

A MAN FROM GLASGOW  
and  
MACKINTOSH

W. Somerset Maugham



# **A Man From Glasgow and Mackintosh**

**W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM**

Retold by **JOHN MILNE**

*Illustrated by Clifford Bayly and Gar*



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### Note on Difficult Words

Some difficult words and phrases in this book are important for understanding the stories. Some of these words are explained in the stories, some are shown in the pictures, and others are marked with a number like this . . . . Words with a number are explained in the glossary on pages 64-65.

## A Man From Glasgow



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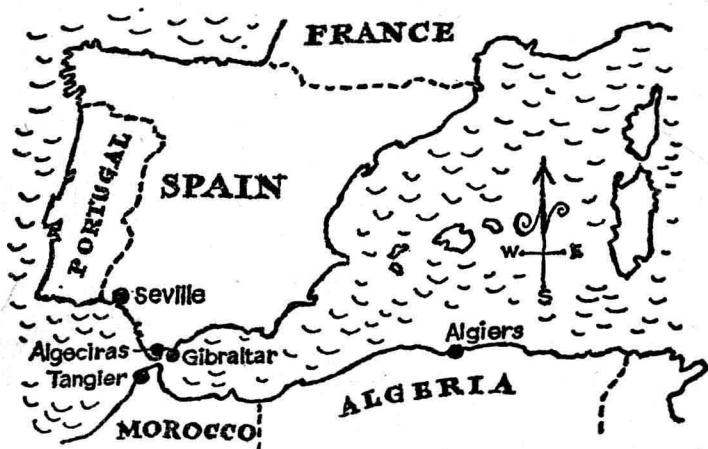
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## I. I Arrive in the Hotel



I have spent many years of my life travelling all over the world. When I arrive in a new country or city, usually I am very tired and go to bed early. For this reason my first day or night in any new place is always quiet and very little happens.

But my first night in Algeciras was very different. This night was very strange and unusual.

At that time Algeciras in Southern Spain was a dirty and badly looked after city. I arrived late in the evening by boat. As soon as I got off the boat, I went to look for a hotel. I found a small hotel not far from the boat.

This hotel looked dirty and untidy from the outside. But I was very tired and did not know my way around the city of Algeciras. And so I decided to stay in this small hotel on the quay. I also decided to stay in this hotel for another reason. The moon was full and it was a clear, bright night. From the hotel I could look out at the sea. I could see the huge rock of Gibraltar in the bright moonlight.

The hotel had a narrow doorway and no name. When I went through this doorway, I had to climb up narrow and dark stairs to the first floor. I came to a small cupboard with a



desk in front of it. This was the hotel office.

An untidy and tired woman was sitting beside the desk. When I said I wanted a room for the night, she took me up some more stairs to a room on the second floor. Inside this room the landlord was sitting playing cards with some friends. The landlord did not seem pleased to see me. He was enjoying his game of cards and I was simply a nuisance. He looked at me when the woman told him that I wanted a room. Then he said, 'Room five', and turned back to his game of cards.

The woman, who was obviously the maid, took me to room five. I put my bags on the bed which did not seem too dirty. Then I went to the window and looked out. I could see the huge Rock of Gibraltar clearly across the bay because the moon was full. I began to feel quite pleased that I had decided to stay the night at this hotel. Then I felt rather hungry and asked the maid if I could have something to eat.

'You can have anything you want,' she replied.

When a hotel maid gives this answer, it is usually untrue.

'What have you got in the hotel?' I asked.

'You can have ham and eggs,' the maid replied quickly.

I understood from the way she replied that there was nothing else to eat in the hotel. And so I asked her to go and bring me some ham and eggs.

She took me to a long narrow room. There was a table prepared for the next day's breakfast. And for the first time I realized that I was not the only foreign guest in the hotel.

A man was sitting beside the small fire. But he had a strange look on his face, so I decided not to talk to him unless he talked to me first.

#### POINTS FOR UNDERSTANDING

1. What is the name of the city and the country the author was staying in?
2. Was the moon full that night?
3. Why did the author not want to talk to the other guest?



## 2. The Stranger Speaks

I sat and waited in silence. I saw the stranger look at me. But as soon as he saw that I had noticed him, he looked away quickly. After I had waited for about ten minutes, the maid returned with one fried egg and two very small pieces of ham. I sat down and ate the very poor meal in silence.

