

"CROWTHER"

A new series created by

Compton Bennett

Derek Glynne

If an individual is really of consequence enough to have his life and character recorded for public remembrance, we have always been of the opinion that the public ought to be made acquainted with all the inward springs and relations of his character.

Thomas Carlyle

The Basic Situation

A powerful, ambitious and wealthy man is in prison, convicted of a number of serious offences of which he believes himself innocent.

His name is JAMES WILSON CROWTHER.

By nature he is a 'nonconformer', ready to fight for what he believes in, wilful and not easily advised - but capable of great loyalty towards those who have befriended or helped him. A shrewd man, he is always prepared to take a chance. (He is an excellent poker player) and once committed to a course of action, he will go through with it fearlessly. Although ruthless he is never vindictive. He is most ruthless towards himself and prepared to accept (if necessary suffer) the consequences of his actions once he has made up his mind as to what must be done. Before his imprisonment, he had an increasingly dominating position in the world of business and finance.

During his time in prison he looks back at the events of his life searching for the reasons which have brought him to such a disastrous pass.

The Method

With the exception of Episodes 1 to 4 the method used is that of the re-enactment of past events in Crowther's life. By this means we seek to create a picture of the man himself.

It is as if a jig-saw puzzle of a man's face is slowly growing as the pieces of the puzzle are put in place. As Crowther reconsiders his life's events we see the picture growing. Each episode is complete in itself, but the effect is cumulative.

The Aim of the Series

The surface appeal of the Crowther series is that it tells the story of one man's life, considered in depth and in relation to the society of the last twenty-five years. The 'below the surface' appeal is that it is also the story of modern man in search of a soul. The effect on the viewer will result from the combination of both ingredients.

The actual events of Crowther's life are documented later - orphan upbringing in Wales, escape to London, a successful novel filmed, a period of frustration in Hollywood, a marriage which breaks down because Crowther clashes violently with a millionaire father-in-law who expects unquestioning obedience, a second escape to Europe via the West Indies, growing business success, a position of wealth and power, etc. etc. All these events (call them "adventures") have failed to satisfy his deeper desires, conscious as well as unconscious. But as far as the surface appeal of the series goes, they will be such as to satisfy (indeed excite) the viewer for episode after episode.

It is the 'below the surface' aspects of the series which will make the difference between Crowther and any other similar semi-picaresque series - "The Fugitive", for example.

It seems sensible therefore to enlarge briefly on what Crowther has to offer in addition.

Modern Western European society is sick, and the sickness has been increasing from 1945 onwards. Crowther is continually conscious of the decay surrounding him, and because he is by temperament and talent a creative artist, he is constantly analysing in his writing the reasons for this decay - the title of his first novel was significantly "The Ruined Valley".

Like most of us he has felt himself caught up in world events, but (unlike us) he is not prepared to acquiesce. He is rarely willing to swim with the tide, but rather wishes to use the tide to serve his own purposes. But by nature he is not a swimmer but a surfer. First force a way out, diving through the combers to a point past where the waves are breaking. Then the long, undulating pauses before choosing the right wave to 'CRACK'. The skill of riding upright and at speed on the rush of water, leading to the moment of success, when the surfer has used all of the wave's power he wishes, with finally the break-off, short of the beach, and the start of the whole process again.

An analogy of the surfer clearly applies to Crowther's business activities, but it also applies to his private life. Sex to Crowther was always 'cracking a wave' - until the gradual realization with his true love FRANCOISE LEROY that sex has become love and is not a matter of winning anything.

In other words, he has discovered that what you do is a reflection of what you are, not vice-versa.

In the artistic side of his nature he had of course always known this fact, but given it little conscious thought in connection with the actual living of his life. After the shock of arrest and imprisonment he begins to try to discover why this should have happened to him, why his world has suddenly fallen to pieces around him. In attempting to answer this question he is really being forced to ask also 'what sort of person am I?' It is Crowther's growing consciousness of this (as episode follows episode) which will both prevent any feeling of repetitiveness and will add a special (and unusual) ingredient - a man's growing understanding of himself and his motives.

