

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY Inspecteur Cherche La Femme
CHEF DE POLICE SUISSE

Shelley-Lulette Sizemore is a much sought-after C List celebrity who has, at her own admission "lived through enough adventures to fill three lifetimes". "Discovered" by Professor Brian Thrupiece at a young age, her name and his became closely associated following his demise in a Swiss Hotel Room in 2004. Ms Sizemore was amongst the last of his acquaintances to see him alive.

Until now Ms Sizemore has refused to comment on what remains an ongoing case. Here she may or may not offer insights into the Professor's final days, insisting that what follows is a hemi-demi-semi autobiographical account in which "the demands of fiction heavily outway those of fact".

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SHELLEY-LULETTE SIZEMORE (with A Real-Writer)

Scene of the Crime

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PROLOGUE

The Cornabin Hotel, Cheb, Sudetenland April 2004

"Bonjour madame", said the suave Swiss concierge as the uncoventionally dressed young woman advanced towards the hotel lobby desk. "Professeur", he added with a slight deferential bow towards the distinguished gentleman accompanying her, as though acknowledging someone he had seen many times before though not perhaps in company such as this. "Your valises?", he enquired, relieving the Professor of his bags and glancing in the direction of the young woman who appeared to have no luggage of her own to carry.

The oddly matched couple proceeded to the reception desk, quiet at this time of night and manned only by a solitary sleep-deprived young intern whose interest in the hotel's guests had long since evaporated as one by one they had retired to their rooms. "I'd like my usual suite if its available", the Professeur said affably, knowing full well that the Cornabin was punctilious in such rgard and would have allocated it to him the moment he had telephoned informing them of his intention to stay.

"But of course Professeur" the young man responded, quickly recovering his composure and now fully aware of the stature of the slightly stooping figure which stood before him. The Cornabin - like all the other hotels in the city - was full. There was to be a prestige Culinary Bioethical Conference beginning the next day and delegates had been arriving from all over the world. Professeur Brian Trueponce - the very man who even now smiled beningnly upon the hapless clerk - was to give the Plenary Address and though he was tired from his long journey from Church Knowle, Dorset, England, he was a man of infinite gentility and wisdom, much given to encouraging the young of either gender.

The girl shifted uneasily from one foot to another, conscious perhaps

that this was not the kind of hotel in which she usually found herself and certainly not one calculated to put her at her ease.

"Will the Professeur require the room made up for two or for one?" the clerk inquired. "Either will be fine", the Professeur responded adding, since the clerk seemed bemused by his reply, "the lady is helping me with my conference speech and may or may not stay the evening". Satisfied the clerk rang the bell and filed several sheets of paper - documents which were to take on a wholly disproportionate significance in light of the events that were to follow but which seemed at this moment a mere bureaucratic formality.

The arrival rituals complete, Le Professeur and "La dame Anglais" as she would later be known to Police moved swiftly through the lobby to the lift and thence to the fifth floor of the hotel. Room 506 was much like any other of the Cornabin's 98 rooms. It comprised a sitting room and bedroom with en suite facility and was furnished in the usual manner of five star hotels: clean, efficient yet without character. A room like any other for now, though later a room that would be forever mired in infamy. The Professor unpacked and, satisfying himself that there were sufficient electrical sockets for the many hand held small appliances he had, as usual, byrought with him, proceeded to relax.

The young woman was also feeling more at ease. Now that they were alone she felt more able to be herself and less inclined to play that part the Professor demanded whenever they were seen together in public. Checking the minibar she realised that few of the items she had expected to find there - and would require if she and the Professeur were to make a success of their evening together - were present. Overpriced pretzels and thin German beer had their place but not in their precisely delineated scheme of things.

"Oh for Christ's sake Byron" this is hopeless she complained, flouncing toward the sofa and landing with a desicive thud. Unpeturbed the



ABOVE: The Hotal Cornabin "Respectability in Concrete Form"; BELOW: Room 506 "A scene of unimaginable mystery"



Professor continued to scrutinise his Flyco Company [Shanghai, China] Type C nasal clipper wondering for the second time since he had left the airport whether he would need to use it before tomorrow's meeting. Consoling Cherie-Lorgnette had almost become his life's work and, though she offered him much in return, he was beginning to wonder whether agreeing to meet her again had been a mistake. Thirty-six years was a significant age gap and quite apart from the mutual failure to recognise each other's cultural references, his erudite scholarship and her streetwise attitudes were awkward bedfellows. Indeed, he was forced to admit, they themselves were awkward bedfellows even on the rare occasions they exchanged "pleasantries" in the same room. It was often a matter of regret the next day.

