

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



Fan-Tan

Marlon Brando and Donald Cammell

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INTRODUCTION

The year was 1982, the place Teti'aroa, Tahiti, Marlon's island, his sanctuary. Here he felt he could be himself, not like in Los Angeles. No disguises needed.

I'd known the electric eccentric Marlon since childhood, before I even knew what an actor did. So I was not surprised when I found myself on Teti'aroa, with my husband Donald Cammell, a Scotsman, a writer, and a film director with his own outrageous reputation, a man for whom Marlon had a special kinship.

The two had been friendly since the late 50s, when they met in Paris. Marlon's film career was well underway and Donald, in his early 20s, was already an established portrait painter. Their liking for one another was immediate, but took a more definite shape years later, after Marlon saw a screening of Donald's film *Performance*.

Donald had written and co-directed *Performance* in the U.K. It was a film that broke every rule in cinema, especially with its editing technique: Donald played with time, fractured it, in a highly structured way (Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* is a contemporary example of this non-linear storytelling method). It was considered revolutionary, and became part of the language of film. Marlon saw that revolution and called Donald immediately to propose ideas that the two of them could work on together.

Their friendship spanned four decades, through endless projects and various stages of distress—like Liz Taylor's marriages, always hoping to find the secret combination, to make it work this time. They respected each other's talent. That was obvious. It was personal, "a family thing," Marlon liked to say.

Teti'aroa was an island paradise, that's certain, but paradise done Marlon's way: sprinkled with thatched roof huts, each roof formed in perfect clusters of bound reeds, the posts and beams joined without a single nail, gigantic conch shells as sinks, linen so crisp you never wanted to get out of bed, and, to top it all off, a French chef prepared all our meals. It was the most exquisite fantasy of paradise.

So, these two characters convened every morning, with me in tow, and we'd have a breakfast of papaya, mango, the sweetest fruits of the island, all very important to Marlon and Donald's processes. Then work would commence.

They wrote daily: talking, acting, recording, bringing characters alive.

The sight of the two of them running up and down the island's private landing strip was truly amusing: the slight and the slightly larger silhouettes, Marlon with his, believe it or not, ripped white T-shirt à la *Streetcar* and Donald with his trademark panama straw hat. Donald loved running, rain or sun made no difference. All along talking story, plot, *Fan-Tan*, *This Book*, and this was considered their time off!

They were non-conformist compadres, both having a fascination with Asian culture and Asian women. Marlon was truly happy on Teti'aroa and so their time spent working together was something to witness. This book is a glimpse into that obsession, one pearl from their collaboration.

Only a few other times had I seen Marlon so delighted, when all of his best qualities would come out, his mischievous nature—back when I was a little girl.

He was a friend of my parents, and us kids from both families would roam like a posse, "the crew" Marlon called us. He had fun sneaking us into R-Rated movies (himself in a blonde wig disguise), and taking us to Disneyland. He loved the monorail and sometimes would wake us up in the middle of the night to go for rides around the park. I guess they did this special for Marlon, because we were always the only people on the train. He never seemed to get tired of it:

back and forth, back and forth, or maybe it was us who never got tired of it, and what he liked was watching us.

I hope you enjoy this book in the spirit it was intended: a tale of love, mischief and adventure, the grand scale of history, the big score, to beat the odds and carve out a slice of paradise. A story suited to its authors: bold and thrilling.

China Kong

FAN-TAN

Marlon Brando

AND

Donald Cammell

Edited and with an Afterword

by David Thomson

New Introduction by China Kong



WILLIAM HEINEMANN : LONDON

CHAPTER 1

THE PRISON

Under a black cloud, the prison. And within the prison, a bright rebel. The walls were extremely high, and although this was not possible, they appeared to lean inward yet also to bulge outward, and they were topped with a luminous frosting of broken glass. Seen from the heights of the modest hill named Victoria Peak—from the summer residence of the governor of the Crown Colony of Hong Kong—the prison must have looked very fine. “If the sun were ever to shine,” said Annie to the Portuguese, “the glass would probably glitter. It would look like a necklace of diamonds, Lorenzo. Or a big margarita, in a square cup.”

