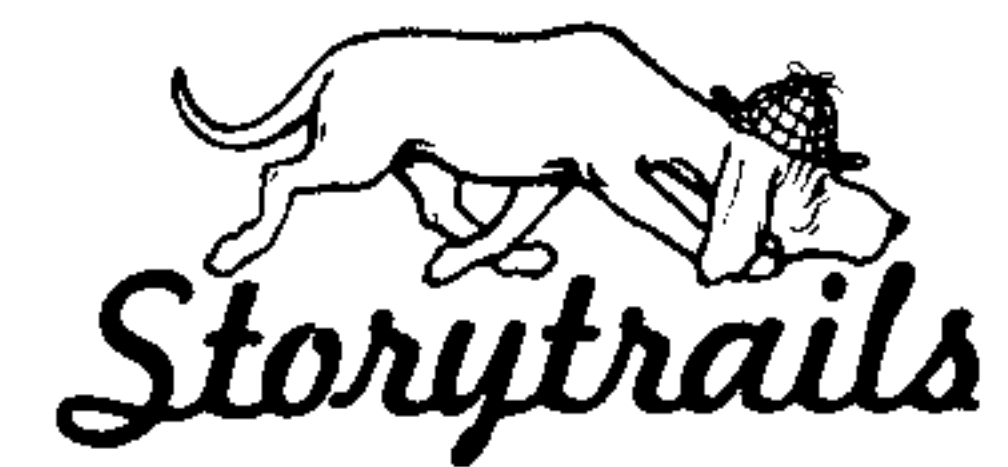


Click on the number in paranthesis (e.g. (2)) to go directly to that page :)



THE EVIL OF MR HAPPINESS

Can **you** defeat the schemes of a criminal
mastermind?

Allen Sharp

**CHILDRENS PRESS INTERNATIONAL
CHICAGO**

Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP
32 East 57th Street, New York, NY10022, USA
296 Beaconsfield Parade, Middle Park, Melbourne 3206, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1982

First published 1982
Reprinted 1983 (twice)

Printed in Great Britain at the University Press, Cambridge

Library of Congress catalogue card number: 81-38476

British Library cataloguing in publication data

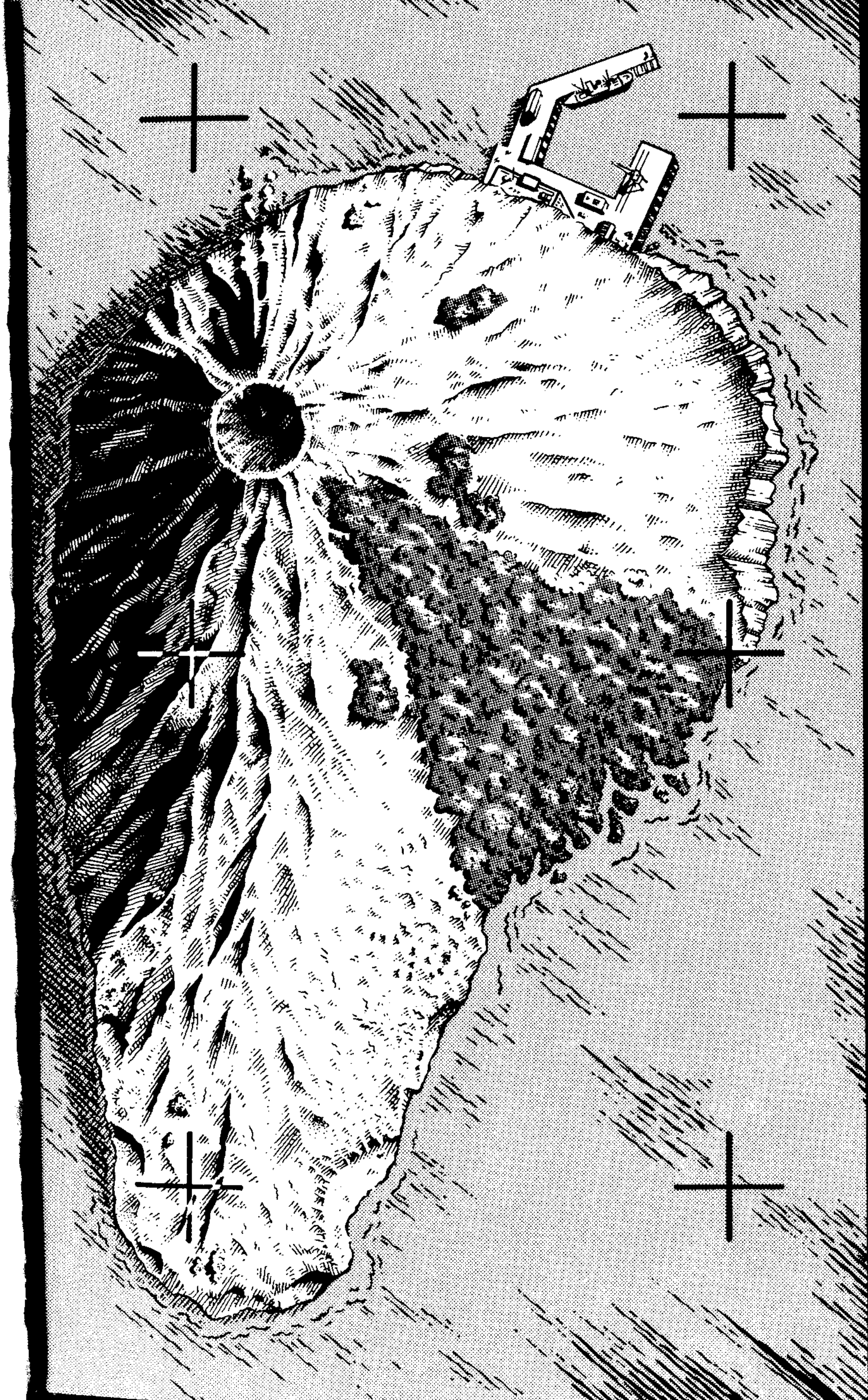
Sharp, Allen
The evil of Mr Happiness – (Storytrails)
I. Title II. Series
823'.914[J] PZ7
ISBN 0 521 28500 3

Storytrails by Allen Sharp

Invitation to Murder
Terror in the Fourth Dimension
The Evil of Mr Happiness
The Haunters of Marsh Hall
The King's Mission
The Stone of Badda

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North American 1984 edition published by Regensteiner
Publishing Enterprises, Inc.

Illustrations by John Storey
Map by Reg Piggott



BAHAMAS
FLORIDA
GALVESTON (TEXAS)

ATLANTIC
OCEAN

San Juan
PUERTO
RICO

Virgin
Islands

ANTIGUA

GUADELOUPE

DOMINICA

Martinique Passage

MARTINIQUE

Happiness's
Island

ST LUCIA

ST VINCENT

BARBADOS

Bridgetown

GRENADA

TOBAGO

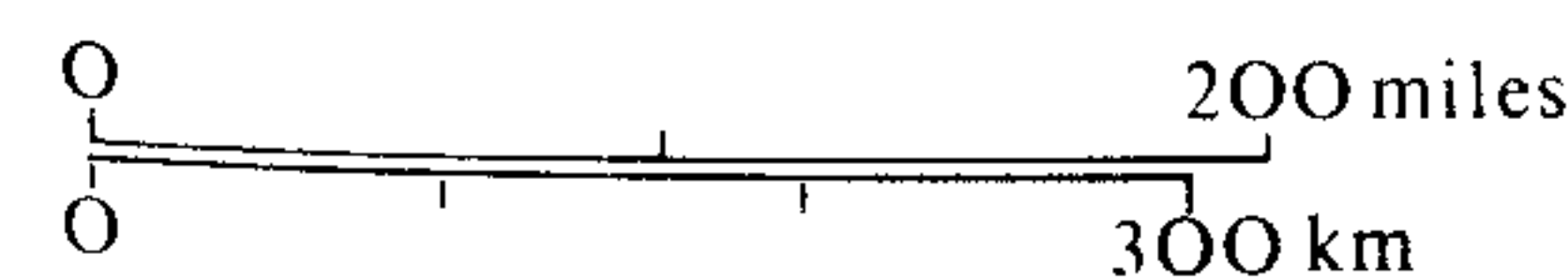
TRINIDAD

Caribbean

Sea



HAPPINESS'S ISLAND
and the Eastern Caribbean



Read this first



This book may be like no book that you have read before, because **you** decide the story. It is just like having an adventure in real life. What happens in the book happens to **you**. You decide what to do next and, like a real-life adventure, the end may not always be a happy one. That is up to **you**.

There are plenty of thrills and scares and you will have lots of chances to decide what you would do if you were really caught up in the adventure. The events take place in the islands of the Caribbean and, in case that is a place that you don't know too well, there is a map at the beginning of the book to help you.

If you have ever wondered what it would be like to be a government agent on a dangerous secret mission, then stop wondering and start reading, following the simple instructions printed below.

How to use your book

The left-hand pages are numbered in the top left-hand corner. Flick the edge of your book through

your fingers and you will see that the numbers are easy to find.

You start reading on the page marked 1 and when you come to the end of the opposite page it will tell you where to go next. As you go through the book, there will be times when you have to make a choice about what to do next. As you come to the end of the page you will see what the choice is. You choose what you are going to do by turning to the number of the page shown beside your choice.

Example: 'Should I walk into the room (10), or should I take my chances down the staircase (19)?'