The Professor was conscious of the need to complete his address. He had made a number of alterations on the aeroplane but needed to work out the full implications of the changes he had made. Again he pondered the wisdom of allowing Cherie-Lorgnette to stay. At 11.05 precisely the light on the telephone blinked indicating that he had an incoming call. A momentary panic seized the Professeur. Who knew he was here? What else did they know? He placed the receiver to his ear and was relieved to hear the desk clerk's reassuringly facile voice. "I am so sorry to disturb Professor. I hope I do not find you in the midst of something...". The Professor glanced at Cherie-Lorgnette still pouting on the sofa. "No", he reassured the clerk, "nothing to report on that front". "Bon, then I must tell you that the delegation from FIFA would lioke very much to meet with you tomorrow before breakfast. Will this be possible? Mr Blatter is most insistent."

The Professeur returned the receiver to its cradle and sat disconsolately on the bed, hardly noticing that in doing so he displaced the carefully poitioned after dinner mint left there in silent welcome. A dispassionate observer might have said that he seemed in that very moment to age a decade. His hair, already dangerously thinned and unfashionably combed-over fell listlessly across his face; a face that drooped alarmingly

as though seized by a sudden stroke. He glanced at the girl barely able to raise his eyes towards her.

Sensing his distress, Cherie-Lorgnette moved towards him. Never before had she so wished she had paid more attention in her pre-abortion classes, though steady breathing seemed beyond the Professor's reach just now. She placed an arm around him andt immediate awareness of her half supported and life-affirmingly pendulous breasts seemed miraculously to revive him. "We will. get through this" he said, as much to himself as to her. "All will be well my dear."

Never had a man been so wrong.



Cheb: A favourite with Hitler but by 2004 an intellectual powerhouse. BELOW: A culture of indulgence lay just beneath the surface



CHAPTER ONE

Branscome, Dorset, England, 13 years earlier



Branscombe: An unlikely start to a murder mystery?

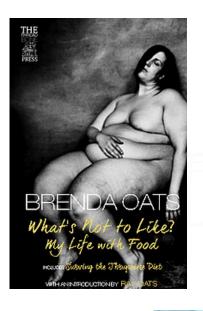
I first met Professeur Trueponce in December 1991 when I was fifteen years old and running errands for - well let's call her Ma Browne - a characterful old witch who ran a small betting operation out of her house in Spindle Street, Branscome. I can't recall now whether he or I was the first to speak but I knew immediately that he wasn't an ordinary sort and that his relationship with Ma Browne wasn't ordinary either. I had already left school by then and was headed nowhere, so the interest of an older man - and a kindly one - was welcome even if I was slow to show it. I had no idea how distinguished he was or that, in future, the separate

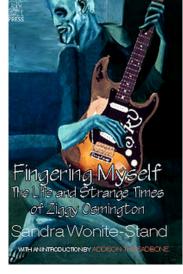
tracks of our lives would cross and recross as now they seem destined to do. So we became important to each other - but not in the way that people think and not for the reasons people think either. Lazy assumption was the curse of our time together and may even have been the curse that ended it all. No! Ours was a partnership though maybe the least conventional parnership in the history of partnerships. That it would be me who was with him almost to the end .. well that would have seemed crazy back then; and not just crazy: impossible, unbelievable. And yet I was there and now I'm here; here to tell the tale

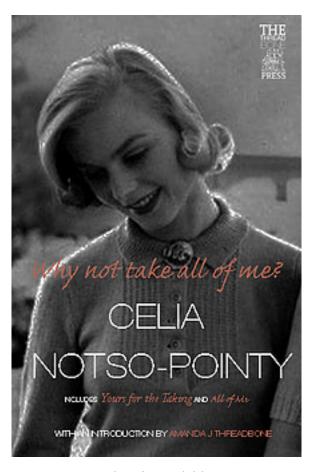
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The Infamous Ma Browne House. What was The Professeur's business there?







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