Stepping into the foyer of the Elderberry Hotel, I concealed myself behind one of the columns near the entrance, took the onion I had brought with me out of my pocket and cracked it in half. The strong smell immediately bit into my nose and brought tears to my eyes.	
Only with di iculty did I keep from sneezing. It took a while for my eyes to become significantly wet. Two or three times I checked in the large mirror on the wall. Did I look distressed enough yet? No, not quite. I needed to be really distraught.	782
Overwhelmed. Terrified. When I was finally satisfied with my appearance, I let the onion drop and kicked it into the nearest corner. With an audible sob I staggered out from behind the column near the entrance, as if I had just now come in.	129 0 25
It wasn't easy to stumble and stagger like a real damsel in distress on my way to reception. This kind of silly behaviour was kind of annoying. But I did a great job, if I do say so myself. By the time I had reached reception and clutched the counter in an apparently desperate e ort to keep myself upright, the man at reception had	a
In response, I gave him a pretty impressive heartbroken wail, and tottered precariously.	26 160
The receptionist was desperately trying to find a spot where he could grip me to support me without being improper. His eyes were wild, showing his panic and complete puzzlement about what to do with this female who had suddenly appeared in front of him. Finally, he hit on the perfect solution.	33 73
"Sarah! Hellen!" he called. But unfortunately, the female sta seemed to be out of hearing range. "I no, don't call anybody else, please," I begged him in a low whisper. Compassion and panic mingled in the face of the young man. My, my, I was pretty good. If Mr Ambrose kicked me out some day I could always try a career as an actress. "The shame is too great. Please, Sir, don't"	1 60
"Of course not, Miss, if it will distress you," the receptionist answered warmly. "Only tell me what is the matter with you, and how I can help you. Do you wish a room to rest? You look in need of rest." "No, I" Shaking my head, I pressed my clenched hands to my face, half-concealing my features, and wiping away a few of the tears that were running down my face. "I don't need a room. I came I came	a 43
to"	ส่ ส
"I can't reveal the secret to another living soul! What he has done it is too shameful. My lips will not form the words. What he has done No, I cannot tell you. Even if he is here" "Who, he?" demanded the young man. "Has somebody harmed you?"	498 0 22 0 22
	a a 262
front of me, "if one of our guests has behaved dishonourably to such a fine young lady as yourself, the honour of our house is in question. I must beg you, please, tell me who this man is and what he has done to you." I made a smile flicker across my face, with just the right amount of feminine feebleness and a pinch of sadness thrown in.	454
"You are too clever, too persistent for me, Sir. You are right. There is indeed a man I am looking for, a man who has done a grievous wrong. I have heard that he might be in this hotel, and have come in the hope of finding a gentleman willing to aid me. And now I have. Oh Sir, you have no Idea how great a pleasure it is for a weak girl such as myself to find that there are still strong and honourable men in the world, willing to stand up for what is right."	383
The receptionist's narrow chest swelled. I fluttered my moist eyelashes at him and it swelled some more. I briefly wondered whether he had a balloon and a pump hidden under his shirt. "Whatever wrong this man has done to you," he promised, his voice a bit deeper than it had been before, "I shall see to it that he gets what is coming to him."	.660 279
"Thank you Sir, Thank you!" I clutched his hand with both of mine and gave it a gentle, grateful squeeze. As if I had squeezed a trigger, his chest pu ed out a little more. Interesting. This seemed to be a reflex reaction, with the brain playing no part in the decision. Well, in what part of the male decision-making process did the brain ever play a part?	378
"Thank you," I repeated. "I shall be eternally grateful to you. But it is not to me that the wrong was done – it is to my sister." "Oh." The receptionist looked slightly crestfallen at this news, so I quickly ploughed on, giving him another sad smile. "Oh yes, my poor, innocent little sister. Dear Ophelia."	437 637
"She oh, I can't bring myself to say it. You must understand, Sir, she has been educated in a convent. She does not know the ways of men who are no gentlemen, who are not like you. You must not judge her	31 3 ¹
"What happened?" he gently inquired. "She she eloped. A man, staying in the village of the convent, enticed her with honeyed words, sweet words of love and eternal devotion. He said he would marry her."	ריי היי גריי
"How shocking!" "Oh no, Sir, the shocking part is yet to come. As I said – my sister is young, only sixteen years of age. She was deceived by his words."	ם ה ה ה
"When they had run away together, he he" I closed my eyes at this point. It seemed the right thing to do. A er all, I was in such terrible pain about my poor little sister Olivia. Or was it Olga? No, Ophelia right! "He used her, and then threw her away like a soiled handkerchief, le her at the first inn where they stopped and	a 40
"The devil!"	ื่อ ส์อื่ 10
The receptionist, overcome with his emotions and his manliness for a moment, stood there mute, holding my hand in silent support.	35 7 3 7 3 7 3 7 3 7 3 7 3 7 3 7 3 7 3 7
"And what is to become of your sister now?" He asked, a er a moment. "What will your father do?" "That is just the thing." Renewed tears sprang to my eyes – and I didn't even have to use another onion. I wasn't just good at this, I was top-hole! A natural talent! "We have not a father nor a mother, not even an uncle. We are all in the world, Ophelia and I, and have only each other?"	a° a
That was something I had pondered for quite a while before starting to put this little plan of mine into action. I mean, Lilly Linton? That didn't sound very romantic. It sort of clucked of the tongue, rebounded from the teeth and came shooting out of the mouth like canon fire. No. I needed a name with weight. With romance. So why	7 6
not let myself be inspired by romance? "Juliet," I said. "Miss Juliet Desdemona Bennet." "Miss Bennet, you have my sincerest condolences." He pressed my hand again, with all the masculinity he could muster. "Both for the death of your parents and the misfortune that has befallen you since. I stand in awe at your bravery, for I can see what has happened since. For love of your sister, you went out in search of this man, did you not? You, who had no one in the world, dared to go a er such a	a° 24ĸ
	ar ar ar
Oh boy. This was really working out nicely. Apparently I had delivered the first part of my performance so well that he was doing the rest of the job for me. So I just gave a shaky little nod. "He shall be brought before the magistrate!" the receptionist	a
"Oh no! No, Sir, I beg of you!" Quickly, I pressed his hand, which immediately caused some more chest-pu ing. Yes, apparently this was a male reflex and worked quite automatic. Fascinating. "If that were to happen, if the whole matter were to become public, my sister's honour would be forever ruined!"	å 173
"I intend to confront him. To force him to marry my sister a er all."	ซ ซ ซ
	338 6 6
	ີ ຕື ໄ
Most kind indeed. Now get on with it, before the onion stops workin The receptionist went back behind the counter and picked up the big book in which all the guests signed their names. "If you would be so good as to tell me his name, Miss?" "His name is Mr Simmons. But I doubt he would have used his real	an B
name to sign into your book. He knows he is being sought and will probably make use of an alias." "How clever of you!" the receptionist exclaimed. "I would never have thought of that." That, I believed.	36 51 576
"I can give you his description," I o ered. Finally we were getting to the interesting part. "My sister has told me exactly what he looks like. He has quite a distinctive appearance."	a a
people who check into our hotel, and it is part of my job to have a good memory for faces. I will certainly be able to tell you whether he	ď
A curious expression spread over the receptionist's face: a mixture of disappointment and relief. "Well, that is quite distinctive, Miss, and I can tell you right away that	ະ ເບັ ຜູ
trouble." "Wait a minute, Miss. What will you" "I suppose I will have to go look somewhere else now. Bye!"	³ ั า 3ั 3ั 3ั 3ั
tapping his foot on the ground. His fingers were unconsciously tracing some pattern on the lid. "And?" he asked, as soon as he saw me. "He's not here." "How do you know that?" he growled through clenched teeth.	ซ ี ชิ ชิ
	374 8 6 6 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8
law, what then do you intend to do?" the receptionist asked, concern in his voice. Gosh, it really was amazing how similar male minds were. "I intend to confront him. To force him to marry my sister a er all."	47 70 70 43 33
Hey, he had actually said 'by yourself' instead of 'alone'! So men were capable of some variety a er all! "I shall not be alone," I answered, sni ling. "There is a man – an old acquaintance of my father – who has promised to assist me. He	

