BEGINNING TODAY:
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BEGINNING TODAY:
The Best Selling Suspense Novel

From the pen of the author of "The Moonspinners" comes a vibrant new mystery that is a sudden sensation in bookstores across the country. Here is "This Rough Magic" in serial form, while it is still climbing in the best seller lists.

"AND if it's a boy," said Phyllida cheerfully, "we'll call him Prospero."

I laughed. "Poor little chap, why on earth? O, of course. . . . Has someone been telling you that Corfu was Shakespeare's magic island for 'The Tempest'?"

"As a matter of fact, yes, the other day, but for goodness' sake don't ask me about it now. Whatever you may be used to, I draw the line at Shakespeare for breakfast." My sister yawned, stretched out a foot into the sunshine at the edge of the terrace, and admired the expensive beach sandal on it. "I didn't mean that, anyway, I only meant that we've already got a Miranda here, and a Spiro, which may not be short for Prospero, but sounds very like it."

"O? It sounds highly romantic. Who are they?"

"A local boy and girl: they're twins."

"Good heaven, Papa must be a literary gent?"

Phyllida smiled. "You could say so."

Something in her expression roused my curiosity, just as something else told me she had meant to; so I—who can be every bit as provoking as Phyllida when I try—said merely, "Well, in that case hadn't you better have a change? How about Caliban for your unborn young? It fits like a glove."

"Why?" she demanded indignantly.

" 'This blue-eyed hag was hither brought with child,' " I quoted. "Is there some more coffee?"

"Of course. Here O, my goodness, it's nice to have you here, Lucy! I suppose I oughtn't to call it luck that you were free to come just now, but I'm awfully glad you could. This is heaven after Rome."

"And paradise after London. I feel different already. When I think where I was this time yesterday . . . and when I *think* about the rain . . ."

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I shuddered, and drank my coffee, leaning back in my chair to gaze out across pine tops furry with gold towards the sparkling sea, and surrendering myself to the dreamlike feeling that marks the start of a holiday in a place like this when one is tired and has been transported overnight from the April chill of England to the sunlight of a magic island in the Ionian sea.

Perhaps I should explain [for those who are not so lucky as I] that Corfu is an island off the west coast of Greece. It is long and sickle-shaped, and lies along the curve of the coast; at its nearest, in the north, it is barely two miles off the Albanian mainland, but from the town of Corfu, which is about halfway down the curve of the sickle, the coast of Greece is about seven or eight miles distant.

At its northern end the island is broad and mountainous, tailing off thru rich valleys and ever decreasing hills into the long, flat scorpion's tail of the south from which some think that Corfu or Kerkyra, gets its name.

My sister's house lies some twelve miles north of Corfu town, where the coast begins its curve towards the mainland, and where the foothills of Mount Pantokrator provide shelter for the rich little pocket of land which has been part of her husband's family property for a good many years.

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My sister Phyllida is three years older than I, and when she was 20 she married a Roman banker, Leonardo Forli. His family had settled in Corfu during the Venetian occupation of that island, and had managed somehow to survive the various subsequent "occupations" with their small estate more or less intact, and had even, like the Vicar of Bray, contrived to prosper. It was under the British protectorate that Leo's great-grandfather had built the pretentious and romantic Castello dei Fiori in the woods above the little bay where the estate runs down to the sea.

After his father's death three years ago, Leo had decided that the Castello's rubbed and faded splendours were no longer for him, and had built a pair of smallish modern villas—in

Lucy realized that the humming was caused by bullets from a silenced rifle.

reality twin bungalows—on the two headlands enclosing the bay of which the Castello overlooked the center.

He and Phyllida themselves used the Villa Forli, as they called the house on the northern headland; its twin, the Villa Rotha, stood to the south of the bay, above the creek where the boathouse was.

The Villa Rotha had been rented by an Englishman, a Mr. Manning, who had been there since the previous autumn working on a book ["you know the kind," said my sister, "all photographs, with a thin trickle of text in large type, but they're good"].

