

***AN EXCERPT FROM:***

Agatha Christie's

# **THE SECRET ADVERSARY**

**A Radio Mystery in Three Parts**

**Episode One: Young Adventurers, LTD**

*Based on the novel by Agatha Christie*

*Adapted by Jake Sung-Guk Sullivan*

## PROLOGUE

*FX: The muted sound of being underwater waves, creaking metal. A radar.*

**NARRATOR.** "To all those who lead monotonous lives in the hope that they may experience at second-hand the delights and dangers of adventure." - Agatha Christie.

*FX: A torpedo flies past. An explosion. Water, crashing. Panicked screams. A siren and ship's bell create chaos.*

It was 2 pm on the afternoon of May 7th, 1915, and off the southern coast of Ireland, the *Lusitania* was sinking.

*FX: Explosion, water crashing. explosion. Telegraph beeping.*

**SAILOR 1.** *(Distort)* SOS! SOS! Come at once. This is the HMS Lusitania. Hull breached by German torpedoes. Taking on water. Lifeboats are in process of launch. Send help, repeat, *send help!*

*FX: Explosion, fade telegraph.*

**NARRATOR.** On its return voyage from New York City, the civilian passenger liner *The Lusitania* had entered German-controlled waters surrounding the British Isles, and was now paying the price. As water filled the sinking ship, passengers scrambled towards the lifeboats. The sailors, though shaken by the attack and the chaos on deck, attempted to keep order amongst the frightened passengers...

**SAILOR 2.** Lifeboat one, launch!

*FX: Splash, as lifeboat hits water*

Lifeboat two, ready to launch! All women and children, to the front of the line!  
*(To DANVERS)*

**DANVERS.** Sir, I need you to step away, women and children must fill the lifeboats first!  
**SAILOR 2.** Sailor, you must let me through - I am an agent of the British government, and -  
**DANVERS.** Orders is orders, sir. I need you to step back!  
**SAILOR 2.** Listen, I am on a mission of great political import -  
**SAILOR 2.** I won't ask again, sir!  
**DANVERS.** Argh!

*FX: He stalks away*

Fools! If I don't get these documents ashore, why, it'll - OOF!

*FX: He bumps into and knocks down JANE FISH*

I beg your pardon, miss - here let me help you up.

JANE. Thank you, sir. I wasn't at all watching where I - are - are you alright? You've got the most peculiar look upon your face.

DANVERS. *(Low, to himself)* Yes, yes of course! It must be her, it is the only way!

JANE. I beg your pardon?

DANVERS. You! Girl. You are an American, no?

JANE. I am...

DANVERS. And patriotic one?

JANE. I am, though I hardly see how that's any of your business of - HEY! Let go of me!

*FX: Footsteps, as DANVERS drags her around a corner, out of sight.*

DANVERS. Let go of me this instance, or I'll -  
Quiet, please! I'm sorry to be so forward, but if you knew how much was at stake - well, if you knew, you'd be as frightened as I am now.

JANE. What on Earth are you talking about -

DANVERS. But I've *got* to trust someone - and it must be a woman, it must be *you*!

JANE. Sir, if you do not explain yourself this moment, I shall scream for an officer!

DANVERS. Don't do that, please! Look -

*FX: DANVER'S coat rustling as he removes an oilskin package*

I am - here we are - a covert agent, working on the behalf of the British government. Do you know what this is?

JANE. ...It's an oilskin package, isn't it?

DANVERS. No. *This* is the key to *ending the war*.

JANE. Ending the war - !?

DANVERS. Inside this package, I am carrying documents, vitally important papers that will change the very nature of this conflict - that is, if they can make it off this ship, if they are saved, and they must be! And *you* are the only one who can do so!

JANE. Me? Why me?!

SAILOR 2. *(Off)* Women and children, to the front of the line! Lifeboat two, prepare to launch!

JANE. Oh...

DANVERS. Please. These papers have more of a chance with you than they do with me. Will you take them!?

JANE. Will I be in any danger, if I do?

DANVERS. There may be a risk. It is... possible, that I've been followed aboard - I don't think I have, but one never knows - but if I have, then yes, there will be danger.

JANE. Oh... I -

DANVERS. You are the only chance I've got, miss.

