

Dear Detective Wasserman,

Greetings from a fellow soldier in the trenches of the imperial service, and I hope you may forgive the slight delay in the delivery of this message. For reasons that shall become clear from its contents, I felt it necessary that the letter be carried by Shanghai by diplomatic pouch directly to young Harry Firth (perhaps the most trustworthy chap any of us encountered in Shanghai aside from yourself and one kindly priest), and thence onward, by personal delivery, directly to you. There is knowledge that should not be disclosed widely, and discretion is, as we all know, the better part of valour.

You may recall us speaking about the fate suffered by a certain Catholic priest whose remains are now in your care. This letter is sent to disclose to you certain facts regarding the case, which should convince you to release the remains of the man into the custody of Fr. Henri, a 'docteur' in a local hospital innocent of this whole business, but with whom I believe you have been in contact regarding the release of the strangely-decomposing body of Fr. Emile.

I believe you will have been called to investigate certain events at a particularly splendid hotel in the International District--something ~~involveling~~ involving an explosion and three dead Japanese nationals garbed in ridiculous black costumes? I must confess that those involved in the incident, seen fleeing the scene of the crime--and whose identities may be gleaned by inference, if not from the hotel guestbook--were merely defending themselves from vicious attackers: three Japanese garbed in ridiculous black assassins' pyjamas, which a companion assures me is traditional in what passes for a culture on their islands. If any payment for the damages is necessary, it should fall upon the hotel, whose negligence in hiring competent guards to ensure the safety of its guests ultimately necessitated the same damages.

Yes, my dear comrade, the Japanese were involved. It was uncovered that the Japanese, and Chinese gangsters, and Christ knows who else, were fighting over a certain... object. An object of disturbing qualities of the sort which I know you are familiar. (You have seen the handiwork wrought with such an object, and I beheld it as well, in your presence.)

Rest assured, the object has been ~~remoaved~~ removed from Shang-hai, to be delivered to one of the few in our world who has some idea of how to handle such items of wickedness. (It is enroute to that SECURE location even now, rest assured.)

I am sure that you have heard the whisperings of a war coming, between the Reds and the Green Gang. It appears both sides had a desire to use the object I have mentioned as an unwholesome weapon in their struggle. What role the Japanese

played in this business, we cannot be certain, but it is possible they sought the object for their own ends... perhaps in the furtherance of the imperial ambitions.

In any case, from the little we have gleaned whilst having it in our possession, the object was a danger not only to Shanghai, but also to whoever possessed the thing. It is powerful, but... it demands a PRICE be paid for its power. The price is murder... murder manifest in the form of a body left in the curious condition of a certain Chinese body found on the morning of August 8th.

When the bearer of the object refuses to pay the price--REFUSES MURDER--then the price seems, apparently, to be exacted upon him, leaving him in a state indistinguishable from that which would have been inflicted on his victim.

In other words, Father Emil was not a suicide, but a martyr. I do hope with this information--however you may do up the documents--the body of Father Emile may be released into the custody of Fr. Henri? But please do take care to warn him not to examine the body without bracing himself against the inevitable shock. (PERhaps you might, as a fellow Catholic, say a prayer or two with him to steel his nerves?)

Perhaps I am being too indirect about the circumstances of the case. The object passed from one victim to another: from Father Emile to a Sikh named Darvish Singh (who, we suspect, did not kill the Father, but stumbled upon him after the mirror slew him). There is no use seeking Singh, by the way, unless you wish to retrieve his corpse: although Singh made off with it, used it against some gangster whose murder likely also is under investigation, his own remains are now in the same state as Father Emil's, and in the possession of a very insistent beggarwoman in the International District. With Singh dead, the passed the object passed to an individual known locally as Wrong Eye, and thereafter to a certain military-trained member of the Japanese embassy (who, by the way, is armed with a handgun, if that gives you any wiggle room in terms of imposing legalities despite whatever immunities his employment confer). We acquired it from the Japanese directly, and have removed it from Shanghai for the good of all.

You may, however, expect conflict to continue in the city: doubtless some will not believe the object is gone. The object, by the by, is a mirror of some antiquity: were you publicly to announce (by means of the press, perhaps) that the antique mirror that is the subject of s many rumors had been destroyed in the battle at the hotel, and disposed, it might cut short some proportion of the conflict in which I am sure even now Shanghai is embroiled.

I would thus appreciate if you were to release the body of Fr. Emile to Fr. Henri, so that last rites may be performed and the remains shipped back to his family for a proper Catholic burial. I would also appreciate if you were to pass on to Father

Henri the information regarding the circumstances of Fr. Emile's death. He seemed terribly distraught in his belief that Fr. Emile had killed himself, and will be overjoyed to discover that instead he was martyred for his refusal to murder another.

Finally, a brief word between us: have you considered leaving the force? Shanghai seems a not-favorable place for a man to serve as a police officer--so far from anyone who might recognize and reward good service. I have stood in the position where you stand now, fighting to hold back the tide of chaos in some remote corner of the world, and I assure you: you cannot win out forever. Were I you, I would either make strenuous efforts to return closer to home, if you can, or look beyond the career you believe you have chosen for yourself. Opportunities abound, and you are a young man. It is not too late for you to make more of your life than the shabby environs granted you could ever allow. I mean no disrespect, and am certain you do meaningful work... but a man cannot do this sort of job forever, can he?

In any case, I do hope to cross paths again with you, in more favorable circumstances.

Sincerely,
A Friend

P.S.: There is a young Russian who gives his name as Wassily, who loiters near the docks and in the Int'l District often. He is not to be trusted, but for the right amount of pay, he may prove a useful resource to you in breaking apart the Green Gang. Perhaps it would be a coup worthy of ending your career in Shanghai, and sufficient distinguishment to warrant a promotion? However, beware: he serves many masters, and I sincerely doubt but that someone in the Green Gang is one of them.