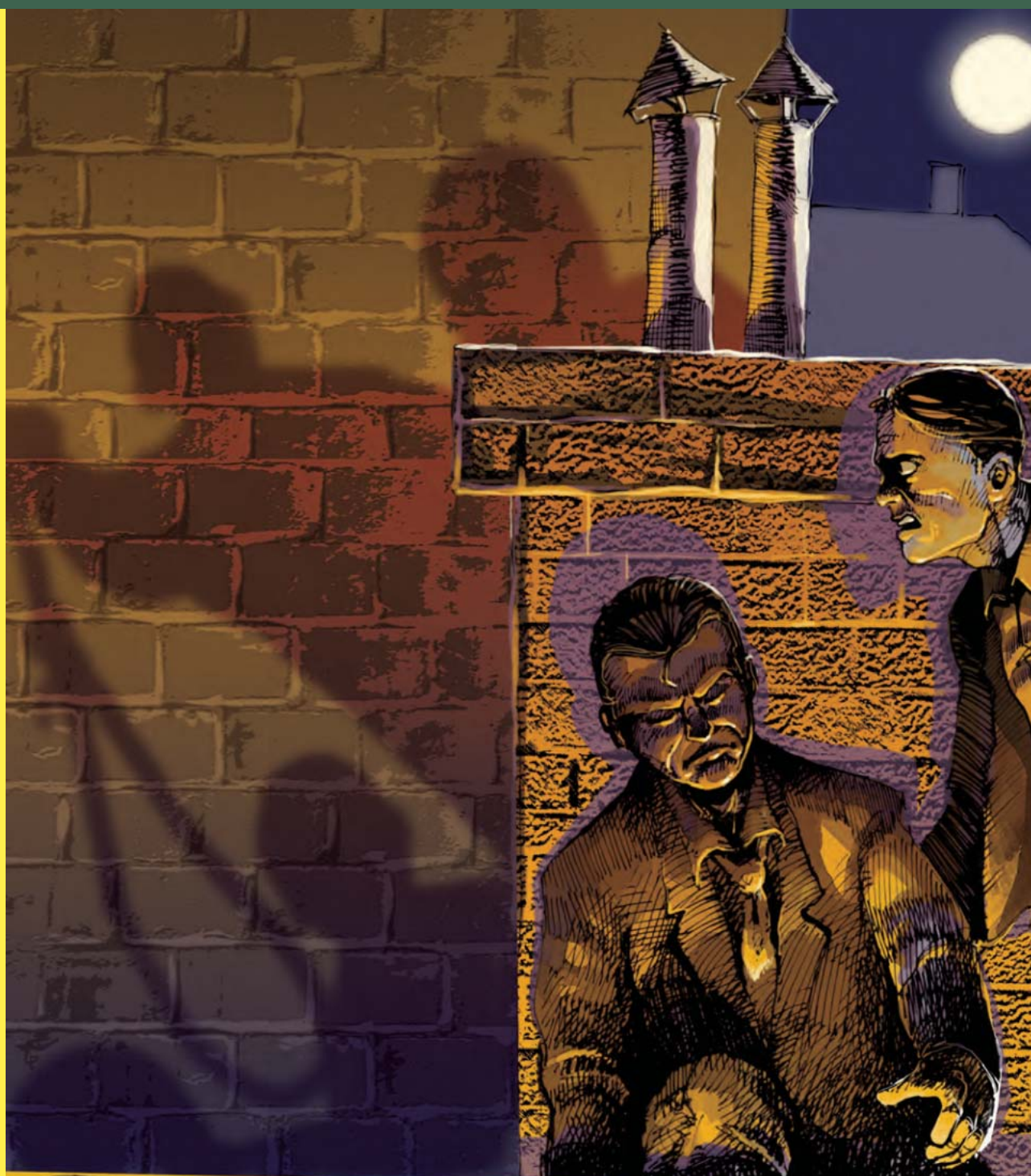


# TAJEMNICA EGZOTYCZNEGO WŁADCY



# SECRET OF AN EXOTIC RULER



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# PROLOGUE

That evening the fog over London was extremely dense. The streets were nearly empty and almost quiet.

On the river a small steamship "Atticos" was signaling with a special warning siren that it was coming into the port. It had just arrived in London from Piraeus and was carrying a load of coal.

"Atticos" was planning to dock in the main port but because of the weather it had to stop at Millwa Pier, in a less crowded area.

A customs officer came on board and was talking with the crew. They all thought that London at the moment was very unpleasant so the sailors offered a glass of hot grog to their guest.

The ship was rocking slowly, bumping the post to which she was tied. Suddenly, a man jumped from the ship and landed on the pier. He did it so quietly that nobody paid any attention. He ran quickly towards the lights on West Ferry Road. When he reached Malabar Street, he saw a drunk man walking close to the curb. A big truck, driving very fast, was approaching him.

The man who had escaped from "Atticos" jumped at the drunken fellow and stabbed him in the back with a knife. The victim fell directly under the wheels of the truck . . .

