

Chapter 11

La Jambe Cassée

There is a desolate district on the right bank of the Seine, running parallel to the *Boulevard Beaumarchais* between the *Place de la Bastille* and the *Place de la Republique* . Getting off at *Metro Filles de Calvaire* , one enters a warren of streets which, despite the astronomical value of Parisian real estate, hold essentially nothing on them and which, in addition, go just about nowhere.

It is a debris strewn waste-basket, sodden and melancholy, without restaurants, stores, or cafés, and, at most, an occasional pedestrian.

All the more delight, therefore, in discovering the rare exception! Such as the café-bar- restaurant which bears the designation *La Jambe Cassée* , a veritable oasis within these precincts of sloth, despair, abandon, gloom and indifference (which, like the sighting of arcing rainbows, cause the hearts of bewildered tourists to skip a beat, if not to stop altogether.)

La Jambe Cassée is easily found. After exiting *Filles de Calvaire* on the west side of the *Boulevard Beaumarchais*, you can walk down the *rue de Temple* as far as the *rue Poitou* . Turning right, walk a few more blocks, perambulate the environs, and you may discover the *rue Saintonge* . If you don't, just keep looking: this

street has a way of disappearing for months at a time, only to re-emerge just about the time that mankind has, to its great relief, come to the conclusion that it is gone forever.

Alighting upon the rue Saintonge you then search for a certain *impasse*, not indicated on any of the standard city maps, identifiable only by a plaque affixed to a whitewashed wall. The plaque states that one is standing before the *Impasse de la Béquille*. La Jambe Cassée is located at its uttermost end.

Three Algerians manage the restaurant: a waiter, a barman, and a cook. No one has ever testified to seeing them when they weren't drunk ¹.

There is reason to believe that its name did not originate with its present owners. It hints at a darker past, when *les Apaches* roamed the seedy districts of Paris, and rough justice was enacted without benefit of law.

The ambiance smacks of an endless carnival. The prevailing climate is filled with promises of immanent violence that sometimes spill over into a real brawl. Were this rude fellowship not so cheerful, not so replete with forced gaiety, it might be deemed merely gross. Were the Arabic Pop Music pouring out of the radio above the bar not so raucous, the foul obscenities

¹No slur is intended on restaurateurs, nor Algerians, nor Islam which forbids drinking.

passing between staff, customers and a table near the bar reserved for friends of the management, might appear less shocking.

No one, himself least of all, can recall the strange chain of events which led the celebrated Inspector Guy de Migraine to this outlandish hole. Its' sole recommendation appears to be that one could never hope to find it merely by looking for it - implying that Migraine must have uncovered it by some other means. That neither the staff nor the regulars had the faintest notion of who he was, what the initials DST stood for, or the location of the Eiffel Tower, had certainly been key factors in the decision to settle upon it as the headquarters for the Thursday afternoon planning and debriefing luncheons for the specialists of the DST team assigned to the Eiffel Tower Gang case.

It didn't take long before every crook in Europe knew where to find Inspector Migraine on a Thursday afternoon. Spies from various secret services and the Mob, who would normally have not been caught dead in such a place, mingled with the clientele on these days. Migraine's own plainclothes spies were also dispersed at various tables around the room.

The three partners of *La Jambé Cassée* had distributed the functions essential to running the restaurant among themselves. Over the cash register presided Mohammed, the barman. On most occasions

he could be expected to be a shade less inebriated than the others. Hamid, the cook, his torso more sinewed than a *djellaba* that had too often been laundered by being beaten on rocks, stood all afternoon long in his tiny kitchen at the far wall opposite the bar. Sweat dripped over his tormented brow as he choke lustily on the billowing fumes that poured out of his cell and suffocated the clientele.

The third partner, the waiter, Aziz, was a paradigm in extroversion. It is no mere metaphor to state that he never stopped talking. When he was not forcing more food (and, above all, drink) on their customers, he'd be boasting of all the ships he'd sailed on, the restaurants he'd worked in, his unimaginable exploits in the many brothels he'd frequented. Or again he might loudly promote the charms of the two dumpy and very fat prostitutes, as old and tired as the district itself, crouched over the high stools at each end of the bar.

Indeed there was something frankly malevolent in the appearance of Aziz, in the distemper around his eyes, the seeping warts on his swollen nose, the wild flailing of his arms, in his ruthless determination to get the whole restaurant as drunk as himself, in the extravagant craziness of his monologue in 5 languages, Arabic, French, Greek, Spanish and English, delivered in a voice so loud that it could be heard even above the

deafening noise of the radio. The brainless yelling and screaming of Aziz and Mohammed over the ridiculous matter of the radio's volume was one of the predictable features of the day's entertainment.