The sun had not shone since November. This was March 2nd, “In the year of Their Lord” (Annie’s words again) 1927. The vast cloud, several hundreds of miles in diameter and near as thick, squatted upon the unprepossessing island and pissed upon its prison. Annie Doultry (named Anatole for Monsieur France, the novelist) was negotiating the one hundred and eightieth day of a six-month stretch. Born in Edinburgh in the year 1876, he looked his age, every passing minute of it.

His father had been a typesetter, a romantically inclined Scotsman whose hands played with words, a man who loved puns and tragedy, *King Lear* and Edward Lear. His mother was an unusual woman, lovely and liked, but not quite respectable. She was a MacPherson, but she had a flighty side. She had had lovers, the way some families have pets. Though raised in logic, common sense, and strict economy, once in a while she took absurd gambles—for one, her husband. Later the Doultrys emigrated to Seattle, the boy

and the paternal grandmother in tow like many a Midlothian family in those days (when at least there was somewhere to emigrate to). The whole story was vague, though, and Annie was not much given to reflection upon his childhood. His memory was a mess, as full of giant holes as an old sock. Scotland was an accent he loved.

On the other hand, he thought a lot about the future. “That is one of my characteristics, Lorenzo,” he said firmly to the bum of a Portuguese who occupied the bunk above, all aswamp in his own noisome reflections. Annie spoke out like that as a matter of principle, as a way of resisting the danger of thinking silently about one’s own thoughts. That could lead to more thinking and so forth in a potentially hazardous spiral of regressions, the sort of thing one had to be careful of in Victoria Gaol. Men went mad there.

“If you think like a prisoner,” said Lorenzo, “you are a prisoner for life.”

“Not me,” said Annie Doultry.

“But you are here,” said the Portuguese—and it was undeniable. The loose Annie, liberty-loving, unpredictable, spontaneous, was as confined as anyone else in the prison.

“Soon you be old, man,” mocked Lorenzo. “People grow old fast here.”

That warning sank in. It helped explain Annie’s thoughtful look. Once in prison was once too often. Annie Doultry had had little time to ask himself, “Where are you in life? Are you going to be a jailbird or are you going to be your own man?” He had taken that latter hope for granted, but he was too old to be lingering. You could say that it was prison that turned him into a full-blooded fatalist—and made him dangerous.

The grown man himself had a nose bent a little to the left. This is what he had written in pencil under March 1, his yesterday: “They say follow your nose. If I followed mine I guess I would be a Bolshie. But mine is a nose that knows who is boss.” There, his own words hint at it: at a level

above mere punnery the nose stood upon its battered cartilage as a sort of memorial to the mockery of the name that might have graced a fair highland woman. "Annie Doultry, rhymes with 'poultry,' " he repeated a number of times, testing his earplugs of candle wax as he screwed them in. Nothing wrong with the ears, their lobes pendulous in the style that indicated wisdom according to the Chinese, but the main organs compactly fitted beneath the hinges of a lantern jaw notorious for its insensitivity. "A face to sink a thousand ships," said Annie sonorously, as a final trial, and with the satisfaction of one who could no longer hear himself except as cello notes in his own bones.

To turn from the inner life of the man to his three-dimensional situation: the lower bunk of a cell in D block, seven feet by five with the usual grim appurtenances, shit pail and ignoble window, glassless but thickly barred, its sill over five feet from the concrete floor, making it fiendishly difficult for a Chinese to see out. Not so hard for Annie Doultry, however, for he was a large man and terribly thick of thew. Thick-chested, thick thumbs and eyebrows, thick tendons of the wrist and below the kneecap and at the insertion of the hamstring, a valuable asset for a violent man a little past the years of youthful resilience when being thrown out of bars and down companion ladders were just laughable excursions. Thick-bearded he was, too. They had tried to make him shave it off, but he had fought a moral battle with them, from barber to chief warden to the governor himself—and won it. So they had taken his hair but left him his beard to play with. Subsequently each hair had grown prouder, though admittedly grayer. It was an unusual gray, with the cuprite tinge that bronze develops when it takes what the imperial metal workers called the water patina.

