

Non-stop from New York

Autor(en): **Mitchell, Roger S.**

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Non-Stop from New York

I suppose that of all times in the year, the Autumn is the Season of memories and reminiscences, and it was natural for me to sit, looking over the top of a steaming cup of coffee into that wonderful misty-blue morning, with a hint of frost, and start to recall that other season of the year which is reserved for love.

It happened three summers ago.

It had been one of those weeks which a travel courier sometimes gets in the height of the season, when the accumulation of stinking hot weather, a rail strike and one or two awkward clients, makes one feel like packing the whole thing in and going home, job or no job! Ah, well, the strike was over now, and this particular lot were on their way home. I had just a few hours respite to catch up on a few essential bits of correspondence before the next party of tourists would arrive.

When I got back to the office, to which the Company in England, for whom I am the Swiss representative, sends all my papers, I was immediately confronted by one of those things which really is the last straw! It was their usual policy, to enable me to have some idea of who was going to be in the party, to send with the list of names a little dossier about each person. Someone had slipped up and there were no notes about any of the people whom I was to meet within the hour. I looked down the list, which was entitled 'Party of American Teachers Visiting Europe', and which did not seem to differ very much from so many of the others which I have conducted around during the summer. There were the usual numbers of marrieds and unmarrieds alike, but still I was furious at not having the slightest inkling as to the background of my party, and so, with a rather sinking heart, I rode out on the Airport Coach to meet them.

I still had a few moments between the 'touch down' of the aircraft and the time when I would come face to face with my party, and, looking back on it now, I remember that I indulged in the old game of trying to build pictures of people from their names. I had always known that this was a futile pastime, as one is always surprised, either agreeably or otherwise, as one's mental pictures of people are invariably incorrect.

I could see them now, approaching across the runway with the Air Hostess, and suddenly I was caught up in the bustle of the Airport. Before I knew where I was, the first members of the party were approaching me.

I smiled and waited for everyone to come through the Customs, nodded, said 'Hello' to a few people and, when everyone was gathered, I spoke:

«Good Afternoon ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to Switzerland! My name is Rudi Schmidt, and it will be my pleasure to be your courier for the next two weeks, and to show you something of our beautiful country. I see from my list that you are a party of Schoolteachers on holiday, and I ask you to forgive me if I start with a roll call. I hope it won't be long before I get to know you all by name.»

I went down the list of names, to which they all answered with a

variety of sounds and words according to their degree of embarrassment at a first meeting. Towards the end of the list I called the name of a Mr. Harry Peterson. This received no reply and a small bespectacled gentleman in the front row said:

«Oh, he was with us a few moments ago. I think he must have got held up in Customs!»

Suddenly, from the back of the group came a voice—a cool, clear, even voice, which startled me into attention:

«Sorry folks! I got hitched up with the Customs over my camera. I hope I'm not delaying things!»

I looked at the Voice, and I often wonder if, when one's heart skips a beat and that dry sensation comes into one's throat, anyone notices anything different. All I could think of at this moment was that I sincerely hoped no-one was watching me.

Again the Voice spoke:

«I rather gather that you were looking for me. I'm Harry Peterson.»

I know that »like a greek god« is a hackneyed expression, but it summed up my feelings alright. He was fairly tall, dark-haired, and well . . . He looked straight at me, grinned—I managed what must have been a sickly smile and hoped nobody noticed as I stammered:

«Not at all! I was just running through my list, to make sure that everyone was present.» I controlled my voice, read through to the end, then asked the party to follow me to the Airport Coach, signalling to a waiting porter to bring their luggage.

I was very glad of the excuse to see to the stowing of the baggage to give me a moment or two to think straight. I have always made it a rigid maxim of mine never to mix business with pleasure, but here was desire, and I knew that, given the slightest encouragement, I would break all my good resolutions.

I suddenly found myself wishing that I had in the party some of those people whom I dread, and who would certainly have taken from my mind the problem which was posing itself in a very real form. Paradoxically, this was going to be a very «good, nice and easy party». The people all seemed very friendly and on the face of it I should have none of those worries which would have distracted me from the little monster of desire, which assiduously creeps into one's brain at the least provocation.

By the time the luggage was stowed, everyone was in the coach, and they all seemed to be chatting happily together. As I got into the coach, and looked down the row of seats, I noticed 'my problem' was busily engaged in conversation with a matronly-looking spinster of about 60 summers.

I liked these ladies, with whom I always got on very well. They were the sort who had no illusion about themselves, unlike some of the predatory young females released on their first vacation, who, with a combination of being loosed from parental control for the first time, and the dash of southern sunshine (and often aided by a bottle of local wine), think that all travel couriers are an admixture of Don Juan, Rudolph Valentino and the latest screen idol.

We arrived at the hotel, and, again, it was a relief to busy myself with

the rooming arrangements, but, here again, I was faced with the same old nagging problem.