Aziz's behavior indicated a man obsessed by his perceived self-image as a Bacchus in residence, the presiding genius over some Roman orgy, Circean revel, transmigration of damned souls or roller coaster to hell, lubricated by strong, cheap, poisonous rotgut table wine (*tord-boyau*).

This setting made Migraine feel very much at home. It pleased him that the noise level was always so high that none of the perpetually present underworld spies could hear, let alone understand, the conversations buzzing about his table. It was also the case that this state of affairs applied in equal measure to the cops and informers who surrounded him: they were rarely able to make out more than a few words of what they were saying to each other. This also didn't trouble him, Migraine being of the opinion that really important information should not be communicated verbally. If what his subalterns had to say was all that important, they could always write a note and slip it to him under the table.

This, too, carried its risks ; for it sometimes happened that

Kif-har'lech , the restaurant's enormous , dirty, hairy and lazy French sheepdog, might decide that the note was meant for him, and eat it. Migraine, who often fed *Kif-har'lech* the left-over *frites* from his plate, wasn't unduly concerned with this either. He felt that any message not worth the trouble of writing up and passing twice, should not have been written in the first place.

These luncheons, mind you, were taken very seriously. Many a case stalled for years had been cracked wide open by some idea introduced during them; and even more by some that had not. Greasing the cogs and gears of criminal justice involves more than the transmission of dull, meaningless facts! Of far greater importance were intangibles such as camaraderie, team spirit, male bonding, reckless conviviality. tribal rite and ritual, the quaffing of much dubious wine, and the stimulation of bibulous cheer!

Notable among the many challenges faced by them was the presence of the two prostitutes, Olga and Minna. Any member of Migraine's team caught using their services was kicked off the force for life! This had nothing to do with Migraine's morals: both of them were KGB agents.

Around 1 PM on a certain Thursday afternoon in early July, 1989, Pavel Lukash and Jean-Luc Fevrier were sitting at the bar of *La Jambe Cassée* , waiting for

the arrival of the rest of the team. To the left of Fevrier sat Olga; Minna, to Lukash's right, was talking to him in Russian. Together they were comparing notes on working conditions in their respective agencies:

"Life is a paid vacation when you work for our side". Minna's tone of voice could not have been more bored. She was a stocky woman with Slavic features that dripped with thick makeup. Aloft she bore a fantastic reddish-brown wig. Beneath a torn black lace dress, her exposed varicose legs looked as if they'd been greased with chicken fat.

"I did hear something to that effect once", Lukash replied, "I think it was in Czechoslovakia before I got out. Speaking to you frankly, working for Migraine here isn't all that much better than being locked up in a labor camp over there."

"So? Why don't you quit? This is a free country! "

Lukash debated the question: "I don't know, really. You get to feel sorry for the boss. Where else will he find someone to take the fall for him every time he fucks up? Migraine becomes like a bad habit; like his name, a kind of headache. It gets so you depend on him to keep you from getting lonely."

"Sounds like Joe Stalin. Boy: I sure missed him when he dropped dead! "

"Hey, you rotting penis! Where's that shitty Basque chicken! Up your asshole?"

" Here it comes! Don't spew your vomit on it, dog's fart!"

A scrawny, oily, burnt, onion-swaddled chicken came flying through the upper part of the kitchen's Dutch door. It streamed across the room to splatter on the large mirror at the back of the bar. Mohammed wiped it off the mirror, put it onto a plate, tidied its trimmings and handed it over to Aziz. He handed the plate to Olga, who was apparently used to being served in this fashion.

Turning towards the kitchen, Aziz screamed.

" Stick of sick slime! Having fun??!"

He ran behind the bar and returned with a garbage can overflowing with wine bottles, paper and food slops. Kicking open the Dutch door he heaved the can into the kitchen:

" Take that, you moronic bugger!! Go chew the Devil's cock!"

Hamid charged out of the kitchen, a meat cleaver in his right hand:

"Another one of your jokes, weasel snot? I'll hack you to bits!"

" May leprosy rot your bladder! Get back to work!"

" May you be Satan's toilet seat in the afterlife !"

" I'm not afraid of cockroach spit like you!"

" Will you or will you not apologize, flesh of venereal pig?"

" What? ME apologize!? Pigeon shit! Who was it threw the chicken??"

The cook whirled about and raced back into the kitchen. After slamming the door behind him, he started banging pots and pans together.

Scenes like these erupted several times a day. They were staged events, primarily for the diversion of the clientele. Aziz strolled to the radio and turned it on full blast. Then he waltzed about the room singing along with the crooners, substituting obscene lyrics in a variety of languages.