JANE. I - Yes, I'll go through with it all right. I'll do it.

SAILOR 2. Lifeboat two, launch!

*FX: A splash.*

DANVERS. Once you're ashore, take them straight to the American Embassy, *straight* to the hands of the Ambassador alone! Is that clear?

JANE. Yes.  
DANVERS. Good. Well then, off with you. And good luck, young lady.  
JANE. I won't let you down!

*FX: Footsteps, as she goes.*

DANVERS. For the sake of the world, I hope not, young miss. I hope you do not...

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## INTRO SEQUENCE.

ANNOUNCER. [Producing Organization] proudly presents – Agatha Christie's *The Secret Adversary*, Episode 1: Young Adventurers, LTD, adapted by Jake Sung-Guk Sullivan. *Ect.*

[NOTE: Individual producing companies have room here to play, add in stylized / vintage ads, put in credits of lead players, ect, as long as format, title, and playwright remain intact]

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## SCENE 1: Int., Mrs. Pourtsmouth's Office

*FX: Office sounds. Muffled street sounds, from outside.*

NARRATOR. Years pass and time stretches on. It is now 1919, and the war has come to an end. The sinking of *The Lusitania* is a well-remembered tragedy, but nothing more. With the signing of the Armistice, the soldiers of the world have returned home, attempting to find some peace in civilian life. Finding a job, making a home, finding some sense of normal, that is the dream of many. One such dreamer, a young woman by the name of Miss Prudence Cowley, known to her friends for some mysterious reason merely as Tuppence, currently sits nervously across the desk from a potential employer; hatchet-nosed matron, who sits sourly digesting the younger woman's credentials...

*FX: Office sounds muffle; a clock ticking, loud and obnoxious. Papers rustle.*

PORTSMOUTH. Hmm. Hmmm. Hmmmmmmmmmmmm.  
TUPPENCE. Is there something wrong, Mrs. Portsmouth?  
PORTSMOUTH. Ms. Cowley -  
TUPPENCE. *(Too quick)* Yes?  
PORTSMOUTH. Miss. Cowley. Would you please tell me what exactly I am supposed to be looking at here?  
TUPPENCE. Well, those would be my credentials, references, and applicable experience. Ma'am.  
PORTSMOUTH. Applicable experience, yes. Let's see: "Lorry driving, treacherous terrain – five months."  
TUPPENCE. You'll see that Sergeant Matthias Sitwell endorses my ability to, quote: "Remain calm at the wheel under violent duress"  
PORTSMOUTH. "Battlefield hospital nurse, twelve months. Pertinent skillsets mastered."  
TUPPENCE. Dressings, sutures, amputations. Nothing out of the usual.

**PORTSMOUTH.** Successfully managed minor *covert operations (!)* in - well, I can't tell where, can I? Everything after that's been blacked out.

**TUPPENCE.** Oh, yes. You know how the War Office is about their little spy games. It's all hush-hush this, and speak-about-what-you-saw-here-today-and-we'll-throw-you-in-a-hole-so-deep-you'll-never-see-the-sun-again that.

**PORTSMOUTH.** Ms. Cowley.

**TUPPENCE.** That's me!

**PORTSMOUTH.** It is clear to me that in the relatively short amount of time you've been on this earth, you have racked up a wealth of experiences, the like of which most common folk would never care to even dream of.

**TUPPENCE.** Thank you, ma'am.

**PORTSMOUTH.** *That* being said, I fail to see why any of your rather horrifying exploits would lend you to be a good fit for the position of, let's see - "Lipstick Counter Girl", here at Haversham's Department Store.

**TUPPENCE.** ... I've got a winning personality?

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## SCENE 2: Ext. Street

*FX: A door, slamming. Street sounds, cars, people talking. Footsteps, as TUPPENCE exits the building.*

**TUPPENCE.** Winning personality, my Aunt Petunia. What were you thinking, Tuppence, you silly old cow? That's the fifth job interview you've scuttled this week! Keep on like this and you'll end up blowing through the last of your military allowance before the month's out! Well, nothing to it but to keep at it, old girl. Off to the next interview! Let's see, where's that Wanted section of the paper got to -

*FX: Newspaper rustling.*

Ah, here it is - WOAHH!

