



Library podcast

Virtual Thrilling Tales: *The Reckoning with Otto Schreed* by E. Phillips Oppenheim

[00:00:00] Welcome to Thrilling Tales, Seattle Public Library's Storytime for grownups. I'm your librarian/reader, David Wright. This week, in honor of Memorial Day, we return to the stories of a century ago with a tale by one of the era's most popular writers – E. Phillips Oppenheim – a story of profiteering and espionage in World War One.. The story first appeared in the Strand Magazine in February, 1921.

[00:00:30] And now: THE RECKONING WITH OTTO SCHREED By E. Phillips Oppenheim

[00:00:39] MR. JOSEPH P. CRAY followed the usual routine observed by members of the "Americans in London" Society on the occasion of their weekly lunches. He left his coat and hat in the cloakroom, and deposited the ticket which he received in exchange in his waistcoat pocket. Afterwards he slipped into the ante-room, where a little crowd of men were thronging around a narrow counter, exchanging hearty greetings and indulging in various forms of pre-luncheon nourishment. Mr. Cray, who had a mesmeric way of getting served over the shoulders of waiting throngs, disposed of a small cocktail in a matter of seconds, made his way to the reception-room, where the guest of the day stood by the side of his host, exchanging platitudes and handshakes with the little stream of arrivals, and a few minutes later wandered into the luncheon-room, where he discovered the round table for four at which he was placed, exchanged friendly greetings with the two men who were already in their seats, recognized the fact with a little sigh that they were not kindred spirits, and glanced with interest at the vacant place on his right hand, no claimant to which had as yet arrived.

[00:01:57] It was a crowded gathering, and it takes some time for six hundred men to take their places and be seated. Mr. Cray studied the menu with mild approval, glanced through the wine list, and decided to postpone for the moment his decision as to liquid refreshment, and finally, yielding to an impulse of not unnatural curiosity, he raised the card which reposed upon the tablecloth opposite the vacant chair on his right and read it:—

[00:02:28] MR. OTTO M. SCHREED.

[00:02:33] The four walls of the banqueting-room fell away. The pleasant hum of voices, the clatter of crockery and the popping of corks fell upon deaf ears. Mr. Cray's blue eyes were set in a steady stare. Gone his morning coat, his irreproachable linen and carefully-tied tie, his patent boots and well-

creased trousers. He was back in the tight, ill-fitting khaki of months ago, a strange, sober figure in the midst of the bustle of life, yet living under the shadow of death. He stood at the door of the canteen and he saw them marching by, a long, snake-like procession, some singing, some shouting cheery greetings, some pale and limping. Back to the opening in the hills he could trace them, the hill which had once been a forest and now seemed as though a cataclysm had smitten it, a nightmare of bare stumps, of shell and crater holes. The whole horizon seemed streaked with little puffs of smoke. The sound of the guns was incessant. There were times when even the ground beneath his feet shook. The boys were on their way to the mess tents after a stiff twelve hours. He stepped back into the canteen, tasted the coffee in the great urn, ran through the stock of extra provisions, looked carefully round to see that all was ready for the hordes of his customers who would presently throng the place. They came much sooner than they should have done, a little sullen, many of them cursing, pushed and struggled for a place at the counter, swept him clear of the whole of his stock of extra provisions. He could hear their voices.

[00:04:20] "More of that filthy tack!"

[00:04:23] "Say, there's some of those chaps at Washington deserve to swing!"

[00:04:27] "What is it to-day, boys?" Mr. Cray asked.

[00:04:31] There was a string of lurid adjectives. Mr. Cray looked as concerned as he felt.

[00:04:37] "More of that stinking beef, eh?" he asked, sympathetically.

[00:04:42] He was met with a chorus of groans. A score or more had left the counter already, ill before they could reach their coffee. He heard the curses of further hordes struggling to get in. Then the scene faded away. He walked down the great impromptu annexe to the hospital and spoke to one of the doctors. The doctor's adjectives made the words of his patients sound like the babbling of children.

[00:05:10] "More cases of that bad beef," was the plain English of what he said. "We are just in the one corner of the line, too, where we can't rely on stores for a few days. Curse the man who ever made the stuff, and the Government inspector who passed it."

[00:05:28] There was a little movement by Mr. Cray's side. He glanced up. A tall, well-built man of early middle age was taking his seat. The two men exchanged greetings.