During the time in which this quarrel was working out its dreary inner logic, the American marine Stanley Cobb had entered unnoticed through the open doorway. His hands twitched like a nuclear reactor on the verge of a meltdown, and he felt something diarrhoetic in his hams. Such scenes of unrestrained violence aroused the military cop in him. It was only with the greatest difficulty that he restrained himself from clubbing everyone in sight, before arresting them all . Only his mystical veneration of "*The Inspector* " stayed his hand. Migraine figured third in a hierarchy topped by his mother and followed by the Stars-and-Stripes. Had he not worshipped Guy de Migraine as more than a second father, not even his commanding officer could have ordered him to attend these Thursday afternoon debauches.

His anger mastered, yet (even as a tick resting in the ear of a hapless mastiff will swell to indecent proportions) its growth unchecked , Cobb stomped to the nearest table with an arrogant show of high dudgeon. There, heavily emitting a weary sigh of world-weariness, he seated himself. He draped his trench-coat over his chair and lay his Marine hat on the table. The holster belt hooked to his bulletproof vest, holding several rounds of bullets and an Uzi pistol was unstrapped, then deliberately dropped on the table from a great height. The clatter resonated across the room with menacing intent . Once again he sighed.

The clientele froze, petrified. Even Lukash and Fevrier blanched. Only the inebriated restaurant managers continued their tasteless and despicable threnody of curses, mock quarrels and loud abuse.

Cobb lifted a truncheon the size of a bowling pin and brought it crashing down on the table, breaking it in two. No longer was there a whimper to be heard from anyone.

" Hey! You!" he shouted. With an imperious swipe of an index finger he pointed to Aziz: "Go get another table! Pronto!"

Waiter and barman hopped to it. Exiting into the inner courtyard they went down into the basement. Soon they were back with another table. Generating much needless commotion, they pulled it into the room.

In a restaurant in which a semblance of normalcy reigned, this would have been the signal for a mass exodus . Given that La Jambe Cassée on this day of the week contained only Eiffel Tower Gang spies, spies from the Mob, KGB operatives, DSGE operatives, occasionally CIA, Mossad and Special Branch operatives, nobody made a move.

The old table was removed and the new one put in its place. Cobb planted his boots on the table, stretching out his porcine figure to its full length, and began indolently picking his teeth with a grenade pin. Lukash and Fevrier came over and joined him

Shortly afterwards Inspector Migraine entered through the doorway of La Jambe Cassée. Accompanying him were Alphonse de Choucroute and Els Dordrecht of the Rotterdam Customs Authority . In her left hand, she held a briefcase; her right supported a *papier-maché* cast of the Eiffel Tower. Migraine lugged along a briefcase stuffed with documents and a laundry sack full of monosodium glutamate. Bag and Eiffel Tower were placed at the center of the table. Then everybody sat down and ordered drinks. The meeting had begun.

de Choucroute spoke up first: "Well, boss: we were able to trace that guy. You know - the one we lost in the showers at the Gare de Montparnasse ?"

" Don't remind me of it". Migraine scowled: " I still break out in a cold sweat whenever I think about it. So: what did you find out?"

" That powder, boss: it was the mono, all right."

" Aha! What did I tell you? Where's he from? What's he up to?"

" He's an Englishman." de Choucroute flipped through a stenographic tablet and began to read ...

" Monsieur le detective! Ze stupeed feelthy whore sends you siz! "

Aziz planted an apricot brandy before Migraine's cherubic red nose. Migraine turned his head around far enough to see Minna wink at him through her mascara laden eyelashes. He acknowledged the gift with a wave of the hand. Relations between the DST and the KGB were not always adversarial. Stanley Cobb glared at Aziz:

" Lower the fucken music - okay ?" Aziz nodded and did nothing.

" Like, if you don't want your head broken." Aziz waltzed out of reach. Migraine steadied Cobb with an outstretched arm. Turning to de Choucroute, he said: " Go on, Alphonse. Read the report."

" We learned that the suspect enters France on the night ferry from Dover. It arrives in Calais at 2:00 AM. He carries several passports, only one of which we believe to be authentic. The name on that one is

'Llewellyn Jones' (Choucroute pronounced the name as ' YownYownz ') , an odd name common among English Bretons. Yownz is employed as a salesman for a company that manufactures pipe fittings. He boards the train for Paris at 6:30 AM and arrives at 9:30."

" Did he pass through customs?" de Choucroute rubbed his ears to cover up his embarrassment:

" At that time of night, boss, our customs officials do not always operate at that level of ruthless efficiency which is our special pride and makes us honored among nations."