Annie had often looked at himself in his mirror—before he lost it. It was a metal mirror, not of great antiquity. It was stainless steel, with a hole to hang it from, four inches

square and probably Pittsburgh-made, for trading with Polynesian natives. The mirror was both kind and perceptive, like a rare friend. It stressed equally the deceptive youth and petulance of Doultrey's mouth and the inexpressible, faltering beauty of his eyes. Faltering, because they never quite looked back at themselves, in that or any other mirror. The eyes were guarded because he did not wish them to expose him in any way. Beautiful, by way of his mother presumably, for his father was an ugly fellow; or perhaps just by way of contrast with the rustic ruin of the nose.

His hair was not so thick, of course, and it was cropped repulsively short back and sides. This style was all the rage in the prison, for it denied living space to the poor overcrowded lice.

The next thing was to get his socks in his hands in the correct manner. The heels should fit one in t'other, hand heel in sock heel; but the latter were giant vacuities, and the light was poor. The task had to be done. Nothing else guarded against the roaches.

The Portuguee was moaning, which meant that he was asleep. No earplug was proof against that sound. "He is in the fearful presence of a Jesuitical dream," said Annie softly. He wished he could write this down in his schoolbook, but the socks made it impossible. "Or perhaps he is praying." Damnation was what the man wished to avoid at all costs; he had told Annie so. But what made his moans all the more impressive was their coincidental harmonic precision with a Chinese type of moan, straight from the throat in E-flat and out through a mouth agape and then the open window of the hospital ward. This pit of suffering was on the ground floor of A block, just across the alley. The one who moaned had been flogged two or three days ago; his wounds were ulcerating and so on. But it must be made clear that the problem for Annie was not emotional or spiritual: it was a

sleeping problem, for the buildings were all crammed together and the acoustics were excellent.

Annie lay back with the socks on his hands. On the great hairy pampas of his chest stood a ravaged tea mug, its blue enamel all mottled with dark perfusions like aging internal bruises promising worse to come. Yet Annie treasured it, for it was his one remaining possession inside this tomb of a prison. The other things—the lighter without a flint, the metal mirror, the brass buckle with the camel's head—he had gambled away at the roach races. Besides, Annie liked his tea, and Corporal Strachan (Ret.), chief warder of D block, would slip him an extra in this mug, Annie's own. Now, however, it was empty as an unrewarded sin. On either side of it lay his big bunched mitts, gray as stone, *manos de piedra* indeed, whose knuckles were protuberant but the fingers astonishingly delicate considering what they had been through—no pun intended.

He remained still. Around his tea mug, his chest was decorated with dried pellets of sorghum (a sort of mealy stuff) flavored with ginger. This was a taste much favored by cockroaches. His broad belly carried a trail of these pellets past his navel via the folds of his filthy canvas pants down to his bare feet. The big toes rested with a look of weary dignity on the rusted bedstead. Along it was laid an enticing line of roach bait, like the fuse to a keg of TNT.

Annie Doultry was lying in wait for his prey with all the punctilious preparation of a hunter of tigers, or of leopards, using his own person in lieu of the tethered goat. For this was the essential feature of his plan: his personal attractiveness to the animals in question. If there is one dish a Chinese roach prefers to sorghum and ginger, it is the dried skin of a whitee's feet. They would not dream of devouring the living epidermis, they were not looking for trouble, but they favored calluses as an epicurean rabbi does smoked herring. To hold it against them—the roaches, that is—would be rank prejudice; but the fact was that a

vulnerable foot was denuded of its natural protection. Feet became little engines of sensitivity. In Annie's case it was worse, for the roaches nibbled his fingers too throughout the torpid watches of the night—oh, how delicately they chomped away at the husks of his fingertips! Never did they wake him, and circumspection was their motto. No doubt the fearful size of the man gave them pause. "Do not wake him," they whispered one to another as they satisfied their desire. Hence the socks on his hands.

In a mood of stillness, Annie Doultry waited. The light became dimmer, the black cloud thickening with the approaching night. Under the black cloud, the prison.

Doultry's cell was no different in shape or size from the other three hundred and twelve. But in status it was one of a select few, like an ancient and appalling Russian railway carriage with First Class all in gold letters on its side. The top-floor view included the top strata of Victoria Peak and the governor's summer residence, its Union Jack weighted in the moist atmosphere like a proud dishcloth. The grub was better too—pork twice a week, which was twice as much pork as the others got, the others being Chinese, a smaller race and less needful of meat, according to colonial doctrine. (And who will say they were wrong? Too much pork rots the colon's underwear and the upholstery of the beating heart.)

