

Y. Zimmermann
by Richard Anderson

It was in the summer of 1863 that I first became acquainted with Mr. Zimmermann. The acquaintance never ripened into friendship. Just as we were beginning to know each other fully, his naturally retiring disposition asserted itself, and the treasures of a remarkable experience were only partially revealed to me. He was a man of decided character and originality, of whom many intelligent persons would be glad to know more.

The circumstances under which I met him were very peculiar. So far as they only concern Y. Z. and myself, I will relate them without reserve; but there are “reasons of state,” or reasons of city rather, for being a little indefinite in regard to some of the persons and places connected with the story.

At the time I have mentioned (1863), I was private secretary to the mayor of ——, one of the largest seaboard cities in the United States. Whatever importance the office had, was due mainly to the war in which the country was then engaged. The mayor was expected to keep a fatherly eye on all his patriotic subjects who went forth to do battle or draw their bounties. If Mrs. Moroney failed to receive her letters and remittances regularly from Private Moroney, she came to “His Honor” about it; and when an aggravated case of neglect was shown, an official letter was sent to the captain of the company in which Private P. Moroney was serving, inquiring after the welfare of that item to the credit of the city’s quota. Or if that noble defender himself became anxious about his family, he employed his leisure time in writing letters to the mayor. Moroney, having been a member of several organizations which annually brandished a dinner knife in the face of the British lion, had a taste for eloquence of the Grattan and O’Connell style. As his opportunities for displaying this taste were somewhat limited in the army, he could not resist the temptation, when addressing a civil officer at a safe distance, of occasionally exhibiting his brilliant powers. He made the English language creak under his pen. The mayor stood to him as the purse-proud majority of the House of Commons. While he was undergoing frightful privations, and daily drenching himself in the enemy’s blood, “His Honor and his proud satellites” were revelling in security and luxury at home.

As for myself, one of the proud satellites referred to, I felt, when I saw the big bundle of letters brought into the office on a fine summer morning, that I should prefer to wrestle with the enemy in open field than to revel in the contents of the mailbag at home. The sight of letters became as obnoxious to me as to Sir John Ellesmere. The only ones in which I took any interest were those which the late King of Siam would have described as “gloomily mysterious”—the anonymous letters which did not call for an answer.

Great numbers of these letters were received just after the riot in New York and the attempt at a riot in Boston. Warnings of diabolical plots to destroy the city and the shipping by fire, to blow up the City Hall, the Custom House, and the armories, were received almost daily from "The Avenger," "A Conspirator," or "A Friend."

One morning in the latter part of July the mayor handed me a pile of open letters, and calling my attention to one of them, said with a smile, "The price of plots appears to be going up." Although he had not marked the letter to be answered or attended to in any way, I naturally selected it to read first. It was written on a half sheet, which appeared to have been handled a good deal. The writing was as delicate as a woman's, and showed that the pen was held by a nervous hand. I looked at the signature; it was *Y. Zimmermann*. That is an improvement, I thought, on the stereotyped "Y. Z." or "X. Y. Z."; it shows that the writer is not entirely a fool.

I have since lost the letter, and can give only the substance of it from recollection. It was postmarked at Montreal, but the place at which it was written was not given. The writer stated that he was a citizen of Virginia; that he had been in the Confederate army, first as a common soldier, afterwards as a recruiting officer, and latterly as a member of the secret service organization; that while in Canada he had been approached by certain persons who wanted his assistance in carrying out a scheme by which the industrial and commercial interests of this city would be destroyed at a blow. He had been forced, he said, by the circumstances in which he was placed, to appear to enter into the plot but he only awaited an opportunity to warn those who were threatened and to give up these cutthroats, who were no Southerners, but Northern roughs. He was without money, however, and if he divulged the plot there was no safety for him on this side of the Atlantic.