" Yes, yes , Choucroute - please go on."

" Chief", Fevrier interrupted, " Aren't you overlooking the *key notion* ?"

" What's that, Fevrier. Hey, you there! " Migraine snapped at Aziz ,

" Take this soup away. It's been rotting for days . "

" Sure thing your excellency. *Hey there! Hamid* ", Aziz shouted into the kitchen , "*Hey , you dog's scrotum! The inspector doesn't like your swill! Have you got a bowl of pig's phlegm for him to slurp ?* "

Els Dordrecht, who had never been to La Jambe Cassée before, was feeling sick : " Do we have to put up with this stuff much longer?" Migraine apologized:

" It's what the locals call color. Don't forget who we are, or why we're here. These foul *bougnols* ² protect our anonymity."

Migraine covered his blank face with a faraway look no less blank. Within the creases of his troubled brow lay many astonishing innuendoes which, like the breakers of tidal waves in the clutches of *El Niño* , rippled their spasms over its shoe leathery folds.

The perpetual Gaulois butt , already thoroughly soaked in rotted cabbage soup, dribbled from the carious teeth at the right corner of his mouth like a platyhelminthe spontaneously generated from spoiled meat tossed by a supermarket into its waste bins, then sprayed with insecticide so that the beggars who eat it will croak. His clenched muttonous fists rattled helplessly on the table.

The truth of the matter was that Inspector Guy de Migraine entertained only the vaguest notions about any of his cases, including the ones he happened to be working on at that moment. Dozens of them, mostly unsolved, were always crowding in at the back of his head. It was a question of professional ethics that he should treat all leads, however far-fetched, with the same degree of seriousness, (or perhaps indifference depending on one's point of view) What counted was

² racist term for an Algerian

that they were given equal weight, all such multiple considerations buzzing about his brains (rather like bees stinging the soft nose of a Yosemite grizzly bear debilitated over the years through all the stale pizza fed him by witless tourists) , interfering with his concentration, scrambling the signals on the way to his cerebral cortex, distracting him from his primary focus which, in the best of cases, was at most a matter of convention.

On top of which the Inspector was drunk. To do him justice, he was no drunker than customary for the ritual Thursday afternoon luncheons at La Jambe Cassée. He might have remained in this fixated state indefinitely, if Stanley Cobb hadn't bent over and whispered something in his ear. Exactly what it was we will never know, but it had the effect of a strong jolt of electricity applied to the gonads. Migraine pulled himself up to a rigid sitting position and said nothing. After a moment he seemed to recall that Fevrier's question to him had not been answered. By nodding reassuringly in Fevrier's direction he indicated that he would be giving his answer at the appropriate moment. Immediately afterwards there began a frantic search through all of his pockets for his pack of *Gaulois* . It was nowhere to be found. He'd probably lost it out in the street, during the time he'd wasted looking for the

rue Saintonge (which, as is well known, has a way of showing up at various places over time) .

" Carry on, men. I'll be back in a jiffy!" The Inspector stood up and walked briskly out the front door of La Jambe Cassée to scour the neighborhood for a *Tabac* . He would not be returning for another half hour.

After Migraine left the room, Els Dordrecht turned to Stanley and said : " Where's the message you wanted me to see?" Cobb lowered his booted foot from the table top and dug into the pockets of his Marine vest.

" It's on this thing, m'am." he replied, pulling out his keyring. The mezzuzah, obtained the month before from Izzy the Litvak, had been attached to the key ring between the fingerbones of the dead Russian diplomat and a collection of stamped metal disks of the sort disgorged by stamping machines in penny arcades. These constituted Stanley's addressbook. On these disks were recorded the names and addresses of all suspects associated the contacts associated with the Eiffel Tower Gang case .

Els Dordrecht manipulated the keyring to carefully tease out van Klamperen's message from the mezzuzah. While she was absorbing its contents, Olga slid off her stool at the bar and walked over to the table. Something in the blanched fingerbones had attracted her attention. She ran her fingers over their knobby

contours with caution, even a certain tenderness. Bending down she fixed her eyes closely on their indentations. As she sat upright once more, she rattled the balls of pink tinsel on her shoddy black knee-high dress. Her wig fell earthwards like the strands of a penitentiary mop, as she threw her head back and roared the demonic laugh of a schizophrenic committing suicide from eating 3 copies of Sigmund Freud's "Interpretation of Dreams" .

