

DAVID WILLIAMS

Advertise for Treasure

A Mark Treasure novel

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FONTANA/Collins

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by William Collins & Co Ltd, 1984

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ADVERTISE FOR TREASURE

David Williams was born in South Wales. After Oxford and the Royal Navy he followed a highly successful career in advertising before becoming a full-time writer. He is married with two children – and a retriever called Mr Pooter. They live at Wentworth in Surrey.

by the same author

Copper, Gold & Treasure
Treasure Preserved
Treasure by Degree
Treasure Up in Smoke
Unholy Writ
Her for Treasure

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THIS ONE FOR
JOHN AND JEAN WILSON

Chapter One

Helen Wintly wore her long black hair swept back in a loose bun. Few men who met her could avoid speculating how it looked when she shook it free: fewer still had ever found out.

She was tall, sharply beautiful and elegant – dressed entirely in white. The collar of the crisp blouse was ruffed, like the cuffs. It accentuated the long, slender neck. The pleated skirt swung with a sensuous rhythm as she stepped across the pavement in the sunlight. The cashmere cardigan was draped around her shoulders. Casually she rearranged it while pausing to let Henry Pink, the chauffeur, open the door of the Rolls-Royce.

'Good morning, miss.' He saluted smartly, Navy style.

She nodded back. The smile was more gracious than familiar. Not so many years before she would have returned that greeting with a self-conscious smirk and the comment, 'Look at me going to the office in a Rolls. They'll never believe it back home' – or something like that.

At 27 Helen Wintly had learned a good deal – only some of it from McGill and Columbia Universities and the Harvard Business School. The white leather document case by Gucci nicely reflected the owner's personality – richly feminine but uncompromisingly businesslike.

'Good morning.' Now it was Mark Treasure who greeted her as she settled into the seat beside him. The Chief Executive of Greenwood, Phipps, the London merchant bankers – and Miss Wintly's employers – added an approving nod. 'Mmm. Charming. We should do this more often.'

The compliment about her appearance had been especially welcome. Despite her assured demeanour, her ego had taken a knock the night before from which it was unlikely ever to recover. Treasure's second comment

registered only as a pleasantry. She was certain *The Times* he had just set aside commended itself to him at this hour more than she did.

As it happened the last speculation was far from accurate. Perhaps Miss Wintly's judgement had been too recently upset to be wholly reliable. In the six months she had been employed at the bank, she and Treasure had seldom been thrown together. This was the first time he had been given the chance for close inspection.

She was certainly very striking – the face, figure and deportment of an up-market model girl. She was highly intelligent, too, by all accounts. He knew her age. There was great solace in the fact. He was not old enough to be her father – by conventional standards: he would need to have been an irresponsible fifteen-year-old. Yet these days most of the bank's female employees . . .

'You didn't mind my phoning?' She broke in on the rumination.

'Of course not. Very sensible.'

'It was late.'

He looked at the time. 'And this is very early. I don't imagine you normally leave home at seven-forty-five.'

'Not without this kind of incentive.' She could have meant the handsome car or its equally distinguished-looking owner. In truth she often left earlier than this, but to say so would have sounded like crawling for good-conduct marks. 'It's kind of you to call for me.'

He shrugged. 'Dolphin Square from Cheyne Walk isn't a detour.' Nor was it. Both places are on the Thames Embankment, a mile apart with Chelsea Bridge in the middle. 'I'm breakfasting with an Arab at nine. Could hardly put him off. But with Harry Karilian available for eight . . .'

'Lucky to get anyone in August.'

He wrinkled his forehead, glancing up Vauxhall Bridge Road as Pink hurried the car across into Millbank. 'Suppose you're right. We haven't gone the way of all Frogs, of course, putting up the shutters on Bastille Day. Sorry,

I believe you're a strong Francophile. You don't sound French Canadian.'

'I'm not. Well, a quarter maybe. My maternal grandmother. No, I'm just a late, ordinary Canadian convert to the Common Market. Euromarket. Better for everyone that Britain's in, not out.' The 'out' came distinctly from north of the 49th Parallel.

'Very commendable. D'you want to start telling me about Rorch, Timms and Bander?'

'Yes, sir.' She uncrossed her extremely attractive legs, obliterating his view of them with the document case which she pulled on to her lap and snapped open. A new pair of tights in their transparent wrapper fell out from the pocket in the top, slid over her copy of the *Financial Times* and on to the floor. Treasure picked them up with affected diffidence.

'Thanks.'

'Bet none of our male executives carry spare socks,' remarked the banker amiably.

'No,' she answered with just a touch of irritation. 'The company's usually known as RTB. It was founded five years ago. You know that, of course. You kind of did the funding. Right?'

He nodded. 'Advertising agencies were out of fashion, at least as prospects for ultimate public floatation. They've picked up since. This one looked promising, though, as a useful growth investment. I liked the three principals, especially Rorch.'

'Roger. Roger Rorch.'

'Yes. He approached the bank in the first place. For funding. Sorry, really, I lost touch with the thing. I got kicked upstairs into this job just after we got involved. As I remember, the company did well enough in the first two years, then fizzled a bit. Didn't we have to increase the loan capital?'