The top floor of D block was called the E section, which need not confuse the student if he remembers that the E stood for Europe, or European. The exalted E loomed on brooding signs and likewise on Annie Doultry's institutional garments, stenciled on the canvas in blood-clot red above the broad arrow. The arrow pointed at the letter with pride or with accusation, depending on how you looked at it. In Annie's case it was also with indignation, for he was an American, a true-blue American since the age of five or thereabouts (though in his heart's heart he knew he was ever a Celt from the land of mists, and a wanderer).

Doultry was not the first Yank to wear the big E. As the superintendent had patiently explained to him, the E referred not to geography but to race, and in the view of the prison service a white or whitish American was indisputably an E. There were five-hundred-odd A's and fourteen E's in residence in March of '27, including remand prisoners awaiting trial. This proportional representation was surprisingly close to that of the colony as a whole. This again could be regarded as praiseworthy, pointing at the proud blindness of British justice, or as shameful, for obvious reasons.

But enough moral speculation; back to the facts, blinder than justice. Annie, prostrate in his bunk, his socks on his hands and all strewn with cockroach bait, his leathery face menaced by the sagging paraboloid of the Portuguee's mattress, protruding like an appalling fungus through its fret of rusty wire, an instrument that sang tunes of despair with each twist of the poor wee bugger's bum. A great stain resembling Australia pressed on Annie's eyeballs with the whole weight of that meaty continent, which he had seen more than enough of in the course of his erratic voyages. And to think this was but the mattress's underside! What must she be like topsides—in proximity to the wooly back, the shriveled buttocks, the leaky sphincter of the Portuguee?

Perish the very thought.

Although it might be pretended by a certain superintendent that Victoria Gaol was named for the sovereign on whom the sun never set, this was not so. The naming was at second hand, like a wife's, bequeathed to the prison by the city of Victoria, erected all higgledy-piggledy on Hong Kong Island. There was very little old-fashioned imperial pride about the project; a place to make a few bob was all that was behind it. Noting the pussyfooting of the English, the Scots moved

in and cannily organized things. The colony was run by them, they made the bureaucracy tick, they owned the richest merchant houses. They ran the docks and the engines of the ships on the China Seas.

However, though he was once a Scot, it was not the future of the city that bore on Annie Doultry's brain, nor the world's, either; his own future it was, or would be. The reality to be expected, the facts of it. But was there such a thing as a future fact? There was one for Mr. Wittgenstein, indeed. Common sense answered "Yes!"; logic hollered "No!" To hell with philosophy, thought Annie. It was too much reflection had got him there in the first place, too much thinking and too little action. "If I had only shot the bastard," he thundered at the Portuguese's vile mattress, "instead of standin' there weighin' the pros and cons of it! God blind me for my compassion—Lord, do you hear me now? Act, damn your guts! ACT!" The tin mug on his chest danced to the tune of his recriminations, the great sob that he would not allow to emerge gonging its enamel bottom. Annie overcame the sob and filtered it out as a sort of sigh, or wheeze. "Ah, now there was a good firearm. That Luger. Nine-millimeter Parabellum, disastrous to the flesh as any .45 and a helluva sight straighter-shootin'." Pause. "But all said and done, nobody makes metal like Smith & Wesson." He caressed the dull enamel of his mug. "The color o' the pit of the night. There are pearls that color, Lorenzo." (Manuel was his name, but no matter.) "Like ink on a leather apron."

The Portuguese slept on, moaning in the swamps of his own dreams.

This one was big, too: a good three and a half inches long. He stood upon the rusted iron bedstead at the foot of Annie's bunk. He eyed Annie and then stepped with circumspection onto a toe. The toe, the whole foot, Annie had attempted to wash a little to make it as appetizing as

possible. But this creature ignored the riches spread before it. Him, her—how in Christ's name do you tell the sex of a cockroach? (Well, Hai Sheng could—and later did, pronouncing it to be a he.)