" Those fingerbones - Why! - They're Sergei's, aren't they ?! "

Stanley Cobb stared at her, thunderstruck . The DST had conducted a lengthy investigation to learn that these fingerbones, (and the mysterious head that had fallen into the Paris Canal from a windowsill on the boarded-up Hotel du Nord on the Quai des Jemmapes) , had once served as body parts for a Russian diplomat with the name of Sergei Ipanchin Vladimirsky Nepimov Ivanov Akakyevitch Strogin. Stanley shook his head, as if asking himself , 'Am I really that stupid'?

"Excuse me, m'am", he said. The mock courtesy in his manner sank under the weight of its own sarcasm, " Like, I know you're not a lady - but - maybe - just maybe - I can still call you ma'm, okay? How the *HHELL* ! did you manage to steal that state secret ? I should warn you you're one inch from being put under arrest, m'am. So don't push your luck."

" Don't be stupid, kiddo! I didn't steal no classified info! I recognized that fingerbone from a distance of 6 meters. Sergei, if you must know, was a cousin of my uncle by the second marriage of my mother's eldest second cousin on my grandfather's side."

" That don't convince me none, m'am. Could you try explaining how you just happened to know what his bones ought to look like?"

" Oh. I thought you knew; you should ask the Inspector about me. I was the assistant to the famous paleontologist Gerassimov for 12 years. He invented all the modern techniques for reconstructing complete bodies on the basis of a few pieces of bone. Just looking at those fingerbones I visualized the person, my cousin that is, they came from . That's real my profession. What a surprise to find my cousin here! "

" Whoa, m'am! Us marines ain't *that* dumb ! I mean, m'am - I ain't never been so drunk I couldn't tell a bull from a pig! *Your* profession? Ma'm? Huh? You mean to tell me you ain't just a tart?"

" No of course not, you cute Yank blubber-puss! I'm the senior bone identification specialist for all KGB operations in Western Europe. May I?"

Aziz brought over a chair for her and she sat down at the table. When Olga overturned the contents of her pocketbook, more than 30 bone fragments dropped onto

its surface. Sorting through the pile she isolated an ankle bone splinter:

"Take a good look at that one. It came from a dancer with the Bolshoi Ballet. She defected a few years ago during one of its routine visits to Paris. Before her entrance to the *pas de deux* in Swan Lake, the KGB seeded the stage of the Paris Opera with curare coated splinters. Look .." Olga raised it up to the light " .. There! You can still see the hole where the splinter penetrated. I try not to think of how horribly he suffered before she died. This bone was sent to me afterwards for identification . Purely routine you understand."

Aziz had once again turned the radio up full blast and it was impossible for Stanley to hear anything Olga was telling him. In the meantime Els had finished read van Klamperen's message and handed it back to him:

" Here, Stanley: you keep it. Stick it back into that cylinder thing; its important. After we get back to headquarters I'll transcribe the message. Then we'll run a test for fingerprints, although I know it's a waste of time. This is a master criminal we're dealing with."

Mohammed got off his stool and turned the radio down, while Olga continued her lesson in osteology. She lifted out a bone fragment shaped like a pottery

shard: " This was once part of a shoulder blade belonging to some American cop."

Stanley's right hand gripped his Uzi. Gooseflesh chilled the back of his neck.

" Put that thing away, stupid! It wasn't us what terminated him. The jerk , some dumb cop from a place called, uh, 'Cincinnati' - You ever heard of it? - was drunk for a week in Pigalle. He collapsed in the street during a shoot-out between local gangsters. Later a comrade heisted this bone from the American Embassy just before the dumb jerk's body was driven to the crematorium. My job was to find out if he was CIA. He wasn't. Nothing but damn routine all the time . "

Migraine re-entered the room just as Cobb was replacing the Uzi in its holster. He twisted van Klamperen's message back into the mezzuzah and put the keyring into his trousers back pocket. Then he savagely attacked the monstrous plate of spaghetti with mutton chops which Aziz had dumped in front of him. In a few minutes everyone at the DST table was greedily wolfing down the unsavory yet filling Franco-Maghrebian cuisine devised by Hamid, the cook of La Jambe Cassée . In between guzzlings and gurglings they belched, swore , made wide gesticulations and proudly generated loud lip-smacking noises. They were altogether a crude bunch.

Hamid had left the kitchen, from which smoke continued to pour over the tops of the Dutch doors into the room. With his left hand down her bosom, holding a meat cleaver high in his right hand, he danced cheek-to-cheek with Minna. Aziz alternated between yelling at his friends seated at a corner table, and guzzling *tord-boyaux* directly from bottles which he then broke on the cobblestones of the inner courtyard.

During a pause between eating and drinking, Migraine turned to de Choucroute and asked:

"Choucroute: weren't you about to tell me what happened to the man you followed to Quimper?"

deChoucroute picked up his steno pad: "Shall I continue where I left off, boss?"