And then came his proposition. On a certain day which he designated (about a week after the date of the letter) he would meet a confidential representative of the mayor at — Junction, Canada East, on the Grand Trunk Railroad. The person sent must go to the Russell Hotel, within a few rods of the station, register his name as B. Jacobs, ask for a room, and go to it immediately. The writer should call upon him there, and, after giving satisfactory proofs of the danger which threatened the city, he would require the payment of \$35,000 in gold on account. On this he would furnish all the details of the plot, so as to enable the city not only to frustrate it, but to secure the persons of those concerned. He would then proceed directly to Quebec, and on the following day a further sum of \$40,000 in gold must be deposited at a certain banking house in that city in season for him to draw it and take the steamer which would leave that day for Europe. That was the substance of the letter. For the trifling sum of \$75,000 in gold, Mr. Zimmermann would save the city from a loss of many millions. The statement of the circumstances which had led him to make the proposition, was very plausible; and the proposition itself was made in a business-like way, that was intended to be attractive to the official mind.

To appreciate the impression which the writer hoped to produce, it is necessary to recall the condition of affairs at that time. The recent enforcement of the draft had made the war very unpopular among a large class of poor people, and had led to serious outbreaks in many places. The papers were full of reports about mysterious plots to destroy the Northern cities by fire or by some frightful invention known only to the dark conspirators.

There was a good deal of anxiety on the part of our city authorities as to their ability to keep the revolutionary element under control. A home guard was organized; the police force was largely increased; Spencer rifles were placed in the station houses, and a secret alarm was proposed to call the members of the force together in case of emergency. There was a general feeling of restlessness and insecurity. The wildest stories of contemplated outrages by Southern emissaries and Northern “plug-uglies” were received with credit.

It was on this feeling that Y. Z. had counted to secure attention to his proposition. He showed bad judgment, however, in addressing the representative of a large city, as communications of a similar character were too common to attract particular attention. If he had sent such a letter to the selectmen of a manufacturing town in the interior, it would, in the existing state of affairs, have produced serious alarm, and perhaps led to negotiations. As it was, the mayor merely glanced over the letter and found its contents amusing rather than fearful. The idea of sending a man to meet the writer would have appeared to him as simply idiotic.

I was intending to leave the city in the following week to spend a fortnight’s vacation in Canada, and as I should pass — Junction, it occurred to me that it would be a pleasant little excitement to call upon Y. Z. and have some conversation with him. By leaving a day later than I had purposed, I could keep the appointment and not interfere with my plans for making a trip up the Saguenay River.

I was thinking the matter over when the Chief of Police came in to make his morning report. I passed the paper to him without comment, and watched to see the effect. He was too much preoccupied to take it in fully. He went over it hastily, and said with a laugh, as he returned it, “I’ll get up a plot for less money.”

“What sort of a man do you suppose he is?” I said.

“A confidence man, or a bounty jumper; an adventurer of some sort, you may be sure.”

“I’m going up that way next week for my vacation,” I continued, “and I’ve half a mind to drop in on Y. Z. and chaff him a little.”

“You’d better confine your chaffing to people you know,” said the chief, as he went out.

I was a young man then, “of imagination all compact”; and as I was neither “a lover” nor “a poet,” I must have been a lunatic. By dwelling upon the peculiarities of the handwriting and the composition my curiosity became excited at last to such a degree that I determined to leave the city in time to keep the appointment if I should feel like it on arriving at the place designated. No answer was required by Y. Z. He would be at the Russell Hotel on such a day, at such an hour, and he confidently expected to meet someone there authorized to pay for his information.

On the day before I was to start, I stepped into the police office and said to the chief:

“Good-by, old fellow. I’m off for my vacation. If I find that Y. Z.’s plot includes blowing up the police stations, I’ll send a despatch to you.”

“What!” he said with a look of surprise, “you don’t mean to say you are going to meet the man who wrote the anonymous letter you showed me the other day?”

“Why not? I purpose to have a little fun with him.”

“Have you got the letter?”

I took it from my pocket and handed it to the chief. He read it through very slowly and carefully, held a magnifying glass over the signature a moment, and then returned it to me.