It was my Company's policy for the resident representative to stay in the same hotel as the guests, so as to be on hand. should any crisis arise, night or day. As the guests followed the bell boys to their rooms, I told each one the time for dinner, and that I would explain more about the fortnight's programme at that time.

At last I was able to get away to my own room and have a real chance to weigh things up, for here was a problem far greater than that which any number of predatory young ladies could present. I had to admit to myself that at last I had come face to face with 'The Person'. I had always scoffed at the idea of 'love at first sight', but here it was, sure enough. Of course the answer was quite straightforward—that was, leave well alone! This was alright in theory, but, face to face with concrete facts, what was I to do? After a wrangle with my own conscience, and even supposing that this young man might too have looked at me in a similar way as I at him, I knew, of course, that it would be the utmost foolishness to make advances, however cautious, to one of the clients. Steeled with these noble thoughts, I set forth for the dining room, where by now I knew that the party would be assembled.

It was my usual practice to outline the Itinerary of the holiday on the first evening and then fill in the details day by day, so as not to give the guests too large a slice of geography, history and other items of general interest than they could happily digest at one sitting. I went round the tables where my party were sitting, in order not to disturb the other guests of the hotel in the dining room by making a general announcement; also this gave me an opportunity to get to know the individuals, and for them to get to know me a little better. As I went the rounds, I was able to gauge the feel of the party, and I was feeling pretty pleased as they all seemed to be a very pleasant bunch, when I suddenly realised that I had not spoken to the 'Problem'.

It was at such a time as this that I cursed not having those notes from the Office. As I went over to the table, he was engrossed, as he had been on the coach, in conversation with the matronly spinster. When I arrived at the table, he looked up, grinned, and said:

«Why Hullo! I thought you were never going to get to us.»

«I'm sorry to have kept you waiting,» I replied. «I hope that you didn't think that I was abandoning you.»

«Hell No!» He grinned back. «We were enjoying ourselves and talking about you.»

I coloured.

«Don't worry—it was nothing detrimental. We were just saying how we liked the idea of your talking to each person in turn; makes 'em feel more at home than if you're talked at in a party.»

«Say,» he continued, «What do we call you—Mr. Courier?»

«Heavens No!» I replied. My name's Rudi, and I should like you to call me that if it's not being too familiar.»

«Well, my name, as you well know, is Harry Peterson, but my friends call me Hank. I am 27, a Harvard Graduate, and I teach Science at a High School in California.»

That, I thought, would account for the wonderful golden tan, which set off like a jeweller's velvet the sparkle of his dark eyes and the flash of ivory teeth.

I thanked him for his information and told him that this sort of 'gen' was usually sent to me by my Office, so that I should be able to get to know people more easily.

«Oh Well,» he sparkled, «I hope it won't be long before we are really good friends!»

The matron smiled on approvingly.

«Well Rudi: say, when do we get to hear about the holiday?»

I returned the sparkling grin with what I imagine must have turned out a weak smile, for it was as much as I could do to keep control of my voice. It must have been alright, however, as I saw no change in the face waiting to hear from me.

«Right now,» I replied, and went on to detail the general programme for the fortnight, that they would be with me, and, in particular, the salient features of the town in which we were staying.

«Why don't you try a walk by the Lake after dinner,» I suggested. «It's a beautiful evening, and one or two of the lakeside restaurants will have orchestras playing.»

The idea was generally discussed and they asked me if I would care to join them.

«If you will excuse me for this evening,» I said, «I have rather a lot of bookwork to catch up on, but another evening I would love to.»

And, with this, I excused myself and went to find the Hotelier, to discuss some arrangements with him, and to make some telephone calls.

Eventually, back in my own room I found that I could not concentrate on the work I had to do, as my thoughts kept turning to the young American. Oh, of course, there had been other young men before, who had attracted me, but they were usually with fiancées or girl friends and so the situation had never really taken such concrete shape as this before. Once or twice there had been a waiter or a porter at an hotel, but again, I was usually too busy during the season to make anything of it, even if they had noticed me.

I should perhaps, at this point, say that I am 26 years old, fairly easy on the eye, blond, tall and I try to keep myself in as good a shape as possible by swimming, walking, and whenever I am able to get the time, going to a gymnasium for a work out.

At last, I decided to try to forget the whole business, and, as it was getting late, I would take a shower and read in bed for a little while. Up to this point I hadn't taken much stock of the time, and was therefore most surprised to find it was nearly 01.00.

I had barely got out of my clothes and under the shower, when a knock came at my door.

«Oh Hell!» I thought. «It's started already! Who wants aspirins at this time of night?»

I shouted «Wait a minute,» grabbed a towel, calling «Come in» as I did so.

I was still wiping the water from my eyes as the door opened and in walked my young American. I don't know whom I expected it would be,

for I was too startled at seeing him to think for a moment. My first reaction was to apologise for my state of undress, whereupon he laughed and said:

«Well, carry on—don't let me interrupt anything. I saw a light under your door and just popped in to ask again about the excursion tomorrow—and don't apologise for *your* state of undress. What about me?»