"Yes: who is this suspect? Did you arrest him?"

As the swim-bladder of teleostean fish will burst if it rises too quickly out of the water, Stanley Cobb broke wind:

"Pah'din me folks", he apologized, rising from his chair, "It looks lahk this is gonna' be the big'un!" Stanley lumbered off to the WC.

Choucroute consulted his notes:

"The suspect checks in at a place called the *Hotel ... des Voyageurs* ... At midnight he leaves the hotel to wait for a taxi. It takes him down to the docks. We've got the number of its *permis de conduire* ... There he

boards a tugboat. It was very difficult to see anything clearly in the dark ...but we were able to identify at least two other persons with him on the boat..

" Soon afterwards we hear some kind of loud commotion coming from below deck. It sounds to us as if a fist fight was happening there. That made sense to us : the others were angry because he'd lost the stuff...

" Then, all of a sudden, they stopped fighting. They'd wised up to the fact that the police were closing in. One of the gang, it may have been the pilot... he wore a navigator's cap ... came running up onto the deck with a searchlight that he beamed across the docks. We're quite certain he was looking for us."

" So? So ?? SO??? Don't leave us all in suspense, Choucroute. He didn't find you, did he?"

" Er yes, boss..... he did."

" AND???"

" ... I don't know how put this, boss. There was a shoot-out. I got wounded in the shoulder. Nothing to worry about . My buddy, remember the guy you met at the Gare de Montparnasse ?"

"Indeed I do. Hector Berque if I remember correctly."

"Yes ; he was also hit. It's pretty bad I'm afraid. The tugboat got away."

" It's bad? It's bad!? What in bugging hell does that mean- IT'S BAD??!"

"Well, boss ... I hate to have to put it this way ..
Forgive me.. In fact he's dead."

" WHAT???" Migraine stood up with such force that he lifted the table with him, spilling the rest of the swill into everyone's lap. His voice leveled out at a roar:

" An *officier* of the DST is killed on an assignment! The crooks get away! And I, your Inspector, your *chef*, your *general*, don't hear a fucken thing about it for a month ??"

de Choucroute looked as if he were trying to squeeze his body into a tennis ball:

" Boss ... I'm afraid it's more complicated than that."

" How more complicated? How can it be more complicated?"

" The ballistics report indicates that our man was shot
....from *behind* !"

" From behind? From behind? FROM BEHIND? " Migraine continued to repeat this phrase over and over again, employing slight modifications of inflection to render it either ridiculous or outrageous as the fancy moved him. Unable to control himself further he seized de Choucroute by the lapels and slapped his face:

" WHO , CHOUCROUTE ? WHO DID IT?
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? WHO SHOT HIM ??"

de Choucroute banged deliriously on the table with his fists, then buried his head in his hands and sobbed:

" We don't know."

The celebrated Inspector Guy de Migraine, roused to total fury, strode away from the table. He yanked a wine bottle from the tripey fingers of Aziz, now very drunk and trembling, and threw it across the restaurant. It connected with the mirror behind the bar just above the head of Mohammed, asleep on his stool behind the cash register. Glass fragments flew in all directions.

" FIND THEM!" Migraine screamed at his staff, " FIND THEM IF YOU HAVE TO GO TO CHINA!"

As if on cue , 3 customers lowered their faces into their soup.

His fury unleashed, Migraine folded his hands into a hammer fist and demolished the *papier-maché* Eiffel Tower with half a dozen effective swipes. Waltzing about the room, he whirled the sack of monosodium glutamate around his head until it slammed him in the face and knocked him down. Fevrier came over and pulled him up.

Migraine dusted off his trench coat. He pawed its pockets until he found the new pack of *Gaulois* , then jammed another cigarette between his teeth. The great Inspector, shapeless as a sack of potatoes. sat down. His

face was grim, more grim than anyone had seen it in a long time, as least as grim as it was during the Massage Parlor Case, when he'd lost so much kneaded evidence.

"Jean-Luc!", he barked: "Go to the bar and get me a double Scotch." He felt as foolish as a Spanish matador who'd just learned from one of the picadors that the bull was stoned on psychedelic mash. A gloomy, bleary, bleak, shabby haze soaked his sunken jowls. Sick of life, he suddenly felt very, very old.

A door clicked open at the back of the room. It was Stanley Cobb, falling out of the jakes. He stumbled across the room back to the table, tripped, and clutched for support at the back of his chair with both hands. Leaning his whole weight against the chair he stiffened his body. His head, bent with shame, hung down at a vertical angle from his neck.

