

The Questors Theatre Archives
Questories
7th New Plays Festival

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THRILLER CLIMAXES

I once found myself, arriving early for the second half of a double feature, sitting through the last five superbly incomprehensible minutes of "The Maltese Falcon."

"You thought Askopulos would take you with him to Istanbul," Humphrey Bogart was gritting, to my best recollection, over a table to a blenching Mary Astor, "but you didn't know he'd already collected the million from Astrov for killing Himmelweiss. Which meant there had to be someone behind Schwartz—a woman, perhaps!"

A similar experience must have inspired Malcolm Quantrill's **What Really Happened to Fidelity Hope?** a surreal collage of such thriller-climaxes which opens the Ealing Questors' festival of new plays.

In a number of inconsequent scenes, it crochets a violent pattern of conflicting fantasies around something unspeakable which happened to a British spinster on holiday in Crete. Was it or was it not rape, and if so why? The effect is of a number of thriller-writers competing in a New Statesman competition for the most far-fetched fragment explaining what really happened to E. M. Forster's heroine in the Marabar Caves. It's as funny in disjointedly brilliant bursts as such contests are, but the author takes too long to reveal that this is what he's up to and falls victim to the occupational risk of parody—it all seems more fun for him than for the audience.