When I finished eating, I suddenly realized how cold I felt. It was a rather cold night. The people in Algeciras have long hot summers and they forget how cold it can be in the few short weeks of winter. In these weeks it can be very cold at night. I moved my chair towards the fire where the stranger was sitting. He was sitting huddled over the very small fire. The fire was hardly big enough to give warmth to two people but as soon as I moved my chair towards the fire, the stranger moved his chair to one side.

'Don't move,' I said. 'There's plenty of room for two.'

I took out a cigar and lit it. Then I turned to the stranger and offered him a cigar. They were very good cigars and people did not often refuse one.

'That's very good of you,' the stranger said and took the cigar from my hand.

From the way he spoke, I realized that he had been born in Glasgow. A person from Glasgow speaks in a kind of singing way.

When you give someone a cigar, it is usually an invitation to talk. But apart from these few words of thanks, the stranger said nothing. He huddled over his half of the fire and returned to his thoughts.

I tried to start a conversation about the weather but he simply answered 'yes' or 'no'. I stopped speaking to him and tried to get as warm as possible before I went to bed for the night.

As I sat there before the fire, I had a good look at this man

from Glasgow. He was a very big man with broad shoulders. His face was sunburned and his hair was short. The skin of his face was wrinkled. He had obviously been working out in the sun and the wind. His mouth, ears and nose were very large and he had pale blue eyes.

As he sat by the fire, he kept pulling the end of his moustache with his fingers. It was an untidy moustache and I wondered if he would pull it out altogether. He went on pulling his moustache, sometimes with his right hand and sometimes with his left hand. I did not feel like watching him so I looked into the fire.

I sat for a few minutes longer before going to bed. I suddenly felt that the stranger was looking closely at me. This made me look up and my eyes met his. I thought that he would immediately look away, but he looked away for a few seconds only. Then he looked me in the eyes again and suddenly spoke to me.

'Have you just come across from Gibraltar?' he asked.

'Yes,' I replied briefly. I had tried to talk to the stranger earlier. Now that I wanted to go to my room, he was ready to talk and this made me rather angry.

'I am going to Gibraltar tomorrow,' the stranger continued. 'I am going there tomorrow and then I will be on my way home. Thank God!'

The stranger said these last two words so fiercely that I felt that I had to reply.

'Don't you like Spain then?' I asked.

'Oh, Spain is all right,' he replied.

'Have you been here long?' I asked politely.

The fierceness of his reply shocked me.

'Too long,' the stranger replied fiercely. 'Far too long.'

I was shocked by the way the stranger answered my question. This question of mine seemed to upset him very badly and make him angry.

The stranger stood up and began to walk up and down the

long, narrow room. And as he walked up and down, he kept saying to himself 'Too long – far too long.'

The stranger seemed to have forgotten that I was in the room with him. I felt embarrassed<sup>1</sup> by his behaviour. I made a noise in order to remind him that I was there. The noise reminded the stranger that I was in the room. He stopped walking up and down and stood still for a few moments. Then he looked at me in a strange way and sat down again in his chair beside the fire.

'Do you think that there is something unusual about me?' the stranger asked suddenly.

A question like that is extremely embarrassing, especially when it is asked by a complete stranger. I replied to his question as politely as I could.

'I do not think that you are more unusual than anyone else,' I said.

But his questions became even more embarrassing.

'You don't think that I am strange?' he asked.

As the stranger asked this question, he leant forward and I could see him clearly.

'No,' I replied firmly, and I tried to think of an excuse to get out of the room.

'If you did think that there was something strange about me, you would tell me, wouldn't you?' continued the stranger.

'Of course I would,' I replied trying to be polite. 'If I did think that there was something strange about you, I would tell you.'

When I said these words, I was of course, telling lies. But what other reply could I give to this strange man? I could not understand what he was talking about and I began to wonder if the stranger was drunk. We sat in silence for a few moments and I tried to think of an excuse to get out of the room. But before I said anything, the stranger began to speak again.

'What's your name?' he asked.

I told him.

'My name is Robert Morrison,' he said.

Robert Morrison is a very common Scottish name.

'You come from Scotland, then?' I asked.

'Yes,' he replied. 'I come from Glasgow.'

