

'The ultimate saviour of mankind is about to destroy it!'

The INVESTIGATIONS of the PARA-USUAL



PAUL ANGLISS

Candyman¹

There was nothing yet remarkable about his nostrils. Not as he peered impassively from the veranda. Mysterious behind shades, enigmatic beneath a shabby-chic straw boater.

'Good evening, sir,' chirped an immaculate waiter wearing a hospitality smile that stretched as far as was required. He gently clunked a long cool drink on a marble-top table, acknowledged a negative on further requirements and left, affording the one with the unremarkable nasal passages an unspoilt panorama of the Ngorongoro Crater.

The sun had slipped below the Tanzanian horizon; the last of the light seeping with it. Down below in the bowl of the ancient meteor crater, the so-called 'cradle of humanity', animals were beginning, others finishing their shifts. The zebra, the wildebeest, the lion, were all knocking off. The cicadas clocking on. They flashmobbed, building to a manic tropical screech.

The figure sat rigidly, clamped to a mobile phone, in front of him opened up upon the marble table a small, sleek laptop computer.

'I am sending it now,' he said, deliberately. Ominously. He paused with a finger, the finger of a mortal man, held tantalisingly above the laptop keyboard. A smile slowly rippled across his face. A sneering, triumphant, relishing-the-moment kind of smile. His nostrils flared disdainfully. Then, at the precise moment the waiter negotiating the decked half-levels of the hotel complex disappeared from view, he lowered the digit.

Mid-tap, half-depressing the key, the enigma paused again and held the pose. The moment was too precious not to savour.

'Remember, as from this conversation we will no longer communicate by phone,' he murmured into the mobile. 'Understood?'

'Hereby, I launch Operation Green Sh...' the figure began, lifting the long cool drink to his lips. As he finally fully depressed the key, he stuffed a straw up his now

remarkably flared and accommodating right nostril all the way up to its bendy knuckle.

This was how Operation Green Shoots was almost launched. And how, instead, Operation Green Sher-hey! – one of the most significant operations in the history of mankind – was sneezed into existence. ‘Hereby, I launch Operation Green Sh...’ the figure began, lifting the long cool drink to his lips. As he finally fully depressed the key, he stuffed a straw up his now remarkably flared and accommodating right nostril all the way up to its bendy knuckle.

This was how Operation Green Shoots was almost launched. And how, instead, Operation Green Sher-hey! – one of the most significant operations in the history of mankind – was sneezed into existence.