The three houses were connected with the road by the main drive to the Castello, and with one another by various paths thru the woods and down into the bay.

This year the hot spring in Rome, with worse promised,

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Bullets Shatter a Peaceful Vacation

Someone on this charming island hated intruders and was well prepared to drive them away—even if it meant killing them.

[Continued from first page]

had driven the Forlis early to Corfu. Phyllida, who was pregnant, had been feeling the heat badly, so had been persuaded to leave the two older children [whose school term was still running] with their grandmother, and Leo had brought her over a few days before I arrived, but had had to go back to his business in Rome, with the promise to fly over when he could at week-ends, and to bring the children for Easter.

So Phyllida, hearing that I was currently at a loose end, had written begging me to join her in Corfu and keep her company.

The invitation couldn't have been better timed. The play I was in had just folded after the merest face-saver of a run, and I was out of a job. That the job had been my first in London—my "big chance"—accounted partly for my present depression. There was nothing more on the cards: the agencies were polite, but evasive; and besides, we had had a dreadful winter and I was tired, dispirited, and seriously wondering, at 25, if I had made a fool of myself in insisting against all advice on the stage as a career.

But—as everyone knows who has anything to do with it—the stage is not a profession, but a virus, and I had it. So I had worked and scraped my way thru the usual beginnings until last year, when I finally decided, after three years of juvenile leads in provincial rep., that it was time to try my luck in London.

And luck had seemed at last to be with me. After 10 months or so of television walk-ons and the odd commercial, I had

Lucy Phyllida

landed a promising part, only to have the play fold under me like a dying camel, after a two-month run.

But at least I could count myself luckier than the other few thousand still fighting their way towards the bottom rung of the ladder: while they were sitting in the agents' stuffy offices, here was I on the terrace of the Villa Forli, with as many weeks in front of me as I cared to take in the dazzling sunshine of Corfu.

The terrace was a wide tiled platform perched at the end of the promontory where wooded cliffs fell steeply to the sea. Below the balustrade hung cloud on cloud of pines, already smelling warm and spicy in the morning sun.

Behind the house and to either side sloped the cool woods where small birds flashed and twittered. The bay itself was hidden by trees, but the view ahead was glorious—a stretch of the calm, shimmering gulf that lies in the curved arm of Corfu. Away northward, across the dark blue strait, loomed, insubstantial as mist, the ghostly snows of Albania.

It was a scene of the most profound and enchanted peace. No sound but the birds; nothing in sight but trees and sky and sun-reflecting sea.

Lucy Is Amazed to Learn the Identity of Her Sister's Tenant

I sighed. "Well, if it isn't Prospero's magic island it ought to be. . . . Who are these romantic twins of yours, anyway?"

"Spiro and Miranda? O, they belong to the woman who works for us here, Maria. She has that cottage at the main castello gate—you'd see it last night on your way in from the airport."

"I remember a light there . . . A tiny place, wasn't it? So they're Corfu people—what's the word? Corfusians?"

She laughed. "Idiot. Corfiotes. Yes, they're Corfiote peasants. The brother works for Godfrey Manning over at the Villa Rotha. Miranda helps her mother here."

"Peasants?" Mildly intrigued, I gave her the lead I thought she wanted. "It does seem a bit odd to find those names here. Who was this well-read father of theirs, then? Leo?"

"Leo," said his loving wife, "has to my certain knowledge read nothing but the Roman Financial Times for the last eight years. He'd think 'Prospero and Miranda' was the name of an investment trust. No, it's even odder than you think, my love . . ."

She gave her small cat-and-canary smile, the one I recognized as preceding the more farfetched flights of gossip that she calls "interesting facts that I feel you ought to know."

"Actually, Spiro's officially called after the island Saint—every second boy's called Spiridion in Corfu—but since our distinguished tenant at the castello was responsible for the christening—and for the twins as well, one gathers—I'll bet he's down as Prospero in the parish register, or whatever they have here."

