang—and I came over to kill you—though the latter could have waited."

Peterson's eyes were hard and merciless, but the expression of faint boredom still lingered in Drummond's. Only too well did he realise now that he had played straight into his enemy's
hands, but he was a gambler through and through, and not by the quiver of an eyelid did he show what he felt. Right from the very start the dice had been loaded in Peterson’s favour owing to that one astounding piece of luck in getting hold of Phyllis. It hadn’t even been a fight—it had been a walk-over. And the cruel part of it was that it was not through any mistake of Drummond’s. It was a fluke pure and simple—an astounding fluke—a fluke which had come off better than many a carefully-thought-out scheme. If it hadn’t been for that he would never have come to Peterson’s sitting-room at all; he would never have been doped; he wouldn’t have been sitting helpless as a log while Peterson put down his cards one after the other in cold triumph.

“Yes, it could have waited, Captain Drummond—that second object of mine. I assure you that it was a great surprise to me when I realised who the leader of the Black Gang was—a great surprise and a great pleasure. To kill two birds, so to speak, with one stone, saves trouble; to accomplish two objects in one accident is much more artistic. So the Black Gang loses its leader, the leader loses his life, and I regain my diamonds. Eminently satisfactory, my friend, eminently. And when your dear wife returns from the country—if she does, well, Captain Drummond, it will be a very astute member of Scotland Yard who will associate her little adventure with that benevolent old clergyman, the Reverend Theodosius Longmoor, who recently spent two or three days at the Ritz. Especially in view of your
kindly telephone message to Mr.—what's his name?—Mr. Peter Darrell."

He glanced at his watch and rose to his feet.

"I fear that that is all the spiritual consolation that I can give you this evening, my dear fellow," he remarked benignly, "You will understand, I'm sure, that there are many calls on my time. Janet, my love"—he raised his voice—"our young friend is leaving us now. I feel sure you'd like to say good-bye to him."

She came into the room, walking a little slowly and for a while she stared in silence at Hugh. And it seemed to him that in her eyes there was a gleam of genuine pity. Once again he made a frantic effort to speak—to beg, beseech, and implore them not to hurt Phyllis—but it was useless. And then he saw her turn to Peterson.

"I suppose," she said regretfully, "that it is absolutely necessary."

"Absolutely," he answered curtly. "He knows too much, and he worries us too much."

She shrugged her shoulders and came over to Drummond.

"Well, good-bye, mon ami," she remarked gently. "I really am sorry that I shan't see you again. You are one of the few people that make this atrocious country bearable."

She patted him on his cheek, and again the feeling that he was dreaming came over Drummond. It couldn't be real—this monstrous nightmare. He would wake up in a minute and find Denny standing beside him, and he registered a vow that he would go to an indigestion specialist. And then he realised that the
two men had come back into the room, and that it wasn't a dream, but hard, sober fact. The Italian was putting a hat on his head and wrapping the scurf round his neck while Peterson gave a series of curt instructions to the other man. And then he was being wheeled along the passage towards the lift, while the Reverend Theodosius Longmoor walked solicitously beside him, murmuring affectionately in his ear.

"Good-bye, my dear friend—good-bye," he remarked, after the chair had been wheeled into the lift. "It was good of you to come. Be careful, liftman, won't you?"

He waved a kindly hand, and the last vision Drummond had of him before the doors closed was of a benevolent old clergyman beaming at him solicitously from behind a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles.

And now came his only chance. Surely there would be someone who would recognise him below; surely the hall porter, who in the past had received many a tip from him, must realise who he was in spite of the hat pulled down over his eyes. But even that hope failed. The elderly party in the invalid's chair who had come half an hour ago was now going, and there was no reason why the hall porter should suspect anything. He gave the two men a hand lifting the chair into a big and very roomy limousine car which Drummond knew was certainly not his, and the next instant they were off.

He could see nothing—the hat was too far over his eyes. For a time he tried to follow where they were going by noting the turns,
but he soon gave that up as hopeless. And then, after driving for about half an hour, the car stopped and the two men got out, leaving him alone. He could hear a lot of talking going on, but he didn’t try to listen. He was resigned by this time—utterly indifferent; his only feeling was a mild curiosity as to what was going to happen next.

The voices came nearer, and he found himself being lifted out of the car. In doing so his hat was pulled back a little so that he could see, and the first thing he noticed was his own new Rolls-Royce. They couldn’t have brought it to the Ritz, he reflected, where it might have been recognised—and an unwilling admiration for the master brain that had thought out every detail, and the wonderful organisation that allowed of them being carried out, took hold of his mind.

The men wheeled him alongside his own car; then they lifted him out of his chair and deposited him on the back seat. Then the Italian and the other man who had been at the Ritz sat down one on each side of him, while a third man took the wheel.

“Look slippy, Bill,” said the big man beside him. “A boat will be coming through about half-past nine.”

A boat! What was that about a boat? Were they going to send him out to sea, then, and let him drown? If so, what was the object of getting his own car? The hat slipped forward again, but he guessed by some of the flashing lights he could dimly see that they were going through slums. Going eastward Essex way,
or perhaps the south side of the river towards Woolwich. But after a time he gave it up: it was no good wondering—he’d know for certain soon enough. And now the speed was increasing as they left London behind them. The headlights were on, and Hugh judged that they were going about thirty-five miles an hour. And he also guessed that it was about forty-five minutes before they pulled up, and the engine and lights were switched off. The men beside him got out, and he promptly rolled over into a corner, where they left him lying.

"This is the place to wait," he heard the Italian say. "You go on, Franz, to the corner, and when it’s ready flash your torch. You’ll have to stand on the running-board, Bill, and steer till he’s round the corner into the straight. Then jump off—no one will see you behind the headlights. I’m going back to Maybrick Tower."

And then he heard a sentence which drove him impotent with fury, and again set him struggling madly to move.

"The girl’s there. We’ll get orders about her in the morning."

There was silence for a while; then he heard Bill’s voice.

"Let’s get on with it. There’s Franz signalling. We’ll have to prop him up on the steering wheel somehow."

They pulled Drummond out of the back of the car, and put him in the driver’s seat.

"Doesn’t matter if he does fall over at the last moment. It will look as if he’d fainted, and make the accident more probable," said the Italian, and Bill grunted.
"Seems a crime," he muttered, "to smash up this peach of a car." He started the engine, and switched on the headlights; then he slipped her straight into third speed and started. He was on the running-board beside the wheel, steering with one hand and holding on to Drummond with the other. And as they rounded the corner he straightened the car up and opened the throttle. Then he jumped off, and Drummond realised the game at last.

A river was in front—a river spanned by a bridge which swung open to let boats go through. And it was open now. He had a dim vision of a man waving wildly; he heard the crash as the car took the guarding gate, and then he saw the bonnet dip suddenly; there was a rending, scraping noise underneath him as the framework hit the edge; an appalling splash—and silence.