If you decide to walk into the room, then you will turn to page 10. If you decide to go down the staircase, then you will turn to page 19.

This book is better than a real-life adventure because, if you fail the first time, you can try again.

To be completely successful on your mission, you must destroy Mr Happiness and *all* of his evil schemes.

Now turn to page 1 – and good luck on your mission!

Some British words used in this book:

loudhailer is a loud speaker

spanner is a wrench

The morning was wet and foggy. My taxi turned off London's busy Kensington High Street and dropped me on the corner of the square. I walked along the row of Georgian terraced houses to number forty-seven, let myself in with a key, and walked up the uncarpeted stairs.

The brass plate on the door of forty-seven reads 'J.B. Harcourt. Business Consultant'. There is no J.B. Harcourt. There never was a J.B. Harcourt. Number forty-seven is the London headquarters of 'Eurintel', the European Intelligence Agency.

The briefing room is on the first floor. Four people had arrived before me. Three of them, I knew. Paul Schreiber is with Interpol in Munich. Emile Katterman is C.I.A. and attached to the American Embassy. The third man, Sir Hugo Appleyard, is head of Eurintel's London operation.

Sir Hugo began the meeting by introducing the young, red haired woman as Dr Helen Simpson, a seismologist (an expert on earthquakes), and a special adviser to the United States Government.

For several months, severe earth tremors had

been recorded, centred on a tiny island on the Atlantic edge of the Caribbean, a hundred miles north of Barbados. By all the rules, the island should have split apart, yet photographs from the American satellite, 'Kestrel II' had shown no trace of any damage.

Closer inspection had not been possible. The island was privately owned by a man known only as Mr Happiness. The name 'Happiness' was on the files of both Interpol and the C.I.A., in connection with several unpleasant activities from drugs to slave trading.

Two C.I.A. agents, posing as fishermen, had got within a mile of the island. Their bodies were washed ashore a week later. A light plane sent to fly over the island had vanished, together with its crew.

Agents in the area, from Trinidad to Florida, had failed to pick up any scrap of information. Usually reliable sources were strangely silent.

Happiness was always a step ahead of U.S. Intelligence. Washington was now requesting the assignment of Eurintel's best available agent.

If you accept the assignment, turn to page 2.

2

With no detailed maps of the island, we had to rely on the satellite photographs. It looked a bit like a fat pear, standing on its head, the top of the pear pointing due south. It was three quarters of a mile from top to bottom and about half a mile wide at its fattest point. The island was volcanic with the remains of the old crater in the north-west corner. There were high cliffs right round the north end. The south end sloped down to sea level and met the water in a series of sandy coves.

There were few trees on the island, except in the south-east corner where water seemed to be running down from below the crater. It ended in a patch of swamp before emptying into the sea.

Part of a building could be seen sticking out from the cliff face on the north end, and below it was a deep water harbour, big enough to take a small freighter. The only other sign of life was something in the old crater. It was in shadow, but looked like radio and radar masts.

The first problem was how to get onto the island – and off it!

The Caribbean is full of rich boat owners, not all of them good sailors. Anyone setting off from Barbados to sail north up the Atlantic side of the islands could easily get off course and arrive at Mr Happiness's island 'by accident'. There was still the question of what happened to the C.I.A. agents who 'went fishing'? Did Happiness know who they were, or would the same thing happen to *anyone* who got too close?

There was another way. There was deep water to within a few hundred yards of the island. A submarine could get in without being detected on radar. It would be an easy swim to one of the beaches. There was only one thing wrong with that idea – Happiness must have thought of it too. The beaches could hold one or two unpleasant surprises for unwelcome visitors.

Either way, it was going to be dangerous. All that I had to do was to decide which was less so, going in openly by boat (5), or going in secretly by submarine (7).

Between me and solid rock was a wide stretch of pebbles, just the place to bury landmines! One way or another, I had to get across it.

I couldn't see any way round it, and there was no time to start exploring. It was farther to the other side than I thought I could jump, but jump it I must. I took as long a run up as I could and launched myself into the air.

My feet reached the rock on the opposite side, the rest of me didn't! There was nothing I could do to stop myself from falling flat on my back in the pebbles.

Something was pressing on the middle of my back. I half turned onto one side and felt behind me with my free hand. I couldn't see, but I could feel, and my fingers told me that there was a mine detonator right underneath me.

I moved my hand away very gently, turned right over onto my side and, not daring to get up, began to ease myself onto the rock.

I had just made it when I heard a sound that I knew only too well, the throb of a helicopter. I

couldn't see it yet, but it was somewhere over the trees, probably flying low along the shoreline.

The sun was just high enough in the eastern sky to make seeing hard. Then I spotted it, a black shape against the brightness. I couldn't recognise the type, but it was small, probably of the 'scout' variety – two man crew – fast and highly manoeuvrable. I didn't rate my chances of taking it on in the open too high. I had to find some cover.

Fifty yards in front of me were some large rocks, big enough for me to keep out of sight if I hadn't been spotted before I got there, not a healthy place to be if I had.

The trees were at least twice as far off. I hadn't got very far up the hill so was not above the level of the swamp. Once I got deep into those water channels, nothing could spot me. It would just take longer to get there. So it was rocks (11), or swamp (12). The big question was, 'Would I be spotted by the time I got there?'

4

I walked out of the water where the beach met the edge of the swamp. Tall trees covered with creepers, and growing thickly around reed-lined pools and streams, gave me perfect cover to change my clothes and hide the rest of my gear.

My target was the building and harbour at the north end of the island. There was no way round the island. I would have to go over the top and needed first to head towards the old crater.

If I kept to the trees, they would give me good cover all the way to the top, but that meant going through the swamp with its mud and water and tangle of tree roots. I decided to walk along the beach and take a look at the open ground on the south end of the island.

The edge of the trees formed a neat line up the hillside. All of the ground to the south was not much more than bare rocks with a few tufts of grass and the odd, stunted bush. I walked on a bit farther until I could just see the top of the crater. It looked an easy climb from there. Beyond the sand was pebble and loose rock, though it was a good way up the slope before any of the rocks were big enough to give me cover, if I needed it.

There was no doubt that I could move quickly on the open ground and the trees were still not too far off if I needed to change my mind. I had only gone a few yards when there was a quick flash of orange among the rocks to my left. I stopped in time to see a fat, black and orange striped body haul itself onto one of the rocks. It sat and eyed me, a black tongue flicking out from between its lips. It was a gila monster, a big lizard with a nasty temper and a poisonous bite. I flung a stone at it and it slid off the rock. I didn't see where it landed, but I soon knew what it had landed on. There was a blinding flash, a bang that set my ears ringing and a shower of small stones. The place was mined!

The lizards might have set mines off before, but someone was going to come looking. I had to move. Not far ahead the rock looked pretty solid. That couldn't be mined, but I'd still be in the open. The trees were over to my right, with what I now knew to be a minefield between me and them. Should I go for the rock (3), or the trees (9)?

Since I had left London, I had a new name, new passport, new papers, and a healthy suntan from a few sessions under an ultraviolet lamp. My papers gave my address as Nassau in the Bahamas. My business was banking.

My boat, well named '*Atlantic Venture*', was a sleek, sixty-foot, six-berth cruiser, powered by twin hundred-and-twenty-horse diesels and capable of better than thirty knots cruising speed. She was registered in Miami under my new name as having been bought two years previously. The seller, whose name was on the bill of sale, would swear to having known me since childhood. My 'cover story' was good. It would not stand up to really searching enquiry, but it should be good enough to buy me the time I needed.

Since the beginning of November, I had been doing nothing but sail the *Atlantic Venture* around the Caribbean Islands looking as if I was on holiday. In the early evening of November 16th, I left Bridgetown in Barbados, letting it be known that I was going to cruise up the Atlantic

side of the islands to Nassau, my home town in the Bahamas. The boat's gyrocompass had been adjusted to give a three degree error, enough to take me off course by the right amount and land me on Happiness's doorstep.

I couldn't openly carry a weapon, but my rather dashing blazer wasn't quite what it looked. Steel wires, sewn into the seams of the lapels, would pick most locks. The brass buttons had been supplied by Eurintel's Special Services Section. Each one was a tiny grenade. The grenade was primed by twisting the ring at the back of the button. A full turn gave a one second delay.

The three buttons on the front of the jacket were gas grenades, the two on each sleeve, high explosives. I also carried what looked like a pack of a well-known brand of American chewing gum. It was, in fact, a powerful plastic explosive. It did other things too! In the open, it burned quietly, but at a very high temperature. If chewed up, it made a very good adhesive. If swallowed, it gave awful indigestion (6).

I caught my first sight of the island around dawn on the 17th. I had sailed through most of the night on the autopilot, which meant that I had been able to snatch a few hours' sleep.

My reason for sailing close to the island was my faulty compass, but now I needed a good reason for stopping there. It was no use just saying that I had engine trouble unless it could be made to look good enough to fool an expert mechanic.

That had also been taken care of. I was carrying a spare length of fuel pipe which had been carefully part-blocked with diesel sludge then stopped up with a cork at each end until I needed it.

I unscrewed a section of the fuel pipe to one of the engines, ditched it into the sea and replaced it with the part-blocked section. It worked like a dream. The engine didn't stop, but made the kind of coughing and spluttering noises which would make anyone head for the nearest harbour!