[“]Well,” I said, “what do you think of it?”

“I think you had better not have anything to do with the writer of that letter,” was the reply.

“Take my advice, ‘don’t play with edge tools.’”

The advice was not well-received. I replied that I thought I should know a rascal or an adventurer before I had talked with him a great while; that I had no fear of getting into trouble, because I intended to be very agreeable to the gentleman; that I would give him a good cigar, a drink from my flask, and make him laugh over the absurdity of his own proposition before I had been with him an hour.

“Don’t say anything to the Syndic,” I added, “as he might be vexed. I shall not use the office to cover me under any circumstances.”

“Perhaps you’ll think better of it,” said the chief, “by the time you get started. Anyway, I hope you’ll have a good time, and not come home before your vacation is over with a broken head and empty pockets.”

I started on the following morning; and late in the evening I was standing on the platform at ——— unction, feeling more like going to bed than having an interview with a mysterious stranger. I half regretted that I had said so much to the chief about it. Under the circumstances, it seemed to me that I could not withdraw from the adventure without being considered deficient in pluck. If the fellow turns out to be a bore, or makes himself unpleasant, I thought, I can put him off until morning and go to bed. With that idea, and without any other very definite idea of what I would do or say, I picked up my valise and inquired the way to the house designated for the meeting. It was a small country tavern, very old and very frowzy. It looked as though it might have had a local celebrity in stage-coaching times, but now it smelt of decay and “navy plug” burnt in clay pipes. The office and bar occupied one room. Several men were sitting [or] lounging listlessly about the room as I entered; and a man with a leather traveling bag in one hand was looking over the dirty, dog’s-eared register at the desk.

In reply to my request for a room, a bloated young man behind the bar gave the finishing touch to a “cold whiskey with,” handed me a pen, and motioned to the register. The man with the bag surrendered the book, and I had made the first letter of my real name before it occurred to me that on this occasion my name was “B. Jacobs.” As the stranger appeared to be looking at me, I dashed off the assumed name with apparent carelessness, and stated that I would go directly to my room. As I shoved the book back on the desk, the stranger took it up, looked at the name I had written, and said, “I guess you may give me a room.”

I immediately came to the conclusion that this was my man; and I looked him over critically as he wrote his name. He was short and rather thickset. His dress was surprisingly like the ordinary dress of persons in my own city. I have a good memory for faces, and it seemed to me that I had seen that face before. The remembrance was very vague, however, and it did not impress me. He had heavy, brown whiskers of the English cut, hair of a lighter hue cut close, and a pair of dark eyes, small and very restless. He is no Southerner, I thought; and his whiskers have an artificially perfect look.

As I lighted my candle I glanced at the name he had written. It was an ordinary name, which I have since forgotten. I did not expect he would put a name as Y. Zimmermann on the register, as it would have excited attention from its peculiarity.

The bloated young man kindly offered to show both of us to our rooms. The other man desired a postponement of that civility, so far as he was concerned, as he “proposed to have a little smoke before turning it in”; and he proceeded to carry his proposition into execution by producing a small meerschaum pipe.

My room was on the second floor. I looked at the numbers of the other rooms as I passed along the passage, and noticed that the other guest had a room directly opposite mine.

Would I have anything to eat? inquired the young man. No, I would not have anything to eat. I would have some beer, though—a good-sized pitcher full.

The room was not inviting, and I felt that I was not having as much fun as I had anticipated. I thought I would drink beer enough to enable me to sleep in the unpleasant place, after I had got through with Y. Z.

The beer was brought, and while I was engaged in removing the cinders from my eyes and ears, there was a knock at the door. I requested the knocker in a powerful and aggressive tone to come in. I fully expected to see the brown whiskers enter; but instead, there entered quietly, almost stealthily, a tall, dark man, who closed the door instantly behind him, and stood looking at me without saying a word.

