

Daily Routine Orders 7

It's like parachuting. Get the first jump over and it becomes routine, but you mustn't get complacent. Check your equipment every time. Run through procedures. Know what's what. Don't fall into any traps.

There's a trap serial killers fall into, namely, the trap of pattern. There's something the same about each of their killings, and this tells the law that it's the same person doing them. It also helps the police by saying something about the killer. For example, if all his victims are Mexican they know they're probably looking for a bloke who hates Mexicans. If all the bodies are found in underground stations, they're after someone who hangs around underground stations. It's a trap, see? A trap of the killer's own making, because it narrows the field.

I've got to be particularly careful about this. I can't help making a pattern, because all of my clients are dossers. Bound to be. Of course, they're not going to find bodies, in underground stations or anywhere else. I'm not that daft. But there is this unavoidable pattern, so what I have to do is create as much variety as possible without straying beyond the borders of my appointed task.

Last night's piece of business differed from its predecessor in several respects. For one thing, my

client was a female. I didn't select her because I like women, or because I hate them. I can take them or leave them, as a matter of fact. I chose her because the last one was a male, that's all. And I didn't pick her up by Camden tube, because that's another pattern. I rode down to Piccadilly Circus and strolled round Soho, and I spotted her coming out of the Regent Palace. Manky, she was – you could see the grime on her neck from across the road – and there she was, stepping out of the hotel like a bleeding duchess or something. She'd sneaked in to use the toilet of course, but how she'd got past security I don't know. Anyway, I let her get a little way down the road before tapping her on the shoulder.

'Excuse me.' She spun round.

'Y-yes?'

'Hotel Security,' I snapped. 'Regent Palace.' Well. I looked the part in my suit and trenchcoat. 'You were in the hotel just now, weren't you?'

She nodded. There was a look in her eyes like a hunted animal. 'Yes. I went to the toilet. Why?'

'There's been a series of thefts. I'm afraid I must ask you to return with me to the hotel.'

'Thefts?' She looked desperate. 'I don't know anything about thefts. I told you – I needed the toilet. I was only there for a minute.' Poor cow. Looking as she did, she must have stuck out like a sore thumb in there. She wouldn't have lasted long enough to commit theft.