In the first light, I had made out a freighter

lying just outside the harbour and probably waiting for the dawn. By the time I was within a half mile of the island, the sun was up over the horizon and the freighter was weighing anchor. If it was going to berth in the harbour, it might be an idea to stay close to it. That way, there would be less chance of someone taking it into his head to blow me out of the water.

Up to now everything had looked very quiet. Through my glasses, I already had a good view of the harbour and the building set into the cliff face above it. For this early in the morning, there were plenty of people about on the quay. If I could see them, then they could see me and, so far, nobody looked very interested.

The freighter had begun to turn in a tight circle towards the harbour mouth and I was now close enough to be following almost in its wake.

No-one had warned me off and no-one looked like stopping me from entering the harbour. At least, I had done better than the two C.I.A. 'fishermen'! (13)

On November 12th, the submarine U.S.S. *Houston* sailed out of Galveston, Texas bound for San Juan on the American Island of Puerto Rico. At San Juan, the captain received sealed orders to sail south under radio silence and to pick up an unnamed passenger at a point in the Martinique Passage.

At midnight on November 16th, I boarded the *Houston* from a small inflatable dinghy. At twenty knots, we would reach Happiness's island in less than five hours, time enough to be in position before the dawn.

Since I had left London, I had a new name, new passport, new papers, and a healthy suntan from a few sessions under an ultraviolet lamp. My papers gave my address as Nassau in the Bahamas. My business was banking. My story would be that I had fallen overboard from a passing motor yacht. I knew that if I was caught the story would not stand up for long, but it could buy me some time.

Apart from a frogman's suit and breathing apparatus, I was travelling light. Everything else was in a small plastic sack.

The weapon I had chosen was a long-barrelled machine pistol, a good friend in tight corners. I had a change of clothing – sweater, trousers, shoes, socks and a rather dashing blazer. The blazer was not quite what it looked. Steel wires, sewn into the seams of the lapels, would pick most locks. The brass buttons had been supplied by Eurintel's Special Services Section. Each one was a tiny grenade. The grenade was primed by twisting the ring at the back of the button. A full turn gave a one second delay.

The three buttons on the front of the jacket were gas grenades, the two on each sleeve, high explosives. I also carried what looked like a pack of a well-known brand of American chewing gum. It was, in fact, a powerful plastic explosive. It did other things too! In the open, it burned quietly, but at a very high temperature. If chewed up, it made a very good adhesive. If swallowed, it gave awful indigestion!

With thirty minutes to dawn, we were lying at periscope depth and five hundred yards off the nearest beach of the island (8).

We were not alone. A freighter was anchored outside the harbour, no doubt waiting for the dawn before she sailed in.

That was going to upset my plans. I had been going to row ashore in the same dinghy which had brought me aboard. Now, I couldn't risk it. The chances of being spotted were very small, but the whole mission hung on my getting ashore unseen.

This wasn't going to stop me getting ashore. It was for just such a situation that I had brought a frogman's suit with me. That way, it was only sharks that I had to worry about!

I put the suit on and got into the airlock of the escape hatch. When it was flooded with water, I opened the outer hatch, closed it behind me and rapped three times on the hull of the 'sub' to tell them I was away.

First light was breaking in the sky and, as I looked up through the water, I could make out the mottled patterns formed by the waves on the surface. I started to swim for the shore.

A shoal of small fish, which had been moving along beside me, suddenly darted down towards the coral below. The fish had sensed danger. I stopped swimming and trod water. I could see nothing in front of me. I turned and looked back.

Above and behind me, I could make out a dark shape moving through the water. Against the changing patterns of light, I couldn't make out what it was, just that it was something large.

I started swimming again, this time altering my direction so that I was moving along the shoreline. Whatever was there was still following.

I pulled the knife from my belt and dived deeper into the darker water below me. The idea was to come up behind my pursuer. If it was a shark, then I wanted the surprise to be on my side.

The timing was perfect, though it was difficult to know who was the more surprised, me or the giant soup turtle! It paddled off like a big, clumsy bird, leaving me to make for the beach (4).

I looked over the ground towards the trees. My guess was that the mines were planted in the patches of pebbles. If I stuck to the areas of solid rock, then I should be all right.

It wasn't easy. Some of the stretches of pebbles were quite wide, and there was no time to study which was the best route. I was doing well until I came to one of the wider stretches of pebbles. There was no way of taking a run at it. I jumped. My feet landed on the rock, but my body didn't come with them. I fell flat on my back in the pebbles.

Nothing happened. I raised myself gently onto my elbows. My hand touched something cold. I couldn't see it, but my fingers told me that it was the detonator of a mine. I shifted my weight and drew my hand away. I slid myself back onto the rock before making another attempt to get up.

The rest of the way was easy, but I had just reached the edge of the swamp when I heard the chopper. I couldn't see it, but there was no mistaking the chug of the engine or the rustle of

the treetops as they were caught in the draught from the helicopter's rotor blades.

I waded down one of the water channels to get myself deeper into the trees. The sound of the chopper had changed. It was no longer over the trees, but somewhere over the sea. The sound faded and then came again as it headed back to the land.

I still had a good view of a part of the beach and the southern end of the island, though the sky wasn't so easy because I was looking directly into the rising sun.

I caught sight of the chopper as a black shape against the brightness of the sky. It wasn't a type that I recognised, but it was small, probably of the 'scout' variety – a two man crew – fast and highly manoeuvrable. I wouldn't have rated my chances very high if I'd been out in the open.

It hovered for a few seconds over the beach, then turned and headed straight towards me. I had seen it. Had it seen me? (12)

The room I entered had something of the look of an office about it, but was obviously meant as a reception area, much as one would see in the best office blocks in London or New York.

It was plain, modern and expensive – white walls, white carpet, several long, black, leather settees, some potted plants, a T.V. set, some very fine paintings, all of which looked like originals, and, in the centre of the room, a low, circular, marble table.

The table had a few magazines scattered on it and, in the centre, something that didn't seem quite to fit: an unopened bottle of wine, sitting in a silver ice bucket.

I could only think that someone was expected. I went over to the table and pulled the bottle out of the ice. The ice had hardly melted and the room was warm. It hadn't been there too long. The wine was champagne, Bollinger 1970, a very fine vintage. It was then that I saw the small white envelope lying beside the ice bucket. It was unsealed. I slid out the card which was inside it.

On it was printed 'With the compliments of Happiness'. I turned the card over. On the back, in a small neat hand, was my name – not the false name on my passport, my real name!

I had a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach. The game looked as if it was up before I had even started. I looked towards the door, expecting to see some sort of armed reception committee. The door was still open and no-one in sight.

I wasn't ready to give in. I took another look around the room. It was artificially lit and had no window. That meant there was no way out, except by the door. It also meant that was the only way in.

I could see only two choices. Either I got out, and took my chances on the reception committee being round the next corner (20) or I stayed where I was and faced them one at a time as they came through the door (18).

I knew the odds were against me, but if I was going down, I was going fighting.

I thought that I was going to get a quick answer to my question. The chopper was heading straight for the rock where I had taken cover. A hail of bullets from an automatic weapon splintered the rock no more than a foot from my face and left me in no doubt that I had been spotted.

The chopper began to circle the rock so that I had to keep moving to stay out of the line of fire. I managed to return two short bursts from my pistol, but without doing any damage. I was aiming for the underbelly of the chopper and its fuel tanks. I was too good a shot to have missed twice at that short range. I began to think that the underside was armoured.

Now that we had tested each other's fire power, I wondered whether he was going to keep me running around the rock or just sit and wait while he radioed for more help.

He did neither. He was trying a new tack of coming in low, firing as he came. That kept my head down so that I didn't know on which side he was going to pass. If I ran the wrong way, that

would be my last mistake.

The first time I was lucky. He had to take a wide sweep to come in for a second run, time enough for me to see my chance. The draught from the rotor blades had disturbed the fine pebbles. Fifty yards away, one of the landmines was lying, uncovered. It was exactly in the direction he had made his last approach. Armoured or not, if it was low enough, no chopper would survive that explosion.

He was coming again, from the same direction. I knew that I had one chance. If I missed, then he would be on top of me before I could get out of the way.

I did not miss. The explosion of the mine was followed by a second as the chopper split apart in a ball of flame. A pillar of black smoke rose up into the blue sky like a smoke signal.

One thing was certain. Someone else would be coming to find out what was going on. The wreckage might distract their attention, but I needed to be far away (15).

I didn't have long to wait for an answer. A wall of flame was heading through the trees towards me. I dropped into the water. I saw the flash of light as the flame travelled over the surface above me.

One thing that I hadn't counted on was a flame thrower. I lifted my head out of the water. The chopper was out of sight, but not out of earshot. I had no doubt that the pilot was turning for a second run. He was! As I took a second ducking, I realised that all he needed to do was to keep me pinned down while he radioed for help. As he turned for the third run, I pulled myself out of the water and flattened myself against one of the larger tree trunks.

I took the machine pistol out of the belt of my jeans, knowing it would be no worse for a good soaking. I was banking on the tree shielding me from the flame. My only chance to get in a shot would be at the moment after the flame had passed and the chopper was still in sight.

The idea didn't work! The flame licked far enough round the tree to singe my hair and leave

me coughing and spluttering. By the time I had wiped the tears from my eyes, the chopper had gone. I got back into the water to have another think!

The next attack didn't come. There was a crackling sound somewhere above me and a voice from a loudhailer boomed through the trees. The accent was Brooklyn. The message was simple, 'Surrender, or fry!'

