

Arthur Hailey

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## Strong Medicine

Arthur Hailey, storyteller *extraordinaire*, has become one of the most widely-read writers of all time. His books are *Flight into Danger* (with John Castle), *The Final Diagnosis*, *In High Places*, *Hotel*, *Airport*, *Wheels*, *The Moneychangers* and *Overload*. They are published in thirty languages, his worldwide fans number millions.

Arthur Hailey was born and educated in Luton. He was an RAF pilot during World War II and afterwards emigrated to Canada where he met and married his wife Sheila, also an emigrant from Britain. Now the Hailey's home is in Lyford Cay, Bahamas, from where they visit Britain frequently.

Also by Arthur Hailey  
in Pan Books

**Airport**

**Hotel**

**In High Places**

**The Final Diagnosis**

**The Moneychangers**

**Flight into Danger (with John Castle)**

**Wheels**

**Overload**

Diseases, desperate grown,  
By desperate appliance are reliev'd,  
Or not at all.

Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

We are overwhelmed as it is, with an  
infinite abundance of vaunted medi-  
caments, and here they add a new  
one.

Thomas Sydenham, M.D.  
(1624–1689)



## PERSONAL

### *The Author to His Readers*

In 1979, with the publication of *Overload*, I announced my retirement. I was tired. My life had been full. I was, and still am, grateful to those millions of readers worldwide who have enriched my life in many ways, including making retirement possible.

In whatever years remained I wanted to spend more time – and travel – with my dear wife Sheila, go fishing, read more books, relax with music, do other things a working writer can't.

What I did not know was that I was near death from six blockages in the coronary arteries – a condition diagnosed soon afterwards by my friend and physician, Dr. Edward Robbins of San Francisco, who urged immediate surgery. This was done – a quadruple bypass – by Dr. Denton Cooley and his associates at the Texas Heart Institute, to where my gratitude flows strong.

Sheila was supportive, as she has been through our long and loving marriage. It is more than coincidence in this novel that the names Celia and Sheila come similarly off the tongue.

The aftermath of everything was my revived good health and an abundance of energy – so much of the latter that Sheila said one day, 'I think you should write another book.'

I took her advice. *Strong Medicine* is the result.

5 April 1984

A.H.





## *Prologue: 1985*

In the 747, up forward in first class and half an hour out from London, Dr. Andrew Jordan reached for his wife's hand and held it.

'Stop worrying,' he urged her. 'Nothing may happen.'

'*Something* will happen,' she said. 'Dennis Donahue will see to that.'

Andrew grimaced at the mention of New England's populist U.S. senator. 'I was looking forward to lunch,' he objected. 'Did you need to spoil it by making me nauseous?'

'Be serious, Andrew. Remember there have been deaths. Drug-related.'

'You were a long way removed from them.'

'Just the same, if there are criminal proceedings, I'll be included. I could go to prison.'

He tried to buoy their sagging spirits. 'It hasn't happened yet, but if you do I promise to visit every day and bring cakes with hacksaw blades inside.'

'Oh, Andrew!' She turned towards him, her smile a mixture of love and sadness.

After twenty-eight years of marriage, he thought, how good it was to see your wife, with admiration, as beautiful, intelligent and strong. And, he told himself, he wasn't being sentimental either. He had seen all those qualities, and more, exhibited a thousand times.

'That's nice,' a female voice beside them interjected.

Andrew looked up. It was a bright, young, cheerful stewardess, observing them holding hands.

He told her, deadpan, 'Love can happen to the elderly, too.'

'Really?' The stewardess matched his mocking tone. 'That never occurred to me. More champagne?'

'Yes, please.'

He caught the girl inspecting him and knew, without being vain, that he still looked good, even to someone young enough to be his daughter. How had that London newspaper columnist described him last week? 'The white-haired, handsome and distinguished physician husband of . . . et cetera, et cetera.' Though Andrew hadn't said so at the time he'd rather liked it.

The champagne poured, Andrew sat back. He enjoyed the perquisites which went with first-class travel, even if today they seemed less significant than usual. It was his wife's money which provided those embellishments, of course. While his own income as a busy specialist - internist - was more than comfortable, he doubted if he would splurge on first-class fare between London and New York, and certainly could never afford the private jet in which his wife, and sometimes Andrew, travelled around North America.

*Correction*, he reminded himself: *had* travelled until now. What changes lay immediately ahead were far from certain.

Money, though, had never been any kind of issue in their marriage. They had never had the slightest argument about it, and right from the beginning his wife had insisted that what they had, they had together. Their bank accounts were always joint, and though Andrew's contribution nowadays was by far the smaller, neither bothered with comparative arithmetic.

His thoughts drifted and they continued to hold hands as the 747 thrummed westward above the Atlantic far below.

'Andrew,' his wife said, 'you're such a comfort. Always there. And always so strong.'

