

## *Solving A Mystery*

“Mr. Brent, sir.”

“Show him in, John.”

The servant withdrew and ushered in a tall, dark featured, sharp looking man, who bowed as he entered.

“Be seated, sir,” and Mr. Colton pointed to a chair and threw down his paper. “You are Mr. Brent, the detective, I presume—the gentleman I have sent for?”

“I am that gentleman, sir, and completely at your service,” and the sharp looking man seated himself.

“I’ve got some work for you to do, Mr. Brent,” began Mr. Colton, the banker, “and, as you bear an excellent reputation for solving mysteries and hunting down criminals, I’ve no doubt but that you’ll be successful in this case.”

“I hope so, sir,” replied Mr. Brent, in a quiet manner.

“Well, now to tell you what I want solved,” and the banker coughed, drew his chair nearer to the detective, and began in a low tone of voice, while Mr. Brent was all attention.

“You must know, Mr. Brent, that for the past two weeks large sums of money have been missing from my safe, which stands in my reading room, up stairs, the window of which room leads out on a small balcony which overhangs our back garden. Day and night the windows of that room have been securely bolted and locked, and so with the door, save when I am in there reading. In the safe that stands there I have had deposited, for the past two weeks, a large amount of money, all gold, sir; and since the night I put it there it has been abstracted – not altogether, Mr. Brent, but \$300 or so at a time. I have striven to unveil the mystery, but failed.”

“Yes,” is all that Mr. Brent remarks, in his quiet way.

“Now, who can be this thief?” Mr. Colton continued. “Who can it be that purloins this money from my safe, which I always find relocked after the money has been taken?”

Mr. Brent is silent; his sharp eyes are bent on the floor; he is in deep thought.

“Who are the occupants of your house, sir?” the detective at length asks.

“Two old and trusted servants, whose honesty lies beyond the shadow of a doubt, and Richard, my son.”

“Ah—yes!” is what Mr. Brent says. “Have you visitors often?”

“No, sir,” replies the old banker; “that is, I mean, very seldom since my wife died.”

Mr. Brent coughed behind his hand, and then said:

“Could you call up your two servants, sir?”

“Certainly,” and the banker put his hand on the bell cord.

Mr. Brent stopped him quickly.

“Excuse me, Mr. Colton,” he said, “but call them up on some excuse. Don’t let them know our business, sir.”

Mr. Colton nodded his head and pulled the bell cord.

The summons was answered by the old man who had shown Mr. Brent in.

“Any letters, John, today?” the banker asked, while the detective eyed the man closely.

“No, sir. None as yet.”

“Very well, John. By the bye, send your wife in, won’t you, when you go down stairs?”

The old servant bowed his head and withdrew, while Mr. Brent quietly said, looking at the banker:

“That man’s honest.”

His wife, an old, gray haired woman, now made her appearance.

“Mrs. Thompson, you’ll have mutton today for dinner, won’t you?”

“If that’s your wish, of course, sir,” respectfully answered Mrs. Thompson, and a moment after she left the room, wondering in her own mind why that gentleman with her master stared at her so.

“That’s an honest woman,” was Mr. Brent’s conclusion.

At that instant a young man, perhaps five-and-twenty, entered the room in his slippers and passed across the room to a shelf of books, some of which he took down, and then went out of the room and up the staircase.

Mr. Brent had eyed him keenly.

“Who is that young gentleman?” he asked after he had gone.

“That is my son, Richard—quite a studious boy, sir.”

Mr. Brent arose from the chair, coughed and picked up his hat, remarking:

“I shall call here early in the evening, Mr. Colton, and stay all night.”

“You have some hope of solving this mystery, then?” inquired Mr. Colton.

“Well, yes, I guess I can clear it up a little—at least I’ll try. Can’t do any more, eh?”

So Mr. Brent, the detective, took his departure, promising to come again in the evening.

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Ten o’clock at night.

The detective had arrived at the banker’s residence an hour before, and both were together in the former’s bed chamber, as we draw up the curtains on this, the second scene of our little drama.

There was a night lamp in the room, but it was turned low, and at the side of the table where it stood were seated Mr. Colton and the detective.

The room of the banker was situated in the rear of the house and opened into the reading room, where the safe stood, from which the banker’s gold had so mysteriously disappeared lately.

“Ain’t you going to bed, Mr. Colton?” the detective asked.

“I don’t think I shall. If I ain’t in your way I don’t mind sitting up, too. Something tells me that we shall make a discovery tonight.”

The front door below opened now, and a man’s footstep was heard ascending the staircase and walking across the corridor, then opening a door, entered the room and closed the door.

“That’s your son coming in?” Mr. Brent asks in a low voice.

“Yes,” the banker responds, in an equally low voice; “he attends lectures in the city university twice a week—ah Mr. Brent, he is a most studious and learned young man.”

Eleven o’clock, and the banker and detective are still waiting for the burglar.

You could hear a pin drop in the house at this time; even the street outside seemed sleeping.

Mr. Colton, the banker, is dozing in his easy chair.

Mr. Brent, the detective, has never closed his eyes, nor has he any notion of doing so.

He sits there in his chair facing the partly open door of the reading room, wherein is the banker's safe, and his eyes—his sharp, owl-like eyes—are fixed on that door, and he is on the alert to catch the faintest sound.

For another hour they watch, and 12 strikes at last.

Ten minutes after Mr. Brent's ears catch a strange sound, and he rises quietly to his feet, and as quietly strides across the room and reaches the door of the reading room.

A lamp also burns on the mantel of this room, and it is also turned down quite low, leaving the chamber in semi-darkness.

Mr. Brent hears a sound, and looking through the crack of the door beholds the oak door of the banker's reading room open, and a white robed form enter, with a small night lamp in his hand.

The banker at this instant awakes, and, seeing where the detective is, walks cautiously toward him.

The detective turns, puts his finger to invoke silence, and, the banker coming up, he points to the reading room, where the white robed form is standing.

"It is my son," hoarsely whispers Mr. Colton, his face turning an ashy pale and his limbs trembling.

"Hush – not a word above your breath," commanded Mr. Brent, in a deep whisper, "but watch."

Their eyes were now centered on the form of the banker's son in his night robes, as he set down his lamp on the reading table, and tried the safe with a key he had in his hand.

But the banker had had the lock and turn of the safe altered that day, and the banker's son, after trying for some time to open it, gave a pitiful moan, and arose.

"The wretch," hissed the pale banker, "it is he who has been robbing me. My God, that I should call that villain my son."

The detective's uplifted finger caused him to pause.

The banker's son, arising from his fruitless endeavors to open his father's safe, again took up his lamp and looked around, then walked over to his father's library—it was not locked—and took from thence a small wooden box—brought it to the table—all the time moaning—and then sat down, his back to those whose eyes were on him, and opened the little box.

From out it they saw him take half a dozen gold pieces and lay them, one by one, on the table, count them again and again, and then again pile them up into one high heap in the center of the table, and arising from his seat left them there, and taking up his lamp turned around, and the

banker and the detective for the first time saw the face of the midnight visitor as he turned around.

“That is no burglar, sir,” whispered Mr. Brent in the banker’s ear. “That son of yours is not robbing you, nor has he been.”

“What do you mean?”

“Why, that he’s walking in his sleep, and while in that condition has opened your safe.”

The banker’s astonishment was unbounded at this discovery.

The detective was right.

On walked the sleep walker out of the room, across the corridor and into his own room.

The mystery of the disappearing gold was now solved.

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