I still had my gun. I hadn't used it, so there was no reason for the chopper crew to know that I had one. They couldn't land in the trees or the minefield, and a lot could happen before they got me aboard. 'Surrender' might not be a bad idea (17), if it wasn't just their trick to get me into the open.

On the other hand, the water I was standing in came above my waist. There was just a chance that it might stay deep enough to swim for it under the surface. Would it stay deep for long enough to get me out of trouble (16)?

Either way, the chances were not good, but it had to be one or the other.

I sailed into the harbour behind the freighter and berthed beside two motor yachts already tied up at the quayside. A man in a canary-yellow suit caught and secured my lines as I threw them ashore and waited for me on the quay.

I told him that I was heading for the Bahamas, that I was off course and having engine trouble. I asked if I could stay in the harbour until I had carried out my repairs.

'Sure,' he said, 'anything to help.'

The accent was Brooklyn. The suit was silk and expensively tailored, but did not quite hide the bulge of a shoulder holster under the left armpit.

'But no need for you to do the repairs,' he added. 'I'll put one of our engineers onto it. Don't get many visitors in this neck of the woods, and the owner likes to show a bit of American hospitality when we do.'

'Who is the owner?' I asked, innocently.

'Happiness,' he replied. 'Likes to be called plain "Happiness".'

He grinned as he said it, showing a row of gold teeth. It was the kind of grin that was as pleasant as a cold draught.

'Follow me,' he said.

The harbour looked like any other busy, small harbour. That didn't answer the question of what it was busy doing a hundred miles out in the Atlantic Ocean.

We entered the building and climbed several flights of stairs. We stopped in a corridor. A door at the end was open. The room beyond looked as if it might be some kind of office.

There was a shout from somewhere down the staircase. My canary-suited friend decided that he was needed elsewhere and asked if I would like to wait in the room facing me.

It was all going well, much too well! I could not get rid of the feeling that I was expected and that I was walking into a trap. Should I walk into the room (10), or should I take my chances down the staircase (19)?

I had just reached the top of the stairs when I spotted three men coming towards me from the other end of the corridor. I was sure that they had seen me.

It would be easy to run back down the stairs. I had a good head start, but all that that would do would be to raise the general alarm. I had to find some way of dealing with these three myself. I ripped the bottom button off the front of my blazer and concealed it in the palm of my hand. I waited for them to come to me.

They were not long in coming. All three looked like night club 'bouncers'. One carried an automatic pistol.

'I'm unarmed,' I said, raising my arms from my sides to show that I was speaking the truth. 'Take me to your leader.'

None of them smiled, but the business end of the pistol, pushed hard into the small of my back, suggested that they were taking me somewhere.

I let them walk me for a few yards before I dropped the button. The click on the concrete

floor made them look down. I stopped. The gun was pushed harder into my back.

'Do you mind?' I asked. 'I wouldn't like to meet my end feeling undressed for the occasion.'

This time, they did smile, probably because the thought of me meeting my end was the sort of thing that did appeal to their sense of humour. I bent down, took a deep breath and gave the eye of the button the least twist.

There was an almost immediate crack, a puff of smoke and a cloud of yellowish gas. As I expected, they leant towards it to see what had happened and then crumpled into a neat heap on the floor.

The one with the gun was lying on it. The other two had fallen on top of him. I would have liked to have that gun, but I wasn't sure how long the effects of the gas would last. There was no time to start sorting out bodies. I took off, stopping only after I had covered a fair distance. There was an open door in front of me. The corridors might soon become unhealthily crowded (10).

I was well up the hillside before two more helicopters appeared from over the trees. I was keeping out of sight, but a wisp of black smoke still pinpointed the wreckage and I could tell that the new arrivals had landed somewhere nearby.

Unless the pilot of the first chopper had radioed back to base, there would be nothing to tell them what had happened. The chopper would seem to have been the victim of one of their own land mines.

I went on climbing. There was no sign of any search being started. I watched the choppers take off again and head back in the direction from which they had come. It looked as if my luck was holding and that I had not been discovered.

By now, I was near to the old crater of the volcano. I climbed up to the edge. Our guess had been correct. There were both radio and radar masts. Heavy cables led away from them in the direction of the north end of the island. I followed them.

Where the cables disappeared over the cliff, I

got down flat on the ground and crawled to the edge. The building, or that part of it that stuck out from the cliff, was about fifty feet below me. The harbour was below the building. The freighter had now docked and a crane was unloading large packing cases onto the quayside. My next job was to get down to the building.

The cliff face didn't offer much in the way of footholds, but the cables were the next best thing to a rope. If anyone happened to look up, I was in full view. It had to be done quickly.

It was nearly too quick! My foot slipped and I slid for ten feet. I managed to hang on to the cables, but I felt the pistol jerk from my belt. It landed on the quayside. Mercifully, no-one saw it and no-one looked up.

I reached a narrow piece of flat roof. Just below the roof was a row of windows. One of them was open. I swung myself over the edge, through the window and into the room. Outside was a corridor. It was empty. At the end of the corridor was an open door to what might be an office (10). Beside me was a staircase (19).

I took a big gulp of air and dived. It was difficult to swim, there were too many tree roots in the way. The best I could do was half swim, half pull myself along under the water. I didn't surface until my lungs were just about bursting. I could still hear the chopper, but I couldn't see it. The trees were now so thick that I doubted that even a flame thrower could get through them.

With some breath inside me, I had time to look around. The first thing that I noticed was that the water I was standing in was very warm. The second was something sticking out of the bank, something that looked very like the top of a large metal pipe. I dived under the water again to get a better look.

It was a metal pipe, about four feet in diameter. It was difficult to know what a metal pipe was doing in the middle of a swamp, a pipe with hot water running out of it. Whatever it did, it had to come from somewhere, and that somewhere must be the building I was trying to reach. It was certainly big enough to crawl through.

Something else had had the idea before me. A

shaft of sunlight through the water picked out a nose that was sticking out of the pipe. Behind the nose were two bulging eyes. It was another of the keen local swimmers, a North American crocodile. It was asleep, but I wasn't sure it would stay that way while I squeezed past it. I pulled a button off each sleeve of my blazer, primed them and tossed them into the pipe. There wasn't much of a bang, but a lot of water got thrown around. With it went my machine pistol!

It was too late to worry about the pistol. I had to get past the 'croc' while it was still stunned.

As I had hoped, there was air in the pipe above the level of the water outside. It was pitch black and the slimy sides made it no easier to crawl up. My hope was not only to get out at the other end, but not to meet a deluge of boiling water on the way.

The pipe came out into an open metal tank. I couldn't see over the edge, but I could reach it. I hauled myself up (19).

I made my way out from the trees holding my arms well above my head. The chopper was now hovering near enough for me to see that it did have a crew of two, a pilot and a gunner. I could see the tanks of the flame thrower strapped to the gunner's back though, for the moment, he was covering me with an automatic pistol.

I knew that the chopper couldn't land until they had got me clear of the minefield. The gunner waved the pistol, motioning me to come on, while the chopper moved away towards the firm rock.

I kept moving forward, hoping that they knew where the mines were! I had seen no chance to use my pistol. I had no doubt that any false move would get me a bullet in the head.

I was out of the minefield and the chopper was landing. If I was going to try anything, then it had to be within the next few seconds. I looked up at my arms which were still held in the air. One of the buttons on the sleeve of my blazer was hanging by a single thread.

The chopper landed. The gunner climbed out. I shouted.

'I have a pistol in my belt. Do you want me to throw it over to you?'

He couldn't hear. Without lowering my hands, I made signs. He understood. He made signs back. The answer was yes, but slowly, and with one hand.

As I put my hand round to the back of my belt, I got the button off the sleeve and worked it into my fingers so that I could prime it by giving the eye a twist. I wasn't going to get a full turn, so the delay was going to be less than a second. I flung the gun and the button towards the feet of the gunner.

What I didn't expect was that the explosion would set fire to the fuel tanks on his back. He panicked and ran, blindly, towards the chopper. He reached it as the tanks exploded. A split second later, there was a second explosion. The chopper was a ball of flame and a pillar of black smoke rose into the air (15).

I did not have much in the way of weapons. I did still have the grenades on my blazer, but not knowing who or what might come through the door, I couldn't even guess how or whether I was going to be able to use them.

While I was waiting, it might be nice to find some other way of holding off unwelcome visitors. I took a look at the door. It had handles and a lock, but no key. I could push one of the large settees across it, but that wasn't going to keep anyone out for long.

I took another look around the room. There was a television set. To do something with that, I needed a length of cable. There was a short length from the set to an aerial socket, but it was too short. A table lamp at the other side of the room looked as if it might give me what I needed. I ripped the cable out of it and took it over to the T.V.

I took the cork out of the champagne bottle

and eased off the piece of metal that covered the top of it. It made a strong enough screwdriver to get the back off the T.V.

I connected one end of my cable to the high tension side of the T.V. tube and fixed the other end to the door handle. That would deal with the first one through the door! A four thousand volt electric shock is a bit like a blow with a sledge hammer, and sometimes just as fatal.

I thought that I had better check that the T.V. was working by switching it on. The picture appeared quickly. It was a man's head. It spoke.

'I am sorry, Major, that we haven't time to see whether your clever idea will work, though I will say that you do seem to live up very well to your reputation.'