It was only then that I realised that he was wearing pyjamas and dressing gown. He seemed so friendly that I replied:

«If you really don't mind holding on for a bit, I'll show you on the map.»

«You carry on,» he smiled, «and I'll make myself comfortable»

I was so excited that I was only in the shower a matter of minutes, whereas I normally like to have a good long soak. I dried off, threw on a robe and stepped back into the bedroom. As I walked in, I could not see him at first, as there was only a small light over my desk, but, as my eyes grew accustomed to the dimness, I saw him stretched out on my bed.

«My!» he said «That sure didn't take you long!»

«Oh,» I jested, to cover my confusion, «that's because I had no-one to scrub my back!»

«Well, next time you know who to ask!»

I went over to the desk and asked whether he would like a drink.

«Does that mean calling room service?» he asked.

«No,» I replied. «I'm room service for tonight.»

I poured out two glasses of Scotch, and turned to him. He was grinning from ear to ear.

«Does that mean I can get anything I want?»

«Oh yes,» I replied. «It's all part of the service.»

As I handed him his drink our fingers touched for a second, and an electric thrill ran through me as I stood looking down on him.

«Hey! I told you my friends call me Hank. Why don't you?»

«I'm glad to be included among them, Hank. Thank you very much.»

«Now, what about that trip tomorrow? You said you would show me on the map.»

I went over to the desk again and got out my map, which I laid out across the foot of the bed, whilst I sat to one side of it. Hank heaved himself up into a sitting position, and leaned over. As he did so, I caught a glimpse of the beautiful smooth tanned skin across his chest, and I began to feel my excitement rising. I raised my legs onto the bed, so that we were sitting opposite one another. Then Hank looked down and saw that my legs were bare.

«Hey Rudi! Haven't you got anything on under that robe?»

«No. I had a shower, remember?—Anyway it's too hot for pyjamas tonight.»

«Hear hear» Hank grinned back at me. «Say, d'ye mind if I take my gown off?»

«Be my guest,» I said, and, with one fluid movement, off came the gown and the top half of his pyjamas as well. The movement of his muscles must have pulled on the cord of his pyjama trousers, which fell open and, as Hank saw this, he pulled them off with a

«Well, might as well go the whole hog!»

He leaned towards me, and said:

«Com'on Rudi, don't be shy. Let's see what you're made of.»

And he gently pulled my robe from my shoulders, at the same time loosing the cord. I don't know what came over me, for, during those last few moments I had just sat there looking at Hank's marvellous body, and I was quite powerless to stop him, even had I wanted to.

«Com'on Rudi—I said don't be shy,» he breathed quietly.

He drew me towards him and I felt his beautiful long fingered hands, firm yet gentle, slide down my thighs, as he murmured:

«I promised myself this the moment I saw you at the Airport. I believe in Love at First Sight—don't you?»

At that, I gave myself to him, and, with eyes closed, we met in a searing kiss. All I could feel was the warmth of a trembling body pressed tight to mine, and we seemed to float away on a cloud of golden light . . .

then into a misty whiteness as I opened my eyes to look at the now clearing winter's mist and the great shining peaks before me. I must have been still far away, for suddenly I realised that someone had been talking to me for several moments. I jerked round to see the worried young enquiring face of my hotel porter.

«Are you alright, Sir?»

«Yes thank you, Henri. I was just day dreaming. Well, what can I do for you?»

« telegram, Sir.»

I took the yellow envelope, and, with the usual trembling hands, which always accompany the unexpected, I tore it open and drew out the sheet, still damp from the Post Office.

Surprise Stop Arriving Zürich 13.35 Stop This time for good. Love H.

by Roger S. Mitchell

SCORPIO RISING

a comment on a new film by Kenneth Anger

Many years ago when old Grace George was touring the United States with a road company of *Lysistrata*, the Los Angeles chief of police issued a warrant for the arrest of one Aristophanes, as the «author of a play considered obscene under the laws of the sovereign state of California.»

A quarter of a century has not changed the views of the police of our smoggy neighbor, evidently. Not long ago Michael Getz, owner of the Hollywood Cinema Theater, was seized by the Hollywood Vice Squad for permitting the showing of a new film by Kenneth Anger, creator of the sensational *Fireworks* of the early 1950's, an avant-garde film with strong homosexual overtones. This time the police confiscated a copy of *Scorpio Rising*, a film about motorcyclists. And they did it at almost the same moment that the Ford foundation granted to Mr. Anger a sum of ten thousand dollars to enable him to continue the production of his artistic films.

To call *Scorpio Rising* a 'film about motorcyclists' is like calling Leonardo an Italian inventor. *Scorpio Rising* is a multi-level thing; it can be many things to