The appearance of the man, and his theatrical manner of entering the room, gave me a start. I had an unmistakable feeling, extending from the roots of my hair downwards, that I was in the presence of Y. Z., and that he was more of a man than I had expected. Without stopping to think about the manner in which it would be best to conduct the interview on my part, I adopted the one which came to me naturally, and acted upon it without hesitation. Giving my face a parting rub with the towel, I went up to the man, took him by the hand with a good appearance of cordiality, smiled amiably, and said: “I suppose you are the gentleman I came to meet—Mr. Zimmermann?”

My promptness rather took him aback, I fancied; and it gave me a feeling of confidence that I had the lead. Instead of replying directly to my question, he smiled very slightly and said, after a moment’s pause, “I am probably the person you expected to meet. Do you represent the mayor of _____?”

“It is to see you about the matter contained in your letter sent from Montreal last week that I am here,” I said. “But excuse me, take a seat and have a cigar and beer, or something stronger if you prefer. As we are likely to have a pretty long talk, we might as well make ourselves comfortable.”

“Thank you,” he said, taking the offered chair and cigar, “but I won’t take anything to drink just now. Do I understand that you are prepared to comply with the proposition made in the letter you mentioned?”

“I cannot say what I am prepared to do,” I answered, “until I know the value of the information you are able to offer.”

“Do you expect me to tell you the whole story and leave you to pay me with thanks? No, sir! When I place the means in your hands to put a stop to this infernal plot, my only safety lies in getting across the water without delay; and to get across the water I must have money.”

“Now let us understand each other,” I said. “You claim to have information in regard to a plot to destroy property in the city of——. You ask a certain price for that information. I decline to say whether the price will be paid or not, until I know what the information is based upon. You might make up a dozen ingenious plots without any foundation, and offer what you would call proofs of their genuineness. I want to see the proofs, and then I can tell what they are worth.” He got up, lighted his cigar from the candle, and took two or three turns across the room before he said anything in reply. I did not notice it particularly then, but I remembered afterwards that he looked rather curiously at my valise as he passed it. As I had looked him over pretty thoroughly by this time. I may as well describe him here.

He was about thirty-five years of age, tall (at least six feet, I thought), well-formed, and had evidently been a very handsome man ten or fifteen years before. He was not bad-looking at that time; and I am inclined to think that a good many young ladies just from school would have found him more fascinating, with the suggestion of a dangerous experience behind him, than if he had been younger. His features were unusually perfect in form, but excessive care or dissipation had destroyed their freshness. The eyes had an uneasy, dissatisfied look. A long, handsome moustache, turned up at the ends, together with a certain military air in his dress and bearing, suggested a cavalry officer. His voice had a pleasant, subdued tone, which predisposed the hearer in his favor.

The impression which he produced upon me at that time it would be difficult to define. I could not reconcile what seemed to me the absurdity of the proposition which had been made with the appearance of this man, who, according to all the rules that I had been accustomed to apply to the judgment of men, possessed a clear and well-balanced mind. My whole purpose in keeping this appointment was to have some fun out of the unknown writer. It was apparent to me from the moment this man entered the room, that he was not one to endure a great amount of chaffing with patience and cheerfulness. The matter had taken an altogether different tone from what I had expected.

After walking up and down the room several times, as I have stated, the man stopped before me and said:

“You must see that I am placed in a very embarrassing position. It is natural that you should be suspicious of me. When I wrote that letter I did not appreciate the difficulties I should labor under in making myself understood. It was in my power to do your city a great service. I owed it nothing. It wouldn’t touch me any more than a South Sea islander if it were laid in ashes tonight.

For that service I asked barely enough to enable me to live beyond reach of my enemies during the rest of my life. Mind, I don't blame you for declining to commit yourself until you see the proofs. I am glad I have a gentleman to deal with. I am sure that, if you will have a little patience with me, I can cure your suspicions as to my motives in his affair."