I had not missed the use of the 'Major', my honorary Secret Service rank. A whole section of the wall behind me was sliding back to reveal a very large room behind it (21).

I found myself in what I suppose would be called a 'plant room', meaning that it is full of machinery. It was no ordinary plant room. The last time that I had seen anything as big was when I had visited Battersea Power Station.

I took a walk down a row of generators, keeping a careful eye open for anyone who might be about, but the place appeared to be unattended.

The manufacturer's plates on the machinery suggested that all of it had come from Far Eastern countries. That fitted with the freighter I had seen in the harbour which had a North Korean registration. All that told me nothing except that whatever Happiness was up to, he was using an awful lot of electricity doing it.

The reason that I was here was to find out just what he was up to and I could see that I was going to have to do some more looking.

I already knew that the building must be vast. The bit that could be seen sticking from the cliff was, as they say, 'only the tip of the iceberg'.

I explored two floors and a lot of corridors – without much success. Most of the doors were locked, but from the few rooms that were open, it looked like this was nothing but a big storage area. That would also account for the fact that, so far, I had seen no-one about the place.

I had come to the end of yet another corridor and another staircase. There was no point in going back the way I'd come. It had to be up the stairs (14), or down (20).

The girl who was blocking my way at the bottom of the staircase, didn't look exactly dangerous. She was young, small, pretty, and looked as if she might be half Chinese. She was dressed in a short, black tunic and I could see no way that she could be armed.

That was my first mistake. She put one hand up to the back of her neck. When she brought it down again, it was clutching a long, thin knife. Young ladies who carry knives strapped high between the shoulder blades haven't learned the trick in the Girl Guides.

I whipped off my blazer and used it to cover one arm. I was just in time to stop the first blow from doing more damage than a six inch cut in the sleeve. She was fast, but not fast enough to avoid my kick that sent her knife skidding across the floor.

She looked towards the knife, then at me, decided that it wasn't a good idea to go for the knife and took up what is known, in the art of Kung Fu, as the 'Horse Stance'. She was certainly a young lady full of surprises.

I saw her lean to her left and I knew that she was going to try a classic Kung Fu sweeping kick to my right leg. I dropped my leg into the kneeling counter. It hurt her, but she came straight back with short, jabbing punches. I knew this girl could be lethal. I didn't want to break her leg, or her neck, unless I had to.

I didn't have to. I was saved 'by the bell', or rather a voice which seemed to rasp out from the middle of nowhere. I couldn't translate the words, but I recognised the language as Cantonese Chinese. The girl stood back.

The voice, which had to be coming from a loudspeaker, went on, this time in faultless English.

'I am sorry, Major, that we haven't time to see what else you can do, though, so far, you have lived up very well to your reputation.'

I hadn't missed the use of the 'Major', my honorary, Secret Service rank. A whole section of wall behind me was sliding back to reveal a very large room behind it (21).

There were several people in the room, though the one I was looking at was the man seated at the desk right opposite to me. I had no doubt that this was Happiness, in person.

'Come in, Major. No harm will come to you. When I decide to have you killed, I will tell you.'

The voice was quiet and educated, but had a coldness which matched the steel blue eyes looking over a pair of half spectacles.

'Unfortunately, you have just missed feeding time for my pets.' He waved one hand to the wall behind him, which I could now see was a large panel of glass. Whatever was behind the glass was in half darkness and all that I could make out was what looked like a tree hung with dead leaves.

'Bats, Major – actually a cross between one of your British bats and Desmodus, the common South American vampire. You may know that Desmodus carries the disease rabies. These carry something nastier and, unlike Desmodus, will breed happily in any part of the world.'

'Dangerous pets!' I said.

'Very, Major. Our last "volunteer" died within an hour of being bitten, which is why I like to keep the antidote around.' He picked a hypodermic syringe from the desk. 'Completely effective if given within one minute of the bite.'

'And am I to be the next "volunteer"?' I asked.

Happiness tried a smile. It reminded me of a laughing rattlesnake.

'Oh! No!' he said. 'I told you – the bats are just pets. You came here because the American Government has been most anxious to find out what I am doing on this island. The American Government already knows what I'm doing, and since you aren't going to be with us for very long, I intend to let you see what you came for.'

He got up from the desk. I didn't understand what he had said about the American Government, but that would have to wait. A pair of giant steel doors was sliding apart to reveal some kind of observation platform (22).

We were looking down into a large control room. The walls were lined with instrument panels, tended by six or more white-coated staff. The centre of the floor was empty, except for a large hole with pipes and steel cables running into it. Some of the pipes looked to be crusted with ice.

'What is it?' I asked.

'Exactly what it appears to be, Major, a hole – eight and a half miles deep, drilled down through the old core of the volcano. The pipes are for cooling. You probably know that it gets hotter as you go down through the Earth's crust, and the temperature at the bottom of that hole is nearly five hundred degrees centigrade. The cables running down the centre operate a small elevator, a "lift" I think you say in your country.'

Now I knew what it was. I still couldn't imagine what it was for. Knowing Happiness, I didn't think that it was just a way of providing hot water!

'I believe you have met that charming young lady, Dr Helen Simpson.'

Happiness didn't wait for a reply. He went on.

'Dr Simpson would explain to you that earth-

quakes are caused by the sudden release of pressure which builds up along natural cracks in the Earth's crust. What you are looking at is my way of helping nature along. A small nuclear device, exploded at the right depth, will produce a shock wave capable of setting off a major earthquake in any one of a dozen cities which I might choose.'

I knew that Happiness was mad, but I was just as certain that he could do what he said.

'Look over here, Major.'

He turned to the side of the observation platform to where, on the wall, was a large-scale map of the west coast of the United States. Marked on it, was a thick red line running, roughly, north to south.

'That,' said Happiness, pointing to the red line, 'is one of those natural cracks in the Earth's crust. It's called the San Andreas fault. If you look at the map more closely, Major, you will see that the red line goes right through the city of San Francisco.'

It was not too difficult to work out what was coming next! (23)

'While you were setting off for this island, Major, one of my agents was delivering a note to Washington. In 1906, the city of San Francisco was almost totally destroyed by an earthquake. It will happen again in just one hour fifty-five minutes, unless the United States Government agrees to the payment of one billion dollars – a modest price for a whole city.'

When Happiness had left his desk, he was followed by two men who I assumed were his personal bodyguards. They were obviously twins, identical except for the fact that one had a scar from top to bottom of his right cheek. Their heads were shaven and they wore loose Karate-style robes, which made them look no less like two hairless gorillas.

Happiness snapped his fingers. The one without the scar came forward and took hold of my shoulder in a grip like a mechanical grab.

'If Washington pays, Major, I might let you go. If it does not, then I can promise you a last grandstand view – with the bomb, five miles

down that hole. It will be warm, but the discomfort will not be for long.'

For a prison, the room that I was locked into was the last word in luxury – furniture, pictures and ornaments in the very best of taste. Only the heavy bars on the windows and the locked door with no keyhole on the inside spoiled the effect.

I could see from the window that I was near the top of that part of the building which stuck out from the cliff.

I had no idea what I could do about Happiness's mad scheme, but I knew that I had less than two hours in which to do it.

I still had my pack of 'chewing gum'. That should deal with the bars. That might get me out of the building, but would it get me back in (28)?

The easiest way back into the building was through the door. That posed two problems. First, I had to get someone to unlock it. Second, if the someone was the gorilla who had brought me, had I any chance at all of overpowering him (26)?

I knew that the man was just playing with me. He was standing back and waiting for me to get up. I stood up and braced myself against the wall and, as he moved towards me, I planted both my feet in the middle of his stomach.

That moved him! He stepped back to keep his balance and came up against the edge of the low table. I saw my chance and followed up with a kick to the chest. He fell back across the table, rolling onto the floor on the opposite side. Almost at once, he was on his feet again.

We stood, facing each other. I had decided that he was going to make the next move, but he didn't. The seconds passed while he did nothing but stare at me with that fixed grin.

Then something happened. At first, it was so slow that I wasn't sure that I was really seeing it. He had begun to topple forward. It was like watching the demolition of a building in slow motion. His body crashed to the floor at my feet and lay quite still. A patch of red was spreading across the back of the white robe. At its centre

was the bronze bird which had stood on the table, its long beak sunk deep into the man's rib cage. I had no doubt that he was quite dead. The wonder was how he had stood on his feet for so long with the bird stuck in his back.

The door was still standing open. If I was going to do anything to stop the destruction of San Francisco, I had about ninety minutes left in which to do it. I had a lot less time than that before somebody discovered my escape.

My first thought was of the control room. That was the nerve centre of the whole operation and the place where I should be able to do the most damage. For that very reason, it might also be the best guarded (30).

The control room might be the nerve centre, but it couldn't operate without vital machinery – like the generators. They had to be somewhere down on the lower floors. They should be less well guarded than the control room, but might not be too easy to damage (27).

I had been out of sight of the camera for a bit too long already. My luck wasn't going to hold for ever and I had to find some way of reaching that roof – and quickly!

I dropped back to the floor to see what else the room had to offer. On a low table in the centre was a bronze statue of a bird, about a foot high. It was a flamingo or an ibis, or something of the sort, with a long, curved neck and a long, sharp beak. It was the curved neck that took my fancy. I picked it up and tried it for strength. I certainly couldn't bend it in my hands. It looked like the next best thing to a grappling hook. All I needed now was a 'rope'.

