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DOROTHY L.
SAYERS

HAVE HIS CARCASE

The gigolo's throat was cut from ear to ear,
and the death scene was no place for a lady
until LORD PETER WIMSEY arrived.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE EVIDENCE OF THE BAY MARE

"Hail, shrine of blood!"

The Brides' Tragedy

WEDNESDAY, 1 JULY

THE photographs of the paper found on the corpse duly arrived next morning, together with the original; and Wimsey, comparing them together in the presence of Glaisher and Umpelty, had to confess that the experts had made a good job of it. Even the original paper was far more legible than it had been before. The chemicals that remove bloodstains and the stains of dyed leather, and the chemicals that restore the lost colour to washed-out ink had done their work well, and the colour-screens that so ingeniously aid the lens to record one colour and cut out the next had produced from the original, thus modified, a result in which only a few letters here and there were irretrievably lost. But to read is one thing; to decipher, another. They gazed sadly at the inextricable jumble of letters.

XNATNX

RBEXMG

PRBFX ALI MKMG BFFY, MGTSQ JMRRY. ZBZE
FLOX P.M. MSIU FKX FLDYPC FKAP RPD KL DONA
FMKPC FM NOR ANXP.

SOLFA TGMZ DXL LKKZM VXI BWHNZ MBFFY
MG, TSQ A NVPD NMM VFYQ. CJU ROGA K.C. RAC
RRMTN S.B. IF H.P. HNZ ME? SSPXLZ DFAX LRAEL
TLMK XATL RPX BM AEBF HS MPIKATL TO
HOKCCI HNRV. TYM VDSM SUSSX GAMKR, BG AIL
AXH NZMLF HVUL KNN RAGY QWMCK, MNQS
TOIL AXFA AN IHMZS RPT HO KFLTIM. IF MTGNLU
H.M. CLM KLZM AHPE ALF AKMSM, ZULPR FHQ—
CMZT SXS RSMKRS GNKS FVMP RACY OSS QESBH
NAE UZCK CON MGBNRY .RMAL RSH NZM, BKTQAP
MSH NZM TO ILG MELMS NAGMJU KC KC.

TQKFX BQZ NMEZLI BM ZLFA AYZ MARS UP QOS
KMXBP SUE UMIL PRKBG MSK QD.

NAP DZMTB N.B. OBE XMG SREFZ DBS AM IMHY
GAKY R. MULBY M.S. SZLKO GKG LKL GAW
XNTED BHMB XZD NRKZH PSMSKMN A.M. MHIZP
DK MIM, XNKSAC C KOK MNRL CFL INXF HDA
GAIQ.

GATLM Z DLFA A QPHND MVAK MV MAG C.P.R.
XNATNX PD GUN MBKL I OLKA GLDAGA KQB
FTQO SKMX GPDH NW LX SULMY ILLE MKH
BEALF MRSK UFHA AKTS.

At the end of a strenuous hour or two, the following facts were established:—

1. The letter was written on a thin but tough paper which bore no resemblance to any paper found among the effects of Paul Alexis. The probability was thus increased that it was a letter received, and not written by him.
2. It was written by hand in a purplish ink, which, again, was not like that used by Alexis. The additional inference was drawn that the writer either possessed no typewriter or was afraid that his typewriter might be traced.
3. It was not written in wheel-cipher, or in any cipher which involved the regular substitution of one letter of the alphabet for another.

“At any rate,” said Wimsey, cheerfully, “we have plenty of material to work on. This isn’t one of those brief, snappy ‘Put goods on sundial’ messages which leave you wondering whether E really is or is not the most frequently-recurring letter in the English language. If you ask me, it’s either one of

those devilish codes founded on a book—in which case it must be one of the books in the dead man's possession, and we only have to go through them—or it's a different kind of code altogether—the kind I was thinking about last night, when we saw those marked words in the dictionary."

"What kind's that, my lord?"

"It's a good code," said Wimsey, "and pretty baffling if you don't know the key-word. It was used during the War. I used it myself, as a matter of fact, during a brief interval of detecting under a German alias. But it isn't the exclusive property of the War Office. In fact, I met it not so long ago in a detective story. It's just——"

He paused, and the policemen waited expectantly.

"I was going to say, it's just the thing an amateur English plotter might readily get hold of and cotton on to. It's not obvious, but it's accessible and very simple to work. It's the kind of thing that young Alexis could easily learn to encode and decode; it doesn't want a lot of bulky apparatus; and it uses practically the same number of letters as the original message, so that it's highly suitable for long epistles of this kind."

"How's it worked?" asked Glaisher.