Each male viewer should see something of himself in Crowther, should identify with his basic problems, and feel he is sharing in both Crowther's triumphs and disasters - just as each female viewer should feel a partial identification with Francoise.

'Crowther' then is a series in which each episode exciting in itself, will add another facet to a man's personality. For those who prefer a series at surface level it will be readily acceptable. For those who wish also something less soft-centered, our centre will be hard.

In the event it may do more than a little to contradict the most insidious of modern heresies - 'I cannot help what I am, therefore it does not matter what I do.'

The Format of the Series

Episode 1 and 2 show Crowther already well on the way to the top, so that we get a view of the man as he is now. We also meet the people who are important to him now, or who have played an important part in his life. These include:-

Francoise Leroy
Nicholas Brunel
Alain St. Treville
Spenser Griffith
Erwin Dalton
Caroline Fleming
Michael Darrell

Episodes 3/4 cover the trial at the end of which Crowther is found guilty on all counts and sentenced,

Episode 5 begins with Crowther in prison, and the first of his examinations of his past life.

Subsequent episodes continue on the same pattern as 5, in each case with some event at the start which will spark-off his memory.

It may be a visit from one of the important characters mentioned on previous page, the arrival of a letter, his own study of the transcript of his trial, a conversation with his legal advisers, and discussions about the Appeal which is being lodged on his behalf. More can be learnt about the man in these short opening scenes before we go back and tell a particular story.

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Somewhere about Episode 20 his recollections begin to become more connected with the charges against him because of the pending Appeal.

Episode 26 covers the actual Appeal and ends with Crowther's exoneration. (The placing of the Appeal Episode can, of course come earlier or later than Episode 26, and the decision can be based on the popularity of the series after some six or eight episodes have been transmitted.)

Early Biographical Background (1930 - 1945)

Although we do not propose to deal directly with events in Crowther's life before he has reached the age of 24 or 25, it is necessary to know something of his earlier years. The events may be touched on, but not recreated.

JAMES WILSON CROWTHER was born in Liverpool on October 13th, 1930. His parents married during the First World War and lost their first child in 1926. They were a devoted family, thrifty through their poorness, and strict but not bigoted Non-conformists. They were killed in a raid on Liverpool Docks in 1940, just after Crowther had been evacuated to his Aunt BETH, the widowed proprietress of a residential pub in a little Welsh town.

His father had been a great influence on this imaginative eager-to-learn child, encouraging him from an early age to read all the books he could lay his hands on. His mother had supplied all the care and devotion.

Dreadfully homesick in the unfamiliar noisy pub atmosphere for the next eight years this child created a fantasy world of his own, with his books, his maps and a growing fascination for languages.

During this period he attended the local grammar school where he remained until his call-up for National Service in 1948.

As with all of us a number of incidents were to leave their mark. At the age of 14 or 15 he was seduced by his cousin GWYNETH, who was about 3 years older. It was his first introduction to sex and it gave his puritan conscience enormous pangs of guilt. The incident was to figure in his first novel "The Ruined Valley".

The greatest influence on his life at this time was HUW MORGAN his schoolmaster. An outspoken, far-left radical he introduced Crowther to literature, languages and self-expression thus laying the foundation for Crowther's talent as a writer.

Later Biographical Background (1948 - 66)

The events of this period may be used as the basis of episodes.

(1) National Service (1948 - 51)

In 1948 Crowther was called-up for National Service.

Though too much of an individualist to enjoy Army life, he gained from it the taste of the larger world and the knowledge of other people's way of life. It also brought him into contact with MAJOR WILLIAM SAXBY, a former Regular Army N.C.O. commissioned during the war and commanding Crowther's unit in the Middle East. Saxby was basically a Soldier of Fortune, a glib Londoner with an East End background and lots of charm. With him Crowther felt an instant affinity - at heart both were rebels.