'That's right.'

After beating the traffic lights in Parliament Square, Pink had done the same in Bridge Street, turning left on to the Victoria Embankment at speed. The momentary

and presumably involuntary shifting of Miss Wintly's left knee against Treasure's right the banker found entirely agreeable.

'Anyway, I shed Rorch, Timms and Bander - sorry. RTB - on to Cecil Oakley. Don't suppose it rates very high with him.' Oakley was one of the bank's three Joint Managing Directors.

'He keeps abreast of it.' The knee returned to its proper position.

'But it's your responsibility?'

'Since I joined Corporate Finance. Mr Oakley figured it fitted with my portfolio. I did a second degree in communications. Before my MBA.' No harm in keeping the front office reminded about meaningful inputs.

'So you understand advertising. What makes an agency tick.'

'A little of both. I worked in agencies for a while. In New York. I seem to have gotten along with the RTB management.'

'Do we have you on the board there?' Greenwood, Phipps held a quarter of the ordinary shares in the company and had funded the whole of a financially more significant medium-term loan.

The girl nodded. 'Three months ago. Actually it wasn't the bank's idea. It was the founding directors. I'd been in attendance at the monthly board meetings to represent the bank's interest. They asked if I'd like to join the board formally. Mr Oakley agreed.'

'Good for you. You'd been attending all the meetings?'

'Sure. My predecessor didn't. Figured the fellows in the agency didn't really want him around unless they asked him specially. That was Mr Morris.'

'Mmm. Now retired. Probably didn't fit the image.' It was hard to imagine poor old Morris in tights. 'Sound chap, though,' Treasure continued aloud. 'Perhaps they found him a restricting influence. Touch of the big brother. But when they realized you were . . .'

'You can say it. Something more than passably decorative, then I got pressed to pitch in. So I did.'

'But you didn't hear about this takeover offer from Crabtree at a board meeting?'

'No. Nobody did. The first the agency heard of it was in this hand-delivered letter yesterday afternoon.' She passed him a copy. 'Financial data on Crabtree came with it. I have copies of that too.'

'And Karilian has it all?'

'Plus RTB's current vital statistics. I left them on his desk at seven last night. I'd been in Birmingham. Got back to the office at five. Roger Rorch had been calling since mid-afternoon, on the half-hour. He came round. Later we had dinner. I rang you from the restaurant. The President of Crabtree and the Executive Vice-President should be checking into the Savoy this morning.' She paused. 'With Mr Oakley on vacation . . .'

'Another Euromarketeer. Spends every August in Port Grimaud. They've a house there, and a boat. A motor-boat.' Treasure made a painful grimace while studying the letter. 'Not everyone's idea of heaven. Suits the children, of course,' he added, a touch wistfully. 'Anyway, I'm delighted to stand in for Oakley.'

'Just so I can get your view. Mr Treasure. It looks like they're aiming to nationalise the agency. With the bank so involved I figured . . .'

'You did absolutely the right thing, Miss Wintly . . . er, Helen, isn't it? Should he ask her to call him by his first name? It was the sort of thing that put other people's noses out of joint, of course. 'My name's Mark,' he compromised, satisfied it was as much a statement as an invitation.

The car swept past the Mansion House, entered Threadneedle Street, then went left into Old Broad Street. The traffic was still light.

It was five to eight when the better-acquainted Treasure and Miss Wintly stepped from the lift on the third floor of Greenwood House. Harry Karilian was waiting for them in Treasure's office.

* * *

At 8 o'clock precisely on that same Tuesday, August 23rd, Howard John Crabtree the Second, President of Howard J. Crabtree Incorporated of New York City, emerged from the 'Nothing to Declare' green exit of the Customs Hall at London's Heathrow Airport.

He was short, spare and tired. He was wearing a crumpled, three button suit and a furtive look.

Howie Crabtree had not knowingly broken a law since at the age of three he had screamed until his nurse had laced his hot milk with bootlegged gin. That had been fifty years ago, towards the end of Prohibition. The gin had made him sick and the nurse had been dismissed. The lesson had endured. Howie's penchant for law observance had become legend.

Now he could breathe freely again: almost. They could still stop you – even after you had left the airport: he knew that. He would gladly have gone through the Customs' red route, declaring everything in his possession on the chance something was chargeable. He had done as much at several airports. Nothing had ever been elected contraband. Once he had been admonished for wasting the time of officials. There was no pleasing bureaucrats. Still, the thought of being accosted with an overlooked dutiable item or because his tranquillizers had suddenly been exposed as dangerous drugs gave him stomach trembles.

He even carried a note from his doctor about the tranquillizers.

'They didn't arrest you yet, Howie?' called a familiar voice from some way behind.

That did it. Crabtree started nervously, glanced backwards, and overturned the baggage trolley with the faulty front wheel he had been carefully manipulating down the polished ramp.

Porters had been available: using one had seemed a needless expense – and a bad example to the others. So now he was floundering on a foreign slope with an upset trolley, and trying to regain control over his two large