*FX: Gust of wind, papers scattering*

My papers! Miss, if you could - Sir, just that there - No? Well, that's quite fine. Quite fine. I'll just chase after them all by myself. What a fine and lovely day this is turning out to be. But! I shan't jinx it and ask what could be worse, because Prudence Cowley knows better than to set up the universe for a punchline like that!

*FX: Thunder! Rain!*

...Not that the universe has ever needed any help before.

*FXL A horn as a truck whizzes by, splashing through a puddle*

HEY! Watch it, you ninny!

**TRUCK DRIVER.** Clear off, lady!

TUPPENCE. ARGH! *Stupid rain, stupid city, and stupid, stupid Londoners!* I swear, this city is filled with the most boorish, most brutish, most bad-mannered -  
TOMMY. *(Close)* Well, surely not everyone's all that bad.  
TUPPENCE. ACK!

*FX: She turns and punches TOMMY*

TOMMY. OOF!  
TUPPENCE. Oh! Oh, I'm so sorry, sir, here let me - Tommy!? Thomas Beresford!?  
TOMMY. *(Stiffed jawed)* Hello, Tuppence. I see you've improved your left hook considerably!  
TUPPENCE. Tommy, you old thing!  
TOMMY. Tuppence, old bean! Get under this umbrella before you're soaked through!  
TUPPENCE. Oh, Tommy, come here! Ah! *(She squeals and gives him a hearty hug. He wheezes.)*  
TOMMY. Oof! Careful there, you!  
TUPPENCE. Hush, Tommy, I haven't seen you in ages!  
TOMMY. Not since that field hospital in, what, 1916?  
TUPPENCE. Has it really been that long?  
TOMMY. I suppose the old place's all gone and demobbed, don't you think?  
TUPPENCE. Just like everything else.  
TOMMY. They've given you the sack too, then?  
TUPPENCE. Completely and irrevocably. You?  
TOMMY. Definitely and conclusively.  
TUPPENCE. And your severance check?  
TOMMY. Spent.  
TUPPENCE. What, all of it?  
TOMMY. It's the cost of living nowadays, Tuppence! It's expensive to be alive!  
TUPPENCE. Oh, Tommy, you are gilding the lily.  
TOMMY. I suppose I am. But enough of this, let's get out of the rain and get some warm food in our bellies. The Lyons is right down the street, old bean, let's settle in there.

*FX: Rain swells*

TUPPENCE. And quickly, too. It's beginning to really pour!  
TOMMY. Come on, then!

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### **SCENE 3: Interior, The Lyons Restaurant**

NARRATOR. The two old friends rushed down the avenue, dodging between the hustle and bustle of Londoners, all eager to escape the torrential downpour. They soon found themselves inside the modest restaurant at the Lyons Hotel...

*FX: Teacups, gentle ambient conversation. A door opens, letting in sounds of the rain as TOMMY and TUPPENCE enter, then closes again.*

TOMMY. Here we are. Keep your eyes peeled for a table.

TUPPENCE. Let's wander the periphery, we're more likely to spot a table that way.

*FX: Footsteps as they walk, picking up snippets of others' conversations on the way.*

DINER 1. And - do you know, she sat down and *cried* when I told her she couldn't have the flat after all!

DINER 2. Reeaaaally!

DINER 3. (*Another snippet*) It was simply a *bargain*, my dear!

DINER 4. Yes, it looks *just* like the one Mabel Lewis brought from Paris *last year* -  
(*DINER 3 gasps indignantly*)

TUPPENCE. Isn't it funny the scraps one overhears at a place like this?

TOMMY. Quite. I passed two fellows on the street earlier today, who mentioned the most peculiar name, what was it - oh! *Jane Fish*. Did you ever hear such a peculiar name? Jane Fish -

TUPPENCE. Oh! Tommy, there! Open table, near the window. Twelve o'clock.

TOMMY. Roger. Pardon me, excuse us, gents. Ah, here we are. M'lady, your chair.

TUPPENCE. Too kind, m'lord.

*FX: Footsteps, as the waitress approaches.*

WAITRESS. Hello, you two. Welcome to the Lyons. What'll you have?