In 1951 he completed his National Service and returned to Wales.

(2) The Welsh Period - (Early 1951)

Returning to Wales and Aunt Beth, he felt stifled by the smugness of the little town he had been brought up in, and longed to give the small minded community a kick up the backside to make them realise there was a larger world outside. He began to find Aunt Beth's possessiveness oppressive, and was bored by Gwyneth's sexual importunities. Even Huw Morgan (now Communist) irritated him, and he tired of listening to tirades about the betrayal of the workers by the Labour Government.

It was about this time that Crowther realised that he must use his gifts as a writer. So although his deep intention was to become a novelist, he took a job with the local paper as the most junior of reporters, covering small

and tedious events - minor court cases, local council meetings etc. In the process he managed to upset quite a few of the tin gods who thought they ran the town.

During the course of this he met SPENSER GRIFFITH (a year older than Crowther) son of a local building contractor and Alderman, a former Mayor of the town. Spenser was a Civil Servant working in a Ministry in London, with the ambition of reaching the House of Commons. He was often to be met at weekends in Wales, and managed (with the help of an allowance from his father) to run a flashy sports car and cut a dash. Spenser was always on the lookout for the quick (even if shady) deal and was often accompanied by MICHAEL DARRELL an effeminate young man with a job in a London Merchant Bank, and a taste for 'inside' financial snippets of information. Both play the stock-market, often with success. Spenser knows Gwyneth (they have slept together - once) and so has met Crowther. They disliked each other instantly, and on one occasion Crowther knocked Spenser down. As the years passed, Crowther forgot about this (and other rows they had) but, Spenser never forgot. Indeed, Spenser's youthful jealousy of Crowther never left him.

ALDERMAN GRIFFITH, Spenser's father, was a blustering windbag who made a fortune out of Government surplus and scrap-metal in the immediate post-war years. Crowther detested his brand of religious cant and do-gooding, and Griffith reciprocated in his dislike of Crowther's outspokenness.

The two were like oil and water, and Crowther used his job with the paper to try and expose Griffith for what he was and prevent him getting the peerage he has been seeking for years 'for services to the community'. But Griffith not only got his peerage - he also gained control of the local paper. To Crowther, this was the last straw, and he walked out of his home, the town and Wales.

Crowther had made many enemies, (particularly the Griffith family) and Spenser never forgot the various rows, and the occasions when Crowther had made him look a fool. This hatred was to remain and fester all Spenser's life.

(3) The First London Period (mid 1951)

In London the writing of his novel was the first important thing he wished to do - so he took odd jobs such as sorting mail to pay for a cheap bedsitter. His first discovery was how totally alone one can be in a great city - his fellow lodgers never spoke to him, and to his workmates, he was an 'outsider'. He was outspoken in his dislike of the Management's methods (he thought he could have run the business better) and contemptuous of Union regulations and shop-stewards' endless meetings. But the crowded streets of London gave him idea after idea for stories (as they had Dickens) and he discovered that he had the knack of being on hand when events happened - fights in pubs, street accidents, crimes of violence.

He lived on next to nothing but sausages and tea, and collected a good collection of rejection slips for his attempts at short stories and articles. During this period he met a young law student (NICK BRUNEL) and a friendship began which was to continue throughout his life.

After a matter of months, he decided to find a way of getting to the young artists' Mecca - Paris.

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(4) The First Paris Period (late 1951)

One day the chance came good and he landed a job with a French family, to teach their son English. He left for France by the cheap Newhaven car ferry. His career as a tutor was brief but successful, though his activities are not of importance to the series. What was important were the friends he made outside his work, particularly Mde. SARA SCHUMANN, a wealthy and attractive widow pushing forty and admitting to early thirties.