[00:05:41] "Mr. Otto Schreed?" Mr. Cray observed.

[00:05:45] The man winced a little, but acknowledged his identity.

[00:05:49] "And your name?" he asked.

[00:05:51] "Mr. Joseph P. Cray," Mr. Cray replied. "We seem to be neighbours, Mr. Schreed. Will you join me in a bottle of wine?"

[00:06:00] "That's a great idea," was the hearty response.

[00:06:05] So Mr. Cray did what those few months ago he would have deemed impossible—he fraternized with Mr. Otto Schreed, of Chicago, exporter of tinned beef. They talked together of many subjects. Their conversation was the conversation of two patriotic and high-minded Americans, with the obvious views of the well-meaning man. Mr. Schreed, encouraged towards the end of the meal by his companion's friendliness, and warmed a little by the wine which he had drunk, became confidential.

[00:06:42] "Say, it's a hard question I'm going to put to you, Mr. Cray," he said, lowering his voice a little, "but does my name suggest anything to you?"

[00:06:52] Mr. Cray took up the card and looked at it.

[00:06:56] "Can't say that it does," he replied, "except that your front name reads German."

[00:07:01] "That ain't it," the other observed. "My father was a German all right, but I was born in Chicago, and I am a good American citizen. It isn't that. I was one of the unlucky devils that got into some trouble with the Government contractors."

[00:07:17] "And I was one of those," Mr. Cray mused, "who spent a hundred dollars cabling to the head of the Y.M.C.A. in the States exactly my opinion of you." But aloud, Mr. Cray's words betrayed nothing of this fact.

[00:07:32] "Say, that was hard luck!" he admitted. "How did it happen?"

[00:07:37] "Just as those things do happen," the other explained, "however almighty careful you may be. We were canning night and day, with Government officials standing over us, and Washington wiring all the time, 'Get a move on. Get a move on. We want the stuff.' I guess some of the foremen got a bit careless. I was worn out myself. The weather was moist and hot, and a load or two of stuff got in that shouldn't. Not but what I always believed," Mr. Schreed went on, "that the complaints were exaggerated; but anyway the Y.M.C.A. busybodies over yonder took it up, and they got me before the Court."

[00:08:17] "Did it cost you much?" Mr. Cray inquired.

[00:08:20] "They fined me fifty thousand dollars," the other replied, "and I had to sell out. Just at the time, too," he went on, gloomily, "when one was making so much money that one couldn't count it." It was just at this moment that Mr. Cray was on the point of raising his voice and of speaking words which, without doubt, would have led to his neighbour's precipitate ejection from the room. And then

something struck him. There was something more than the natural humiliation of a punished man in Mr. Schreed's drawn face and furtive expression. There was something beyond the look of the man who has done wrong and borne an unacceptable punishment. There was still fear; there was still terror of some unnamed possibility. Mr. Cray saw this, and he held his peace. He took his thoughts back a few months to the little conversation he had had with the doctor in that impromptu hospital. He recalled the latter's impassioned words, and he choked down certain rebellious feelings. He decided to offer the right hand of fellowship to the unfortunate Mr. Otto Schreed.

[00:09:38] Mr. Otto Schreed was alone and friendless in a strange city, with the shadow of disgrace resting upon his unattractive name. He was more than disposed, therefore, to accept the advances of this genial and companionable new acquaintance. He was not by disposition a gregarious person, but he was too uncultured to find any pleasure in books or pictures, the newspapers of London were an unknown world to him, and a certain measure of companionship became therefore almost a necessity. It appeared that he was staying at the Milan Hotel, and it was quite natural, therefore, that he should see a great deal of his new friend during the next few days. He was not at first disposed to be communicative. He said very little about his plans, and he asked a great many personal questions, some of which Mr. Cray evaded, and others of which he answered with artless candour. Mr. Cray's connection with the Y.M.C.A. and his work in France was not once alluded to.

[00:10:41] "Say, what's keeping you over here?" Mr. Schreed asked one day. "You've nothing against the other side?"

[00:10:47] "Haven't I!" Mr. Cray replied. "That's where you're making the mistake of your life. I am not a drunkard," he went on, warming to his subject, "but I am a man who loves his liberty, and I hate a country where the bars are crowded out with soft drinks, and where the darned waiters wink and jerk their thumbs round the corner towards the apothecary's shop when you want a drop of Scotch. I am over here, Schreed, my lad, till the United States comes to its senses on the liquor question, and over here I mean to stop until then. What about yourself?"

