

made our way back to Baker street. It was not until after dinner that Holmes came back to the subject.

"Our little problem draws to a close," said he. "No doubt you have outlined the solution in your own mind."

"I can make neither head nor tail of it."

"The head is surely clear enough, and the tail we should see tomorrow. Did you notice nothing curious about that advertisement?"

"I saw that the word 'plough' was misspelt."

"Oh, you did notice that, did you? Come, Watson, you improve all the time. Yes, it was bad English but good American. The printer had put it up as received. Then the bookboards. That is American also. And artesian wells are commoner with them than with us. It was a typical American advertisement, but purporting to be from an English firm. What do you make of that?"

"I can only suppose that this American lawyer put it in himself. What his object was I fail to understand."

"Well, there are alternative explanations. Anyhow, he wanted to get this good old fossil up to Birmingham."

"That is very clear, I might have told him that he was clearly going on a wild-goose chase, but, on second thought, it seemed better to clear the stage by letting him go. Tomorrow, Watson, well, tomorrow will speak for itself."

Holmes was up and out early. When he returned at lunch time I noticed that his face was very grave.

"This is a more serious matter than I had expected, Watson," said he. "It is fair to tell you so, though I know it will only be an additional reason to you for running your head into danger. I should know my Watson by now. But there is danger, and you should know it."

"Well, it is not the first we have shared, Holmes. I hope it may not be the last. What is the particular danger this time?"

"We are up against a very hard case. I have identified Mr. John Garrideb, counselor at law. He is none other than 'Killer' Evans of sinister and murderous reputation."

"I fear I am none the wiser."

"Ah, it is not part of your profession to enquire about a portable Newgate Calendar in your memory. I have been down to see friend Leestrade at the Yard. There may be an occasional want of imaginative intuition down there, but they lead the world for thoroughness and method. I had an idea that we might get on the track of our American friend in their records. Sure enough, I found his chubby face smiling at me from the Rogues' Portrait Gallery. 'James Winter, alias Morecroft, alias Killer Evans,' was the inscription below." Holmes drew an envelope from his pocket. "I scribbled down a few points from his dossier. AG#44. Native of Chicago. Known to have shot three men in the States. Escaped from penitentiary through political influence. Came to London in 1893. Man died, but he was shown to have been the aggressor in the row. Dead man was identified as Rodger Presbury, famous as forger and collier in Chicago. Killer Evans released in 1901. Has been under police supervision since, but as far as known has led an honest life. Very dangerous man, usually carries arms and is prepared to use them. That is our bird, Watson—a sporting bird, as you must admit."

"But what is his game?"

"Well, it begins to define itself. I have been to the horse agents. Our client, as he told us, has been there five years. It was unlet for a year before then. The previous account was a scoundrel at large named Waldron. Waldron's appearance was well remembered at the office. He had suddenly vanished, and nothing more has been heard of him. He was a tall, bearded man with

very dark features. Now, Presbury, the man whom Killer Evans had shot, was according to Scotland Yard, a tall, dark man with a beard. As a working hypothesis, I think we may take it that Presbury, the American criminal, used to live in the very room which our innocent friend now devotes to his museum. So at least we get a link, you see?"

"And the next link?"

"Well, we must go now and look for that."

He took a revolver from the drawer and handed it to me.

"I have my own little derringer, small but effective. If our Wild West friend tries to live up to his nickname, we must be ready for him. I'll give you an hour for a steat, Watson, and then I think it will be time for our Ryder street adventure."

It was just 4 o'clock when we reached the curious apartment of Nathan Garrideb. Mrs. Saunders, the caretaker, was about to leave, but she had no hesitation in admitting us, for the door shut with a spring lock and Holmes promised to see that all was safe before we left. Shortly afterward

the outer door closed, her bonnet passed the bow window, and we knew that we were alone in the lower floor of the house.

Holmes made a rapid examination of the premises. There was one cupboard in a dark corner which stood out a little from the wall. It was behind this that we eventually crouched, while Holmes in a whisper outlined his intentions.

