

The Evil Eye of Africa: Solution by Tim Ford

As Hercule Hornblower intimated, Professor Plum stole Indiana Brown's research and passed it to Baron von Boddy. Boddy, needing a source of funds, turned to Madame Midas-White, a move that attracted the attention of his leech of a nephew, Ambrose Peacock.

Ambrose blabbed about the quest for the Mask to Colonel Cardsharp Mustard over a game of cards. Colonel Mustard, sensing an opportunity to deal with his own debts, contacted an old...acquaintance of his, a woman who now goes by the name Lady Peacock. He suggested to her that she insinuate herself into von Boddy's life in Cairo, with an eye to intercepting the mask.

We shall come back to this woman's identity shortly.

The mystery woman meets von Boddy in Cairo, "by chance." In an attempt to win his affections, she tells von Boddy that she needs help and protection, in the form of marriage and security.

When von Boddy leaves, Ms. Peacock meets up with the Colonel to tell him that the trap is set, so to speak.

Von Boddy finds the mask, goes back to the manor, and sends a telegram to Ms. Peacock. He intends to run away with her, so smitten is he.

But then he stumbles onto something that changes everything.

Remember how detective Hercule Hornblower put out his spy spiders, but he found a set already in place in the manor?

This first set of spiders belonged to von Boddy, and they caught Ms. Peacock and the Colonel "in flagrante delicto" as they plotted against him.

Finding out the secret, von Boddy confronts the Colonel on his airship. In the midst of an argument, von Boddy turns his back, quite literally, on his old friend.

The Colonel shoots him in the back as von Boddy faces the window. The bullet nicks a rib, passes through von Boddy's body, and out the front window, leaving the bullet hole in the glass.

The Colonel then lashes von Boddy's body to the trunk, dumping him into the sea, and sets the airship adrift. He hopes it will appear that the expedition went awry.

He then bails out, using the canvas as only his military training gave him the qualifications to do so, and hides the items in a crevasse in the moor.

Unfortunately, the Colonel has killed von Boddy before the mask could be retrieved.

Ms. Peacock, furious, decides her only recourse to find the mask is to marry the incompetent nephew, Ambrose, allowing her time to search the manor. Ms. Peacock, of course, having received von Boddy's telegram informing her of his success in Africa, knows the mask is

somewhere on the premises. The Colonel, meanwhile, confident that von Boddy will "never return from his search" sets himself up in the manor. When Ms. Peacock arrives, the two get into an argument over the Colonel's premature killing of von Boddy, which deprived them of the ultimate prize, the mask. There remains only one question: who IS this mystery woman? Why, the Colonel's illicit lover whom he met on one of his illustrious campaigns of course! This is the true reason for his constant poverty; a scandalous divorce that could never be revealed to the public for fear of shaming his military career. Yes, Ms. Peacock, is in fact...Ms. Mustard. That's my stab at it!

Best, Tim Ford