To the eye of the roach, Annie's size 11 must have had the appearance of that Buddha's foot forty feet long, carved from the pale gray throat of a Singhalese mountain. Its calluses and corns were already well pruned by previous visitors; the terrain was smooth and sweet as an adolescent girl's. The cockroach pressed on, up the pants to Kneecap Knoll and then downhill to Groin Canyon, where certain morsels of sorghum roach bait, moistened to make them stick, lay in a crevice. But the beast ignored this feast. With a cautious but unhesitating step he descended ledges of dirt-caked hemp to the very lip of Fly Gap itself—that fault in the world's crust to which (Annie thought, with respect) your average roach would give a wide berth. The pit itself yawned there, with boredom no doubt, spooky bronze-gray tendrils curling forth, shameless and buttonless (for Annie had gambled away the buttons). The splendid creature's antennae felt the moist ether and his carapace glittered like Beelzebub's armor, the perfect color of fresh tar. He looked downward, into the shadows; and the view must have dizzied him, for he did not seem to hear Annie's whisper: "You are not a gentleman, sir." Annie said it so that it could not be said of him later that he said nothing, that it was a betrayal of confidence. Then the gloomy cauldron of that tea mug descended like a shroud upon that proud cock of the roach walk, making him prisoner too.

The roach races were held in a gutter about twenty-five feet long that traversed the exercise yard. By convention this gutter demarcated Europe from Asia. It was concrete, eight inches wide by four deep, and rimmed with a vile greenish tinge that Doultry liked to call "this Emerald Sward" or

sometimes “the turf of grand old Epsom.” Understand, please: he was trying to be British.

As the clang of the starting gong did the trick (it was a tin plate), the roaches were released with a lot of noise and exhortations up at the north end. Most often they chose to keep to the straight-and-narrow, encouraged by the stamping feet on either side. With a following breeze the best entries reached (or roached) fifteen miles an hour, the speed of a man with the devil at his heels. It was imperative to catch the critters before they disappeared down the drain a yard beyond the finishing line, except in the case where a runner’s sloth made liquidation by the sole of the disappointed foot a more likely fate, and the drain became life’s sanctuary. “They’re a fatalistic lot,” said Annie to Hai Sheng, an owner like himself. “They prefer dishonor to death any day of the week.”

Hai Sheng spat with a rich sound, signifying his approval of these words. He spoke pidgin, but understood considerable English. His wiry thoroughbred, Wondrous Bird of Hope, had yet to lose. His winnings were well over ten dollars in cash alone this season, though he was only a few weeks old. The rains didn’t set in properly until June, so you can see the profit to be made from a good roach in Victoria Gaol.

Beyond the gutter, the greater part of the yard was devoted to the hard labor of the Chinese inmates, on a shift basis. They unraveled old rope, many miles of it. The shredded hemp, called oakum, was nominally destined to caulk sprung seams in the oaken hulls of His Majesty’s ships. However, this was 1927 already, and the navy had built its ships of steel for over fifty years. So the oakum was stored against the day when the wooden walls might arise again from the deep of Trafalgar, and the Bay of Tientsin too, where a frigate had gone down in 1857 under the ancient guns of the Dragon Emperor’s fortresses.

The rope picking was pointless, but it pretended to a point. It was officially called Hard Labor No. 2. The east end of the yard was where the cream of the condemned worked at Hard Labor No. 1, or Shot Drill. Their labor transcended purpose; it was labor consecrated to itself alone.

The “shot men,” as they were called in the prison, walked all day in circles. At four points on the perimeter of the circle there stood small pyramids of twenty-four-pound shot, or cannonballs, so that no more than five paces separated them. The shot were of cast iron, black and featureless as the back of Death’s hand. For over three centuries they had fed the secondary armament of His Majesty’s ships and the army’s all-purpose cannon. Then, overnight, about the middle of Victoria’s reign, the belated adoption of the rifled cannon had made the twenty-four-pound shot quite obsolete. The whine of the spinning shell became their dirge.

So the shot accumulated in their millions. Like a vast and despicable population confronting genocide, they brooded in their pyramids great and small in dark corners of the empire, schoolboys pissing on them. It was left to this ageless penitentiary in Hong Kong to find a proper use for them. Here, the shade of that irrefutable old lady, Queen Victoria, lifted her petticoats for the last time to reveal to the forgetful that those iron balls of hers were not yet impotent; that they could still break men’s hearts.

The labor consisted of each man picking up a shot from a pyramid as he reached it, carrying it those few paces, and placing it carefully on the next pile. Then five paces, light-footed, to the next one, and once more the stooping, the lifting of the shot, the carrying, the setting down, and so forth, and so forth, in two-hour shifts, eight hours a day.