In her apartment on the Quai Voltaire Mde. Sara entertained a great deal and very much across the accepted lines of society - there one could meet up-and-coming politicians, financial entrepreneurs, businessmen, journalists, writers known and unknown, artists, musicians, dancers. It was Mde. Sara's peculiar social gifts as well as her wealth which made her receptions so mixed and so amusing (the late Nina Hamnett, who occupies a similar position in the Paris of the '20's once introduced James Joyces to Rudolph Valentino and discovered neither had heard of the other!)

Literary Paris in 1951 was the Paris of Existentialists, of Satre, Camus, Simone de Beauvoir, the Deux Magots and the Cafe Flore, with the talents of Yves Montand, Greco and Amouk beginning to flower in the cellars. Some of these Crowther met, his talent for languages now paid off, and his novel went ahead like a bomb.

He showed the complete MS to Mdm. Sara. She saw the quality and power there, and sent it to an English publisher who was a personal friend.

There was one habitue of the Salon to whom Crowther took an immediate dislike - ALAIN ST. TREVILLE. He was then about thirty-five, wealthy, distinguished and with the poise of a man who is entirely self-sufficient and confident. There had been vague rumours that during the War he had collaborated with the Nazis, but he had never been charged with any offences.

Treville disliked and distrusted Crowther - as an established man may dislike a younger man who does not defer to him, and is clearly on the road to success. But at this stage, their mutual dislike merely exists. Later it deepens on both sides and contributes to Crowther's downfall.

Another frequenter of Mde. Sara's group was ERWIN DALTON, a tough, rugged American film producer, in his forties and reminiscent of John Huston in manner and bearing - though not in the quality of the many Hollywood films to his credit. Crowther took to Dalton at once, probably because of his swashbuckling attitude to life and his way with women. As a result of this liking, Dalton got a look at Crowther's novel (The Ruined Valley) and saw the film possibilities.

He took an option on it, and after a bit of persuasion agreed Crowther should go to Hollywood to do the treatment if the project went ahead. Meanwhile, the book was accepted for publication in England.

So the beginnings of a success were in the makings, and for Crowther the change of a look at another City, this time in the New World. Hollywood (he felt) was to be his for the taking - a naive attitude (and Crowther was still only in his mid-twenties) which he was later to regret, when in due course he was launched into that town of artificial values and cellophane-wrapped acclaim.

(5) The Hollywood Period (1953)

Firmly determined to resist Hollywood's artificiality, glamour and larger-than-life attitude to everything Crowther reckoned without its insidious, sycophantic hospitality, dispensed in direction relation to its recipient's success and financial standing.

Dalton saw to it Crowther got the full Hollywood treatment - publicity, said Dalton, was the breath of life. A constant round of parties, meetings with glamorous girls, interviews in the press and on the air - in an atmosphere where conforming meant wildly extravagant behaviour, and where excess was the norm. Into this behaviour-pattern the youthful Crowther was inevitably sucked. Resistance was explained as eccentricity, and admired as a gimmick - good copy for the columnists.

Some of the more scabrous stories were picked up by the press in England. Spenser Griffith clipped them for his files - and later use.

The McCarthy witch-hunt was in full swing, outspoken as always, Crowther sided volubly with the few Hollywood stalwarts who stood out for the Fifth amendment (i.e. refused to testify) just as he violently opposed those playing for safety and easy money. He was incensed to find Dalton amongst the latter, but the scriptwriting proceeded, though with increasing friction.

Script-conferences became a daily battlefied, with Crowther fighting for the right to preserve the spirit of his own original work. He was allowed to complete quite unaware that Dalton and the studio hack writers were at the same time re-writing. Convinced his version would go on the floor - Dalton and the other executives praised it to the skies - Crowther treated himself to a long vacation.

He returned in time for the premiere. Angry to see Dalton's name coupled with his on the screen-play credit, he was even more furious to find the finished film bore little resemblance to his novel except in the title. To add insult to injury, the film received a nomination for best screenplay of the year.

His performance at the presentation ceremony was electrifying.

