

## *Murder in Jamaica*

It was six-fifteen on a peaceful afternoon in February. The sun was sinking low in the sky over Kingston – the capital city of the beautiful island of Jamaica.

It had been a hot day but the air was cooler now. Insects and frogs had started to call and sing. A man had just left a large white building with wide grass lawns and tall trees in front of it. This was a club where he met his British friends. He went to the club every afternoon to have a cool drink. Now he was going to his house, where he also had an office.

The man's name was Commander John Strangways and he was Regional Control Officer<sup>5</sup> for the Caribbean. Strangways worked in Jamaica for the British government. But he was really an agent of the British Secret Intelligence Service. He was a British spy who worked in Jamaica. Lots of people knew Strangways was a spy because he was not careful enough about his secret.

Every evening at 6.30, Strangways had to contact<sup>6</sup> London and transmit<sup>7</sup> his report to the headquarters of the Secret Intelligence Service on a radio transmitter. The time in Jamaica was five hours behind the time in London. If it was 6.30 p.m. in Kingston, in London it was 11.30 p.m. When Strangways had sent his report, he waited to receive his orders from the Secret Intelligence Service.

If Strangways couldn't make contact with the SIS in London at 6.30 p.m., he had to try again at 7.00 p.m. And if he couldn't send his message at this time, he would try again at 7.30 p.m. If London hadn't heard from him at that time, the SIS wouldn't try to contact him again. The headquarters would 'declare an emergency'<sup>8</sup>. They would immediately start

an investigation. They would try to find out why Strangways had failed to make contact.

Strangways never changed his routine. He did the same things, at the same times, every afternoon. Every evening at 6.15, he left the club where he met his friends and he started his journey back to his office. And every evening he took the same route in his car – he drove along the same streets. Every evening at 6.25, John Strangways met his assistant, Mary Trueblood, at the office. By 6.25, Miss Trueblood had always prepared the radio transmitter, so that it was ready for Strangways to send his report to London immediately.

On this February evening, three large men had been waiting for Strangways on the street near the club. As soon as Strangways came onto the empty, silent street, they started to walk towards him.

The three men were all wearing dark glasses and carrying white sticks. The men were walking together in a line, one behind the other. The first man was holding a little metal cup. The second and third men were each touching the shoulder of the man in front of them.

Strangways began to walk towards his car. He looked at the men and thought that they must be blind beggars<sup>9</sup>. There were some beggars in Kingston, but perhaps Strangways should have been surprised to see *three* blind beggars together. And he should certainly have been surprised that all three men were Afro-Chinese. This was an unusual mixture of races<sup>10</sup> in Jamaica. Meeting three, blind, Afro-Chinese men begging together *should have* seemed very strange to Strangways. But he was thinking about his evening transmission.

Strangways carelessly put a coin in the tin cup as he passed the three beggars and he walked on. So he didn't see the men turn around and pull guns from their pockets. And he didn't really feel the bullets which hit him a moment later. He was dead before his body hit the ground.



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and carrying white sticks.*

A few seconds later, a big black car appeared in the street. It was a hearse – the kind of car that is used for funerals. It was driven by a fourth Afro-Chinese man.

The three killers suddenly took off their dark glasses and quickly opened the doors at the back of the hearse. They threw their glasses and their white sticks into the car. Then they picked up the body of the British agent and pushed it into a wooden coffin<sup>11</sup> which was in the back of the hearse. A few moments later, they had got into the car and it had driven away.

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At six twenty-five, Mary Trueblood heard the door of the office opening behind her.

‘The transmitter is ready for you, sir,’ she said, turning around to welcome her boss.

But it wasn’t Strangways who was standing in the doorway. It was a large Afro-Chinese man, and he was pointing a gun at her heart. Mary Trueblood opened her mouth, but the man shot her before she could scream.

A few minutes later, she was with her boss. Both of their bodies were in the coffin in the back of the hearse, and the office of the Regional Controller was on fire.

Another hour later and the killers had put some heavy pieces of metal into the coffin with the bodies. Then they had dropped the coffin into the deep water of a lake which was many miles<sup>12</sup> from Kingston.