There was no doubt in anyone's mind that something truly dreadful had happened in that room, something far worse than the slaying of the DST agent in Quimper. Stanley grimaced, bit his tongue, clenched and unclenched his fists. His hands shot up to his temples, which he squeezed as one pushes a grapefruit through a juicer. Then he screamed:

"SHIT!! FUCK!! GARBAGE!! MERDE!! HELL!! DAMN!! " ³

³In transcribing this afternoon's events, Stanley's colorful dialect has been translated into an approximation of standard English.

Before anyone could stop him his right arm lunged for his Uzi. In a single gesture he yanked it out of his holster and opened the safety catch. With bewildering speed he raised the muzzle to the front of his brains. One can be certain that Stanley Cobb would never have needed to apply for his pension, had not Hamid rushed out of the kitchen holding a cauldron of boiling cous-cous stew, and dropped its contents over his head.

The gun misfired. The bullet sped across the room, shattering a canister of rotgut wine before plowing into the radio, mercifully silencing it. Mohammed once again slid his lethargic appendages off the tall stool behind the cash register, and entered another dozen or so items in the DST compensation voucher that he filled to repletion every Thursday afternoon.

Stanley collapsed over the table and moaned like an infant. Aziz and Hamid went into the kitchen and returned with a pile of steaming damp towels to wrap about his brow. His behavior would have been embarrassing coming from anyone. That it was emanating from a Marine as tough as they come, could only mean that his entire world had collapsed. Migraine passed him the rest of his double Scotch, then ordered two more, one for himself and another one for Stanley.

Gripping Stanley's hand in his own, Migraine transmitted his immense store of confidence. Like a kindly uncle he stroked the crown of his head ever so gently. In his 30 years with the force Migraine had learned to recognize every kind of crisis liable to bring a cop to his knees. Certainly he was more than a match for anything that might happen to a Stanley Cobb . Migraine pictured Cobb as a loveable Yankee lump, the most loveable thing about him being that he *was* a lump .

" Why don't you talk about it?" he encouraged him, " You'll feel better afterwards."

" Inspector ... No ... I can't..." Stanley's voice caught in his throat.

" Come on, Stanley. You're a tough Marine. *Un cou de cuir* - isn't that right? You must protect your dignity; your sacred honor! Tell me what happened."

" Inspector! It's the stockade for me. For life!"

" Nonsense, Stanley. You're on assignment to us . The DST will protect you."

" Sure, Inspector ..." Lifting his head he gazed at him through eyeballs covered with red streaks and moist with gratitude " Okay ... but even you gotta can me when you learn what I done.! You gotta believe it ... but you won't ! Nobody would believe this damn story! And the Marines, they're gonna wanna know why you canned me, which you gotta do when you learn the

awful truth!" Stanley broke down again. Migraine continued to stroke his head:

" I'm not going to fire you, Stanley. You've got my word on that. Now will you tell me what happened? "

" Inspector... well, okay... I know you won't believe me. *I lost the evidence* !"

" Evidence? What evidence? I didn't know we had any evidence! Where did you lose it?"

" *The key ring, Inspector!* Remember? It had everything on it: the Torah *truc* with the Dutch message! My secret address kit on the metal disks! The Roosian's finger-bones! All the evidence we got on the Eiffel Tower Gang! I ruined your case for you!"

" Well, Stanley ... that's not so bad.. It was getting to be boring anyway ... But of course I would like to know how you lost it."

" *IN THERE!* " With one hand over his eyes, like that figure in Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* who cannot bear to look at the engulfing horror, Cobb pointed to the water closet with the other .

" Okay, men". With a sigh Migraine heaved himself erect, " Let's go in there and take a look around."

Migraine, Cobb, Pavel Lukash, Els Dordrecht and Alphonse de Choucroute walked to the back of the room and approached a tall wooden door displaying a plastic plaque: *Toilette* .

Migraine turned the latch and pulled open the door. Within stood a contraption rarely to be found in the Anglo-Saxon world, although quite common in the Latin, and elsewhere. On the moist pavement lay a porcelain drain sunk into a basin of cement. Two ridged mesas near the middle of the drain were raised for the accomodation of the feet of any and all visitors . In back of these hillocks, directly behind the valley running between them, was positioned a hole about the size of a buttermilk pancake ⁴. A roll of coarse brown paper slumbered against the wall, alongside a miniature broom. Slightly above eye-level hung a chain. When activated by the pulling of the chain, the flushing tank released volleys of water scurrying into the hole.

The user of this device lowers his/her pants/skirt (or whatever) , and squats over the hole. With a little practice one can train oneself to do this without spreading any excrement over one's clothing. Theoreticians of this regimen claim that this apparatus is good for the bowels, much better for one's health than the crappers one normally finds in the rest of the civilized world.