The window had curtains which pulled on cords, a nice touch, I thought, for a prison. I ripped them down and got enough cord for my needs.

With one end of the cord tied around the feet of the bird, I leaned out of the window again and tried a few swings at the edge of the roof.

It wasn't easy. It was at about the fifth or sixth

attempt that the neck caught on the edge of the roof, and held. It seemed firm enough. There was only one way to test it.

I pulled myself over the edge of the roof and pulled the cord up after me. There was no need to advertise which way I'd gone. I took another look over the edge. My hope was that I could get down again through one of the other windows, but they were all closed.

That left the roof. The only thing there was a row of air vents. They were quite big enough to get through. They had wire grills over them, but they didn't look too difficult to force off. The air shafts must run from top to bottom of the building and I was sure that I had seen the same sort of grills in some of the corridors down below. The air vents would get me back into the building, though I was taking a chance on where they would bring me out.

It might as well be one of the two nearest to me. Was it right (30), or left (27)?

I knew enough about Happiness to be sure that he was taking no chances with me. I could be certain that the room had a hidden T.V. camera and that someone was watching me. There was a ventilator grill, but in the wrong spot to hide a camera. The only place that it could be hidden was behind an ornamental mirror which was fixed firmly to the wall. The lighting of the room was modern, in keeping with the furniture. It included two adjustable spotlights on a tall metal stand. I moved the stand over to the mirror and trained the two spots onto it. The T.V. camera would now be 'seeing' nothing but a dazzle of light. That should bring somebody running.

I still wasn't happy about my chances with the gorilla. I looked around for some sort of weapon. There was nothing very useful. On a low table was a bronze statue of a bird, about a foot high. It was a flamingo or an ibis, or something of the sort, with a long, curved neck and a long, sharp beak. The beak looked the next best thing to a knife, but the body was too fat to hold firmly.

It was too late, anyway. A sound in the corridor outside told me that somebody was coming. The door opened. As I had feared, it was the same gorilla who had brought me to the room – and I still had an aching shoulder to remind me of it!

The man didn't look as though he was armed, but that made me no happier. He was built like a small tank. I guessed that he was an expert in Kung Fu, Karate and probably several other things besides. I took up one of the Kung Fu fighting positions. He kept on walking towards me, his hands still down by his sides.

I landed two short, jabbing punches to his chin and a third to his nose. He stood, just smiling at me. I tried two more on his solar plexus. I could have been hitting the wall for all the good I was doing!

If I couldn't hurt him with my fists, I might do more damage with my feet. I tried a high kick. I wasn't sure what happened, except that I found myself lying on my back on the floor (24).

I found myself among machinery – a lot of machinery. They weren't generators. It was a refrigeration plant, which looked big enough to freeze the Caribbean!

Thanks to Happiness, I now had a pretty good idea of what it was for – pumping cooling liquid down that hole. If it was as hot down there as he said, then I could see all sorts of problems if, for instance, the cooling was suddenly stopped!

There was no-one around, though that might not last for long. Someone was going to discover my escape and start a general search.

There were four big machines. I hadn't enough explosive to destroy one. I walked around them to see what could be done. Each one had a giant cooling fan. Something thrown into the spinning blades might well do the trick – 'a spanner in the works' as they say!

Someone had been doing some repairs and had thoughtfully left some lengths of copper tubing on the floor. They looked perfect for the

job. I couldn't use them like javelins because of the wire screens protecting the fans. I had to push them through the wire and send them the rest of the way with my fist.

The noise was earsplitting. Two of the machines jammed completely and smoke started to pour from the fan motors. One went on working, minus all of its fan blades. The fourth had lost half its blades and sounded as if it was going to shake itself to pieces at any moment.

If I could do the same amount of damage in the control room, then the only thing that would be exploding in the next two hours would be Happiness!

The corridor outside of the refrigeration plant was still empty. I headed for the staircase. I had hardly set foot on the stairs, when I heard the sound of running and shouting from somewhere above me.

Had I still time to get to the next floor (30), or should I go back (29)?

I knew enough about Happiness to be sure that he wasn't taking any chances with me. I could be certain that the room had a hidden T.V. camera and that someone was watching me. There was a ventilator grill, but that was near to the floor and not a good place to hide a camera. The only place that it could be hidden was behind an ornamental mirror which was fixed firmly to the wall.

The mirror faced the door, but the camera could probably also 'see' the window, which was over to its right. I had to stop the camera from 'seeing' the window, and I had to do it in some way that wouldn't bring anyone rushing to see what I was up to.

The furnishing of the room was very modern, and that included the lighting. There was a tall metal stand with two adjustable spotlights on it. I remembered an old trick of stage magicians. You can't see too much of what is going on if you are staring at a bright light. The stand was in the right place. I had only to move the spots.

For the benefit of the camera, I 'played' with the spotlights for a few minutes, making sure that when I had finished, they were pointing straight at the mirror. Whoever was watching the T.V. screen would find that where there had been a window, there was now nothing but a bright dazzle of light.

I used four strips of my plastic explosive, wrapping them around the top and bottom of two of the bars on the window.

The explosive burned brightly and quietly and, after a few seconds, molten metal began to splash down onto the window ledge. I gave the bars a moment to cool off before trying them. They were almost melted through and with a bit of pulling and twisting, they came away.

The window itself had a normal catch. I opened it and got myself far enough through the opening to take a look at what was on the outside. There was a sheer drop below me. The roof was about six feet above me, with no hand holds – a bit too far to reach (25)!

I slipped back into the plant room and climbed up onto one of the gantries that were used to inspect the tops of the machines. Whoever came in wasn't going to need to do much inspecting to see what was wrong and, if anyone was looking for me, I was probably in the safest place. They wouldn't expect me to have stayed at the scene of the crime.

Half a dozen men came into the room. There was more shouting and more argument. Someone switched off the machines that were still running.

From what I could hear, they were planning to start on repairs. They seemed to think that two of the machines could be operating again fairly quickly. That was disappointing, but there was nothing I could do except to stay where I was and wait for a chance to get out.

Two of the machines had been part stripped down and two spare fans had been brought in. I was beginning to think that I had wasted my time when someone else came running into the room, shouting.

'Leave it! The shaft's heating up and it's jam-

med the elevator. The bomb's stuck not far down the hole and there's no way of stopping the timer. The whole island's going to go up. Drop everything and get out. The order's for general evacuation!'

The message was clear enough. San Francisco was safe and Happiness's island was going to be blown out of existence, in about thirty minutes I thought.

My job wasn't finished. I wanted Happiness! I could be certain that Happiness wasn't the kind of man to 'go down with the ship'. He must have made some arrangement to get off the island, and there were only two possibilities – boat or helicopter. Whichever it was, it could only be in the area of the harbour (37). With everybody leaving the island I knew that the harbour could be pretty crowded and there was still a risk that someone would find time to put a bullet into me.

Happiness could still be in the observation room and could be alone (31). The risk was that he'd left and that I would be giving him more time to get away.

I had come into a corridor which my arithmetic told me was under the observation room where I had met Happiness. There were no guards, but there was a door opposite me with a glass panel in it. I had found the control room. I still had some plastic explosive, but to use it I had to get rid of the men in the control room or at least put them out of action for a few seconds. None of them looked to be armed. I could only hope that I was right.

There was a large foam fire extinguisher on the wall next to the door. I took it down, kicked open the door and set off the extinguisher. I directed the powerful jet of sticky foam at the man nearest to me. The rest rushed to his assistance, which was exactly what I wanted.

Half blinded by the foam, they were soon skating about in the slippery mess that it had left on the floor. By the time they were able to see again and had stopped bumping into each other, I would have done what was needed – or would I?

Someone else was standing in the doorway – the other half of Happiness's bodyguard, the one with the scar down his face.

I turned the extinguisher on him, only to see the jet of foam giving out until it was nothing but a trickle. This was something that I hadn't expected. I needed time to think. As he walked very slowly towards me, I backed very slowly away. I didn't put my chances very high in a straight fight but I could see nothing else for it.

I was still holding the empty extinguisher. It was big and, even empty, it was heavy. With both hands, I flung it at him with as much force as I could muster.

I hadn't counted on the slippery floor. As the extinguisher left my hands, I started sliding backwards as if I had been standing on a sheet of ice. I half turned to see where I was going. The hole was inches behind me! I couldn't stop! As my feet reached the end of the floor, I flung out my hands. I felt my fingers grip the edge. Below me was a drop of eight and a half miles! (35)

There was plenty of hurrying about going on in the corridors and on the staircases. People even bumped into me, but nobody seemed to care about who I was. They were only interested in one thing – getting off the island before the whole thing blew sky high.

As I had hoped, the observation room was empty – except for Happiness. He was emptying the contents of his desk into two document cases.

‘Going somewhere?’ I asked.

He didn’t look up, but went on with what he was doing.

‘Yes, Major. I am leaving – in a few minutes. I suppose that I should congratulate you. The fault is obviously mine for not treating you with more respect. I really should have had you removed before you left London.’

‘Supposing,’ I said, ‘that I don’t want you to leave.’

He looked up at me.

‘I’m quite certain that you don’t want me to

leave, but I assure you that I am leaving. My helicopter is ready and waiting for me by the harbour at this very moment. I’m sorry to tell you that it is you, Major, who will not be leaving.’

I didn’t think that Happiness was given to any kind of bluff. He was locking the cases. He didn’t appear to be armed. I looked behind me and around the room. It was still empty.

