



CITY OF DREAMS

A NIGHTMARE IN $\frac{3}{4}$ TIME

A Jordan - Hudson Novel

By

R. H. E. Crawford

Author of

FIFTY/FIFTY the Misadventures of Judge Harold J. Hudson, his Jaguar and the Jordan Girl

The Misadventures of the WITCHES THREE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book could not have been written without reference to the following writers whose work contributed considerably to the background information on which this misadventure is based: T. R. Fehrenbach, *The Swiss Banks*; Irena Titova, *Russia to Unveil Restored Amber Room*; Michael Dobbs, *Tarnished Gold*; Tim Golden, *Allied Thieves*.

The artwork in this novel is inspired by the brilliant illustrations of Herbert Roesse.

To artist and poet Marie Landis must go credit for the encouragement to pursue this project.

To the constant support and encouragement of Editor Donna Crawford and the aid of Eva Otten must go the credit for this story ever being told.

Copyright 2004 by Robert E. Crawford
All rights reserved.

For Donna Mae, The Princess of Everything Worthwhile



City of Dreams
A Nightmare in 3/4 time

Chapter	Page
<i>P</i>	<i>City of Dreams</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>Unlawful Entry</i>
<i>2</i>	<i>Hudson's Trail</i>
<i>3</i>	<i>Jungfrauball</i>
<i>4</i>	<i>Into the Breach</i>
<i>5</i>	<i>Strauss Advises</i>
<i>6</i>	<i>Bankers of Zug</i>
<i>7</i>	<i>Budapest Express</i>
<i>8</i>	<i>Tracks of the Third Man</i>
<i>9</i>	<i>Partners</i>
<i>10</i>	<i>Danube Maiden</i>
<i>11</i>	<i>Casanova Club</i>
<i>12</i>	<i>Point of View</i>
<i>13</i>	<i>Tail of the Vienna Woods</i>
<i>14</i>	<i>Blaming Champagne</i>
<i>15</i>	<i>Freudian Bath</i>
<i>16</i>	<i>A Fine Mess</i>
<i>17</i>	<i>Saint Steps In</i>
<i>18</i>	<i>Bruderlein</i>
<i>19</i>	<i>Sewer Cats</i>
<i>20</i>	<i>Crypt</i>
<i>21</i>	<i>Glory Road</i>
<i>22</i>	<i>Eavesdroppers</i>
<i>23</i>	<i>Bentley's Revenge</i>
<i>24</i>	<i>Chacon á Son Goût</i>

PROLOGUE



THE CITY OF DREAMS

“Haben Sie eine Zigarette?”

The question, although it took retired Judge Harold J. Hudson a moment to decipher it, awoke him from the semi-stupor into which he had drifted. The voice was low, husky, and inviting.

“I don’t speak German,” Hudson replied.

“Nor do I; I speak Austrian,” the woman returned, “but I will speak any language you desire for a cigarette.”

Her voice was husky, probably from too many cigarettes. Her words slipped so softly from her brightly painted lips that Hudson could barely hear them over the noise from the Ringstrasse, the multi-named boulevard that replaced the City of Vienna’s old City Wall. The words and the glance that accompanied them constituted a promise of payment in kind.

“Sorry, I don’t smoke,” Hudson replied, belatedly remembering that he was not interested in payment of any kind. Hudson was in no mood for dalliance on this pleasant if foggy evening. Standing in a dark alcove in a side street trying to avoid the pervasive mist that tended to clog his brain as well as his sinuses, gave reason enough for even the most sanguine of men to grow testy -- even openly rude. Hudson was not the most sanguine of men this night.

“You are Amerikaner?”

“Yes.”

“You do not smoke?” The woman made it sound as if everyone of consequence smoked.

“No.”

“You for someone wait?” the soft voice asked, preventing him from returning to the stupor with which he was trying to become familiar.

“Yes,” he replied, “I am waiting.” His own voice, sharp and strained, startled

him. The disturbing ache behind his eyes that never seemed to entirely vanish these days, returned with increasing force, causing his brain to ache in empathy.

“*In Wien*, one does not need to wait alone,” the woman offered, blending Austrian and English with easy facility. He was forced to look at the woman with deeper penetration. She was small, no taller than Betty Ruth, dark and bundled in a fur-collared coat held close about her body to keep out the pervasive fog. She wore highly polished high-heeled boots. The hair peeping out from beneath her cap was black in the dim light. Her eyes were dark, heavily mascaraed and deeply shadowed -- most likely a woman of the streets. A smile, tentative and ready to vanish at the first frown, tilted the corners of her lips. No doubt she did have more in mind than a cigarette; how much more, he had no intention of discovering. She reminded him too much of his Betty Ruth. The dark eyes studied him intently, as if she read more in his face than he had any intention of anyone reading; as if she could see the agony of indecision that lay behind his own slate-gray irises.