He and Dalton walked up to receive their awards and make their expected fatuous speeches of thanks. After a deceptively innocent opening, Crowther turned it into a scathing indictment of Dalton and Hollywood in general, and walked out - without the award.

Hollywood exploded. Hedda Hooper, Louella Parsons and lesser columnists were vitriolic in condemnation of this upstart foreigner. The Examiner printed an article - inspired by Dalton, though this was never proven - that Crowther had been a Communist. Before long he was requested to appear before Senator Joseph McCarthy's Un-American Activities Committee. He refused to testify, and hoped that was the end of the business. But not long afterwards he received an official intimation that his presence on American soil was no longer desirable.

At this time, an important event occurred. The C.I.A. noticed this English writer accused of communism and started to keep a dossier on him.

He was watched, and notes about his past and future activities were made. This dossier was to be kept up as his career continued.

Merely being asked to leave the United States would normally have made Crowther more determined than ever to stay until he was actually deported. But he was outraged by the success of 'The Runied Valley.'

And he was also totally disillusioned by the whole artificiality of the Hollywood scene, by the sybaritism and ruthless nepotism, the yes-men and the screen-struck small-town girls. He decided to go, taking his not inconsiderable earnings with him, making sure he got hold of every possible penny. He left for the Mexican border. The question of how to leave the United States without a tax-clearance certificate did not cross his mind.

(6) The Mexican/Cuban Period (mid 1954)

The exit from U.S. territory nearest to Hollywood is the Mexican border town of Tijuana. Arriving there Crowther was suddenly slapped on the back by a typical Mexican peon, but one with an English accent. It was Saxby, his old unit commander.

Crowther felt surprised at seeing Saxby in straightened circumstances, but there was no need for his concern.

A new Cadillac, a hair-raising drive, and Crowther found himself at Saxby's "little place" - a rambling Spanish-type house perched on a cliff overlooking the Pacific. Over several generous tequilas they reminisced. Unable to settle into a peace-time army, Saxby had got out and was now in "business" in a big way. Crowther was just the man he'd been looking for - he could offer exciting adventure - and plenty of dough with it.

He could offer more - a way across the border without a tax-clearance certificate. He suggested that if 'by chance' Crowther wanted to take with him any U.S. dollars without awkward questions, the "Saxby Route" might be doubly useful.

A bargain was struck. Saxby would get Crowther (and his cash) over the border. Crowther would come into the Saxby 'business' - which as he now disclosed - included gun-running, liquor smuggling, smuggling of illegal immigrants into the U.S. and other dubious activities centering round the Gulf of Mexico.

For instance, in Cuba they helped in the release of a young man after he had served 11 months of a 15-year sentence for attacking an army barracks in an insurrection against a dictator. The young man's name was Fidel Castro.

An exciting adventurous period for Crowther - agreeably spiced with danger. But after one narrow escape nearly ending in distaster, Saxby thought it best to lie low and they parted company.

(7)

The Return to Paris (Late 1954)

Crowther made for Panama, where he picked up a cargo boat bound for Paris via New Orleans. His pockets fairly well-lined, he intended resuming his interrupted return to Paris to start writing again.

It is one of those cargo-boats accommodating a dozen or so passengers in pretty good style -- a two - or three-week trip to Europe calling at various ports, including New Orleans. It was Mardi Gras time, and Crowther went ashore with the Other passengers.

That evening, amongst the Kaleidoscopic, revelling crowds, Crowther got involved with a wildly pretty girl, and also with a fight. The police intervened, examined his passport, and detained him overnight.

The next morning he was escorted back to his ship. At the top of the gangway was the pretty girl again. Enquiries named her as CAROLINE FLEMING, daughter of a wealthy aspirant for political success in Carolina. She was being whisked off to Europe after an affair of which her father disapproved. She was also exquisite, sexy, and 19 years old. The voyage looked promising, but there was one snag - an elderly female relative acting as watch-dog. Crowther's attentive, carefully correct English charm won the day with her. Also his readiness to play gin-rummy.