"Your 'distinguished tenant'?" This was obviously the *bonne bouche* she had been saving for me, but I looked at her in some surprise, remembering the vivid description she had once given me of the Castello dei Fiori: "tatty beyond words, sort of Wagnerian gothic, like a set for a musical version of 'Dracula'." I wondered who could have been persuaded to pay for these operatic splendors. "Someone's rented Valhalla, then? Aren't you lucky. Who?"

"Julian Gale."

"*Julian Gale*" I sat up abruptly, starting at her. "You can't mean—*do* you mean Julian Gale? The actor?"

"As ever was." My sister looked pleased with the effect she had produced. I was wide awake now, as I had certainly not been during the long recital of our family affairs earlier.

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Sir Julian Gale was not only "an actor," he had been one of the more brilliant lights of the English theater for more years than I could well remember . . . And, more recently, one of its mysteries.

"Well!" I said. "So this is where he went."

"I thought you'd be interested," said Phyl, rather smugly.

"I'll say I am! Everyone's still wondering, on and off, why he packed it in like that two years ago. Of course I knew he'd been ill after that ghastly accident, but to give it up and then just quietly vanish . . . You should have heard the rumors."

"I can imagine. We've our own brand here. But don't go all shiny-eyed and imagine you'll get anywhere near him, my child. He's here for privacy, and I mean privacy. He doesn't go out at all—socially, that is—except to the houses of a couple of friends, and they've got TRESPASSERS WILL BE SHOT plastered at intervals of one yard all over the grounds, and the gardener throws all callers over the cliff into the sea."

"I shan't worry him. I think too darned much of him for that. I suppose you must have met him. How is he?"

"O, I—he seems all right. Just doesn't get around, that's all. I've only met him a couple of times. Actually, it was he who told me that Corfu was supposed to be the setting of 'The Tempest'." She glanced at me sideways. "I, er, I suppose you'd allow him to be 'a literary gent'?"

But this time I ignored the lead. "'The Tempest' was his swan song," I said. "I saw it at Stratford, the last performance, and cried my eyes out over 'this rough magic I here abjure' bit. Is that what made him choose Corfu to retire to?"

She laughed. "I doubt it. Didn't you know he was practically a native? He was here during the war, and apparently stayed on for a bit after it was over, and then, I'm told, he used to bring his family back almost every year for holidays, when the children were young.

They had a house near Ipsos, and kept it on till quite recently, but it was sold after his wife and daughter were killed. However, I suppose he still had . . . connections . . . here, so when he thought of retiring he remembered the castello.

Well, that's our little colony. I won't say it's just another Saint-Trop. in the height of the season, but there's plenty of what you want, if it's only peace and sunshine and bathing."

"Suits me," I said dreamily. "O, how it suits me."

"D'you want to go down this morning?"

"I'd love to. Where?"

"Well, the bay, of course. It's down that way." She pointed vaguely thru the trees.

"I thought you said there were notices warning trespassers off."

The Nearness of Communist Albania Is Brought Home to the Visitor

"O, goodness, not literally, and not from the beach, anyway, only the grounds. We'd never let anyone else have the bay, that's what we come here for! Actually, it's quite nice straight down from here on the north side of the headland where our own little jetty is, but there's sand in the bay, and it's heaven for lying about, and quite private . . . Well, you do as you like. I might do down later, but if you want to swim this morning, I'll get Miranda to show you the way."

"She's here now?"

"Darling," said my sister, "you're in the lap of vulgar luxury now, remember? Did you think I made the coffee myself?"

"Get you, Contessa," I crudely. "I can remember the day—"

I broke off as a girl came out on the terrace with a tray, to clear away the breakfast things. She eyed me curiously, with that unabashed stare of the Greeks which one learns to get used to, as it is virtually impossible to stare it down in return, and smiled at me, the smile broadening into a grin as I tried a "Good morning" in Greek—a phrase which was, as yet, my whole vocabulary.