“I have no need of company.” Even as he said it, he knew it was untrue. He was tired of being alone; tired of waiting for life to decide what his future held; tired of waiting for his mistress to make up her mind whether she wanted to share her life with his or go on with her acting career; and tired of waiting for J. Paul to show up at this rendezvous to tell him why he was so desperately needed in J. Paul’s latest and no doubt extra-legal scheme.

“Your woman, she is young?” Beneath the Austrian’s heavy paint was an attractive face; beneath the coat was probably a warm and comforting body--a perfect excuse to abandon this agony of waiting. Her English was surprisingly good, but then, the language ability of the Austrians no longer surprised him. This woman of the streets undoubtedly knew several languages as well as he knew English.

She automatically assumed he was waiting for a woman. “Yes,” he surprised himself by replying. “She is young, and impetuous and most unpredictable; but it is not for her that I wait.”

“The young ones are always unpredictable. You would do better with an older woman.” The woman sighed, bringing his thoughts back to the fog-dampened street. She bundled her coat closer about her ripe body, an indication that the interview was at an end and an opportunity for dalliance was lost. As she turned to continue her solitary way, she looked back over her shoulder, her heavy-lidded eyes masked by the darkness. “*Hüten Sie sich vor dem dicken Mann.*”

“Beg pardon?” said confused Hudson.

“Beware the fat man,” she warned, then resumed her solitary way, to be swallowed by the fog.

Hudson stamped his feet; they were growing cold. Streetlamps, made dim by the fog, provided too little light to more than barely illuminate his shelter. The sound of an electric streetcar gliding by on the Ringstrasse, crackling as its arm

crossed from line to line, reminded him that time was indeed passing. He stamped his feet again to convince himself that they were still awake.

To avoid the pressure of his thoughts, he turned to examine the alcove in which he sheltered. The door was wood, heavy, solid wood. The glass was thick and dark with the impenetrable darkness of immense distance. Was the glass painted? It could be, yet it seemed not. There was a feeling of great depth behind the glass. The walls that abutted the door were stone -- solid, heavy, and capable of spurning the most ambitious of attackers. The doorframe was made of thick timbers, equally heavy and strong. Why would a hotel need to spurn attackers? Was it only the pervasive fog that colored the wall, creating malignancy where none in fact existed?

“*Zigarette?*”

Another soft voice spoke at his elbow. If he stayed here much longer, he would have to stock cigarettes for passers-by. The City would probably require him to obtain a vendor’s license.

This time the voice was male, with a Slavic accent. The man himself had a Slavic accent. He was no taller than the woman, thin, almost emaciated. He wore an old-fashioned fedora. Beneath the brim, his large round eyes watched Hudson carefully, as if his request might give cause for him to beat a rapid retreat. There was something about those eyes that reminded Hudson of the eyes that stared back at him from his bathroom mirror this morning.

“Do I look like you?”

“*Was?*” The man was puzzled, yet he persevered. “*Zigarette?*”

“It’s important, you know, that I know. I have a feeling that I look far too much like you. I’m sorry, I have no cigarettes.”

The visitor fished a large cigar from his coat pocket. “*Nein,*” he replied, and then continued in English, as if the subject fascinated him despite his better judgment. “The eyes; the eyes look as if they have too much seen. My eyes have too much seen.”

“Only the eyes?”

“The eyes, especially the eyes.” The little man watched him hopefully.

“Thank God for that.” Hudson felt a need now, to be friends with this strange little man. They had something in common; eyes that saw too much. Hudson wished he had a cigarette to give him.

The man made a production of lighting his cigar with a large gold lighter. Hudson observed that his heavy camelhair coat, out of season but for the fog, was well made and fitted, just a shade snug, a curious contrast with the woman.

“Sorry about the cigarettes; about not having any, I mean,” apologized Hudson. “It’s too bad; you just missed a woman also looking for cigarettes. She had deep-set eyes.”

“Deep-set eyes. Always I have a weakness for deep-set eyes. I wish I had her

seen.” The man sighed deeply, relishing the pain of his loss. “*Hüten Sie sich vor Dickmann,*” the curious fellow half-whispered, then with small rapid steps, disappeared into the fog. He faded quickly in the darkness of the fog-shrouded street.

“Beware of Fatman.” What a curious warning. What could a fat man possibly have to do with him? He knew no fat men in Vienna. He’d not even seen a fat man in Vienna. He forced his thoughts back to his current problems: what to do with Betty Ruth Jordan and her career -- and J. Paul Renault’s schemes.

Once more he sighed. Betty Ruth Jordan was unfortunately quite capable of doing things on her own. J. Paul Renault only needed help when one of his schemes escaped his control. Hudson’s eyes, the eyes that saw too much, ached in the darkness.