Caroline was intrigued (and not a little piqued) to meet a male who didn't immediately want to jump her into bed. He was also something of a celebrity, with a successful film and a best-seller to his name. Once out into the stormy Atlantic the chaperone (a bad sailor) took to her cabin; and Crowther took to Caroline.

Arrived at Le Havre, the lovers found a way of losing the chaperone and hid away in a little Paris apartment. Their idyll lasted all of three months - for Caroline. For Crowther it began to pall after the second month. He was well into a second novel, but Caroline's lack of interest in his writing irritated him - as did her lack of interest in his Left-Bank friends. He deplored her extravagance. She couldn't understand why. Pop's allowance was more than adequate - why complain? Her possessiveness reminded him of Aunt Beth, and her excessive demands of Gwyneth. He was on the point of walking out when Caroline casually told him she was pregnant.

Crowther's Nonconformist conscience now took over and told him he must marry the girl. That same night they had a mysterious visitor - actually a detective employed by Fleming to check on his daughter. After a violent argument, Crowther threw him out, then contacted Madame Sara, and on her advice made arrangements with the British Embassy for marriage. The wedding followed, and in due course the Embassy reported to the Foreign Office. A further addition to the M.I. dossier followed.

Triumphantly, Caroline cabled Pop. Two days later Fleming arrived, with his lawyer. HOWARD LAURENCE FLEMING, large-framed, large-voiced, demanded immediate annulment of the marriage. Caroline, every bit a match for her irate parent, routed him. He retired, blustering they'd meet later - when the couple were properly dressed!

Crowther bearded Fleming on his own - and casually mentioned Caroline's pregnancy. Fleming decided to make the best bargain he could, and delivered an ultimatum: the couple to return to Carolina and have a second marriage ceremony - 'with her own folk'. Finally Crowther was to take a job in one of Fleming's companies. Fleming dismissed the possibility Crowther might not be welcome in the States - when he, Howard Laurence Fleming wanted something done, it got done! Curiosity plus conscience decided Crowther. Within days Crowther was on his way back to America - in Pop's charter plane.

(8) The Return to America (Early 1955)

The big society second wedding ceremony in Carolina (the Fleming wedding, as it was headlined) was also noticed in the English press. And by the C.I.A.

The bridegroom lost count of the host of uncles and aunts, cousins and relations of the Fleming clan - but refused to be swamped by them. In due course Caroline produced twins! They were named after the grandparents: Howard Lawrence II and Louise May.

Not to be fobbed off with any sinecure, Crowther demanded, (and got), a responsible post as P.R.O. for Fleming - and vigorously applied himself to it, as usual. Fleming had little use for Crowther as a member of the family. For one thing, his outspokenness on politics, religion and radical problems cut right across the family's hidebound traditions - but Fleming found Crowther's grasp of essentials and personal charm a valuable asset in business, (cont...)

and more and more allowed Crowther to front for him in deals.

Crowther had not the intention of remaining a stooge for Fleming for long. Ambition had now set a new target - power in his own right.

His sphere of work increased. He travelled the country negotiating deals, exercised stock options - tough businessmen found themselves on occasion outwitted and outplayed by Crowther's quiet, seemingly innocent English charm. But his innate sense of justice rebelled against Fleming's ruthless exploitation of the less fortunate.

One bitter row developed over the marketing of a new invention. The inventor had spent his last penny in its development but Fleming ruthlessly ignored payment for rights, knowing the man had no chance of successfully fighting the case.

Finally, Crowther became involved in a bitter conflict with local politics. A negro personality, too outspoken on racialism, was victim of a vicious attack by the local Klu-Klux-Klan. Incensed that no efforts were being made to apprehend the criminals, Crowther raised his voice in protest. Then he discovered that Fleming himself had been involved in the KKK attack. There was a violent scene. He told Fleming (and the whole clan) that from now on he would live his own life - and under his own roof. If Caroline was prepared, she could join him and his children. If not, she could go to Reno (or an even warmer place) in her own good time. He left alone. It was many years before he had further contact with the Flemings.