The shot could not be dropped upon its pile, of course. The equilibrium of the pyramids was important; it required precision from each man and an overall rhythm, a disciplined momentum to the wheel of guilty Chinamen (for

Europeans were never condemned, in Annie Doultry's day, to Hard Labor No. 1). Their overseers were Indian warders, burly men (a number of them Sikhs with immense beards fastened up behind their ears) who paced the rim of the circle with their rattan canes (three feet six inches long and one inch thick), smartly uniformed and marvelously impartial. They would poke and pat, encouraging the Shot Drill, for it was a drill, and they were mostly professional soldiers who had been lucky enough (old wounds or sickness would do it) to get this cushy job. They were by no means sadists. Still, when a man fumbled his shot, they beat him, for that was part of the drill.

Between races Annie sometimes watched the shot men. The Chinese convicts all wore straw coolie hats of uniform size—it was regulation. The effect was symmetrical and easy on the eye: the pale pointy hats dipping at the circle's four corners, the chinking of the twenty-four-pound shot, the forming and dissolution of the pyramids, the bending of backs, the bending of brains. Once he said out loud: "You're a lucky sonofabitch, Annie."

Annie's six months was a mere slap of the wrist according to the barrister who defended him, Mr. Andrew O'Gormer. It was not even so much as hard labor, but mere imprisonment. Apart from cockroach racing, Annie's hardest labor was an hour's walking up and down each morning after breakfast. No talking, of course, but Annie had formed a friendship with Corporal Strachan, and they would often walk together, chatting circumspectly. In short, Annie knew how to do his time. He handled the situation.

O'Gormer had taken Annie for every last cent, naturally. On the other hand, the prisoner could have got ten years under the Arms and Ammunition Ordinance of 1900. There's no knowing what goes on in the judge's chambers over a gin and tonic. Annie had shipped in to Hong Kong, all fair

and aboveboard and properly entered on his ship's manifest in his own neat handwriting, "for transshipment, bona fide cargo to Tientsin, Province of Shantung, Republic of China," a modest quantity of firearms procured in Manila from sources close to Uncle Sam's fine army in those regions. Specifically—it was all down in black-and-white—nineteen hundred and twelve U.S. Army Garand rifles, in good shape with regulation bayonets; eighteen Maxim .50-caliber machine guns (well used) plus nine excellent Hotchkiss heavies; two hundred thousand rounds of .300-cal (for the rifles); twenty crates times twenty-four Mills grenades; and an assortment of sidearms: several hundred Army Colt .45 automatics (the classic 1910 model) and revolvers (mostly .38's) and some interesting old mortars, heavy with grease and dents.

According to the quite liberal colonial law, no licenses or red tape need be bothered with provided these goods were ultimately destined for elsewhere. With arms, Hong Kong liked being a marketplace, but not a customer. The problem arose when a certain Polish gentleman approached Annie in Torrance's bar and offered a ridiculous sum of money for half-a-dozen Colt autos plus a few cartons of .45 ammo to make them go pop. "I was deeply offended, sir," Annie told the judge. "I told him to keep his damned money, for I was well aware it was an offense, Your Honor, to sell a gun to a Hong Kong feller without a permit from the captain superintendent, Hong Kong police. I was well aware of that. There's Communists about, Your Honor, and we don't want 'em getting their dirty hands on good American guns, I'm with you on that right down the line." Annie figured this would go down well with his audience. This was at the supreme court, before a jury.

"Please address me as Your Worship, Mr. Doultry," said the judge.

"Your Worship," said Annie.