The attacker laughed loudly, put the knife back into his pocket and started singing a strange song: "La . . . ita . . . Lala . . . Liia-ta!"

And that is how Mr. Hingle arrived in London.

## CHAPTER I

### A STRANGE SURPRISE

"Thirty unexplained murders in three weeks! Gentlemen, do you realize what this means for us?" said Sir Austin, head of the police, to all the main employees of Scotland Yard. "It's not the first time that the newspapers accuse us of being cowardly. But this time I'm afraid they are right. Yes, gentlemen, the journalists expect some action from us. So we have to concentrate all our energy on this case . . ."

A telephone on Sir Austin's desk rang and interrupted him. He picked up the receiver and listened for a moment. Then he put it down and said:

"Detectives Morris, Lorkins, Driskoll and Maxwell have just reported that two heads, cut off the bodies, were brought in a box of fruit to Scotland Yard an hour ago. The victims belong to different social groups. One is a homeless man, the other a young engineer from Drayton. And, as before, somebody put a letter into the box, too: 'Regards from Mr. Hingle.' And directions to where we can find the bodies. Our detectives went there and indeed found them. As usual they hadn't been robbed. I'm sure you remember that after the first murder Mr. Hingle explained that he's not a criminal, he's a murderer. And now we have just found out about the thirty second murder committed by this man. Yet we still know nothing about him.

**dense** gęsty  
**nearly** prawie  
**steamship** parowiec  
**warn** ostrzegać  
**coal** węgiel  
**dock** zacumować  
**crowded** zatłoczony  
**customs officer** celnik  
**board** *tu:* pokład  
**crew** załoga  
**rock** kołysać  
**post** słup  
**tied** przywiązany  
**pier** molo  
**pay attention to** zwracać uwagę na  
**reach** dotrzeć, osiągnąć  
**towards** w kierunku  
**curb** krawężnik  
**approach** zmierzać do  
**stab** pchnąć nożem  
**victim** ofiara

**unexplained** niewyjaśniony  
**realize** zdawać sobie sprawę  
**employee** pracownik  
**accuse** oskarżać  
**cowardly** tchórzliwy

**interrupt** przerwać  
**pick up** podnieść  
**receiver** słuchawka  
**put down** *tu:* odłożyć  
**cut off** odciąć

**homeless** bezdomny  
**regards** pozdrowienia

**indeed** rzeczywiście  
**rob** obrabować  
**criminal** przestępca  
**find out** dowiedzieć się  
**commit** popełnić

**society** społeczeństwo

**servant** służący

**colonel** pułkownik

**in broad daylight** w biały dzień

**Ministry of Military Affairs**

Ministerstwo Spraw

Wojskowych

**awful** okropny

**crumple up** zmiąć

**bottom** spód

**attract** przyciągać

**exclaim** wykrzyknąć

**silence** cisza

**choice** wybór

**hopeless** beznadziejny

**hit (hit, hit)** uderzyć

**fist** pięść

**theft** kradzież

**horrible** okropny

**behavior** zachowanie

**disappearance** zniknięcie

**enemy** wróg

**slave trader** handlarz

niewolników

**untrue** nieprawdziwy

**task** zadanie

I understand very well why society is not satisfied with our work. All the newspapers, even foreign ones, criticize us. Look at this example from the French 'Matin': 'Dead bodies of three servants, who were coming back from a party, were found in the port. Their stomachs were cut open. The dead Colonel Thomson was found in a cinema at the end of a movie. He had a knife stabbed into his back. The people next to him didn't see anything. They thought the man was asleep. An officer was killed in broad daylight in front of the Ministry of Military Affairs . . .' I'm not going to read any more. You know as well as I do this awful list of Mr. Hingle's victims."

Sir Austin crumpled up the newspaper but then a name printed at the bottom attracted his attention.

"They are right!" he exclaimed.

"Why? What is it?" the other policemen asked.

"The article finishes with the following sentence: 'Doesn't England have Harry Dickson?'"

There was silence in the room.

It was true, the police sometimes used the services of the famous detective but they did so only when they had no other choice. But wasn't the situation hopeless now?

"Inspector Goldfield!" Sir Austin said.

"Yes, sir!"

"Aren't you Mr. Dickson's friend?"

"I believe I am, sir," Goldfield answered.

"So tell me please what Harry Dickson says about this case?"

"Unfortunately, I don't know . . ."

Sir Austin hit the table with his fist.

"Don't tell jokes, Goldfield! I know very well that you inform Mr. Dickson about every theft that takes place in this town so it's impossible that you haven't talked to him about these horrible murders."

"I don't understand it myself, sir! For the last three weeks I have been trying to contact my friend but nobody knows what has happened to him and his assistant Tom Wills."

"Impossible! What about Mrs. Crown, his housekeeper?"

"She is used to Mr. Dickson's strange behavior but this time even she is worried."

"His disappearance must be connected with Mr. Hingle's case, then," the head of the police cried.

