

The  
**SEVEN  
DIALS  
MYSTERY**  
By Agatha Christie

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INSTALMENT XXVII.

"Up there," said Battle. "Up the ivy again."

"Nonsense, Superintendent. What you are suggesting is impossible."

"Not at all impossible, sir. He'd done it once. He could do it twice."

"I don't mean impossible in that sense. But if the man wanted to escape, he'd never bolt back into the house."

"Safest place for him, Mr. Lomax."

"But Mr. O'Rourke's door was still locked on the inside when we came to him."

"And how did you get to him? Through Sir Stanley's room. That is the way our man went. Lady Eileen tells me she saw the door-knob of Mr. O'Rourke's door move. That was when our friend was up there the first time. I suspect the key was under Mr. O'Rourke's pillow. But his exit is clear enough the second time — through the communicating door and through Sir Stanley's room, which, of course was empty. Like every one else, Sir Stanley is rushing downstairs to the library. Our man's got a clear course."

"And where did he go then?" Superintendent Battle shrugged

his burly shoulders and became evasive.

"Plenty of ways open. Into an empty room on the other side of the house and down the ivy again—out through a side door—or, just possibly, if it was an inside job, he—well, stayed in the house."

George looked at him in shocked surprise.

"Really, Battle, I should—I should feel it very deeply if one of my servants—er—I have the most perfect reliance on them—it would distress me very much to have to suspect—"

Exhibit "Z"

"Nobody's asking you to suspect any one, Mr. Lomax. I'm just putting all the possibilities before you. The servants may be all right—probably are."

"You have disturbed me," said George. "You have disturbed me greatly."

His eyes appeared more protruberant than ever.

To distract him, Jimmy poked delicately at a curious blackened object on the table.

"What's this?" he asked.

"That's exhibit 'Z,'" said Battle. "The last of our little lot. It is, or rather it has been, a glove."

He picked it up, the charred relic, and manipulated it with pride.

"Where did you find it?" asked Sir Oswald.

Battle jerked his head over his shoulder.

"In the grate—nearly burnt, but not quite. Queer: looks as though it had been chewed by a dog."

"It might possibly be Miss Wade's," suggested Jimmy. "She has several dogs."

The superintendent shook his head.

"This isn't a lady's glove—no, not even the large kind of loose glove ladies wear nowadays. Fit it on, sir, a moment."

He adjusted the blackened object over Jimmy's hand.

"You see—it's large even for you."

"Do you attach importance to this discovery?" inquired Sir Oswald coldly.

"You never know, Sir Oswald, what's going to be important or what isn't."

There was a sharp tap at the door and Bundle entered.

"I'm so sorry," she said apologetically, "but father has just rung up. He says I must come home because everybody is worrying him."

She paused.

"Yes, my dear Eileen?" said George encouragingly, perceiving that there was more to come.

"I wouldn't have interrupted you—only that I thought it might perhaps have something to do with all this. You see, what has upset father is that one of our footmen is missing. He went out last night and hasn't come back."

"What is the man's name?" It was Sir Oswald who took up the cross-examination.

"John Bauer."

"I believe he calls himself a Swiss—but I think he's a German. He speaks English perfectly, though."

"Ah!" Sir Oswald drew in his breath with a long, satisfied hiss.

"And he has been at Chimneys—how long?"

"Just under a month."

Sir Oswald turned to the other two.

The Missing Man

"Here is our missing man. You know, Lomax, as well as I do, that several foreign governments are after the thing. I remember the man now perfectly—tall, well-drilled fellow. Came about a fortnight before we left. A clever move. Any new servants here would be closely scrutinized, but at Chim-

neys, five miles away—" He did not finish the sentence.

"You think the plan was laid so long beforehand?"

"Why not? There are millions in that formula, Lomax. Doubtless Bauer hoped to get access to my private papers at Chimneys, and to learn something of forthcoming arrangements from them. It seems likely that he may have had an accomplice in this house—some one who put him wise to the lie of the land and who saw to the doping of O'Rourke. But Bauer was the man Miss Wade saw climbing down the ivy—the big, powerful man."

He turned to Superintendent Battle.

"Bauer was your man, Superintendent. And, somehow or other, you let him slip through your fingers."

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There was no doubt that Superintendent Battle was taken aback. He fingered his chin thoughtfully.

"Sir Oswald is right, Battle," said George. "This is the man. Any hope of catching him?"

"There may be, sir. It certainly looks—well, suspicious. Of course, the man may turn up again—at Chimneys, I mean."

"Do you think it likely?"

"No, it isn't," confessed Battle. "Yes, it certainly looks as though Bauer were the man. But I can't quite see how he got in and out of these grounds unobserved."