The massive door behind him opened. A large hand in an immaculate sleeve reached out, grabbed the scruff of his neck and hauled him into the dark interior.

ONE



UNLAWFUL ENTRY

Safes are inanimate objects; therefore the wardrobe safe could not be sitting on its shelf staring smugly at Betty Ruth Jordan. Nevertheless, she glared at its black exterior, pondering the procedures for invading its sanctity.

It was one of those nights that seem to come only to Vienna, the City of Dreams. The sky was crystal clear, stars sparkling like diamonds on velvet. The gentle breeze was just able to rustle the skirts of promenading young ladies, stirring the dreams of hopeful young men. Unless one were a second-story bandit, it was no night to be spent in a hotel room staring at a safe.

“Well, can you?”

The voice of Eva Marie Hudson, Harold J. Hudson’s second daughter, intruded on Jordan’s concentration.

“Can you open it or not, *Belle-mère*?” continued Eva, “I am dying of curiosity.”

“I am not your *belle-mère*, *Stiefmutter* or stepmother, in French, German or English,” replied Jordan absently, “nor am I ever likely to be. I am only here because I feel some sort of obligation to help find your father; then I’m back to my own career, which he entirely fails to properly appreciate. As you know, a young lady’s career needs constant looking after, and even if I do have some interest in Harold, it is not proprietary and I have no interest in being anyone’s stepmother. What are you doing?”

“Opening a bottle of champagne. It comes with the room.”

“You have to pay for it, silly.”

“Nope. *Papa* has to pay for it. It’s his room.”

“That reminds me, you still haven’t told me how you managed to obtain your father’s hotel room.”

“Easy as eating cake,” replied Eva smugly. “I pretended to be Missus Harold J. Hudson.”

“And got away with it?”

“Sure, this is Vienna. We have the same name on our passports, but I think they really went for the credit card. The rent on this room was about to expire and since he lets me use his card, I used it to renew the rent for another week. Before you ask, *Mama* Beatrice thinks I am making it solely on my own. *Papa* knows better, but so that I don’t have to go back to New York, he permits me to use one of his credit cards for emergency money, but he uses it when he is overseas. Therefore, we have the same card. Simple, no?”

“Simple, no,” Betty Ruth Jordan replied. “It sounds terribly complicated. If I were your stepmother, I wouldn’t let you get away with it. As for opening this safe, it’s easy as eating pie. Ever since I made the mistake of revealing it to him, Harold always uses the same combination for hotel safes -- my birthday. However, opening someone else’s safe is a trespass, you know.”

Betty Ruth Jordan arrived in Vienna from a small town in Oregon, USA, in response to the urgent telephone call of Eva Hudson from Paris, France, inquiring after the present whereabouts of her father, Harold J. Hudson, who had disappeared from Vienna. Naturally curious, first as to what her wandering lover was doing in Vienna, and second why he should up and disappear, and being in the midst of an unpleasant contest of wills with the director of the local Shakespeare Festival’s current production of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Jordan seized the excuse to leave the production and join Harold’s daughter in Vienna, Eva being another object of her curiosity. Eva met her airport limousine at the City Airport Terminal adjacent to the City Park, and the two of them lugged Jordan’s baggage through the park, winding through paths designed to lead one from the monument to Zelinka past monuments to Schubert, Amerling, Makart, and Franz Lehar before emerging at the Kursalon. So engrossed in getting acquainted that they didn’t even notice the testimonials to past glories, much less multitude of eyes that recorded their passage. The Am Schubertring Hotel lay just two blocks past the City Park.

“You tell me your birthday, and I’ll open it. I’m not afraid of the gendarmes,” Eva scoffed.

“No way; I tell no one my birth date.” Jordan fiddled with the combination lock a third time, again producing no result. “Besides, cops are not called gendarmes here, they are called Polizei.”

“Surely you know your own birthday?” asked Eva, filling two glasses with champagne.

“Not always; I lie about it a lot,” Jordan replied. They chatted and sipped champagne while Jordan twirled the combination lock on the room safe. Eva finished undressing and headed for the shower. As predicted, when Jordan admitted to her correct birth year, the safe door swung open, revealing that it concealed only a large brown envelope. The envelope was labeled quite clearly: ‘Miss Elizabeth Ruth Jordan -- Save; do not open’.

“You are going to open that envelope?” queried Eva. “If not, give it to me and I will.”

“You know how your father is when instructions are disobeyed,” responded Jordan, “besides, your hands are wet.” Carrying the envelope, the glass of champagne and her slender body to the bed, she parked her backside against the pillows, the better to study the envelope.

Eva Marie Hudson, like so many young ladies, was not the least impressed by her father’s instructions. “Yeah, he gets p.o.’d and won’t talk to you for a while, but he ain’t here, *Belle-mère futur*. How come you’re playing with it, if you aren’t going to open it? How do you know *Papa* left it for you anyway?” challenged Eva from the bathroom.