"He wanted to get our amiable friend out of his room—that is very clear, and as the collector never went out it took some planning to do it. The whole of this Garrideb invention was apparently for no other end. I must say, Watson, that there is a certain devilish ingenuity about it, even if the queer name of the tenant did give him an opening which he could hardly have expected. He wove his plot with remarkable cunning."

"But what did he want?"

"Well, that is what we are here to find out. It has nothing whatever to do with our client, so far as I can read the situation. It is something connected with the man he murdered—the man who may have been his confederate in crime. There is some guilty secret in the room. That is how I read it. At first I thought our friend might have something in his collection more valuable than he knew—something worth the attention of a big criminal. But

the fact that Rodger Presbury of evil memory inhabited these rooms points to some deeper reason. Well, Watson, we can but possess our souls in patience and see what the hour may bring."

That hour was not long in striking.

We crouched closer in the shadow as we heard the outer door open and shut. Then came the sharp metallic snap of a key and the American was in the room. He closed the door softly behind him, took a sharp glance around him to see that all was safe, threw off his overcoat, and walked up to the central table with the brisk manner of one who knows exactly what he has to do and how to do it. He pushed the table to one side, tore up the square of carpet on which it rested, rolled it completely back, and then, drawing a jimmy from his inside pocket, knelt down and worked vigorously upon the floor. Presently we heard the sound of sliding boards, and an instant later a square had opened in the planks. Killer Evans struck a match, lit a stump of candle, and vanished from our view.

Clearly our moment had come. Holmes touched my wrist as a signal, and together we stole across to the open trapdoor.

He had ripped up my trousers with his pocket knife.

"You are right," he cried, with an immense sign of relief. "It is quite superficial!" His face set like flint as he glared at our prisoner, who was sitting up with a dazed face. "By the Lord, it is as well for you. If you had killed Watson, you would not have got out of this room alive. Now, sir, what have you to say for yourself?"

He had nothing to say for himself. He only lay and scowled. I leaned on Holmes's arm, and together we looked down into the small cellar, which had been disclosed by the secret flap. It was still illuminated by the candle which Evans had taken down with him. Our eyes fell upon a mass of rusted machinery, great rolls of paper, a litter of bottles, and, neatly arranged upon a small table, a number of neat little bundles.

"A printing press—a counterfeiter's outfit," said Holmes.

"Yes, sir," said our prisoner, staggering slowly to his feet and then sinking into the chair. "The greatest counterfeiter London ever saw. That's Presbury's machine, and those bundles on the table are two thousand of Presbury's notes worth a hundred each and fit to pass anywhere. Help yourselves, gentlemen. Call it a deal and let me go."

Holmes laughed. "We don't do things like that, Mr. Evans. There is no bolt hole for you in this country. You shot this man, Presbury, did you not?"

"Yes, sir, and got five years for it, though it was he who pulled on me. Five years—when I should have had a medal the size of a soup plate. No living man could tell a Presbury from a Bank of England, and if I hadn't put him out he would have flooded London with them. I was the only one in the world who knew where he made them. Can you wonder that I wanted to get to the place? And can you wonder that when I found this crazy boob of a bug hunter with the queer name squatting right on the top of it and never quitting his room, I had to do the best I could to shift him. Maybe I would have been wiser if I had put him away. It would have been easy enough, but I'm a soft-headed guy that can't begin shooting unless the other man has a gun also. But say, Mr. Holmes, what have I done wrong, anyhow? I've not used this plant. I've not hurt this old stiff. Where do you get me?"

"Only attempted murder, so far as I can see," said Holmes. "But that's not our job. They take that at the next stage. What we wanted at present was just your sweet self. Just give the Yard a call, Watson. It won't be entirely unexpected."

So those were the facts about Killer Evans and his remarkable invention of the three Garridebs. We heard later that our poor old friend never got over the shock of his dissipated dreams. When his castle in the air fell, it buried him beneath the ruins. He was last heard of at a nursing home in Brighton.



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