'That's funny,' he replied. 'Strong is what I was thinking about you.'

'There are different kinds of strength. And I need yours.'

The usual airline bustle was beginning, preparatory to service of their meal. Stowaway tables were being released, white linen and silverware appearing on them.

After a while his wife said, 'Whatever happens, I'm going to fight.'

'Haven't you always?'

She was thinking carefully, as usual. 'Within the next few days, I'll choose a lawyer. It must be someone solid but not

flamboyant. Too much showmanship would be a mistake.'

He squeezed her hand. 'That's my girl.'

She smiled back at him. 'Will you sit beside me in court?'

'Every day. Patients can fend for themselves until it's done.'

'You'd never let that happen, but I would like you with me.'

'There are other doctors. Arrangements will be made.'

'Maybe,' his wife said, 'maybe, with the right lawyer we can pull off a miracle.'

Andrew dipped a knife into a helping of caviar that had just been placed before him. However acute their troubles, there was no point in passing up *that*.

'It could happen,' he said, spreading the caviar on toast. 'We started with a miracle, you and I. And there've been others since, which you've made happen. Why not one more? This time just for you.'

'It *would* be a miracle.'

'Will be,' he corrected gently.

Andrew closed his eyes. The champagne and the altitude had made him sleepy. But in his sleepiness he remembered the first miracle.

Long ago.



**Part One**  
**1957-1963**



Dr. Jordan said quietly, 'Your wife is dying, John. She has a few hours more, that's all.' He added, conscious of the pale, anguished face of the slight young man before him, still dressed in his factory work clothes, 'I wish I could tell you something else. But I thought you'd want the truth.'

They were in St. Bede's Hospital in Morristown, New Jersey. Early evening noises from outside – small-town noises – filtered in, barely disturbing the silence between them.

In the dimmed light of the hospital room, Andrew watched the Adam's apple of the patient's husband bob twice convulsively before he managed to get out, 'I just *can't* believe it. We're just beginning. Getting started. You know we have a baby.'

'Yes, I know.'

'It's so . . .'

'Unfair?'

The young man nodded. A good, decent man, hardworking from the look of him. John Rowe. He was twenty-five, only four years younger than Dr. Jordan himself, and he was taking this badly – not surprisingly. Andrew wished he could comfort the other man more. Though Andrew encountered death often enough and was trained to know the signs of death's approach, he still was uncertain about communicating with a dying person's friends or family. Should a doctor be blunt, direct, or was there some subtler way? It was something they didn't teach in medical school, or afterwards either.

'Viruses are unfair,' he said, 'though mostly they don't act the way this has with Mary. Usually they'll respond to treatment.'

'Isn't there *anything*? Some drug which could . . . ?'

Andrew shook his head. No point in going into details by answering: *Not yet. So far, no drug for the acute coma of advanced infectious hepatitis.* Nor would anything be gained by saying that, earlier today, he had consulted his senior partner in the practice, Dr. Noah Townsend, who also happened to be the hospital's chief of medicine.



An hour earlier Townsend had told Andrew, 'You've done all you can. There's nothing I'd have done differently.' It was then that Andrew sent a message to the factory, in the nearby town of Boonton where John Rowe was working.

*Goddam!* Andrew's eyes glanced at the elevated metal bed with the still figure. It was the only bed in the room because of the prominent 'ISOLATION' notice in the corridor outside. The I.V. bottle on its stand stood behind the bed, dripping its contents – dextrose, normal saline, B-complex vitamins – into Mary Rowe through a needle in a forearm vein. It was already dark outside; occasionally there were rumblings from a storm and it was raining heavily. A lousy night. And the last night of living for this young wife and mother who had been healthy and active only a week ago. *Goddam! It was unfair.*

Today was Friday. Last Monday, Mary Rowe, petite and pretty, though clearly unwell, had appeared in Andrew's office. She complained of feeling sick, weak and she couldn't eat. Her temperature was 100.5.

Four days earlier, Mrs. Rowe told him, she had had the same symptoms plus some vomiting, then the next day felt better and believed the trouble, whatever it was, was going away. But now it had returned. She was feeling terrible, even worse than before.

Andrew checked the whites of Mary Rowe's eyes; they showed a tinge of yellow. Already areas of her skin were showing jaundice, too. He palpated the liver, which was tender and enlarged. Questioning elicited that she had been to Mexico with her husband for a brief vacation the previous month. Yes, they had stayed in a small, offbeat hotel because it was cheap. Yes, she had eaten local food and drunk the water.

'I'm admitting you to the hospital immediately,' Andrew told her. 'We need a blood test to confirm, but I'm as certain as I can be that you have infectious hepatitis.'

Then, because Mary Rowe had seemed frightened, he explained that most likely she had consumed contaminated food or water in Mexico, the contamination from an infected food handler. It happened frequently in countries where sanitation was poor.

As to treatment, it would be mostly supportive, with adequate