(9) London Once More (1959 - 66)

As a result of living in the Fleming world, Crowther made a number of profitable investments - using his father-in-law's tips, and improving on them as he began to capitalize on his business acumen,

When he returned to London, he found his investments had matured sufficiently to give him a small working capital. This he used in various ways (property buyings - before the Capital Gains Tax - light engineering, electronics etc.) which gave him the chance of moving towards financial independence. He also made full use of his contacts with Spenser Griffiths (now an M.P.) and Michael Darrell now a junior partner in a City Merchant Bank.

During the next few years Crowther's business developed successfully, and by 1966, he was invited to accept a directorship in Weinberg and Collins, which had the effect of making him a Banker under section 4 (6) of the Bank of England Act 1946 by order of the Treasury.

(10) Paris and Overseas Trips (1966)

Crowther's position in Weinbergs and other overseas commitments brought him once more to Paris, He met Treville again, and as before the man both angreed and intrigued him. The world Treville moved in (political, big business, finance) offered useful connections, but it was an introduction to his ward, Francoise Leroy, that Crowther was most grateful for.

well possessed young Frenchwoman, she ran a small art-gallery in the Faubourg St. Germaine, Strikingly attractive rather than beautiful - not by any ordinary standard could she be labelled sexy - and yet...? Crowther found himself gazing into the most expressive deeply luminous eyes he had ever seen - eyes which he would never forget.

She was a never-ending surprise to Crowther - amongst other things he found she studied at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts, spoke excellent English, loved driving high-powered cars, and had been a junior fencing champion.

She was an orphan - the business had been left her by her father. He had never recovered from ill-treatment in a Nazi concentration camp. Her guardian was Treville.

Within a matter of days Crowther had decided to move into the Art Gallery business - with Francoise. He explained to her his feeling that London was well on the way to becoming the new centre of the art world. Eventually she agreed to sell him 50% of her little Paris Gallery, in exchange for which she would undertake to manage for them a London gallery. Crowther went ahead and bought a small place in the Cork Street area.

(11) The Second London Period (1966 - 70)

Francoise came to London and went ahead with making the set-up viable. With the Gallery came a small flat above it, in which she lived.

After a few months Crowther suggested she should live with him, and she accepted immediately, as if it were the most natural thing in the world. Francoise's positive nature permeated the whole background of Crowther's life. They had violent arguments at times, each being forthright in stating their beliefs (his Protestantism, her Catholicism) on politics, on economics, art etc. There was never any question of marriage because it never entered either's head, and the differences they had only served to cement a deep and lasting love.

With the advent of Francoise, Crowther's ambition for power increased. Though taking no active part in politics, his interest grew in the background corridors of power. His empire continued to expand.

Treville was moving in similar circles in France, consolidating his financial position by a series of operations (some certainly of doubtful integrity) in which he never appeared personally. While Crowther moved forward by his own inventive talents, Treville used other people's ideas to increase his fortune and power.

This then was the situation at the time of Crowther's arrest. He had been through a great deal and was holding a position of very considerable power and importance.

In each phase of his life we have kept the events down to a minimum - they should be looked at and borne in mind as a framework to build our stories around.

But the underlying theme must not be forgotten -- a man searching back into his life to try and discover what sort of man he really is, and why his world has collapsed.

Brief Background of Characters

Characters who may be helping Crowther in his search for knowledge of himself and who (of course) are themselves part of his past.

FRANCOISE LEROY (b. 1940)

An orphan and the last representative of an old and well-to-do Catholic family. Her father (who died as the result of ill-treatment by the Nazis) and had been well-connected in business and a friend of Treville. As a result he became Francoise's guardian though his interest in her extended beyond mere guardianship. Francoise was well travelled, bi-lingual, loved driving high-powered cars, and she had also studied art at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts. She was Strikingly Attractive and Crowther was immediately stimulated by her intellect as well as her charms.