[00:11:24] Mr. Schreed had been exceedingly close-mouthed about his own movements, but this morning he spoke with more freedom of his plans.

[00:11:34] "I am not so strong as you on the liquor question," he admitted, "but I feel I have been hardly done with over there by the Government, and I'm not hurrying back yet awhile. I thought some," he went on, after a moment's pause, glancing sideways at Mr. Cray as though to watch the effect of his words, "of taking a little tour out to the battlefields of France."

[00:12:00] "That's quite an idea," Mr. Cray admitted, with interest.

[00:12:04] His companion looked around to make sure that they were alone.

[00:12:09] "I don't mind confiding to you, Cray," he said, "that I have another reason for wanting to get out there. When the Stores Department discovered that something was wrong with those few

thousand tins of beef of mine, they burnt the lot. They sent a certificate to Washington as to its condition, upon which I was convicted and fined, although I was well able to prove that the week the defective canning must have been done I was taking a few days' vacation. However, that's neither here nor there. I made inquiries as to whether any of it was still in existence, and I was told that before any had been opened a matter of fifty tins or so had been doled out in some French village where the peasants hadn't got any food. Nothing was ever heard about these."

[00:12:55] "I see," Mr. Cray murmured, and there was nothing in his face to indicate that he had found the intelligence interesting.

[00:13:04] "I kind of thought," Mr. Schreed continued, "that I'd like to look around over there, and if any of those tins were still in existence I'd buy them up and destroy them, so as to avoid any further trouble. You see, they all have my name and trade mark on the outside. The Government insisted upon that."

[00:13:21] "Rather like looking for a needle in a haystack," Mr. Cray remarked.

[00:13:25] "Not so much," the other replied. "I know the name of the place where our men were billeted when they opened the stuff, and the name of the village to which they sent fifty tins. I thought I'd just look around there, and if there are no traces of any—well, I've done the best I could. Then I thought some of coming home by Holland."

[00:13:45] "Business in Holland, eh?" Mr. Cray inquired.

[00:13:49] "Not exactly business—or rather, if it is, it wouldn't take more than an hour or two," Mr. Schreed announced.

[00:13:55] "When did you think of going?"

[00:13:58] "Next week. They tell me they're running some tours from Paris out to the battlefields. The one that goes to Château Thierry would serve my purpose. The worst of it is I can't speak a word of the lingo."

[00:14:11] "It's dead easy," Mr. Cray observed. "I've been going to Paris too many years not to have picked up a bit."

[00:14:18] "You wouldn't care about a trip out with me, I suppose," Mr. Schreed suggested, "just in a friendly fashion, you understand, each paying his own dues?"

[00:14:29] "I don't know," Mr. Cray replied, cautiously. "Next week did you say you were going?"

[00:14:34] "I'm fixing it up to leave on Wednesday."

[00:14:37] "It's some trip," Mr. Cray said, thoughtfully.

[00:14:41] "A day or two in Paris wouldn't do us any harm," Mr. Schreed remarked, with a slow smile which degenerated into a leer.

[00:14:50] "We'll take a bite together at seven o'clock to-night," Mr. Cray decided, "and I'll let you know. I don't know as I can see anything to prevent my going, providing I can get accommodation. I might be able to help you with the language, too. Finish up in Holland, you said, eh?"

[00:15:08] "I don't know as you'd care to go up that far with me," Mr. Schreed said, doubtfully. "I sha'n't be stopping there, either. You might wait in Paris."

[00:15:19] Mr. Cray smiled beatifically.

[00:15:22] "Paris," he murmured. "Gee! I think I'll go, Schreed."

[00:15:28] Mr. Otto Schreed was both surprised and gratified at his companion's proficiency in the French language and his capacity for making travelling endurable. Their journey to Paris was accomplished under the most favourable circumstances, and by dint of a long argument and great tact the very inferior accommodation which had been secured for them was cancelled, and rooms with a small salon and bathrooms en suite provided at a well-known hotel. As a guide to Paris itself, except to the American bars and the restaurants pure and simple, Mr Cray was perhaps a little disappointing, but his companion himself, during those first few days, was restless and eager to be off on their quest. On the third day Mr. Cray announced their imminent departure.