Happiness knew exactly what I was thinking. He put the cases down onto the floor and stood looking at me across the desk. Then he dropped his eyes to the top of the desk itself. He didn’t speak – he didn’t need to!

On one end of the desk was a gun. On the other end was a hypodermic syringe; I had almost forgotten about the ‘pets’. I understood the rules of the ‘game’. I was expected to make a grab for the gun or the syringe. Whichever I took, Happiness would get the other. I could be sure that it wasn’t as simple as it looked, but it had to be the gun (34), or the syringe (36).

When Happiness had delivered his threat to Washington, I was already out of radio contact and it had been too late to stop the mission.

Emile Katterman had flown from Washington to Barbados and joined the U.S.S. *Houston* at sea from a helicopter. All the United States naval forces in the area had been ordered to take up positions within an hour's sailing of the island and, knowing that I could be in trouble, the *Houston* had sailed for the rendezvous point an hour ahead of schedule.

The bomb was due to go off in minutes. There was no knowing what it might do to the island. That was the least of the problems; the real danger would be from radioactive fallout drifting towards the main chain of Caribbean Islands.

We were ten miles away and at periscope depth when the bomb went off. It could have split the island apart, but the bomb had been far enough down the hole for that not to happen. Instead, it blew off the top of the old crater, showering rocks into the sea for miles around.

There was a burst of flame which lasted for only a few seconds and then a cloud of grey smoke which mushroomed up into the blue sky. Once the shock wave had passed, the 'sub' surfaced so that its instruments could check for radioactivity.

It looked as if the bomb had been 'clean' and that was soon confirmed by radio messages from other air and sea units moving into the area.

In one way, that was good news. In another way, it wasn't. Happiness had been stopped this time, but it was certain that we would hear of him again. The fact that the bomb was clean meant that Happiness had also perfected a neutron bomb while everyone else was still arguing about whether it was possible.

'Cheer up!' said Katterman.

I told him that, apart from still being in one piece, I didn't think I had too much to be cheerful about.

'Look at it this way,' he said. 'In our business, killing off too many of the customers is going to end up putting us out of a job!'

I had to ease the pain across my shoulders. I couldn't match the strength of the man opposite me, but there was one thing left to try.

I relaxed my muscles, letting my body slip downwards. For the moment, I was free. Without my body to stop it, the bomb started to topple against the shaft wall.

The gorilla must have been taking the whole of the weight on his feet. As the bomb toppled forward, his feet slipped backwards. There was a gap between the edge of the platform and the shaft. I saw his legs slip down it and his body tangle with the cables.

It was over quickly. His neck was broken. The lift had stopped, jammed by the human wedge.

I looked up the shaft. We were now something like a hundred feet down. I tore my blazer into strips and bandaged my hands. I had to start climbing, using the pipes and cables.

The bandages didn't work too well. By the time I reached the top of the shaft, my hands were torn and bleeding.

The control room was empty. Red lights were flashing all over the control panels. I could see that I wasn't the only one who knew that there was a live nuclear device stuck just a hundred feet below me. San Francisco was safe. Happiness's island was going to be blown out of existence in less than thirty minutes.

My job wasn't finished. I wanted Happiness! I could be certain that Happiness wasn't the kind of man to 'go down with the ship'. He must have made some arrangement to get off the island, and there were only two possibilities – boat or helicopter. Whichever it was, it could only be in the area of the harbour (37). With everybody leaving the island I knew that the harbour could be pretty crowded and there was still a risk that someone would find time to put a bullet into me.

Happiness could still be above me in the observation room and could be alone (31). The risk was that he'd already left for the harbour and I would be giving him more time to get away.

I went for the gun, at the same time tilting the desk so that the syringe rolled off the other end and shattered on the floor. As I stood back, I realised that Happiness had made no attempt to move.

'Disappointing, Major. A nice touch, breaking the hypodermic, but you really should have worked out that I would not be offering you a loaded gun. Try it, by all means, but you will find that it is empty. On the other hand, the one that I am holding, is not.'

I didn't know where it had come from, but I could see that Happiness was holding a gun. I took his word that it was loaded.

'I admit, Major, that the game was a little unfair. You would have lost, either way, but I was interested to see how your mind would work. It does seem a pity that there is not going to be more time for me to learn about you. If you didn't choose the syringe, I was going to leave

you to my bats, but I've changed my mind. The bomb can take care of you; that would seem to be only fair, since it is your fault that this island is about to disappear.'

Without taking his eyes, or his gun, off me, Happiness picked up the two document cases and started backing towards the door.

'If you are thinking about the section of sliding wall which I used when we first met, Major, then I'm sorry to tell you that I have already destroyed the controls. You will not be able to open it. The glass panels of the observation platform are also armoured, and quite unbreakable. Once I have locked you in, the only way out will be upwards! My guess is that you have about another thirty minutes to think about it. I will wish you good-bye, Major.'

Happiness was gone. I had no doubt that he had locked the door behind him (39).

My fingers held on the edge. I looked up. A face with a scar down the right cheek was grinning down at me. He placed the ball of one of his bare feet onto one of my hands and did the same with the other foot. Raising his heels from the ground, so that the whole of his twenty stones was carried on my fingers, he began to twist his feet from side to side.

There was an intense burning sensation, followed by a slow numbness. He stepped back and my fingers slipped away from the edge.

I stopped falling with a jerk that shook me from top to toe. I was standing on the platform of the lift, only ten feet below the edge of the hole. The platform was not empty. Most of it was taken up by a large metal cylinder – the bomb!

Happiness had promised me a grandstand view of the explosion and I expected that his bodyguard would be happy to leave me where I was. I didn't expect that he would start to climb down after me, but he did. That put paid to any idea I had of disarming the bomb.

There was not much room on the platform, just enough to squeeze around the cylinder in the centre. Being the size that he was, Happiness's gorilla found the squeezing harder than I did. To keep him away from me, I only had to stay on the opposite side of the bomb. He had worked that out for himself. Instead of doing any more squeezing, he started to push the bomb towards me.

The cylinder must have weighed anything up to two tons, but it was moving, pinning me firmly against the wall of the shaft. I knew that once he had got me pinned down, he could get at me whenever he liked.

I could certainly feel the pressure of the bomb on my chest. I was also feeling something else, a burning pain across my shoulders where I was bracing myself against the wall of the shaft. The burning sensation got worse. It was a moment before I understood what was happening. The lift, with its bomb had started to move down the shaft (33)!

I made my dive for the syringe, at the same time tilting the desk so that the gun fell off and skidded across the floor. I was just going to follow it, when I realised that Happiness had not moved.

'A good choice, Major, the one that I would have made myself. Don't bother to pick up the gun. It isn't loaded. Of course, you realised that I wasn't likely to be offering you a loaded gun. On the other hand, the one that I am holding is loaded.'

I didn't know where it had come from, but I could see that Happiness was holding a gun. I took his word that it was loaded.

'You may think that my little game was unfair, Major. You lose in the end, whichever choice you made, but you may take some comfort from the fact that, having chosen the syringe, I will spare you from my bats. The bomb will give you a much quicker and cleaner end, and you must admit that it is only justice. It is your fault that this island is about to disappear.'

Still keeping the gun pointed at me, he bent

down to pick up the document cases. They were heavy, and having only one free hand, he let one of them slip out of his grasp. He tried to catch it. It was the moment I had been waiting for, the moment he was off his guard.

I picked up a chair and swung it at the plate glass front of the cage of bats. Broken glass showered to the floor and the startled creatures fluttered out into the room.

Happiness was terrified. He dropped the gun, beating his hands wildly in the air as the bats fluttered about his head.

I moved quickly into the corridor, closing the door as I went.

Half a dozen of the bats had got out of the room and were flapping about the ceiling of the corridor. While the doors at either end of the corridor stayed closed, they could get no farther. Happiness had told me where to find a helicopter to get me off the island (38). If I wanted to deal with the bats, I had to go back into that room and get the gun (40).

It looked as though I might have done the right thing. No-one had lost any time in getting off the island.

All the small, faster boats had left and were making their way out to sea. The freighter was just leaving the harbour. There was still one helicopter, and I had a good idea who that was meant for!

I could see two other helicopters already airborne and heading west towards the main chain of Caribbean Islands. The one remaining was unguarded. I climbed in and strapped myself into the pilot's seat. It was a long time since I had flown a chopper and this one was different from anything I had seen. But now was no time to be worrying about small details – like whether or not I could fly the thing!

I got the motor started and the rotor blades spinning above my head. I took a firm hold on the control column and hoped!

The chopper rose easily off the ground.

Designed to be small and fast, it was also that much more difficult to keep steady. I needed to use the radio, but that wasn't going to be possible until I had learned how to keep the thing on an even keel.

I decided I would be safer to try gaining a bit more height. I glanced down to the ground in time to see a figure waving up at me. It was Happiness!

I was thinking about whether I should try to land and pick him up, when something changed my mind – a bullet from a well-aimed forty-five automatic which passed through the window and buried itself above my head.

Happiness had sealed his own fate. I had to broadcast some warning, and I wasn't likely to do it if I got myself blown out of the air. I climbed away, leaving a tiny figure emptying his gun at the sky.

I thought I had the general idea of the controls and headed to the west for the nearest land (42).

The only way that the bats were going to get out of the corridor was if somebody opened one of the doors in the corridor and let them out. My guess was that the building must be already empty. I let myself out of the corridor, making sure that none of the bats came with me.

