

7 A Slight Case of Axident

by Lennie Lower

I shall always look back with pride on my career in the detective force. Bloodhound Lower they used to call me, and I can truthfully say that I deserved it. No one looks more like a bloodhound than I, unless it's a bloodhound.

I must tell you about one of my cases. I was called to a house in the city where I was told something serious had happened. Hastily donning a false beard and a limp I called at the house disguised as a bee-farmer. On disclosing my identity I was let into the house, and conducted to the scene of the mishap by the wife of the victim, Mrs Panky. On the floor of the study was a sight to put you off your haggis. In one corner of the room lay the legs of Mr Panky; in the other corner, on top of the wireless cabinet, was his head, and his arms were under a chair. I examined the pieces.

"I'm afraid, Mrs Panky," I said, "that your husband is in a bad way. I shouldn't be surprised if he was dead."

I was right, as it turned out. The only clue I could find was one fingerprint on the desk. I scraped this off and placed it carefully in an envelope. I then searched the room for a hair. Not one solitary hair could I find. I could find no cigarette butts in the grate either. I had then to look for a man who had only one finger, was bald, and did not smoke. The table was three feet from the floor, showing that the miscreant must have been at least two feet high in order to reach up and leave his fingerprint on it. The description was circulated to all stations.

After that I went through the house with a fine toothcomb, which I invariably carried for the purpose. My colleagues used to say to me, "Why do you always carry a fine toothcomb, Bloodhound?" I would reply, "I keep it to go through houses with," and they would say, "Houses like that ought to be fumigated," but I would just smile my slow, inscrutable smile, and go on my own inscrutable way.

While combing the chimney in the study I found a blood-

slight small
case tilfælde, sag
axe økse
accident ulykke
pride stolthed
de' serve fortjene
serious alvorlig
don put on
limp halten
dis' guise forklæde
dis' close røbe
con' duct føre
mishap ulykke
victim offer
put one off få én til at
miste appetitten
haggis skotsk mad (ret
lavet af indvolde kogt
sammen i en færemave)
wireless radio
in a bad way har det
dårligt
clue spor
envelope konvolut
solitary only
butt skod
grate kamin
bald without hair
miscreant den skyldige
des' cription beskrivelse
circulate offentliggøre,
sende rundt
toothcomb tættekam
in' variably always
purpose formål
fumigate desinficere med
røg
in' scrutable
uudgrundelig
chimney skorsten

soot sod →
flash lyn →



stained axe half-way up. I again examined the body. It had soot on it!

In a flash I knew all. While toying with the axe in his study Panky had accidentally cut his head off. The bloodlust had gripped him, and he proceeded to cut his arms off and then his legs. Sanity returned, and, horrified at what he had done, and afraid of the stigma of suicide being attached to his hitherto honourable name, he had then hidden the axe in the chimney.

But what about the fingerprint, you ask? I will admit that at first this had me puzzled. I took the thing out of the envelope, and tried it on everyone in the house. It didn't fit one of them. Then I had another flash of inspiration. I tried it on myself and it fitted!

I was aghast. Could I have done this foul thing in a moment of abstraction? I hastily turned up my diary. No, my time was fully accounted for. At the time the thing happened I was in an hotel bar ordering the customers out because it was after closing time. I remembered distinctly that I was in that hotel ordering people out for about four hours. I decided, after long

toy play
acci' dentally by chance
pro'ceed go on
sanity fornuft
horrihy shock
stigma skamplet
suicide killing oneself
at' tach forbinde
hitherto until now
honourable ærefuld
ad' mit indrømme
puzzle forvirre
fit passe
a'ghast dybt chokeret
foul forførdelig
ab' straction åndsfraværelse
diary kalender, dagbog
ac' count for gøre rede for
customer kunde





consideration, that the best thing to do about the fingerprint was to say nothing about it. Let them, I said to myself, cling to their myth that no two fingerprints are alike.

I put in my report, and some days later a verdict was returned, 'Wilful Suicide by Some Person or Persons Unknown.' So ended the Panky case.

considera'tion

overvejelse

verdict kendelse, dom

wilful overlagt

1. Describe the case. How would you have gone about solving (:løse) it?
2. Tell what the detective does. Try to explain the different things he does (donning the disguise, looking for certain clues).
3. How would you explain to him that he was on the wrong track?
4. What signs are there in his story that he is not a very good detective?
5. Why has the story been written like this?
How would a murder like this normally be solved? You might try to write a proper story about it.