[00:16:17] "Say, I've done better for you than these Cook's chars-a-bancs," he announced, triumphantly. "I've engaged a private car, and we can get out to Château Thierry, see the whole of that part of the line, visit the village you were speaking of, and get back before nightfall. Some hustle, what?"

[00:16:35] "Fine!" Mr. Schreed declared, showing every impatience to depart. "Does the man speak any English?"

[00:16:42] "I don't know as he does," Mr. Cray admitted; "but that don't matter any, I guess, as long as I'm around all the time." Mr. Schreed seemed a little disappointed.

[00:16:52] "How about making the inquiries in these small grocers' shops, or what you call them?"

[00:16:57] "I shall be along," Mr. Cray reminded him. "You can stand by my side and hear what they say."

[00:17:04] So the pilgrimage started. Mr. Cray felt a great silence creep over him as he stood once more on well-remembered ground. It was a bright day in early October, and the familiar landmarks for

many miles were visible. Behind that remnant of wood a thousand Americans had been ambushed. On the hillside there, a great mine had been sprung. Down in the valley below, the corpses of his countrymen had lain so thick that Mr. Cray found himself remembering that one awful night when every spare hand—he himself included—had been pressed into the stretcher-bearers' service. He grew more and more silent as they neared their journey's end. Mr. Schreed appeared to be a trifle bored.

[00:17:54] "Lutaples is the name of the village we want," he announced, as they began to pass a few white-plastered cottages.

[00:18:01] Mr. Cray nodded.

[00:18:03] "I know," he said, reminiscently. "Our canteen was in the hollow, just at the bottom there."

[00:18:09] "Our canteen?" Mr. Schreed repeated.

[00:18:13] "The American canteen," Mr. Cray explained. "I've been making inquiries for you. So far as I can gather, there was only one shop in Lutaples at the time, and it's up this end of the village. However, we'll soon find out all about it now."

[00:18:29] They stopped at a small estaminet, and here trouble nearly came, for no disguise could conceal from the warm-hearted little landlord the kindly, absurd fat man in tight uniform who had fed him and his wife and children and left them money behind to make a fresh start. Fortunately, however, Schreed had lingered behind, making a vain attempt to converse with the chauffeur, and Cray had time, in a few rapid sentences, to put a certain matter before his friend Pierre. So that when Schreed returned and took his seat by Cray's side before the marble table in the village street, Pierre was able to serve them with liqueurs and speak as though to strangers. Mr. Cray conversed with him for some time.

[00:19:18] "Well, what does he say?" Schreed asked eagerly, when he had gone in.

[00:19:23] "There was only one grocer's shop in the village at the time we were in occupation," Mr. Cray explained, "and the majority of the stores presented by the Americans were handed over to him for distribution. There's the store, plumb opposite—Henri Lalarge. Epicier."

[00:19:40] "That mean 'Grocer'?" Otto Schreed asked.

[00:19:44] "Some of it does. Let's be getting along."

[00:19:47] Mr. Cray led the way across the cobbled street. M. Lalarge was short, fat, and black-whiskered. As they entered his shop the landlord from the estaminet opposite issued from the back quarters.

[00:20:02] "What's he been doing over here?" Schreed demanded, suspiciously.

[00:20:06] Mr. Cray shrugged his shoulders.

[00:20:09] "I suppose these fellows all live on one another's doorsteps," he observed.

[00:20:13] The result of the landlord's visit, however, was that, although the tears of welcome glistened in the eyes of the warm-hearted M. Lalarge, he greeted the two men as strangers. Mr. Cray, having satisfied himself as to his companion's absolute ignorance of the language, talked fluently to the grocer in rapid French. Presently he appeared satisfied, and turned to Schreed.

[00:20:40] "He says he had fifty tins," he explained, "but they were distributed half an hour after he received them. The complaint was made from some of the villagers, and the unopened tins were returned and burned. There is a chemist's shop at the farther end of the village, where it would be as well to make inquiries. The chauffeur might take you there and I will explain to him what you want to ask for. Meanwhile, I will see the curé."

[00:21:08] Mr. Schreed saw nothing to object to in the arrangement, and drove off with the chauffeur. M. Lalarge, with the tears streaming down his cheeks, threw his arms round Mr. Cray and kissed him.

[00:21:22] "Heaven has brought you back!" he exclaimed. "Our deliverer—our Saint! But how thin—how wasted!"

[00:21:30] "Simply a matter of clothes, Henri my boy," Cray assured him. "Uncle Sam used to pinch us a bit tight about the loins. And now how goes it, eh?"