He paused, lighted his cigar again, and sat down, keeping his eyes on me all the while. As I remained silent he continued: "God knows my motives were not all mercenary. When I said I didn't care for your home any more than a savage, I meant that I had no interests there, no friends or relatives, and that it was as distant to me as any city in a foreign country. I have seen too much misery caused by this war—too many homes broken up—to wish to have any hand in spreading it. When the war broke out I was living in a small place in Virginia. I was a mining engineer. I had a good office and was getting a handsome salary from a company. I had been married but a short time. My wife was in a delicate state of health, and when I joined the army it gave her a shock from which she never recovered. I never had any interest in politics—I didn't believe in slavery enough to fight for it; but there was so much feeling among the persons about me that I was obliged to go into the army or clear out. I was wounded in a skirmish at Newport News, and while I lay in hospital, unable to move, I was told that my wife had died. She was a good deal younger than I am. We had been married only a little while, and when the hospital steward read it out to me, without any warning, that she was dead, it came near killing me. I didn't want to get well, but I was tough and couldn't help it."

He turned away his head, and I felt that there were tears in his eyes. I knew there were in my own. It was more the sympathetic tones of his voice, and the hesitating way in which he had uttered the last few words, that moved me, than the words themselves.

"Well I," he went on after a moment's pause, "I needn't tell you all I've done since then. The officers knew how it was with me, and put me on any desperate work they had. That was the way I came to be sent up here. They thought I was in a fit state to assist their cutthroats in creating what they called a diversion at the North, and proposed to make use of my engineering skill in carrying out their plans. I didn't know what was wanted of me until I met some of their men in Montreal. To prevent suspicion I appeared to enter into their plans; but I never meant to help them when the time for action came. When I had got possession of their whole scheme, and the time was fixed for carrying it out, I wrote that letter to the mayor. I've got the whole thing down here in black and white" (taking a large envelope filled with papers from his pocket), "and now I want to know if you are prepared to meet me as I had proposed."

He handled the package in a nervous manner, and looked at me keenly to see what effect he had produced. I was probably more excited than he. I had believed what he was telling me; but his sudden and unexpected question threw me back on my suspicions.

I was saved the difficulty of replying directly, for at that instant the door of the room was opened, and the traveler whom I had noticed below put hi[s] head in. I started to my feet with a sense of danger, and grasped the back of my chair with one hand. Y. Z. had been sitting opposite to me, with his back to the door, and, seeing my sudden movement and excited appearance, started up and looked at the intruder. The man at the door seemed surprised and somewhat disconcerted at the sensation he had created. He paused a moment, looking at my visitor as though the room belonged to him, and then he said: "Beg pardon—must have mistaken the number of my room." He closed the door hastily, and I heard him enter the opposite room.

I looked sharply at Y. Z., who laughed nervously and said, "He startled you."

"Yes," I said, "I thought he might be one of your Montreal acquaintances. Are you sure he is not? He looks to me as though he was disguised."

"Oh! I have no fear of them," he said. "I've given them the slip for a good two days to come. What are you going to do about this?" holding out the envelope.

"I want to think about it," I said. "I've had enough for tonight. I'll see you in the morning."

He looked at me for a moment and then said, "I have put myself in your hands. I have perilled my life in this thing. If I am not out of this cursed country in forty-eight hours, I might as well blow my brains out. I should think, after what I have said, that you might at least give me the satisfaction of knowing tonight whether I shall have the means of saving myself."

"I can give you no assurances tonight," I answered, "except that you need have no fear of coming to grief through me."

"Well," he said, "I suppose I must wait until tomorrow. What time is it?"

I took out my watch. It was nearly twelve. My mysterious visitor walked to the door, stood hesitating a moment with his hand on the latch, and then said, without turning round to look at me, "What time shall I see you in the morning?"

"About seven."

"Well, good night; I hope you'll sleep well."

