

A CAUTIONARY TALE

Sam cursed to himself, he wasn't dressed for the occasion, it was damp and cold and he was stiff from keeping in his position which was neither close enough to be useful nor remote enough to avoid discovery.

However that was not unusual, the life of a Private Investigator was not glamorous nor comfortable. Samuel Lawrence Blenkinsopp PI, did not have the ring of Magnum PI, the cachet of Sam Spade, the gravitas of Sherlock Holmes and definitely not the glamour attached to the general perception of private detectives in books, film and TV. His name was wrong, it was just too long, other detectives had short punchy names, Rebus, Taggart, Frost or exotic foreign names like Wilsolki, which showed their workplace as the Big Apple or The City of Angels, not the area of Mansfield & Sherwood District Council which was Sam's hunting grounds.

Sam's thoughts returned wistfully to his current assignment. It was the bread and butter of investigations, at least of those in Mansfield and the Dukeries, it was following a husband on behalf of a wife. As usual it had started with a phone call and then a meeting with a lady known as Mrs Amelia Michelson who desired information on the doings of her husband Mr Peter Michelson, Sam had abbreviated them in his mind and in his rough notes to AM and PM.

Mrs AM wanted to know what her husband was up to. Sam sighed inwardly, but outwardly put on his best concerned and empathic face and had said *"Ah, your suspicions have been aroused because of changes in his behaviour ?"* AM nodded. Sam continued *"He's perhaps being less attentive...in the marital situation ?"* Sam was pleased with his subtlety, though most of his clients from the less desirable parts of Mansfield would have phrased it more directly as *"He's stopped doing it with you then."* However in this case Mrs AM was clear, she explained that no, the bedroom issue was not in decline, in fact the opposite; Mr PM was apparently unusually active both in frequency and in intensity. What concerned her was not just this, but also the fact that he would wash both cars unbidden, he would offer to take her shopping, would empty the bins every morning and most strangely of all had offered to fetch her Mother round for the weekend.

Thus Sam had been engaged to carry out surveillance and to report where and by implication with whom, he was going.

Every day for a week Sam had followed Mr PM, without anything very interesting. Apart from work and the pub on Wednesday evening, the only other outings had been to a workshop unit in Eakring which he had visited three times. Due to the layout of the premises which contained several small enterprises, Sam had been unable to establish exactly which one Mr PM had visited and his observations via binoculars at a distance had been inconclusive. The only interesting fact noted was that PM on his last visit had acted in a furtive manner when returning to his car with a large box, he had looked around as if ensuring no one could see him, before placing the box into the car boot.

Sam also noted that the box had not been removed from the car on any occasion when he was following PM.

Another visit had been on a Tuesday evening to the Village Hall in Clipstone. Once again geography had made close up observation too risky, yes Sam's battered Ford Sierra didn't look out of place but the number of visitors to the Hall was a high risk factor in surveillance terms. Anyway there were lots of people, old and young, men and women and children too. Nothing however to suggest that PM was engaged in a clandestine rendezvous. Sam noted carefully, as always, for his report, that a number of the visitors had a penchant for Australian style bush hats, but that in itself did not add much to solving the mystery of Mr PM's behaviour.

Thus it was that on Saturday morning Sam again took up the trail which led to him following PM out of town towards the woods. Sam had to hold back as Mr PM's Volvo turned off down a road marked private and when he caught up with the car as it stopped at its destination he was forced to drive past the area where a number of vehicles were parked on the roadside, hide his own car out of sight and return on foot.

That was when he discovered that he wasn't dressed appropriately, as he saw PM and others entering the woods carrying bows and arrows. The signage along the road also confirmed the intentions from their clear warning <CAUTION ARCHERY IN PROGRESS>.

Sam was curious, was this an elaborate cover for a secret meeting with PM's unknown paramour or..... the only option was to wait it out.

Just after 12:00 people started to leave, by 12:20, only Mr PM's Volvo was left. Sam gave it another 10 minutes and then determined to take a closer look. The drizzle had set in and Sam was already cold and damp as he trudged towards the woods. Every so often he paused and listened but there was nothing apart from distant sound of cars on the main road some way off.

Sam followed what looked like a rough path, marked by white triangular wooden signs, moving cautiously, he was mentally preparing a cover story in case he encountered Mr PM,he would be a prospective archer seeking information on this sport.

Just then he heard four sounds close together, sounds he could only describe later when asked as 'thunks'. He moved towards the source of the sounds and turning a corner between some trees stopped in his tracks at what he saw. It was the suddenness of the view and the unexpected nature of the sight which deflected his attention from another sound off to the right but turning his head quickly, he caught a glimpse of someone moving away from the spot, not running but at a fast determined walk. He couldn't be sure but something in his years of training and experience told him it was probably a woman and because the direction was away into the woods and not towards the road, he deduced that she had some good reason for not remaining.

All this was processed in Sam's brain in an instant, and simultaneously he was drawn back to the scene he had first viewed. About 30 yards away was a wooden framework with what looked like inner tubes bundled together and pinned to this structure was a life sized colour photograph of a deer. What however took Sam's attention was that next to the deer, against a large tree was Mr PM, he had an arrow in his chest, one through his sleeve which secured him to the trunk and one through his throat acting as a pin and perhaps most relevantly as the cause of death.

Sam had checked for signs of life and finding none had retreated back, so as to leave the scene uncontaminated in readiness for the scene examiners, who would shortly arrive following his call to Notts Police CID.

Sam knew he had to tell the police everything and so gathered his thoughts. Amongst the structuring of events, his mind also registered that if it was indeed Mrs AM who had killed her husband, he would have some difficulty in getting paid for his work.

He had little doubt that Mrs AM was the culprit; the fourth arrow told the story. It was between the late PM's legs, very, very close to his delicate bits, and it pierced a piece of paper. Sam had sneaked a look at the paper and had seen it was a receipt from a local Archery Supplier for a new bow, various accessories and arrows in the sum of £765.54.

As Sam walked slowly back towards the main path so to be able to guide the police whose cars he heard getting closer, he ruminated that gentlemen who have expensive hobbies which do

not include their wives, might be best advised to seek permission before spending money on such hobbies.

He hadn't thought of archery as a dangerous sport but then clearly neither had Mr PM. "*Secrets and lies that's the stuff of being a PI*", he thought to himself, and then rather more pragmatically, "*I wonder whether I could get Mrs AM to give me the bow and arrows in lieu of my fee*",the approaching blues and twos, broke his train of thought, "*well after it had been used in evidence of course.*"

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