[00:21:40] "Thanks to the benevolence of monsieur, everything prospers," M. Lalarge declared. "His little loan—but give me time to write the cheque—it can be paid this moment."

[00:21:49] "Not on your life!" Mr. Cray replied, vigorously. "Not a franc, Henri. We both did good work, eh, when those guns were thundering, and dirty Fritz was skulking behind the hills there? Finished, Henri. I am a rich man, and what you call a loan was my little thank-offering. We did our best together for the poor people, you know."

[00:22:12] "But, monsieur—" the little grocer sobbed.

[00:22:15] "About those tins," Mr. Cray interrupted. "You have two?"

[00:22:19] "I kept them, monsieur," the man explained, "because I read in the paper that some day inquiry might be held into all these matters."

[00:22:27] "And an inquiry is going to be held," Mr. Cray declared. "What you have to do, Henri, is to pack those two tins securely and send them to me by registered post to the Ritz Hotel, Paris."

[00:22:39] "It shall be done, monsieur."

[00:22:40] "Were there any who died after eating the stuff?" Mr. Cray inquired.

[00:22:46] "Two," the little grocer answered. "They are buried in the civic cemetery. One has talked but little of these things. The Americans came as saviours, and this was an accident."

[00:22:58] Cray glanced down the street. His companion was still interviewing the e chemist.

[00:23:03] "One petit verre, Henri," he said, "for the sake of old times."

[00:23:08] M. Lalarge threw aside his apron.

[00:23:11] "And to drink to the great goodness of monsieur," he responded.

[00:23:16] Mr. Otto Schreed was in high good-humour that evening, on the way back to Paris. He insisted upon paying for a little dinner at the Ambassador's and a box at the Folies Bergères. He spent money freely, for him, and drank far more wine than usual. As he drank he expanded.

[00:23:35] "It is like a nightmare passed away," he confided to his companion. "I know now that no one else in the world will ever suffer because of that terrible mistake. There is not a single tin of the condemned beef in existence."

[00:23:50] "A load off your mind, eh?" Mr. Cray murmured.

[00:23:53] Mr. Schreed smiled a peculiar smile.

[00:23:57] "For more reasons than you know of, my friend," he confided. "Now my little trip to Holland, and after that I am a free man."

[00:24:05] "When are you off there?" his companion inquired.

[00:24:08] "The day after to-morrow—Thursday," was the prompt reply. "And, Cray—"

[00:24:14] "Something bothering you?" the latter remarked, as Schreed hesitated.

[00:24:18] "Just this, old fellow. My little trip to Holland is unimportant in its way, and in another sense it's a trip I want to do alone. Do you get me?"

[00:24:28] "Sure!" Mr. Cray replied. "I am no butter-in. There are some of the boys in this gay little burg I haven't had time to look up yet. When shall you be back?"

[00:24:39] "Monday," was the eager reply—"Monday, sure. I'll go alone then, Cray. I guess it would be better. But look here. Get together a few of your friends, and we'll have a little dinner the night of my return. At my expense, you understand. You've been very useful to me over here, and I should like to make you a little return. Ask anyone you please, and take a couple of boxes for any show you fancy. It isn't the way I live as a rule, but I've a fancy for making a celebration of it."

[00:25:09] "That's easy," Mr. Cray declared. "It shall be some celebration, I can tell you. We'll dine in the hotel here, and I promise there shall be one or two people you'll be interested to meet."

[00:25:24] So on the Thursday morning Mr. Otto Schreed started for Holland, and Mr. Joseph P. Cray, with a brown-paper parcel under his arm, set out to pay a few calls in Paris.

[00:25:37] When Mr. Otto Schreed made his punctual appearance in the hotel salon on Monday evening at a few minutes before eight he found Mr. Cray and three other guests awaiting him. Mr. Cray was busy mixing cocktails, so was unable to shake hands. He looked around and nodded.

[00:25:55] "Glad you're punctual, Schreed," he said. "Pleasant trip?"

[00:25:59] "Fine!"

[00:26:01] "Business turn out all right?"

[00:26:03] "Couldn't have been better. Won't you introduce me to these gentlemen, Cray?"

[00:26:07] "Sure!" Mr. Cray replied. "Gentlemen, this is Mr. Otto Schreed of Chicago—Colonel Wilmot, of the American Intelligence Department, Mr. Neville, of the same service, and Dr. Lemarten."