He was gone, and I felt a sense of relief. Since the door had been opened so suddenly, without any warning footsteps outside, I had had a strange feeling of impending danger. I tried to dismiss it as unwarranted by anything that had occurred, but a review of the situation increased my

nervous apprehensions. I was alone, in a strange place, in a foreign country, in fact under an assumed name. I had allowed an adventurer, a man who was in the pay of the Confederate States, and who had been considered desperate enough, according to his own story, to assist a band of cutthroats, to believe that I had a large sum of money with me. Now that I came to think of it, the man had really given me nothing to show that he was what he pretended to be. He had told me a plausible story, shown me a package of papers, and on that he had tried in every way to find out whether I had the money with me. Was the man in the adjoining room a confederate of his? What would be the next move in this mysterious game, in which, like a country greenhorn, I had taken a hand?

After all, the story which I had just heard might be true. The eagerness which this man had shown to learn whether I was prepared to pay for his service was only natural under the circumstances. Supposing what he had said to be true, he was in a difficult position to furnish satisfactory proofs. Was it reasonable to expect him to go further than he had, until he knew whether I was authorized to negotiate with him? Of course his principal motive in betraying his fellows was to get the money.

After turning the matter over in my mind for some minutes, I came to the conclusion that it was hardly probable an attempt would be made to enter my room forcibly during the night; when the morning came I was certainly capable of taking care of myself in a civilized community. It was now about one o'clock, and as it would be light in three or four hours, I thought I could afford to stay awake that length of time.

The only fastening to the door was a loose button, but it could not be forced off evidently without making some noise. I took my pistol from the pocket of the valise and placed it on the little table, which I drew to the side of the bed. The candle was nearly burned to the socket. I blew it out so that there would be something left to light up in case of emergency. I pulled up the shade and found that the moon was shining brightly. Although that part of the house was in the shade, the reflected light was sufficient to enable me to see the different parts of the room quite distinctly. I took off my coat and boots and lay down on the outside of the bed, quite satisfied that I should have nothing worse to relate of my adventure than a sleepless night and a little scare. The beer that I had taken made me feel drowsy. To prevent going to sleep, I set myself to thinking of what should be done in the morning. Would it be safe for me to go to Montreal, as I had intended, or had I better change my plans altogether and go to Mount Desert or some other place in New England? No; I would go on; it would be weak to turn back. I repeated this to myself a great many times, and then—I fell asleep.

I dreamed that I saw Y. Z. standing at the foot of the bed; that he came up to the table, stood there a moment, then picked up my valise and moved toward the door.

Was I dreaming? My eyes were open. I could see everything in the room. There was a man crouching down near the door, tugging at my valise. I put out my hand cautiously and moved it over the table. The pistol was gone. Should I spring up suddenly and throw myself on him? As I looked, another man stood in the half-opened doorway. My suspicions were realized. It was the man who had looked in so suddenly during the evening. The odds were too much against me to attempt resistance. Should I lie there and be robbed, or alarm the house?

The man in the door paused for an instant, then sprang forward, grasped the other by the neck, and pressed him down on the floor. My name was called. I jumped from the bed to assist my unknown ally, but at that instant Y. Z. twisted himself free, gave his opponent a blow that sent him reeling back upon me, and rushed from the room. I straightened up my friend and started for the door, but he seized me by the arm and said, "Hold on! We'd best let him go. He hasn't gotten anything, and we ain't just at home here. Strike a light."

I obeyed without remonstrance, feeling that the man had a right to command me. I had not come out of the affair very gloriously.

"By George!" said the man, "that rascal gave me a sockdolager. You see, I had to keep an eye on you for fear you'd be firing round in a loose way, and he just squirmed out and gave me a all-goshed-est welt below the belt you ever see. It made me feel sick for a minnit."

Hurried footsteps were heard outside; and a short, fat, red-faced man appeared in the doorway, with a tallow dip in one hand and a stout cane in the other. It was evident from the noise that a general alarm had been sounded, and that reinforcements were coming up.

"What's all this infernal row about?" demands the leader, handling his cane viciously.