*"THE KEYRING! " Stanley moaned ... " IT FELL!
 ...AAAAAARRRRRUGHH... CHIEF! THERE! ...
 DOWN ... THAT THING ! "*

⁴specifically those obtainable at the House of Pancakes on University Avenue in Berkeley, California

Cobb clutched at the walls to steady himself as he vomited into the stall.

" Steady, boy! " Migraine rasped, while at the same time making a desperate attempt to contain his laughter,

" Remember Boot Camp. Nothing can be worse than that."

Migraine had always been astonished and amused at the puritanical reaction of the finicky Anglos to this ordinary French installation.

" I'm not used to those things, Inspector! ", Cobb whimpered, " I never will get used to them! Put me out in the jungle in Nam, surrounded by a thousand gooks, and I'll blast them all to Timbuctoo! But you put me on one of these monkey doo-hickeys a million times and I'll never, never remember to take the stuff out of my pockets before dropping my pants!"

" How did it happen, boy? Treat this as a debriefing, just like it is in the corps. "

" Well, chief, it was like this:" Cobb plunked his carcass onto the tile floor. He'd wiped away the vomit around his lips. Breath and pulse were back to normal.

" The chow they serve in this dingbat joint always gives me the runs! I don't know why you force us all to come here every Thursday afternoon to bolt this pigswill! ... Well, sticking to the point, the shit

(begging your pardon, m'am), was blurting out, watery like ..."

Els Dordrecht fainted. Not all customs officials are hardened by war.

" It was sort of , well, thin, and creamy you know .. something like a McDonald's milkshake ... and I thought , ' Jesus! It's going to splatter all over my pants and boots! ' So I began leaning over backwards, trying to support myself with my left hand while grabbing onto the wall with my right. ... That's when it happened! The keyring rolled out of my back pocket . *Splatch* !! Down that there hole these uncivilized frogs call a toilet! "

Tears streamed copiously down his face.

" I'm a fucken disgrace, Inspector!! I'm a living mound of turd on the face of the leatherneck oath I took 7 years ago! On top of which I'm just a dumb fucken moron! You asked me to help you with this case, and I've made a balls of it! We haven't got a clue to work on without that evidence!!"

" Oh, I don't know about that, Stanley. Don't forget, we ..."

Migraine whirled around, just in time to see a dozen tear gas grenades being lobbed through the front door and exploding in the dining-room. In a few seconds a relatively peaceable if somewhat rebarbative

luncheon had degenerated into a whirlwind of pandemonium and confusion.

Customers, spies, cops and staff, gasping for breath, crying out in fear, collided past one another and into tables and chairs. Those who ran out onto the street staggered as far as the Boulevard Beaumarchais. Others, their mouths and noses covered with wet handkerchiefs helped their comrades to the doors. Fevrier carried out the still unconscious Els Dordrecht, while Aziz and Hamid dragged Mohammed from behind the bar. Then Olga and Minna helped carry him outdoors.

Stanley Cobb had completely recovered his presence of mind. He always functioned best in an emergency. With a forcefulness one could not have imagined possible in him a moment before he yanked Migraine, Lukash and de Choucroute with him into the street.

Migraine seated himself down beside the curb. Between gasps and shrugs he made making vain attempts to re-light his Gaulois.

"Low Bing's work, boss? Huh?" Fevrier clung to a lamppost

" Yes, Fevrier" Migraine coughed and wiped his brow " But its even worse than that. Much worse."

" What makes you say that, boss ?"

" That tear gas! It's not our *police materiel* . You can taste it. " Migraine wiped his face again with a handkerchief , which he then applied to the tip of his tongue.

" *C'est factice* ! This stuff, it was not manufactured in France! It was not made anywhere in the Western world!"

" My God! Boss .. Do you mean, it...?"

" Yes; I do. Those slant-eyed *cretins* will stop at nothing! They are smuggling tear-gas into France from Taiwan! That's a direct threat to the economic security of every *policier dans la rue* ! Fevrier, that's your pocketbook and mine! We must stop at nothing to bring those odious bastards to justice!"

Pavel Lukash had been applying mouth-to-mouth resuscitation to Els Dordrecht. Now he looked up and asked:

" Say, boss - what do we do now?"

Migraine stewed in his grim, bitter, bored, confused, lazy and sour thoughts for several minutes without replying. Suddenly he became very agitated.

Raising his index finger to the heavens, he yelled:

" *TO THE EIFFEL TOWER!! EVERYONE TO THE EIFFEL TOWER!!*"