

CRUISING

There I was cruising Charlton Road at eleven o'clock at night, behind the wheel of my Jag, looking for tottie. The headlights soon picked out the figure of a girl standing on the kerb beneath a flickering gas lamp.

I slowed the Jag to a crawl and saw she was about twenty or maybe younger, dressed in a cheap nylon raincoat, belted tightly at the waist. She was not my usual piece of joy, but for what I had in mind she would do. I drew the Jag to a stop, dropped my window, she stepped forward bent her head and said, 'Looking fr a bit of fun Mister?'

I said, 'What will it cost for an all nighter?'

'Forty quid,' she replied. 'And all the trimmings.'

'Suits me,' I said. 'Get in lovely and we will make a night of it. I've booked a room a the Fallen Angel so we will be as snug as bugs.'

The angel had seen better days but the room was so – so and the bed clean. I sat on the bed and watched her undress; my God she was skinny. She was looking in the dressing table mirror when I walked up behind her and put my hands on her throat; she said, 'What?' But that was all she said.

I drew back the sheets, put her body on the bed and covered it up. She would be safe for a couple of days at least even though I had taken the room for a week. Going down the backstairs I stepped out into the cold night air and walked to the all night car park. Found my Jag, stepped in, settled down behind the wheel, lit a cigarette and said to the face in the rear view mirror, 'Another bit of scum off the streets.'

Today I am sitting in a deckchair by the pool, watching bikini clad girls cavorting in the water. The sun is hot, the sky is blue and the cruise liner Ocean Swell is gliding through the blue Mediterranean Sea and all is well with the world. You cannot beat cruising whether it is cruising down Charlton Road on any night of the week, or cruising in the Med.

It may seem an odd coincidence to anyone that is interested, but the old Angel was burnt to the ground the night I left and the bodies that were found were never identified.

'Yes steward, I will have another drink and one for my charming companion.'

Bob Mather.