"I have already told you my opinion of the men you posted," said George. "Hopelessly inefficient—I don't want to blame you, Superintendent, but—" His pause was eloquent.

"Ah, well," said Battle lightly, "my shoulders are broad."

He shook his head and sighed.

"I must get to the telephone at once. Excuse me, gentlemen. I'm



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sorry, Mr. Lomax—I feel I've rather bungled this business. But it's been puzzling, more puzzling than you know."

He strode hurriedly from the room.

"Come into the garden," said Bundle to Jimmy. "I want to talk to you."

They went out together through the window. Jimmy stared down at the lawn, frowning.

"What's the matter?" asked Bundle.

Jimmy explained the circumstances of the pistol throwing.

An Extraordinary Man

"I'm wondering," he ended, "what was in old Battle's mind when he got Cootie to throw the pistol. Something, I'll swear. Any-

how, it landed up about 10 yards farther than it should have done.

You know, Bundle, Battle's a deep one."

"He's an extraordinary man," said Bundle. "I want to tell you about last night."

She retold her conversation with the superintendent. Jimmy listened attentively.

"So the Countess is No. 1," he said thoughtfully. "It all hangs together very well. No. 2—Bauer—comes over from Chimneys. He climbs up into O'Rourke's room, knowing that O'Rourke has had a sleeping draft administered to him—by the Countess somehow or other. The arrangement is that he is to throw down the papers to the Countess, who will be waiting below. Then she'll nip back through the library and up to her room. If Bauer's caught leaving the place, they'll find nothing on him. Yes, it was a good plan—but it went pays.

wrong. No sooner is the Countess in the library than she comes coming and has to jump back the screen. Jolly awkward for

because she can't warn her accomplice. No. 2 pinches the papers

looks out of the window, sees he thinks, the Countess was

pitches the papers down to and proceeds to climb down the ivy, where he finds a nasty

prise in the shape of me waiting for him. Pretty nifty work for

Countess waiting behind the screen. All things considered,

told a pretty good story. Yes, it hangs together very well."

"Too well," said Bundle dead-ly.

"Eh?" said Jimmy, surprised.

(To Be Continued Tomorrow)

