

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 tooth-comb, which I invariably carried for the purpose. My colleagues used to say to me, "Why do you always carry a fine tooth-comb, 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 fåremave)
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* →



ght small
 se tilfælde, sag
 ø økse
 ident ulykke
 ide stolthed
 'serve fortjene
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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
 horrify shock
 stigma skamplet
 suicide killing oneself
 at' tach forbinde
 hitherto until now
 honourable ærefuld
 ad' mit indrømme
 puzzle forvirre
 fit passe
 a' ghash dybt chokeret
 foul forfærdelig
 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.

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.

considera'tion
overvejelse
verdict kendelse, dom
wilful overlagt