But one thing had led to another. Though Annie maintained that the guilty weapons had been stolen from off his boat while Bernardo Patrick Hudson (his first mate) was suffering a bad attack of malaria brought on by drinking Chinese beer, the jury, though sympathetic, had declined to believe him. The thieves (or buyers) had not been apprehended; the guns were gone: the maritime police counted every last one remaining on board. The emissary of Annie's legitimate customer, Marshal Sun Chuan-fang, warlord of Nanchang and the plains south of the Yangtze at the time, was no help at all. In fact he was extremely annoyed, since delivery of his lawful shipment of arms was canceled at short notice, the entire shipment being confiscated by the Hong Kong police according to the letter of their law. The marshal's rapacious army was then engaged on several fronts in desultory warfare with Chiang Kai-shek. The details are fatiguing, but it was quite natural that British Hong Kong rather disliked stories in the *South China Weekly News* about the colony's role as a bazaar for arms open to both sides—or to all sides, more accurately, since there were at least a dozen independent armies fighting each other up and down China. There was even a theoretical international arms embargo in force, dating from May 5, 1919. It had been sponsored by the American minister in Shanghai and signed by Britain, France, Russia, Japan—everybody but the Germans, whose arms business in China was huge. Then the Russians broke the embargo in a big way when they started supplying armaments to the Nationalist-Communist alliance, and soon the embargo was just another bit of paper. America supplied new machinery for the Nationalists' main armory at Canton, to build British Vickers machine guns and ammunition for Russian rifles (seven hundred thousand cartridges a month). In Hong Kong, deals for anything could be made, including gas masks and airplanes. It was only indiscreet publicity that was taboo.

Annie knew and understood all this—the situation he was getting into, the niceties of it. It was depressing to have to keep up with this ongoing Chinese catastrophe, but he was doing business with them; and though he was not keen on the food, Chinese women were exceedingly attractive—along with the steady rumination on why he was so drawn to them. No, Annie was not naive. To rub salt in the wound, Barney (Bernardo Patrick) Hudson had had the wind up all along about peddling the Colt sidearms to the Polack, and when the shit hit the fan he persisted in repeating, “I told you so, I told you so,” and laughing in a hysterical fashion. He was lucky not to be in the dock himself.

Annie felt he was getting soft. He knew perfectly well he had been framed. Nonetheless, the philosophical way to look at it was like it was just a bad bet, a bet with the odds rigged, the dice loaded, and the dealer’s drinks paid for by the opposite party. But it was in prison that Annie became a real gambler.

Something profound had happened to Annie since September 4th, the day he first donned his E and his red arrow. He had never been in the slammer before, for one, and his age was too old for a first time. He was also plunged into forced proximity with the Chinese for the first time in his life, the Chinese of the narrow alleys and great effluvious slums, the coolies who were as another species to the white men on the outside. Willy-nilly, a sympathy was seeded in him. It might have been disgust, but no, it seems it was sympathy.

Let it be clear, Annie had always got on with most Britishers—a getting-on that got to the point where nostalgia for the Scotland he could barely remember and his pernicious talent for mimicry had led him to pretend to be a limey just for the hell of it. (He could impersonate a cockney near as well as he could a Scot.) But this tolerance for the British, an odd race who (as the Chinese pretended to) lived in the certainty of their superiority to all others, may have

made the temptation to cock a snoot at the limeys irresistible. Annie had no chip on his shoulder on account of his conviction and punishment. He had been caught bang to rights, as Detective Inspector Kenneth Andrews put it; his was a gamble taken and a gamble lost. But the loser incarcerated is an animal destined to six months of the paid principal, of emphatically aversive conditioning toward the powers that put him there. Thus, if the British Empire rubs a man's face in his own dung for six months, he cannot be expected to feel the same way about that empire or the dung. Add to the stew Annie's aversion to authority in any shape or form. To prove the origins of this antipathy would require a pilgrimage into a childhood forgotten by everyone, particularly by Annie. But it was there in the way so large a man insisted on a girl's name. The long and the short of the matter is that what had been merely a rebellious pimple on his psyche must have swollen up in Victoria Gaol into a boil: a boiling boil on the soul's posterior, coming to a fiery head, almost ready to pop.

"Him too much big," said Hai Sheng, the well-known Chinese owner, eyeing Annie Doultry's entry for the 3:15 race. "Wondrous Bird fly fast by velly, velly small foot." Hai's Wondrous Bird of Hope, the richest prizewinner of his day, was still only a colt, according to Sheng, who knew his roaches. Sheng had a collection of small change in many currencies, also safety-pins, aspirin tablets, buttons, toothbrushes, opium scrapings, bandages, and Annie's belt buckle with the camel's head, as proof of this knowledge.

"What callee you fat animal?" asked Hai Sheng, with skepticism.

"Dempsey." On the glossy back of his enormous animal Annie had engraved his mark, a great D, white lime rubbed into it to show it up.

"Ha. Dim-see no more champ."