Goodbye, Mr Hollywood

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Introduction

The story

Nick Lortz is a travel writer. A pretty woman starts talking to him outside a café in Whistler, British Columbia, Canada. Then she kisses him on the mouth and says: ‘Goodbye, Mr Hollywood.’ Nick gets into his car and a white-haired man follows him.

Nick drives to Vancouver where someone pushes him in front of a car and he is almost killed. Then, in his hotel, he sees a photo of the mystery girl from the café in a magazine: she is Meg Hutson, a millionaire’s daughter.

The next day someone shoots at Nick in a park. Then he finds a death threat on his car. He goes to the police but they won’t help him.

Nick remembers seeing part of a letter in Meg Hutson’s bag about her meeting someone at a hotel on Vancouver Island on Friday. He decides to go there too. He sees the white-haired man at his hotel but loses him. He discovers his name is Vickers.

Vickers follows Nick to the Empress Hotel, thinking Nick is Mr Hollywood. He wants to kill him.

Nick finds Meg and Craig Winters in the tea room. Craig Winters sometimes calls himself Mr Hollywood. Meg called Nick this, so that Vickers would follow Nick, and not her. She thinks Vickers is a detective working for her father who doesn’t like Craig and doesn’t want her to see him. Vickers comes into the tea room and takes out his gun saying: ‘This is for Anna’. Craig is wounded.

Meg’s father arrives at the police station. He tells her that Winters takes money from rich young women; that he took $50,000 from Anna Vickers who then killed herself. Howard Hutson takes his daughter home.

At the end of the story Nick is sitting at a restaurant table when a girl asks if she can sit down. Nick leaves the restaurant quickly.

Background to the story

The setting is contemporary and the story is based on a case of mistaken identity. There is a strong story-line which moves along at a good pace and the emphasis is on action rather than reflection or character. There is an element of glamour in the fact that Nick has such an interesting and independent job, and that the woman he meets by chance is the daughter of a millionaire. It is a straightforward story with a twist. The protagonist, Nick Lortz, accidentally becomes involved in the troubled lives of the rich and famous and their hangers-on.

The location of the story is Western Canada and the sense of place is economically but strongly conveyed, in particular the sense of openness and space conveyed through mention of the mountains near Whistler, the park in Vancouver, the ferry trip to Vancouver Island and so on.

Before Reading

Here are some ways to help your students approach the story:

1 Give students the title of the book and show them the picture on the cover. Ask them to try and guess what kind of the story it is.
2 Give students a copy of the text on the back cover of the book, and of the story introduction on the first page. When they have read the texts, ask them a few questions about the story, or use the Before Reading Activities in the back of each Bookworm.
3 Use the pre-reading activity in this worksheet.
4 If there is a recording of this title, play the first few pages and stop at an interesting point.
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Pre-reading activity

Word search

To the teacher

Aim: To introduce key vocabulary
Time: 10–15 minutes
Organization: Give one copy of the word search to each student or put the word search on an overhead projector. Give the students five minutes to find as many words as possible. Then ask them to match the words they have found with the following definitions (adapted from the glossary at the back of the reader.) Go through the words and deal with any remaining difficulties over meanings. Finally ask students what kind of story might include these words.

Key: blood, crowd, fall, ferry, guess, gun, kiss, millionaire, mystery, police, push, scream, shoot, stranger, vacation, worried.

Definitions:

1. red, it moves round the body
2. a lot of people
3. to go down quickly from a high place
4. a ship to carry cars and people
5. to try to give the right answer when you don’t really know it
6. a thing that shoots out bullets to kill people
7. to touch someone with your lips to show love or to say Hello or Goodbye
8. someone who has a million pounds or dollars or more
9. something that you do not understand and cannot explain
10. men and women who catch criminals and try to stop people doing wrong
11. to move something away from you with your hands
12. to cry out loudly, usually when you are afraid or hurt
13. to send a bullet from a gun to kill or hurt somebody
14. somebody that you do not know
15. a holiday
16. afraid that something is wrong or something bad is going to happen
Getting it right
Nick Dortz was a sports writer. He was in Alaska to write a book about football. He was in a city called Whistler drinking tea for breakfast. There was a man with black hair on the other side of the street. Suddenly an old woman came up.

She said, ‘Hi! I’m Pam. Do you remember me? We met at a party in Paris.’ Nick remembered her. ‘Hi, Pam,’ he said. ‘Have some tea.’

The old woman’s half-open bag was on the chair. Nick could see an envelope. It said... and we can meet at the King’s Hotel on Coney Island on Saturday afternoon.

‘Do you like films?’ said the old woman.
‘No I hate films,’ said Nick.

Just then the man with long, red hair came into the restaurant. He was about eighty years old. He started to read a newspaper.

‘Do you know him?’ Nick asked Pam.
‘Yes,’ said Pam. Then she kissed the man with red hair on the nose and walked slowly away.

‘Now what,’ said Nick, ‘was that all about?’

Geography in context

Chapter 5, show the students the map and get them to a) identify and b) number in order of occurrence the places mentioned in the story. Then ask them the following questions.

1 What do we know about each place?
2 What happened in each place?
3 How did Nick get from one place to the next and why?
4 What do you think will happen now in the story?

You could also use a more general map of North America to identify the other places named in the book (Nick is from San Francisco, Meg says that they met at a party in Toronto and he mentions Montréal and New York).
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After reading activity

Role-play

To the teacher

Aim: To reconstruct different parts of the story through invented dialogues

Time: 15–30 minutes

Organization: Give one of the pictures to each pair and ask them to role play the dialogue which they imagine taking place between the two people; most of the dialogues need last only one or two minutes. Then ask each pair to perform in front of the class in the same sequence as in the story. With a larger class, you can give the same picture to two or three pairs.