In all the episodes (except the first) she never pushes their relationship. She accepts it on Crowther's terms.

NICHOLAS (NICK) BRUNEL (b. 1928)

A close friend as well as the legal brain in the Crowther organisation. He took a degree in law at Oxford and then went on to qualify as both Solicitor and Chartered Accountant. He got to know Crowther while still studying. He is the practical man who is expected to work out the details of Crowther's schemes (and one of the few men Crowther trusts). He is an invaluable ally as well as legal adviser.

Though it is never said - he may not even know it himself - he has a deep affection for Françoise.

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TREVILLE (b. 1916)

Distinguished, impressive and with the poise of an utterly self-sufficient man, he has a superb business brain, incredible patience, and endless charm. Once a racing driver, he did well in the motor manufacturing business, continually extending his business empire. There had been suggestions of collaborationist activities during the war, but no actual charges were ever made.

SPENSER GRIFFITH (b. 1927)

Older than Crowther by three years, in 1964 he became an Under Secretary at the Board of Trade. (He was elected at the 1958 election for a Welsh constituency.) He had known Crowther since 1948 and from their first meeting has disliked him intensely, but being an ambitious man has only shown it on one occasion - a physical fight over Gwyneth's attentions. He will involve himself with anyone or anything to achieve his aims (hence the front presented to Crowther) and to this end is quite prepared to use his physical charms - with men or women.

HUW MORGAN (b. 1918)

School-master, part-time journalist, pacifist, socialist, agnostic. He had a great influence on Crowther's formative years, taking up (as it were) where his father had to leave off. He introduced Crowther to the Classics and the poets, got him interested in journalism and basically sowed the seeds for Crowther the author.

GWYNETH (b. 1927)

Crowther's cousin (some three years older than him) who first introduced him to practical sex. Not a particularly bright brain, but because of her earthy voluptuousness and sexual precocity is usually surrounded by men.

SAXBY (b. 1922)

In 1948 was a regular N.C.O. commissioned in the war, reaching the rank of Major during the Arab/Jewish conflict. A glib Londoner (born within the sound of Bow Bells) he is an adventurer. It is this aspect of him that appeals most to Crowther.

MADAM SARA SCHUMANN (b. 1911)

A wealthy attractive widow nearing 40 when Crowther first meets her. Her great talent is as a hostess. At innumerable gatherings she will introduce author to publisher, painter to gallery-owner, composer to conductor, and in this way has set many talented artists on the road to success. She does not exploit them, but as a typical French business-woman always expects her commission.

ERWIN DALTON: (b. 1911)

40 at the time of his first meeting with Crowt her. Tough, rugged film producer reminiscent of John Huston in manner and bearing - though not in the quality of the many Hollywood films to his credit. He is fairly popular with the Hollywood executive hierarchy because in the final analysis he will subordinate artistic values to financial demands.

HOWARD LAURENCE FLEMING (b. 1904)

Crowther's father-in-law. 50ish. powerful bigoted, with the personality and the means to destroy any opposition ruthlessly. His business ramifications cover a wide growing field, including a newspaper chain, a radio station, oil-wells and an airline. He would like to be Governor of his state, and detests pinkos, labour-leaders, freedom-riders and damn yankees in that order.

CAROLINE FLEMING (b. 1933)

Howard's only child (who became Crowther's wife at the age of 19) product of the most expensive and exclusive education the South can offer. She is ravishly attractive and soft-spoken, but utterly hard inside. She has one religion - money and comfortable living.

LOUISE MAY FLEMING (b. 1905)

Caroline's mother, in her youth a considerable beauty. Typical domineering American wife and mother. An indefatigable committee woman, the leader of local Southern society and the only person, until Crowther's advent, who ever ventured to go against Howard Fleming about anything.