"Very prettily. You choose a key-word of six letters or more, none of which recurs. Such as, for example, SQUANDER, which was on Alexis' list. Then you make a diagram of five squares each way and write the key-word in the squares like this:

S	Q	U	A	N
D	E	R		

"Then you fill up the remaining spaces with the rest of the alphabet in order, leaving out the ones you've already got."

"You can't put twenty-six letters into twenty-five spaces," objected Glaisher.

"No; so you pretend you're an ancient Roman or a

mediaeval monk and treat I and J as one letter. So you get this."

S	Q	U	A	N
D	E	R	B	C
F	G	H	I J	K
L	M	O	P	T
V	W	X	Y	Z

"Now, let's take a message—What shall we say? 'All is known, fly at once'—that classic hardy perennial. We write it down all of a piece and break it into groups of two letters, reading from left to right. It won't do to have two of the same letters coming together, so where that happens we shove in Q or Z or something which won't confuse the reader. So now our message runs AL QL IS KN OW NF LY AT ON CE."

"Suppose there was an odd letter at the end?"

"Well, then we'd add on another Q or Z or something to square it up. Now, we take our first group, AL. We see that they come at the corners of a rectangle in which the other corners are SP. So we put down SP for the first two letters of the coded message. In the same way QL becomes SM and IS becomes FA."

"Ah!" cried Glaisher, "but here's KN. They both come on the same vertical line. What happens then?"

"You take the letter next below each—TC. Next comes OW, which you can do for yourself by taking the corners of the square."

"MX?"

"MX it is. Go on."

"SK," said Glaisher, happily taking diagonals from corner to corner, "PV, NP, UT——"

"No, TU. If your first diagonal went from bottom to top, you must take it the same way again. ON=TU, NO would be UT."

"Of course, of course. TU. Hullo!"

"What's the matter?"

"CE come on the same horizontal line."

"In that case you take the next letter to the *right* of each."

"But there isn't a letter to the right of C."

"Then start again at the beginning of the line."

This confused the Superintendent for a moment, but he finally produced DR.

"That's right. So your coded message stands now: SP SM FA TC MX SK PV NP TU DR. To make it look prettier and not give the method away, you can break it up into any lengths you like. For instance: SPSM FAT CMXS KPV NPTUDR. Or you can embellish it with punctuation as hap-hazard. S.P. SMFA. TCMXS, KPVN, PT! UDR. It doesn't matter. The man who gets it will ignore all that. He will simply break it up into pairs of letters again and read it with the help of the code diagram. Taking the diagonals as before, and the next letter *above*, where they come on the same vertical line, and the next to the *left* where they come on the same horizontal."

The two policemen pored over the diagram. Then Umpelty said:

"I see, my lord. It's very ingenious. You can't guess it by way of the most frequent letter, because you get a different letter for it each time, according as it's grouped to the next letter. And you can't guess individual words, because you don't know where the words begin and end. Is it at all possible to decode it without the key-word?"

"Oh dear, yes," said Wimsey. "Any code ever coded can be decoded with pains and patience—except possibly some of the book codes. I know a man who spent years doing nothing else. The code diagram got so bitten into him that when he caught measles he came out in checks instead of spots."

"Then he could decode this," said Glaisher, eagerly.

"On his head. We'll send him a copy if you like. I don't know where he is, but I know those that do. Shall I bung it off? It would save us a lot of time."

"I wish you would, my lord."

Wimsey took a copy of the letter, pushed it into an envelope and enclosed a brief note.

"DEAR CLUMPS,— Here's a cipher message. Probably Playfair, but old Bungo will know. Can you push it off to him and say I'd be grateful for a construe? Said to hail from Central Europe, but ten to one it's in English. How goes?"

"Yours,

"WIMBLES."

"Seen anything of Trotters lately?"

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE EVIDENCE OF THE CIPHER

"I know not whether
I see your meaning: if I do, it lies
Upon the wordy wavelets of your voice,
Dim as an evening shadow in a brook."

Fragment

FRIDAY, 3 JULY

THE letter from "Clumps" at the Foreign Office did not arrive till the Friday, and then was a disappointment. It ran:—

"DEAR WIMBLES,

"Got your screed. Old Bungo is in China, dealing with the mess-up there, so have posted enclosure off to him as per instructions. He may be up-country, but he'll probably get it in a few weeks. How's things? Saw Trotters last week at the Carlton. He has got himself into a bit of a mess with his old man, but seems to bear up. You remember the Newton-Carberry business? Well, it's settled, and Flops has departed for the Continent. What-ho!

"Yours ever,

"CLUMPS."

M	O	N	A	R
C	H	Y	B	D
E	F	G	I J	K
L	P	Q	S	T
U	V	W	X	Z