TOMMY. Tea and buns, please ma'am.

TUPPENCE. Tea and toast, if you please. Oh, and do make sure the tea comes in *separate* pots, please. The young man is positively stoney and has a penchant for writing IOU's.

WAITRESS. Right away, ma'am.

TOMMY. You old rotter. Now, then. Let's get up to date. Everything since I left the field hospital you were stationed at - with that old nurse, what was her name?

TUPPENCE. Sister Greenbank?

TOMMY. That's the one!

TUPPENCE. The poor old lady you convinced the doctor had ordered you *beer* as a tonic, but had forgotten to write it on the chart?

TOMMY. Poor old lady!? She thrashed me like a school boy when she found out. I left that hospital with more injuries than when I came in!

TUPPENCE. (*Laughing*) Oh, Tommy! Do you remember how red her face got, the night we stuck out of the ward to go to the pictures?

TOMMY. She was positively fit for bursting! However did you manage after I left?

TUPPENCE. Truth be told, I wasn't there for much longer after you left for the front! Can you keep a secret?

TOMMY. Like a clam.

TUPPENCE. After you left - I may or may not have left the camp behind, and joined up with the resistance as a courier!

TOMMY. Miss Prudence Cowley! I do believe you've been off having adventures! And without me, to boot!

TUPPENCE. (*Laughing*) Awful, aren't I? I rather thought it was quite like those spy novels you were always reading when we were children, do you remember? You, under the old oak in the schoolyard, burying your nose in some book -

TOMMY. While you bloodied the nose of every schoolyard bully who crossed your path. Oh, the way people talked - the minister's daughter, caught in another scrap!

TUPPENCE. I certainly think I gave poor father a grey hair or two. D'you know that he thinks women in trousers are positively the *zenith* of immorality? Oh, imagine what he'd say now!

(Imitating her pious father)

"Tuppence, you're become naught but a thorn in my side!"

TOMMY. You were quite the thorn back when we were young, too.

TUPPENCE. Lucky I had you as my rose, then! Oh, but we were quite the pair back then, weren't we?

TOMMY. I suppose we are. Were. Are?

TUPPENCE. And, that's me!

TOMMY. And what are you doing now?

TUPPENCE. Doing? Not a blasted thing, and that's the problem!

TOMMY. I know precisely what you mean, old bean. I do nothing but hunt for jobs, but I've had positively zero success! I've tried every mortal blessed thing, and the only logical conclusion for my *astounding* lack of success is that there aren't any jobs! Because if there were, the law of averages says I should have gotten *something* by now!

TUPPENCE. Oh, Tommy...

TOMMY. The only way I'll ever get a job is - is if I hire myself!

(Light Bulb for TUPPENCE)

WAITRESS. Here's your tea... toast... and buns.

FX: Teacups being set down.

TOMMY. Cheers. Anyway, I - Why are you looking at me like that?

TUPPENCE. Tommy, you're brilliant!

TOMMY. I rather am, aren't I? ... why am I brilliant?

TUPPENCE. Look, the way I see things, there's only three ways one might make money.

TOMMY. (Through a mouthful of food) Oh?

TUPPENCE. One, is to be left it. Two, is to marry it, and three, is to make it. Since neither of us is likely to find a rich auntie ready to kick the bucket, the first is ruled out. The second way-

TOMMY. Marriage.

TUPPENCE. - is, of course, the best chance for both of us, respectively.

TOMMY. Yes, I remember you often telling me when we were younger how you'd made up your mind to marry money.

TUPPENCE. As any thinking girl would! I'm not the sentimental sort, you know.

(Beat. TOMMY clears his throat)

Oh, come now, you can't think I'm sentimental!?

TOMMY. Er, certainly not! No one would ever think of sentiment in connection with you!

TUPPENCE. Irony is a low man's wit, Beresford, but I daresay you mean alright by it. Why haven't you married a rich girl?

TOMMY. Oh, me? Er, I -

TUPPENCE. That's fine, because marriage is fraught with difficulties, anyway. And so, remaining is option number three: To *make* money!

TOMMY. I do seem to recall we've tried that one.