cannot aid me in the search because he has his sick wife to take care	
of, but once I have found the miscreant, he has sworn he will come	
and place the man before the choice: to marry my sister or fight a duel to the death."	162
The receptionist nodded solemnly.	a
"Then all I can do is to find out whether or not you are right in supposing this man to be staying with us."	ď
"Indeed Sir," I said, blinking up at him tearfully, "that would be most kind."	đ
The receptionist went back behind the counter and picked up the big book in which all the guests signed their names. "If you would be so kind as to give me the man's name, Miss?"	ä
Yes, if you would be so kind as to do a handstand and a few pirouet for me! God, can none of you ever say anything really dierent? Men! All the same!	
"His name is Mr Simmons. But I doubt he would have used his real name to sign into your book. He knows he is being sought and will probably make use of an alias."	a ²
"How ingenious!" the receptionist exclaimed. "I would never have thought of that. But then how will we determine if he is here?"	398 0
Well, the same way I did it in the last twenty-five hotels, you dolt!	353 d
"I can give you his description," I o ered, having to restrain myself to keep from yawning. This was getting old. "My sister has told me exactly what he looks like. He has quite a distinctive appearance."	ສໍ
"Then please do." The receptionist nodded eagerly. "I see all the people who check into our hotel, and it is part of my job to have a good memory for faces. I will certainly be able to tell you whether he is here."	420 0
Yes, yes, of course you will Now can you stop blabbering so we ca get on with this?	n af
"Oh, I am so relieved." I put a trembling hand over my heart. "Thank you for your kindness, Sir. The man I am looking for is tall and gangly, with a long nose, long blonde hair and a thin moustache, and a scar over his right eyebrow."	່ຜ
Again, I had to suppress a yawn. Here we go again.	a⁵
A grim smile spread over the receptionist's face.	121
"Miss, I believe you have caught your villain! A man of just such a	
description is indeed staying under our roof at this very moment!"	2,7к а
	a
My Dear Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen,	a
I have a little literary quizz for you today: from which works did Lilly pinch her fake name(s) ? ;-) A piece of Victorian Solid	
Chocolate for anyone who can guess! :-)	464 d
Yours Truly	a
Sir Rob	a
	đ
Top-Hole: A (somewhat antiquated) British English expression for "excellent" /"awesome". It is another one of those rather archaic word which are slowly but surely vanishing from modern English vocabulary and which, in my humble opinion, really need to be revived! Isn't it just oojah-cum-spi that all of us completely	
spi ing ladies & gentlemen are working together to give the world back some of its most ton-hole forgotten expressions?	5 9

Continue reading next part

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world back some of its most top-hole forgotten expressions?