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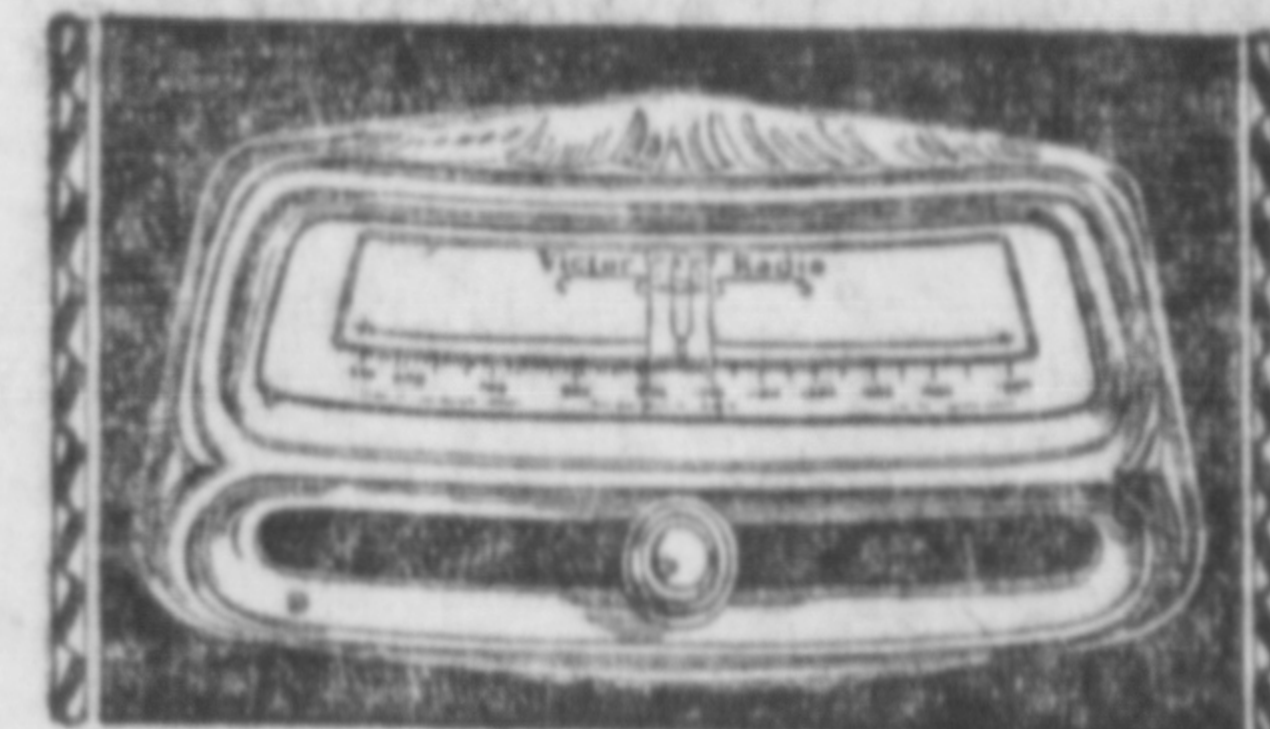
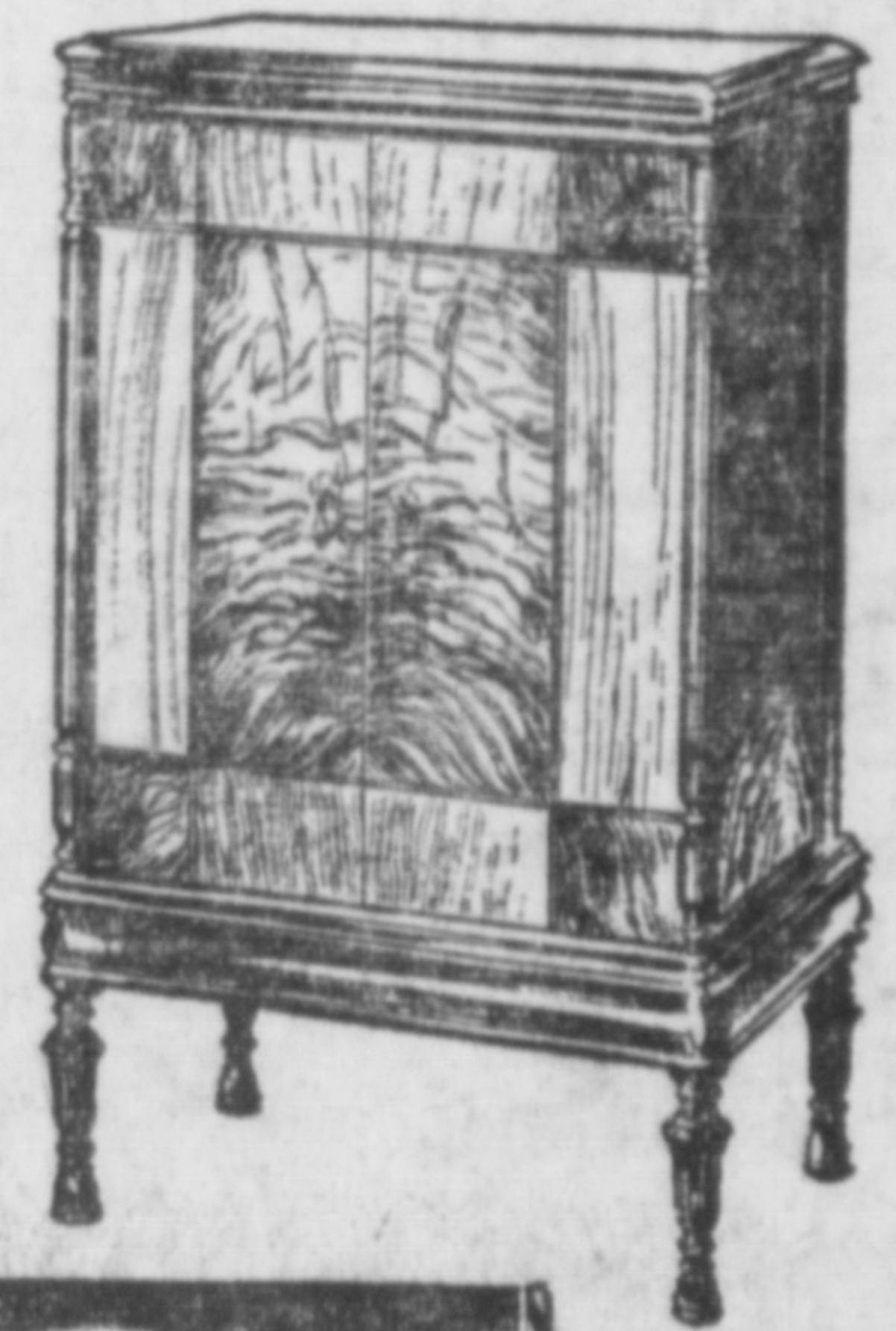
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