

## VERSION ANGLAISE ET THÈME

### I : VERSION

Mrs Ferrars died on the night of the 16th-17th September - a Thursday. I was sent for at eight o'clock on the morning of Friday the 17th. There was nothing to be done. She had been dead some hours.

5 It was just a few minutes after nine when I reached home once more. I opened the front door with my latchkey, and purposely delayed a few moments in the hall, hanging up my hat and the light overcoat that I had deemed a wise precaution against the chill of an early autumn morning. To tell the truth, I was considerably upset and worried. I am not going to pretend that at that moment I foresaw the events of the next few weeks. I emphatically did not do so. But my instinct told me that there were stirring times ahead.

10 From the dining-room on my left there came the rattle of tea-cups and the short, dry cough of my sister Caroline.

'Is that you, James?' she called.

15 An unnecessary question, since who else could it be? To tell the truth, it was precisely my sister Caroline who was the cause of my few minutes' delay. The motto of the mongoose family, so Mr Kipling tells us, is: 'Go and find out.' If Caroline ever adopts a crest, I should certainly suggest a mongoose rampant. One might omit the first part of the motto. Caroline can do any amount of finding out by sitting placidly at home. I don't know how she manages it, but there it is. I suspect that the servants and the tradesmen constitute her Intelligence Corps. When she goes out, it is not to gather information, but to spread it. At that, 20 too, she is amazingly expert.

It was really this last named trait of hers which was causing me these pangs of indecision. Whatever I told Caroline now concerning the demise of Mrs Ferrars would be common knowledge all over the village within the space of an hour and a half. As a professional man, I naturally aim at discretion. Therefore I have got into the habit of 25 continually withholding all information possible from my sister. She usually finds out just the same, but I have the moral satisfaction of knowing that I am in no way to blame.

Mrs Ferrars' husband died just over a year ago, and Caroline has constantly asserted, without the least foundation for the assertion, that his wife poisoned him.

30 She scorns my invariable rejoinder that Mr Ferrars died of acute gastritis, helped on by habitual overindulgence in alcoholic beverages. The symptoms of gastritis and arsenical poisoning are not, I agree, unlike, but Caroline bases her accusation on quite different lines.

'You've only got to look at her,' I have heard her say.

35 Mrs Ferrars, though not in her first youth, was a very attractive woman, and her clothes, though simple, always seemed to fit her very well, but all the same, lots of women buy their clothes in Paris, and have not, on that account, necessarily poisoned their husbands.

*The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926), by Agatha Christie

## II : THÈME

On remonta sur le pont après dîner. Devant nous, la Méditerranée n'avait pas un frisson sur toute sa surface qu'une grande lune calme moirait. Le vaste bateau glissait, jetant sur le ciel, qui semblait ensemencé d'étoiles, un gros serpent de fumée noire : et, derrière nous, l'eau toute blanche, agitée par le passage rapide du lourd bâtiment, battue par l'hélice, moussait, semblait se tordre, remuait tant de clartés qu'on eût dit de la lumière de lune bouillonnant.

Nous étions là, six ou huit, silencieux, admirant, l'œil tourné vers l'Afrique lointaine où nous allions. Le commandant, qui fumait un cigare au milieu de nous, reprit soudain la conversation du dîner.

10 - Oui, j'ai eu peur ce jour-là. Mon navire est resté six heures avec ce rocher dans le ventre, battu par la mer. Heureusement que nous avons été recueillis, vers le soir, par un charbonnier anglais qui nous aperçut.

Alors un grand homme à figure brûlée, à l'aspect grave, un de ces hommes qu'on sent avoir traversé de longs pays inconnus, au milieu de dangers incessants, et dont l'œil tranquille semble garder, dans sa profondeur, quelque chose des paysages étranges qu'il a vus ; un de ces hommes qu'on devine trempés dans le courage, parla pour la première fois :

- Vous dites, commandant, que vous avez eu peur ; je n'en crois rien. Vous vous trompez sur le mot et sur la sensation que vous avez éprouvée. Un homme énergique n'a jamais peur en face du danger pressant. Il est ému, agité, anxieux ; mais la peur, c'est autre chose.

20 Le commandant reprit en riant :

- Fichtre ! je vous réponds bien que j'ai eu peur, moi.

Alors l'homme au teint bronzé prononça d'une voix lente :

- Permettez-moi de m'expliquer ! La peur (et les hommes les plus hardis peuvent avoir peur), c'est quelque chose d'effroyable, une sensation atroce, comme une décomposition de l'âme, un spasme affreux de la pensée et du cœur, dont le souvenir seul donne des frissons d'angoisse.

Guy de MAUPASSANT, 'La peur' (1882)