**TUPPENCE.** Well yes, in all the *orthodox* ways, sure. But suppose we try the unorthodox. Suppose, as you so blithely said, you wise fool, *employ ourselves*. Tommy - let's be *adventurers!*

(*Beat. TOMMY replies, mouth full of bun.*)

**TOMMY.** Adventurers, Tuppence? Shall we just take out an ad in the paper?

**TUPPENCE.** That's *exactly* what we'll do! Quick, give me something to write with!

**TOMMY.** Wait, what?

*FX. TUPPENCE scribbles madly on a piece of paper.*

**TUPPENCE.** "For hire - Two young adventurers - Willing to do anything, go anywhere -"

**TOMMY.** Wait just a moment, old bean!

**TUPPENCE.** " - Pay must be good. No *unreasonable* offer refused." Well? What do you think?

**TOMMY.** Either like a hoax, or like it was written by a lunatic.

**TUPPENCE.** You rotter.

**TOMMY.** It sounds excellent, Tuppence dear, and exactly like the sort of thing that will attract criminals of all kinds. I can see us locked up in the Tower within the month, for stealing some old bird's necklace.

**TUPPENCE.** Ah, but *I* wouldn't get caught.

**TOMMY.** Oh no?

**TUPPENCE.** Of course not. I'm too clever.

**TOMMY.** Modesty always was your besetting sin.

**TUPPENCE.** Don't rag. Look here, Tommy. Shall we really do it?

**TOMMY.** What, form a company for stealing necklaces?

**TUPPENCE.** Let's have us a - what do they call it - a *joint venture!* Oh, that sounds positively romantic.

**TOMMY.** It sounds positively barmy.

**TUPPENCE.** A pound note says that we get responses to our ad within the week!

**TOMMY.** And as much as I deplore taking money from a lady, I shall have a piece of that action. In fact -

*FX: Chair slides as TOMMY stands*

I'll even bring the advertisement to the hotel's lobby right now, and have it wired to the Times! Be back in a jiff.

*FX: He goes.*

**TUPPENCE.** Tommy Beresford, look at you. You just keep waltzing into my life, don't you?

**WHITTINGTON.** (*Close*) Pardon me miss, but is this seat taken?

**TUPPENCE.** Oh! Oh yes, I'm afraid it is -

*FX: He sits anyways*

Excuse you, sir!

**WHITTINGTON.** I do apologize for being so forward, miss. I assure you I means no disrespect. It's just that I happened to overhear part of your conversation with that young gentleman -

TUPPENCE. Oh, so then you overheard the part where I invited you over?

WHITTINGTON. Alright, yes, I took that liberty. But I think I may be of some use to you.

TUPPENCE. In what way? Who are you?

WHITTINGTON. Here - my card.

TUPPENCE. Mr. Edward Whittington - Esthonia Glassware Co.

WHITTINGTON. I believe I have a job that could quite satisfy a lady of your intelligence and experience.

TUPPENCE. Go on...

WHITTINGTON. What would you say to £100 down payment, and all expenses paid for the duration of our contract?

TUPPENCE. I would ask what nature of work would be worth such a generous fee.

WHITTINGTON. Not much, just a pleasant trip, that's all.

TUPPENCE. Oh, Mr. Whittington, you've confused me with a very different type of girl.

WHITTINGTON. Hear me out, miss. It'll be worth the time.

TUPPENCE. Fine. Where is this little voyage bound?

WHITTINGTON. Paris.

TUPPENCE. And how long would you expect me to go there?

WHITTINGTON. Three months, tops.

TUPPENCE. And that's it? No other conditions?

WHITTINGTON. None whatsoever. You would, of course, go in character as my ward.

TUPPENCE. (*Sarcastically*) Oh, of course.

WHITTINGTON. Well then, if that's all settled -

TUPPENCE. Settled, Mr. Whittington? You seem to be taking my consent for granted.

WHITTINGTON. You ain't thinking of refusing, is you? I think the terms is most liberal.

TUPPENCE. *Too* liberal, Mr. Whittington. I cannot see any way in which I can be worth that amount of money to you.

WHITTINGTON. What I am willing to pay for is a young lady with sufficient intelligence and presence of mind to play her part and play it well, and who will have sufficient discretion not to ask *too many bloomin' questions*.

