

MACMILLAN GUIDED READERS

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**INTERMEDIATE LEVEL**

PIERS PLOWRIGHT

*The Smuggler*



**MACMILLAN**

ORIGINALS

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## *A Man in a Hurry*

Emil Harker was a rich man. But this particular Tuesday Evening, he was a worried man. He was more worried than he had ever been in his life. Harker was sitting at a desk in his office. His office was in a small forest hut.

Harker sat at his desk and looked at the piece of paper in front of him. There was something written on the piece of paper – a short poem.

Harker had written the poem himself. It was not a very good poem, but then Harker was not a poet, and he had written the poem in a hurry. He hadn't got much time left.

About an hour earlier, the phone had rung in the hut. Harker had answered it.

'Harker?' said a voice. Harker recognized the voice.

'Ezra,' said Harker. 'What do you want?'

'Where is it?' asked Ezra.

'Where is what?' asked Harker.

'You know,' said Ezra.

'I *don't* know,' said Harker.

'Stop playing games,' said Ezra.

'I'm not playing games,' said Harker.

'Oh yes you are,' said the voice. 'I'm coming to see you.'

'Now look,' began Harker. But Ezra had put the phone down. It was then that Harker wrote the poem. He sat at his desk and wrote fast. He tore up two or three pieces of paper before he was satisfied. At last the poem was finished. Harker folded the paper and wrote across the front:

*To John Samuel Fame – please read carefully.*

Harker put his pen in his pocket and looked at his watch. It was half past nine.

Without warning, the hut door opened. A tall man with a pale face and a moustache stood in the doorway. Behind him were two other men who carried guns.



Harker stood up. 'Now just a minute Ezra,' he said, 'Let's talk.'

'You're the one who's going to talk,' said Ezra. 'Where is it?'

'I've told you,' said Harker, 'I don't know what you're talking about.'

'Hold his arms,' shouted Ezra to the two men. The men moved fast across the room and got hold of Harker. Ezra walked over to the desk. He saw the folded piece of paper and picked it up. He looked at it, then unfolded it and read the poem.

'What's this?' he said.

Harker said nothing. He was sweating<sup>2</sup>.

*At the Frontier*

Harker wasn't the only person who had an important phone call that Tuesday evening. At ten o'clock, the phone rang in the customs shed at the frontier. The phone rang three times and then one of the two customs officers in the shed answered it.

'Hello. Frontier Customs here,' he said.

'Hello,' said a voice, 'Inspector Roland here.'

'Hello, Inspector,' said the customs officer, 'what can I do for you?'

'Do you know a man called John Samuel Fame?' asked the Inspector.

'Yes,' said the customs officer, 'he crosses the frontier a lot. Perhaps two or three times a week. He's a businessman.'

'That's what he says,' said the Inspector.

'Do you know him?' said the customs officer.

'Very well,' said the Inspector.

'What do you want me to do about him?' asked the customs officer.

'Watch him,' said the Inspector. 'Search his car.'

The customs officer, whose name was Silver, put down the phone. Silver was a thin man with a high forehead and large ears. He crossed the room and sat down on a chair by the window.

'Who was that?' asked Rank, the other customs officer.

Rank was a much fatter man than Silver, with a small moustache.

'Inspector Roland,' said Silver.

'What did he want?' asked Rank. Rank was sitting on a chair with his legs up on a table, reading a newspaper.

'He asked me about John Samuel Fame,' said Silver.

'Who?' asked Rank.

'John Samuel Fame,' repeated Silver, 'the businessman who crosses the frontier two or three times a week. He always drives a smart grey car.'

'Oh yes,' said Rank. 'What about him?'

'Inspector Roland told us to watch him,' said Silver, 'and search his car.'

'Why?' asked Rank.

'The Inspector didn't say,' said Silver.

'Oh,' said Rank, and turned over a page of his newspaper

Silver opened a large exercise book that was lying on the wooden table in front of him and began to write in it.

A fly landed on Rank's head and crawled down his forehead and nose. Rank brushed it off and went on reading the newspaper. The clock on the wall behind him ticked loudly and the fly crawled across the lightshade over his head.

Just then both customs officers heard a car. Silver looked up and stopped writing, and the guard outside moved out into the middle of the road. The car came round the corner and stopped beside the guard. The guard told the driver to get out. The driver switched off the engine and the headlights, got out, and followed the guard up the wooden steps of the customs hut. The guard opened the door for him and the man went inside.

Silver, the thin customs officer, looked up. John Samuel Fame was standing in front of him. Fame was wearing a smart dark suit and an open-necked shirt. He was a tall thin man – and rather good-looking.

'It's me again,' said John Samuel Fame.

'Your passport, please,' said Silver without smiling.

Fame gave his passport to Silver. Silver opened it and turned