“It has my name on it. I notice he takes pains to put ‘Miss’ in front. That should tell you the odds against my becoming your stepmother.”

“I mean, how do you know *Papa* was the one who left it?” Eva replied.

“It’s his handwriting. Okay, I’m going to open it, come what come may. Are you with me?”

“Is there a choice?”

With defiant energy, Jordan ripped the envelope asunder.

Inside the envelope was a leather-bound notebook filled with the hasty scribbles of a male hand. It was almost unreadable.

“This is Harold’s handwriting all right,” announced Jordan. “It’s practically code. I’m one of the few people who can read it.”

“What’s it about?” Eva queried from the shower.

“It’s titled ‘Nightmare in the City of Dreams’.”

“Wow! Sounds romantic, not at all like *Papa*,” Eva said, ending with a giggle.

“It must be the influence of this city. Do you suppose it’s all right to read it?”

“Do you suppose there is any way we are not going to read it?” Eva responded.

“No way in this world or any other,” agreed Jordan, “but the question needed to be asked. I’m going to analyze it, so you enjoy your shower and don’t disturb me.”

“Read it loud enough so I can hear.”

“Oh dear, it’s written like one of his damn’d legal briefs. Nevertheless, I shall ‘Speak the speech trippingly on my tongue’, so naturally as even Hamlet would approve.” With a final glare of unrepentant determination, Jordan fluffed the pillows, burrowed her back into them, and in her best stage voice, began Harold J. Hudson’s peculiar journal as everyone should, at the beginning, memorizing it and augmenting it from her own imagination as she recited:

“Nightmare in the City of Dreams.

“Nightmares usually begin quite normally and logically. Mine began most unnaturally, and progressively has become more illogical. The most

fortunate part of nightmares is that one is inevitably alone, at least in the beginning. Because of the persistence of a woman called Satin, I have been unable to be alone. Never have I missed the sometimes-irascible presence of Betty Ruth as much as I do now. While young, and at times most annoying, she has a remarkably sharp mind, and frequently has forced my own foggy notions to accept reality. That is what I need on this beautiful spring morning in the City of Dreams; for I fear reality has deserted me.

"It is my fault; I had absolutely no business being in a dark street off Vienna's famous Ringstrasse last night when the fog was busy spreading its blanket over the city.

"J. Paul Renault directed me to await him at a peculiarly secluded spot. He needed me, he said, to help in a most sensitive matter. I had no idea just how sensitive, but recalling past dealings with J. Paul and his cohort Bruce Bentley, I should have known if it meant trouble for anyone, 'anyone' would be me. . . ."

An hour later, at the conclusion of the journal, Jordan, a bit hoarse and more than a bit angry, nudged her companion and read the last paragraph one more time.

"Satin is unquestionably a beautiful woman, and never more beautiful than now -- dancing with impatience, excited by nearness of danger. I am not at all certain that this is wise, but she has already arranged for a taxi to take us to her apartment on Augustinerstrasse, and reservations on the next train to Liechtenstein. Meanwhile, this journal should be secure in the safe until I return."

"Damn, damn, DAMMIT!" Jordan threw the Journal of Harold J. Hudson across the room and reached for the champagne bottle.

"*Quelle est-il?* What's the matter now, *Belle-mère?*" queried the sleepy voice at Jordan's side. Eva propped herself against the headboard and blinked at her companion. "Now I remember why they invented twin beds. Is that all?"

"That man: that damnable, infuriating, selfish, stupid *man!* That's no journal. It's a goddam novel! It's trash! The real trouble he's in is how to justify his philandering."

Eva said, stifling a yawn, "When 'Uncle' Bruce and J. Paul get together, it's bad news for everyone; they thrive on trouble. Are you sure you don't want me for a stepdaughter? I'd applaud like mad at all your performances."

"You're already your own mother."

"Huh?"

"When you signed into the hotel as your father's wife, you made yourself your mother." Jordan giggled at the notion, refilled her glass with champagne.

"Now you sound just like *Papa*. I'll abdicate in your favor."

Ignoring her companion's attempts to commit her to stepmotherhood, Jordan tried to focus on the first move she and Eva should make tomorrow, but dozed off instead.

"Sleep that knits the ravel'd sleeve of care," she muttered. "I will kill him. I will absolutely throttle him into two pieces with these bare hands." Realizing her bare hands were currently throttling a wine glass, she set it aside and slid deeper into the bed.

"*Quelle?*" Eva responded, already returning to the arms of Morpheus.

"Macbeth murdered sleep," returned Jordan. Harold must have expected to be back before the rent on this room ran out. It has been more than a week. What could have happened, she wondered as she also surrendered to the arms of Morpheus, her troubles hidden beneath a gentle cloak of slumber.

Tomorrow would be soon enough to worry.