She was short and stockily built, with a thick neck and round face, and heavy brows almost meeting over her nose. Her bright dark eyes and warm skin were attractive with the simple, animal attraction of youth and health. The dress of faded red suited her, giving her a sort of dark, gentle glow that was different from the electric sparkle of the urban expatriate Greeks I had met. She looked about 17.

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Later, on the way to the beach, Miranda paused and pointed downhill. "That is the way you go. The other is to the castello, and it is private. Nobody goes that way, it is only to the house, you understand?"

"Whereabouts is the other villa, Mr. Manning's?"

"On the other side of the bay, at the top of the cliff. You cannot see it from the beach because the trees are in the way, but there is a path going like this"—she sketched a steep zigzag—"from the boathouse up the cliff. My brother works there, my brother Spiro. It is a fine house, very beautiful, like the Signora's, tho of course not so wonderful as the castello."

"So I believe. Does your father work on the estate, too?"

The query was no more than idle; I had completely forgotten Phyllida's nonsense, and hadn't believed it anyway, but to my intense embarrassment the girl hesitated, and I wondered for one horrified second if Phyllida had been right. I did not know, then, that the Greek takes the most intensely personal questions serenely for granted, just as he asks them himself, and I had begun to stammer something, but Miranda was already answering:

"Many years ago my father left us. He went over there."

"Over there" was at the moment a wall of tress laced with shrubs of myrtle, but I knew what lay beyond them: the grim, shut land of communist Albania.

"You mean as a prisoner?" I asked, horrified.

She shook her head. "No. He was a Communist. We lived then in Argyrathes, in the south of Corfu, and in that part of the island there are many such." She hesitated. "I do not know why this is. It is different in the north, where my mother comes from."

She spoke as if the island were 400 miles long instead of nearly 40, but I believed her. Where two Greeks are gathered together, there will be at least three political parties represented, and possibly more.

Miranda, It Seems, Has Business at the Forbidden Castello

"You've never heard from him?"

"Never. In the old days my mother still hoped, but now, of course, the frontiers are shut to all, and no one can pass in or out. If he is still alive, he must stay there. But we do not know this either."

"D'you mean that no one can travel to Albania?"

"No one." The black eyes suddenly glittered to life, as if something had sparked behind their placid orbs. "Except those who break the law."

"Not a law I'd care to break myself . . . well, thanks very much for showing me the way. Will you tell my sister that I'll be back in good time for lunch?"

