



S P O I L E R

Emmuska Orczy, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*

Chauvelin chases the Scarlet Pimpernel to France. Marguerite decides to go across as well, partially to warn her brother Armand and partially to atone for her actions (although her hand had been forced). Well, OK, she mainly goes across because she has discovered that her husband Percy is a much better actor than she gave him credit for, and now she realizes that she has just put both of the men she loves in dire danger. Sir Andrew Ffoulkes accompanies her as her lackey, and manages to hide her in an old inn in Calais that the hero is expected to visit. Chauvelin appears before Percy, however. When Percy gets there, he thinks quickly and betrays not an ounce of confusion. In fact Chauvelin, appearing ridiculous in his clerical disguise, is the one who is confused. His men cannot reach the inn before Percy cons him into taking a snort of pepper instead of snuff, and disappears. Chauvelin and his men, with Marguerite creeping in the bushes, take an old Jew's cart to the place where Armand and the Comte are known to be hiding. The French investigator indeed finds the fugitives in a shack, as well as the schooner *Day Dream* which was to take them across the channel, a little offshore. The Scarlet Pimpernel has not yet arrived, however, so the French lie in wait, with orders from Chauvelin to be still until he arrives, no matter what happens.

How are they to get out of this one? I must say the resolution occurred so quickly that I didn't really figure things out until my second reading of the relevant chapter. Then I spent nearly an hour going over events in the story and trying to figure out whether things could really have worked out in the way suggested. Perhaps Marguerite doesn't exactly save the day—she underestimated her husband perhaps—but we can forgive her for that, and laud her bravery! And the man himself, well, of course we whistle "God Save the Queen" with him as he walks away from the scene of his triumph.