[00:26:23] "Delighted to meet you all, gentlemen," Mr. Schreed declared.

[00:26:26] His outstretched hand was uselessly offered. Neville and Colonel Wilmot contented themselves with a military salute. The Frenchman bowed. Mr. Schreed for the first moment was conscious of a vague feeling of uneasiness. He turned towards Cray, who was approaching with a little tray upon which were four cocktails.

[00:26:49] "Hope you've ordered a good dinner, Cray," he said, "and that these gentlemen are ready to do justice to it. Why, you're a cocktail short!"

[00:26:56] Colonel Wilmot, Mr. Neville, and Dr. Lemarten had each accepted a wineglass. Mr. Cray took the other one.

[00:27:04] "And, dash it all! the table's only laid for four!" Schreed continued, as he gazed with dismay at the empty silver tray. "Is this a practical joke?"

[00:27:15] Mr. Cray shook his head.

[00:27:18] "One of us," he confided, "is not having a cocktail. One of us is not dining. That one, Otto Schreed, is you."

[00:27:29] Schreed was suddenly pale. He backed a little towards the door, gripping the back of a chair with his hand.

[00:27:37] "Say, what the devil does this mean?" he demanded.

[00:27:42] "You just stay where you are and you shall hear," Mr. Cray replied, setting down his empty glass. "I worked out at that little village of Lutaples for the last year of the war—ran an American canteen there for the Y.M.C.A. I was there when your filthy beef was unloaded upon the boys. I saw their sufferings."

[00:28:06] "God!" Schreed muttered beneath his breath. "And you never told me!"

[00:28:11] "I never told you," Cray assented, "although I came pretty near telling you with an end of my fist that day at the luncheon club. Glad I didn't, now. When I tumbled to it that you were scared about any more of those tins being in existence I began to guess how things were. I came over with you to be sure you didn't get them. I got two tins from M. Lalarge, and a nice tale he had to tell me about the rest. Dr. Lemarten here analysed them and prepared a report. He's here to tell you about it."

[00:28:44] "The beef was poisoned," the Frenchman said, calmly. "My report has been handed to Colonel Wilmot."

[00:28:52] "It's a lie!" Schreed declared, trembling. "Besides, this matter has been dealt with. I have paid my fine. It is finished."

[00:29:00] "Not on your life," Mr. Cray replied. "Ten thousand tins of your bully beef, Otto Schreed, contained poison. No wonder you were glad to get out of it, as you thought, with a fine. Now we'll move on a step. You've just come back from Holland. You may not have known it, but Mr. Neville here, of the American Intelligence Department, was your fellow-passenger. You cashed five drafts at the Amsterdam Bank, amounting in all to something like five hundred thousand dollars of American money. Half of that went to your credit in London, the other half you've got with you. Blood-money, Otto Schreed—foul, stinking blood-money!"

[00:29:41] Schreed was on the point of collapse.

[00:29:43] "You have employed spies to dog me?" he shouted.

[00:29:47] "We don't call the officers of the American Intelligence Department spies," Mr. Cray observed, coldly.

[00:29:55] "Otto Schreed," Colonel Wilmot said, speaking for the first time, "I have a warrant for your arrest, and an extradition warrant from the French Government. You will leave for Cherbourg to-night and be taken back to New York."

[00:30:07] "On what charge?" Schreed faltered.

[00:30:10] "Political conspiracy—perhaps murder."

[00:30:13] Colonel Wilmot walked to the door and called in two men who were waiting outside. Schreed collapsed.

[00:30:20] "I've two hundred and fifty thousand dollars here," he shrieked. "Can't we arrange this? Cray! Colonel Wilmot!"

[00:30:29] The two men were obliged to drag him out.

[00:30:33] Mr. Cray moved to the window and threw it open.

[00:30:37] "What we want," he said, "is fresh air."

[00:30:40] Colonel Wilmot smiled.

[00:30:44] "He was a poisonous beast, Cray," he said, "but you've done a fine stroke of business for the United States Government, and we're anxious to drink your health."

[00:30:52] Two waiters, followed by a maître d'hôtel, were already in the room. The latter came forward and bowed.

[00:30:59] "Monsieur est servi," he announced.

[00:31:05] The End. Thank you for listening to Thrilling Tales, Storytime for Grownups. Please join us next week for another Thrilling Tale.