I saw no-one else as I made my way out through the building and down to the harbour. The harbour itself was nearly deserted. All the small, faster boats had been taken and were making their way out to sea. The freighter had weighed anchor and was just leaving the harbour mouth.

Two helicopters were already airborne and heading west towards the main chain of Caribbean Islands. I looked around for another, the one that would have taken Happiness off the island. It was there and, as far as I could see, unguarded.

I climbed in and strapped myself into the pilot's seat. It was a long time since I had flown a chopper and this one was different from anything I had seen. But now was no time to be worrying about small details – like whether or not I could fly the thing!

I got the motor started and the rotor blades spinning above my head. I took a firm hold on the control column and hoped!

The chopper rose easily off the ground. Designed to be small and fast, it was also that much harder to keep steady. I needed to use the radio, but that wasn't going to be possible until I had learned how to keep the thing on an even keel.

At last I thought that I had got the general idea. I gained a bit more height and headed west for the nearest land (42).

I still had two pieces of plastic explosive. I took a good look at the door that Happiness had locked behind him. Whatever kind of lock it had, there was nothing showing on the inside. I could press the explosive into the edge, but it would have to be at the right spot and I didn't know which was the right spot.

I thought that my best chance was the armoured glass. I gave the strips a good chewing in my mouth to make them really sticky and pressed them onto the centre of one of the panes of glass of the observation platform.

The explosive burned quietly with its brilliant, hot, flame – and nothing happened. I thought that I had failed, when there was a sharp crack and the whole sheet of glass shattered into a million tiny fragments.

I dropped down into the control room, ten feet below me and made for the harbour.

The harbour was almost deserted. However

many helicopters there had been, they had certainly left, including the one carrying Happiness. The small, faster boats had gone and were visible well out to sea. The freighter was just leaving. There wasn't even a rowing boat left behind!

Not knowing when I might need to leave the island, I had made some arrangements. The submarine, the U.S.S. *Houston* was to stand by at periscope depth for two hours each evening for the next three days. My timing hadn't been very good. She wasn't due for another hour.

There was nothing for it but to swim. I knew very well that there was nowhere to swim to, the nearest land was nearly a hundred miles off, to say nothing of sharks! I might survive the explosion in the water. I might manage to paddle around for another hour. They were big 'mights'!

I was about a thousand yards out from the harbour when I saw a friendly sight sticking out of the water – two feet of periscope (32)!

I still had the syringe in my hand. I thought that I had better keep it there. I opened the door gently, watching for bats.

Happiness was slumped on the floor against the desk. Two of the bats were crawling around his face. The rest had hung themselves around the room. They didn't move as I entered.

The gun was lying beside Happiness. I saw him stretch out a hand and pick it up. I stopped moving towards him. I watched his finger tighten on the trigger. The gun went off.

Happiness had put a bullet through his brain.

At the sound of the shot, the bats flew up into the air again. More of them had got out into the corridor. To be on the safe side, I gave myself a jab with the syringe and hoped the dose was right.

I pulled the desk over to the doorway and got together everything I could see which would burn. The papers took fire quickly and the desk was soon ablaze. It would soon be too hot for

anything to live either in the room or the corridor.

The place was already filling with smoke. I got out of the corridor, making sure that none of the bats came through the door with me.

The building was empty as I made my way out. The harbour was almost the same. All the smaller, faster boats had been taken and were well out to sea. The freighter was just leaving.

One helicopter stood near to the building. Any others would already have gone. I didn't know how much time was left, though it couldn't be long now.

I got myself into the chopper and strapped myself in. It was one that I hadn't piloted before, but this seemed a good time to start learning.

I got it up into the air and headed west. I had trouble with the radio, but managed to raise the coastguard on St Vincent and get my call through to Washington (44).

Emile Katterman was already in Florida where he had flown when Washington had received the threat from Happiness. He had radioed the carrier to say that he would be joining me there as soon as he could arrange a flight.

By the time he did arrive, I had radioed a fuller report to Washington, showered and changed and was stretching my legs on the flight deck.

It was now almost dark. A full moon was rising in the sky and sparkling on the water in the wake of the ship. It was a still, warm, tropical evening. For once, I would have had to agree with Sir Hugo. I was enjoying myself at the taxpayers' expense.

'Now that's the darnest thing!' said Katterman. He was looking out across the water. I followed his gaze, but couldn't see anything unusual.

'What?' I asked.

'Birds,' he said, 'but like no birds I've seen before. It's my hobby, you know. Makes for something to do on a long, dreary stakeout.'

I was no expert on birdwatching, but now I

could begin to make out some black shapes against the dark blue of the sky. Katterman had a pair of binoculars slung around his neck.

'Are those night glasses?' I asked.

He nodded and passed them over to me. I picked up the shapes in the glasses, but still it was too dark to see them plainly. It was at that moment that they crossed in front of the rising moon.

'They're not birds,' I told him. 'They're bats. One of them is a good deal bigger than the other and I would guess that it's a male and a female.'

'Bats!' said Katterman. 'I'll believe you. It's just that I wouldn't have expected to find bats this far out in the Atlantic Ocean. I wonder where they can have come from.'

I passed the binoculars back to him. All at once, the evening didn't feel half so pleasant.

'I know exactly where they've come from,' I told him. 'What we've got to worry about is where they are going to and whether they succeed in breeding when they get there!'

I got the radio working. I knew the frequency of one of the C.I.A. listening posts in Florida. If I could get through to them, then I wouldn't have a lot of explaining to do before I could get some action.

It was no use. Florida was a thousand miles away and the chopper's radio simply did not have the range. I had to be content with raising the coastguard on the island of St Vincent. I had to waste a lot of valuable minutes just convincing them that I wasn't mad, that I was who I said I was, and that we might have a major disaster on our hands. In the end, they were convinced and I was through to Washington.

It was too late to do very much. None of the islands was in immediate danger, but there could be shipping in the blast area. The radioactive fallout was something that would have to be dealt with when it happened. What wind there was should take it out over the Atlantic Ocean,

though winds in these parts could change very rapidly.

I was no more than ten miles from the island when it blew up. The bomb was far enough down the hole and the building far enough into the rock to stop the whole island from being blown to pieces. Instead, the blast was channelled upwards through the top of the old crater, mushrooming into the sky like a volcanic eruption.

Although I had no means of knowing at the time, I later found out that the device was a neutron bomb, with no fallout and no radiation hazard. Apart from a few small craft in the area being buffeted by a small tidal wave, there was no damage, except to the island itself.

I radioed my report of the explosion and was given instructions to change course and to land on an American aircraft carrier which had been moved into the area after Washington had received the threat from Happiness (41).

I had always thought of Sir Hugo's office as being a bit old fashioned, but that morning, I decided that it was really quite homely. It may have been because Sir Hugo didn't go in for bodyguards – or vampire bats. I did notice one new thing since I had been there last, a small bronze statue of a bird with a long, curved neck and a very sharp beak.

The fact that I was offered a cup of tea, meant that Sir Hugo was in a very good mood. He should have been. Happiness was dead, together with his bats. San Francisco was going about its business as if nothing had happened. Washington had been saved one billion dollars. The U.S. Navy had picked up most of the small boats and their crews after they had left the island. Better than all of that, it was the C.I.A., and not Eurintel, which was paying all of the expenses.

I thought that it was a good time to ask for some official leave. Sir Hugo stirred his tea for several seconds.

'Leave?' he said. 'What do you want leave for? You've just had an all expenses paid, sunshine holiday in the Caribbean. I'll be lucky if I get as far as Scotland for my holiday.'

When Sir Hugo said 'No', there was never any point in arguing. As I was leaving the office, he asked, 'What do you think of it?'

'What do I think of what, sir?'

'The bird,' he said, 'the bronze bird on my desk. I saw you looking at it.'

'Well, sir,' I replied, 'you know that I'm not an expert on art, but I can tell you that those birds can be very useful things to have around.'

I left him – still thinking about it.

I was about ten miles away from the island when it blew up. I think that I was expecting the island to split from top to bottom, but the bomb had been far enough down the hole for that not to happen. Instead, the blast went upwards, blowing off the whole of the top of the old crater. I could see rocks showering into the sea and a burst of bright, orange flame. The flame lasted only for seconds and was followed by a cloud of grey smoke which mushroomed up into the blue sky.

The chopper took no more than a slight buffeting from the shock wave, though I knew that the real danger was not yet over. If that cloud was radioactive, it would not need to drift very far for the fallout to reach the main chain of Caribbean Islands.

Minutes later, Washington was back on the radio. This time the message was being relayed from an American aircraft carrier, which had been heading at top speed towards the island since Washington had first received the threat from Happiness.

Planes from the carrier were already on their way to check on the radioactivity from the explosion and to escort the chopper back to the carrier deck.

By the time I had landed, first reports were coming back that the explosion had been 'clean'. It looked as if Happiness's last surprise had been that he had actually perfected a neutron bomb, while the rest of the world had been arguing about whether it was possible.

The danger was over and to anyone who might have seen it, the explosion must have looked like just another volcanic eruption. That was the story which was given to the world and most of the citizens of San Francisco probably missed it. If they did read about it, then few of them were likely to give a second thought to the news that a volcano had erupted on some tiny island in the Caribbean.

My job was almost over. After a de-briefing in Washington, it only remained for me to return to the London winter and an appointment with Sir Hugo (43).