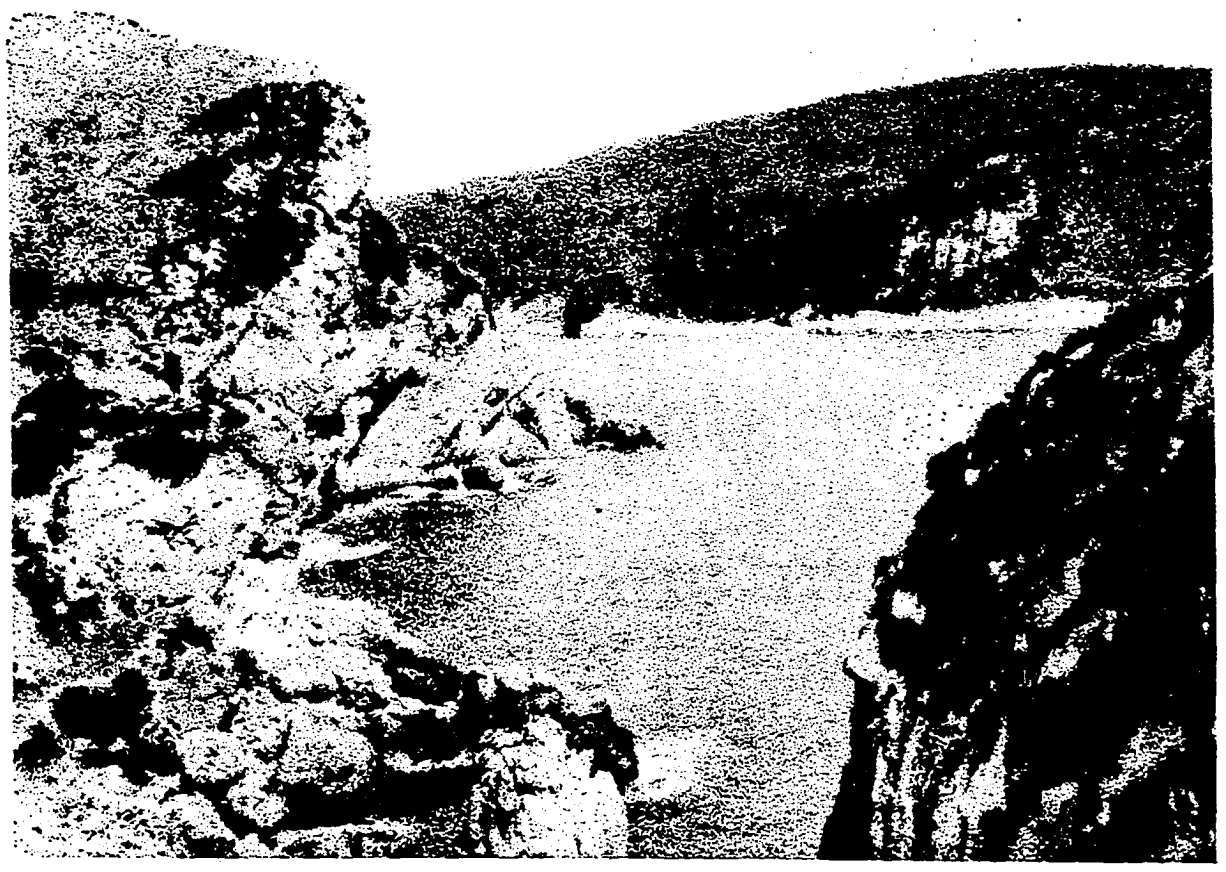
I turned down the steep path under the pines. As I reached the first bend something made me glance back towards the clearing.

Miranda had gone. But I thought I saw a wisk of faded scarlet, not from the direction of the Villa Forli, but higher up in the woods, on the forbidden path to the castello.

The bay was small and sheltered, a sickle of pure white sand holding back the aquamarine sea, and held in its turn by the towering backdrop of cliff and pine and golden-green trees. My path led me steeply down past a knot of young oaks, straight onto the sand. I changed quickly in a sheltered corner, and walked out into the white blaze of the sun.

The bay was deserted and very quiet. To either side of it the wooded promontories thrust out into the calm, glittering water. Beyond them the sea deepened thru peacock shades to a rich, dark blue, where the mountains of Epirus floated in the clear distance, less substantial than a bank of mist. The far snows of Albania seemed to drift like cloud.

After the heat of the sand, the water felt cool and silky. I let myself down into the milky calm, and began to swim idly along parallel to the shore, towards the southern arm of the bay. There was the faintest breeze blowing off the land, its heady mixture of orange blossom and pine, sweet and sharp,



The enchanting cliffs and coves of the Island of Corfu

coming in warm puffs thru the salt smell of the sea. Soon I was nearing the promontory, where white rocks came down to the water, and a grove of pines hung out, shadowing a deep green pool. I stayed in the sun, turning lazily on my back to float, eyes shut against the brilliance of the sky.

The pines breathed and whispered; the tranquil water made no sound at all. . . .

A ripple rocked me, nearly turning me over. As I floundered, trying to right myself, another came, a wash like that of a small boat passing, rolling me in its wake. But I had heard neither oars nor engine; could hear nothing now except the slap of the exhausted ripples against the rock.

Treading water, I looked around me, puzzled and a little alarmed. Nothing. Nothing. The sea shimmered, empty and calm, to the turquoise and blue of its horizon. I felt downwards with my feet, to find that I had drifted a little farther out from shore, and could barely touch bottom with the tips of my toes. I turned back towards the shallows.