"By George!" says my whiskered friend, "I wouldn't inquire if I kept burglars in the house. Some people object to being robbed, and kick up a row when it's tried on."

The landlord, who, it afterwards appeared, was a fierce Secessionist, recognized a certain Yankee flavor of insolence in this speech, and began to swell with indignation. I thought it was time for me to step in; and so I explained that I woke up a few minutes before and found a man in the room trying to break open my valise; that the gentleman in the opposite room, hearing the noise, came in and caught him; that they had a struggle, and that the thief got away.

"See if the front door is unbolted," shouted the landlord, and started off with all his forces to search the lower part of the house. "They needn't waste their taller," said my friend; "the man is out of the house long before this."

I went up to him, took his hand, and said, “You seem to know me. Your face has a familiar look, but I cannot remember where I have seen it before. I hope I may be able to show my appreciation of your services by something more than thanks”—this with rather a grand air, to let my preserver know that I was a person of consequence, if not of pluck.

“Well,” he replied, “it’s all in the family like, and you needn’t feel obliged. I didn’t suppose you’d know me, and I didn’t want you to. I’m made up a bit, and I doubt if you’d a known me if I wasn’t. I shouldn’t wonder if you’d come across my name accidentally before now in the police reports. Fact is, I’m a detective, and my name is Hunt—Ben Hunt.”

Yes, I had seen the name quite often in the papers; but I had never seen the man to know him before. The familiar look was accounted for by my having seen him occasionally in the City Hall.

“Smokin’ allowed?” inquired Ben, producing his pipe. “The old man” (meaning chief of police) “sent me here,” he continued, “to sorter see you didn’t get into no trouble. After he went home the night you showed him the letter and told him you was coming up here, he went to thinking about the thing, and he thought this feller you was going to meet might be an ugly customer. So he comes and routs me out and says, ‘You know the mayor’s secretary?’ Says I, ‘Seen him.’ Then he told me about the letter from Y. Z., and how you was to meet him, and all that; and says he, ‘I want you to go along up to the junction and keep an eye on things; but you are not to interfere unless the secretary gets into trouble; then you are to look out for him, and use your judgment.’ ‘All right,’ says I; ‘I’ll take a peep at Y. Z., and see what his lay is.’ Well, I come along, as you know, and after you’d gone up stairs, I lighted my pipe and sat down in a corner of the room and kep my eyes peeled for the man that looked at the register next. Pooty soon in walks a gent from outdoors. I knew him in a minnit: though I’d never seen him before, I’d seen his picter in the Rogues’ Gallery in New York not more’n two months ago; and I knew his description to a hair. I hadn’t met him before because I’m not on the genteel lay. He’s a swell confidence man, and has done lots of neat things. I never heard of his trying to rob before. I s’pose he found he couldn’t get anything out of you by soapin’, and as you was in a strange place, under a’sumed name, he thought he didn’t run much risk by overhauling your traps. I don’t think he intended to do any carvin’. It isn’t in his line.

“Well, as I was saying, in he comes to the barroom, looks at the register, sees B. Jacobs, and slips quietly up the stairs. I stayed round awhile and smoked, and then took a candle and toddled up quietly after him. I didn’t make any more noise than was necessary in getting into my room, and then I blew out the candle, came to the door, and listened. I could hear him talking low for a minnit, and then raise his voice and ask you, plump, whether you was prepared to meet him. I thought I’d jest look in, accidentally, and see how things was going on. When Y. Z. come out a few minnits afterwards, I saw him fingering the latch and button and knew what he was up to.

That's the whole story, and here comes old Grampus," alluding to the landlord, who came to the door at this moment to say that they couldn't find the scoundrel, and to inquire whether I had lost anything.

I looked around and remembered that my pistol was gone. The landlord suggested the propriety of sending for a constable. I declined, for reasons which I did not state, to pursue the matter further.

"If ever he comes to ——," said the detective, when we were alone, "I'll get him to give you his picter."

RICHARD ANDERSON

Galaxy, August 1872