I felt pleased with myself that I had guessed this correctly.

'I have been in Spain for many years,' he went on and then he suddenly pulled out a pipe. 'Have you any tobacco?' he asked.

I offered him my tobacco and he filled his pipe and began to smoke.

Morrison smoked for a few moments in silence. Then he looked very unhappy. I could see that he wanted to walk up and down the room again. He forced himself to stay in his seat, but he could not stop talking.

'I cannot stay in this country any longer,' he said fiercely. 'I have stayed here too long. Far too long?'

I decided that Morrison was either mad or drunk. I had to get out of that room as quickly as possible. But I still could not think of any way of getting out politely. Morrison did not look very healthy, but he was a large, heavily built man. He might become dangerous if I made him angry. He obviously wanted to say something to me and I just had to sit and listen.

I really wished that I had never asked for ham and eggs. The meal had been so small that I felt hungry again. And now because of this small, unsatisfactory meal I might have to sit up half the night and listen to this foolish man.

#### POINTS FOR UNDERSTANDING

1. Did Morrison want to leave Spain?
2. What questions did Morrison ask which embarrassed the author?
3. What did the author think about Morrison?

### **3. Strange Laughter in the Moonlight**

But I soon discovered that Morrison was not drunk. He sat smoking his pipe and began to tell his story.

‘I have been working here in Spain,’ said Morrison, ‘for the Glasgow and South of Spain Olive Oil<sup>2</sup> Company. We have a new way of processing<sup>3</sup> the oil from the olives and we can sell it quite cheaply. And olive oil from Spain is just as good as olive oil from anywhere else.’

As Morrison spoke, I realized that, although he was strange, he was not drunk. I still wondered if he was mad, but I sat back and listened to him.

‘At first,’ went on Morrison, ‘I lived in Seville. Seville is a port and while I lived there I could look after the shipping. I was able to make sure that the oil was sent off in the ships to the right place at the right time.’

‘I suppose that is necessary here in Spain,’ I said politely in order to show him that I was listening.

‘Yes,’ Morrison replied, ‘it was useful with me living in Seville. Also, Seville is a large port and a very pleasant place to live in. But in the end I had to move. We had a Spaniard who looked after the olive groves. These olive groves which the company owned were in the Ecija district. The Ecija district is the centre of the olive trade in the south of Spain. But unfortunately this Spaniard could not be trusted. The Spaniard was sent away.’

‘The company owned a large olive grove near the village of San Lorenzo,’ went on Morrison. ‘There was a large villa in this olive grove. This villa stood on a hill looking over the olive grove and I went to live there in the villa.’

‘It must have been very lonely for you there,’ I said.

‘Yes, it was quite lonely,’ replied Morrison. ‘But I was able to see that the work was done properly. Also I saved money because I was not paying rent for the house in Seville.’





Morrison sat in silence for a few moments smoking his pipe. I looked at my watch to see what time it was. Morrison noticed this immediately.

'You are not in a hurry, are you?' he asked quite sharply. He seemed determined now that I should listen to his story.

'No, not really,' I replied. 'I am not in a hurry but it is late. It's almost half-past eleven.'

'Well, it doesn't make much difference, does it?' asked Morrison. 'There's nothing to do here. You can only go to bed.'

I did not tell him that I wanted to go to bed. Instead I asked him a polite question about his life in that lonely villa.

'I suppose you didn't see many people,' I said.

'No, I didn't see many people at all,' replied Morrison. 'There was an old man and his wife who looked after me. They lived in the villa and cooked and cleaned for me. But I only saw them when they brought me my meals.'

'I made friends with a man called Fernandez. He was the chemist in the village of San Lorenzo,' went on Morrison. 'I used to go down to the village in the evening sometimes and play cards with Fernandez and his friends. Occasionally I went out riding and sometimes I took a gun with me and did some shooting.'

'That seems to be an enjoyable life,' I said. But Morrison did not listen to me and went on with his story.

'I lived in the villa quite happily for about two years,' continued Morrison. 'It was a quiet life but I became used to it and I was fairly happy. Then the trouble started and everything changed. The trouble started last spring – about ten months ago. The trouble started with the heat. Last spring was the warmest in this part of Spain for many years. It was terribly hot.'

I took out a cigar and lit it. Morrison sat silent for a