This time the wash lifted me clear off my feet, and as I plunged clumsily forward another followed it, tumbling me over, so that I struggled helplessly for a minute, swallowing water, before striking out thoroly alarmed now, for shore.

Beside me, suddenly, the water swirled and hissed. Something touched me—a cold, momentary graze along the thigh—as a body dove past me under water. . . .

The Shark That Turned Out to Be a Very Friendly Fellow

I gave a gasp of sheer fright, and the only reason I didn't scream was because I gasped myself full of water, and went under. Fighting back, terrified, to the surface, I shook the salt out of my eyes and looked wildly round—to see the bay as empty as before, but with its surface marked now by the arrowing ripples of whatever sea creature had brushed by me. The arrow's point was moving fast away, its wake as clear as a vapor trail across the flat water of the bay. It tore on its way, straight for the open sea . . . then curved in a long arc, heading back. . . .

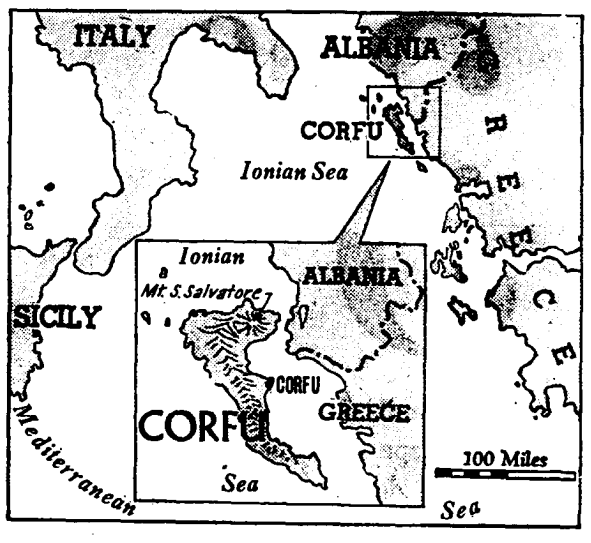
I didn't wait to see what it was. My ignorant mind, panic stricken, screamed "Sharks!" and I struck out madly for the rocks of the promontory.

It was coming fast. Thirty yards off, the surface of the water bulged, swelled, and broke to the curved thrust of a huge, silver-black back. The water parted, and poured off its sides like liquid glass.

There was a gasping puff of breath; I caught the glimpse of a dark bright eye, and a dorsal fin cusped like a crescent moon, then the creature submered again, its wash lifting me a couple of yards forward towards my rock. I found a handhold, clung, and scrambled out, gasping, and thoroly scared.

It surely wasn't a shark. Hundred of adventure stories had told me that one knew a shark by the great triangular fin, and I had seen pictures of the terrible jaws and tiny, brutal eye. This creature had breathed air, and the eye had been big and dark, like a dog's—like a seal's, perhaps? But there were no seals in these warm waters, and besides, seals didn't have dorsal fins. A porpoise, then? Too big . . .

Then I had the answer, and with it a rush of relief and delight. This was the darling of the Aegean, "the lad who lives



before the wind," Apollo's beloved, "desire of the sea," the dolphin . . . the lovely names went rippling by with him as I drew myself up on the warm rock in the shade of the pines, clasped my knees, and settled down to watch.

Here he came again, in a great curve, smooth and glistening, dark-backed and light-bellied, and as graceful as a racing yacht. This time he came right out, to lie on the surface watching me.

He was large, as dolphins go, something over eight feet long. He lay rocking gently, with the powerful shoulders waiting curved for the plunge below, and the tail—crescent-shaped, and quite unlike a fish's upright rudder—hugging the water flatly, holding the big body level. The dark-ringed eye watched me steadily, with what I could have sworn was a friendly and interested light. The smooth muzzle was curved into the perpetual dolphin smile.

Excitement and pleasure made me lightheaded. "O, you darling!" I said foolishly, and put out a hand, rather as one puts it out to the pigeons in Trafalgar square.