"I repeat it to myself a hundred times a day but I am more and more afraid that . . . No, I don't even want to think about it. It isn't possible that the country's finest detective has been killed by this awful murderer."

"Mr. Hingle probably wanted to eliminate his greatest enemy," Sir Austin said. "But it's strange that the press didn't ask Dickson for help."

"It's because of the fact that the newspapers wrote a few weeks ago that Mr. Dickson and his assistant were planning to go to Buenos Aires to attack some slave traders. This information is of course untrue but I've decided not to correct it," Goldfield explained.

"Yes, that was a good idea," Sir Austin agreed. "But now your task

is to find the detective, and remember that neither the press nor the public can find out about it.”

After a short discussion, which did not result in any solution to the problem, Sir Austin finished the meeting.

Goldfield didn't feel hungry so he decided to take a walk along the Thames before dinner. The evening was quite cold but the air was fresh. The inspector sat down on a bench and looked at the river.

From now on he would have to solve all the criminal puzzles alone. Up to now he had been supported by the great detective. Once he even managed to outwit his friend, but generally he knew how clever Harry Dickson was. There were several dangerous situations which they had experienced together. Because of such moments they were very close friends. Tears came to the inspector's eyes . . . He was sure that Dickson was dead.

Suddenly, a young man who looked like a homeless person came up to him and sat down on the bench.

“Good evening, sir.”

“Leave me alone!” Goldfield said.

Another man, a tramp, stood behind the bench.

“This cigarette-butt in my mouth is the last one that I have. Unless you offer me another one, that is,” he said.

“Get lost, the two of you,” Goldfield replied very angrily.

“This gentleman,” the young man explained, “thinks I am Mr. Hingle and want to attack him.”

“Ha, ha, ha . . . What a good joke!” the tramp laughed.

“I will order the police to arrest you,” the inspector shouted.

“Can three weeks change a person so much?” the tramp asked.

Goldfield looked at him surprised.

**neither . . . nor** ani . . . ani

**result in** doprowadzić do  
**solution** rozwiązanie

**bench** ławka

**solve** rozwiązać

**puzzle** zagadka

**support** wspierać

**outwit** przechrzyć

**experience** zaznać

**tear** łza

**tramp** włóczęga

**cigarette-butt** niedopalek

**unless** chyba że

**get lost** splywaj

**reply** odpowiedzieć



“This cigarette-butt in my mouth is the last one that I have. Unless you offer me another one, that is.”

“What are you talking about? . . .” he had a strange feeling. “Oh, God! . . . Is it true or is it just a dream?”

The tramp hit him with his fist, laughing again.

“It’s not a dream, Goldfield, is it?”

The policeman was so shocked and happy that he nearly cried.

“Harry Dickson! Tom Wills! Why did you leave us and didn’t send any message? Where have you been?” Goldfield said, a bit angry.

“Hingle, my dear inspector,” the detective answered.

Goldfield sighed.

“So have you found anything?”

“Hm, not really . . .”

“What a pity! You are as helpless as us.”

“Me? You are wrong, my dear.”

“So, you know something?”

“Do I know anything? Well, that’s my business,” the detective replied.

“I’m begging you. Tell me, please. I’m so curious.”

“Ok, but you have to promise that you will keep everything a secret.”

“I promise!” the inspector exclaimed.

Harry Dickson smiled.

“You don’t know how difficult it will be to keep it a secret.”

“It doesn’t matter! Tell me!”

“Unfortunately, I don’t know much about Mr. Hingle’s case at the moment.”

“So people in London will still be afraid of this awful murderer . . .”

“No, Goldfield! Catching the guilty person doesn’t mean solving the puzzle.”

“So you know who Mr. Hingle is?”

“It’s hard to say. You can stand face to face with someone and still not know who he really is.”

“I don’t understand anything,” the inspector said rather depressed.

“Well, it’s a fact that I have caught Mr. Hingle.”

“Impossible!” Goldfield shouted.

“Yes, I have caught and imprisoned the criminal but this is just the beginning of the case!”



The next three weeks passed and, as Harry Dickson had said, all the murders in London stopped.

Goldfield was becoming enormously impatient. He kept asking the detective to explain the secret to him. He used a lot of arguments saying even that Dickson had no right to hide the criminal.

But the detective wouldn’t change his mind.

“Mr. Hingle is mine! All mine!” he repeated.

Goldfield sighed deeply at such moments and sometimes he thought that the murderer was already dead, shot by Dickson. It would be a nice solution, especially for Scotland Yard.

**sigh** westchnąć

**What a pity!** Jaka szkoda!

**helpless** bezradny

**beg** błagać

**curious** ciekawy

**keep sth a secret** zachować coś

w tajemnicy

**It doesn’t matter!** To nie ma

znaczenia!

**guilty** winny

**imprison** uwięzić

**pass** minąć

**enormously** ogromnie

**impatient** niecierpliwy

**hide (hid, hidden)** ukrywać