

True Tales of a Traveller Series

02: Working Holiday

On the evening of our fourth week payday, Di, Rupert and I took a meal nearby, where we discussed our next move. Once again, the hotel management had not only failed to take the initiative to pay us, but avoided even talking about the subject of pay when we tried to bring it up. "I'm down to less than a thousand drachs now," I said. Di and Rupert were too. "Last week, they promised to pay us today for the full month," I continued. "We know now that they have the money, so I think we should just go in there together, all three of us, and demand payment together. They're bound to be in restaurant right now; the hotel's full now."

"Right! Let's embarrass them in front of the guests, maybe then we'll actually get something!" Di agreed.

Rupert took a deep breath, and stretched. He was obviously in agreement. "OK, time for a showdown!" he said as he rose from his chair. "Let's go!"

I suggested on the way back to the hotel that it would be even better if all four of us confronted Harry and his wife together. Should we go and search for Mike first I suggested?

"Nah, forget it! We don't need him," Rupert said with a tone of confidence. "God knows where he's sulking, maybe gone to drown his sorrows, for obvious reasons". We hadn't seen him all afternoon.

With a new air of resolution, the three of us acting as one, we walked through the main entrance and into the restaurant. It was almost empty, but for a handful of middle-aged Dutch guests. I asked if they had seen the manager, or his wife?

"They were here about an hour ago," one of the guests replied, "then they just disappeared! There were other guests wanting to take their meals here too, but they've given up waiting and gone to eat outside." The man then looked at his companions, and suggested: "I think that's also what we're going to do now?"

"Well, it looks like they've escaped again..." I concluded. "We'll have to leave it till tomorrow if they don't turn up soon..."

And so we retreated to the outhouse, but had barely got inside when Harry appeared at the door, in a fury: "Where is he?" he demanded to know.

"Who?" I asked, but Harry just repeated the question twice more in quick succession, the veins on his neck looking about to burst. He seemed to be having trouble staying calm enough to speak.

We looked at each other in puzzlement, then back at Harry. "Where is your thief friend, the other English dog?" he finally blurted out. "And don't lie to me - I will find out anyway!"

"You mean Mike?" Rupert asked. "No idea; haven't seen him since this morning."

"Liar!" Harry shouted. "You liars plan to meet him to share the money. Where will you meet him? Tell me now and you can stay. You will take me to him."

"What money?" Rupert asked.

Harry was taking deep breaths to control himself. A few moments later, he responded: "Don't pretend. The money from the safe!"

It suddenly dawned on the three of us at once what had happened. Mike had made off with some or all of the money in the safe. Harry suspected we in it together, planning to meet up with him later.

"Wait a minute," suggested Rupert, always the logical thinker. "If Mike's taken money from the safe, as you're saying, why should he need us? He doesn't need to share the money with us, he could keep it all for himself."

Harry rubbed his hands up and down along his thighs for a moment, looking like he was considering Ru's

statement. After a moment, he pointed his finger to within a few inches of Rupert's eyes. "You *will* tell me where he is," he stated with finality. "I will make you tell me!"

With that, Harry turned on his heels, and walked back towards the rear entrance of the hotel. We glanced at each other.

"He's getting his gun!" Rupert said with certainty. "C'mon, we can't stay here tonight," he added, and started to walk away.

The whole thing was so unexpected, and it had happened so fast, Di and I didn't know how to react. It seemed unreal. Di looked around for a moment, apparently for things she wanted to take with her. "Do you think he's really getting his gun?" she asked.

"I don't think; I know! C'mon," Rupert repeated with urgency, "we don't have time!" With that, he walked back, grabbed Di by the wrist and began running to the front gate of the hotel and the road beyond.

I was still standing there at the outhouse door in my high heels. I knew I could not run in those shoes, so I slipped them off, and was about to put my old plimsolls back on when I caught sight of Harry, re-emerging from the back entrance of the hotel with something conspicuous in his right hand. Di and Rupert were already out of the premises. I looked again at the plimsolls; Rupert was right, I had no time. I sprinted barefoot at full speed in their direction, Harry in the periphery of my right field of vision. I could see that the gate had slipped closed again after Rupert and Di left, and not having time to stop and open it, I leapt right over it! I overshot the pavement and almost got run over by a car. Looking back, I saw Harry, unafraid of being seen waving his gun in the air.