The dolphin, naturally, ignored it, but lay there placidly smiling, rocking a little closer, and watching me, entirely unafraid.

So they were true, those stories . . . I knew of the legends, of course—ancient literature was studded with stories of dolphins who had befriended man; and while one couldn't quite accept all the miraculous dolphins of legend, there were also many more recent tales, sworn to with every kind of modern proof. There was the dolphin called Pelorus Jack, 50 years ago in New Zealand, who saw the ship thru Cook strait for 20 years; the Opononi dolphin of the 50's, who entertained the holiday-makers in the bay; the one more recently in Italy, who played with the children near the shore, attracting such large crowds that eventually a little group of business men from a nearby resort, whose custom was being drawn away, lay in wait for the dolphin and shot her dead as she came in to play. These, and others, gave the old legends rather more than the benefit of the doubt.

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And here, indeed, was the living proof. Here was I, Lucy Waring, being asked into the water for a game. The dolphin couldn't have made it clearer if he'd been carrying a placard on that lovely moon's-horn fin of his. He rocked himself, watching me, then half turned, rolled, and came up again, nearer still. . . .

A stray breeze moved the pines, and I heard a bee go past my cheek, traveling like a bullet. The dolphin arched suddenly away in a deep dive. The sea sucked, swirled, and settled, rocking, back to emptiness.

So that was that. With a disappointment so sharp that it felt like a bereavement, I turned my head to watch for him moving out to sea, when suddenly, not far from my rock, the sea burst apart as if it had been shelled and the dolphin shot upwards on a steep slant that took him out of the water in a yard-high leap and down again with a smack of the tail as loud as a cannon shot. He tore by like a torpedo, to fetch up all standing 20 yards out from my rock and fix me once again with that bright humorous eye.

It was an enchanting piece of show-off, and it did the trick.

"All right," I said softly, "I'll come in. But if you knock me over again, I'll drown you, my lad, see if I don't!"

I lowered my legs into the water, ready to slide down off the rock. Another bee shot past above me, seawards, with a curious high humming. Something—some small fish, I suppose—splashed a white jet of water just beyond the dolphin.

Lucy Suddenly Realizes that She and Her New Friend Are in Danger

Even as I wondered, vaguely, what it was, the humming came again, nearer . . . and then another white spurt of water, and a curious thin, curving whine, like singing wire.

I understood then. I'd heard that sound before. These were neither bees nor fish. They were bullets, presumably from a silenced rifle, and one of them had ricocheted off the surface of the sea. Someone was shooting at the dolphin from the woods above in the bay.

That I was in some danger from the ricochets myself didn't at first enter my head. I was merely furious, and concerned to do something quickly. There lay the dolphin, smiling at me on the water, while some murderous "sportsman" was no doubt taking aim yet again. . . .

Nobody, surely would fire at the beast when there was the chance of hitting me. I plunged straight out into the sunlight, clumsily breasting the water, hoping that my rough approach would scare the dolphin away from the danger.

It did. He allowed me to come within a few feet, but as I lunged farther, with a hand out as if to touch him, he rolled gently away from me, submerged, and vanished.

I stood breast-deep, watching the sea. Nothing. It stretched silent and empty towards the tranquil, floating hills of the mainland. The ripples ran back to the shore, and flattened, whispering. The dolphin had gone. And the magic had gone with him. This was only a small—and lonely—bathing place, above which waited an unpleasant and frustrated character with a gun.

I turned to look up the inclosing cliffs.

The first thing I saw, high up above the bay's center, was what must be the upper stories of the Castello dei Fiori, rearing their incongruously embattled turrets against a background of holm oak and cedar and Mediterranean cypress. I could see the full length of the balustrade, with its moss-grown statues at the corners, a stone jar or two full of flowers showing bright against the dark background of cypress, and, a little way back from the balustrade, a table and chairs set in the shadow of a stone pine.

And a man standing, half invisible in the shade of the pine, watching me.

TOMORROW
Death in the Waters of Albania