TUPPENCE. My partner, Mr. Beresford. Where does he factor in?

WHITTINGTON. I'm afraid we shan't require his services.

TUPPENCE. Then it's been lovely chatting with you, Mr. Whittington. Good day!

WHITTINGTON. What -

TUPPENCE. I'm afraid it's both or neither. Sorry - Good afternoon!

WHITTINGTON. Hold the bloomin' phone! Surely we can figure something out, Miss - well, well. I ain't yet asked your proper name yes, have I?

TUPPENCE. It's... It's Jane. Jane... Fish?

WHITTINGTON. (*Quiet, then raging*) So, that's your little game, is it?! Knew exactly what I wanted from the start!

TUPPENCE. I'll ask you to keep your temper in check, Mr. Whittington. We are in a public venue.

WHITTINGTON. (*Quieter, but no less intense*) Who's been blabbing? Was it Rita?!

TUPPENCE. Er... no. No, Rita knows nothing about me.

WHITTINGTON. And you. How much do you know!?

TUPPENCE. (*Wryly*) Very little indeed.

WHITTINGTON. (*With rising volume*) You little cow, throwing that name in my face!

TUPPENCE. Discretion, Mr. Whittington. How do you know that isn't my real name?

WHITTINGTON. Enough!! How much do you know? And how much do you want?

**TUPPENCE.** Want? I -  
**WHITTINGTON.** I ain't one for games, little lady. I think you know a great deal more than you're willing to admit, you rotten blackmailer!  
**TUPPENCE.** Blackmail?!  
**WHITTINGTON.** I ain't giving you one red cent until you tell me who's been squealing. You say it wasn't Rita. Was it -  
**DRIVER.** Excuse me, sir.  
**WHITTINGTON.** What do you w- oh, it's you, Brown. *(To TUPPENCE)* My driver. *(To BROWN)* What is it, Brown?  
**DRIVER.** Telephone message for you, sir, from the hotel desk.  
**WHITTINGTON.** Give it here. Hm. Get your things, Brown. We're leaving.  
**DRIVER.** Sir.  
**WHITTINGTON.** Right. See here, you little fox. I've got urgent business to attend to, which is the only thing keepin' me from squeezin' every last drop of information out of your squirmy little mouth.  
**TUPPENCE.** Oh, how I adore poetry, Mr. Whittington. Now, about that money -  
**WHITTINGTON.** Money? There, take it. Fifty pounds.  
**TUPPENCE.** Fifty pounds - ! *(Catching herself)* And the rest? I assume our little chat isn't over.  
**WHITTINGTON.** You can be sure of that.  
**TUPPENCE.** Shall I drop by your office later? We can discuss particulars.  
**WHITTINGTON.** Yeah sure, do that, luv. I'm shovin' off.  
**TUPPENCE.** Well, then! Good day, Mr Whittington.  
**WHITT.** Brown! Let's get a move on. *(They go.)*  
**TUPPENCE.** *(Close)* What a curious creature you are, Mr. Whittington. There's something about you that I don't like at all. Oh, wait until Tommy sees this.  
**WAITRESS.** All done, miss?  
**TUPPENCE.** Yes, thank you.  
**WAITRESS.** Separate checks, was it?  
**TUPPENCE.** Actually, I'll pay - though I've nothing smaller than a ten-pound note!  
**WAITRESS.** ... Very good miss.  
**TUPPENCE.** Thank you.

*FX: TOMMY rejoins her.*

**TOMMY.** Well the telegram's off and - Good Lord, Tuppence! What is this?! Did you rob a bank while I was gone?! What is all this money!?  
**TUPPENCE.** This? This?? Oh, Tommy, *this* is honest work for the savvy adventurer.  
**TOMMY.** You did, you robbed a bank.  
**TUPPENCE.** Isn't it awfully curious how one can speak nothing but the truth, yet no one will believe a word she says?  
**TOMMY.** What are you going on about?  
**TUPPENCE.** Tell you on the way.  
**TOMMY.** On the way where?!  
**TUPPENCE.** Esthonia Glassworks. I'd like to know a little more about our new employer...

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**SCENE 4: A Cab**