

The SEVEN DIALS MYSTERY

By Agatha Christie

THE STORY THUS FAR

Gerry Wade is found dead in bed at Chimneys, scene of a house party. Seven out of eight alarm clocks placed in his room to awaken him are lined up on a mantel. The guests are told that death resulted from an overdose of sleeping powder. Jimmy Thesiger and Ronny Devereux motor to Gerry's home to tell a sister, Lorraine, of Wade's death.

Lady Eileen Brent, known as "Bundle," finds a letter Wade had written to his sister making reference to the Seven Dials. Bundle feels certain that Gerry was murdered. En route to London a man, mysteriously shot, staggers into the road in front of Eileen's car. It proves to be Devereux, who dying whispers: "Seven Dials—tell Jimmy Thesiger."

At Jimmy's quarters Bundle finds Lorraine. The three of them set out to trail the murderer.

NOW CONTINUE THE STORY INSTALMENT XI

"Well, it saves trouble, doesn't it? We know where we are so to speak."

Bundle hesitated for a minute. "There was a man shot yesterday," she said slowly. "I thought I had run over him—"

"Mr. Ronald Devereux?"

"You know about it, of course. Why has there been nothing in the papers?"

"Do you really want to know that, Lady Eileen?"

"Yes, please."

"Well, we just thought we should like to have a clear 24 hours—see? It will be in the papers tomorrow."

"Oh!" Bundle studied him, puzzled.

What was hidden behind that immovable face? Did he regard the shooting of Ronald Devereux as an ordinary crime or as an extraordinary one?

"He mentioned Seven Dials when he was dying," said Bundle slowly.

"Thank you," said Battle. "I'll make a note of that."

Only an Amateur

He wrote a few words on the blotting pad in front of him. Bundle started on another tack.

"Mr. Lomax, I understand, came to see you yesterday about a threatening letter he had had."

"He did."

"And that was written from Seven Dials?"

"It had Seven Dials written at the top of it, I believe."

Bundle felt as though she were battering hopelessly on a locked door.

"If you'll let me advise you, Lady Eileen—"

"I know what you're going to say. I should go home and—well, think no more about these matters."

"Leave it to you, in fact?"

"Well," said Superintendent Battle, "after all, we are the professionals."

"And I'm only an amateur? Yes, but you forget one thing—I may not have your knowledge and skill—but I have one advantage over you. I can work in the dark."

She thought that the superintendent seemed a little taken aback, as though the force of her words struck home.

"Of course," said Bundle, "if you won't give me a list of secret societies—"

"Oh! I never said that. You shall have a list of the whole lot."

He went to the door, put his head through and called out something, then came back to his chair. Bundle, rather unreasonably, felt baffled. The ease with which he acceded to her request seemed to her suspicious. He was looking at her now in a placid fashion.

"Do you remember the death of Mr. Gerald Wade?" she asked abruptly.

"Down at your place, wasn't it? Took an overdraft of sleeping mixture."

"His sister says he never took things to make him sleep."

Trouble Ahead

"Ah!" said the superintendent. "You'd be surprised what a lot of things there are that sisters don't know."

Bundle again felt baffled. She sat in silence till a man came in with a typewritten sheet of paper,

which he handed to the superintendent.

"Here you are," said the latter when the other had left the room. "The Blood Brothers of St. Sebastian. The Wolf Hounds. The Comrades of Peace. The Comrades Club. The Friends of Oppression. The Children of Moscow. The Red Standard Bearers. The Herrings. The Comrades of the Fallen—and half a dozen more."

He handed it to her with a distinct twinkle in his eye.

"You give it to me," said Bundle, "because you know it's not going to be the slightest use to me. Do you want me to leave the whole thing alone?"

"I should prefer it," said Battle.

"You see—if you go messing round all these places—well, it's going to give you a lot of trouble."

"Looking after me, you mean?"

"Looking after you, Lady Eileen."

Bundle had risen to her feet. Now she stood undecided. So far the honors lay with Superintendent Battle. Then she remembered one slight incident and she based a last appeal upon it.

"I said just now that an amateur could do some things which a professional couldn't. You didn't contradict me. That's because you are an honest man, Superintendent Battle. You knew I was right."

"Go on," said Battle quietly.

"At Chimneys you let me help. Won't you let me help now?"

Battle seemed to be turning the thing over in his mind. Emboldened by his silence, Bundle continued.

"You know pretty well what I'm like, Superintendent Battle. I butt into things. I'm a Nosey Parker. I don't want to get in your way or to try and do things that you're doing and can do a great deal better. But if there's a chance for an amateur, let me have it."

Again there was a pause, and then Superintendent Battle said quietly:

Dangerous Business

"You couldn't have spoken fairer than you have done, Lady Eileen. But I'm just going to say this to you. What you propose is dangerous. And when I say dangerous, I mean dangerous."

"I've grasped that," said Bundle. "I'm not a fool."

"No," said Superintendent Battle.

"Never knew a young lady who was less so. What I'll do for you, Lady Eileen, is this. I'll just give you one little hint. And I'm doing it because I never have thought much of the motto 'Safety First.' In my opinion half the people who spend their lives avoiding being run over by busses had much better be run over and put safely out of the way. They're no good."

This remarkable utterance issuing from the conventional lips of Superintendent Battle quite took Bundle's breath away.

"What was the hint you were going to give me?" she asked at last.

"You know Mr. Eversleigh, don't you?"

"Know Bill? Why, of course. But what—"

"I think Mr. Bill Eversleigh will be able to tell you all you want to know about Seven Dials."

"Bill knows about it? Bill?"

"I didn't say that. Not at all. But I think, being a quick-witted young lady, you'll get what you want from him."

"And now," said Superintendent Battle firmly, "I'm not going to say another word."

DINNER WITH BILL

Bundle set out to keep her appointment with Bill on the following evening full of expectation.

Bill greeted her with every sign of elation.

"Bill really is rather nice," thought Bundle to herself. "Just like a large, clumsy dog that wags its tail when it's pleased to see you."

The large dog was uttering short staccato yelps of comment and information.

"You look tremendously fit, Bundle. I can't tell you how pleased I am to see you. I've ordered oysters—you do like oysters, don't you? And how's everything? What did you want to go moulder about abroad so long? Were you having a very gay time?"

"No, deadly," said Bundle. "Perfectly foul. Old diseased colonels creeping about in the sun, and active, wizened spinsters running libraries and churches."

"Give me England," said Bill. "I bar this foreign business—except Switzerland. Switzerland's all right. I'm thinking of going this Christ-

mas. Why don't you come along?"

"I'll think of it," said Bundle.

"What have you been doing with yourself, lately, Bill?"

Bill's New Girl

It was an incautious query. Bundle had merely made it out of politeness and as a preliminary to introducing her own topics of conversation.

It was, however, the opening for which Bill had been waiting.

"That's just what I've been wanting to tell you about. You're brainy, Bundle, and I want your advice. You know that musical show, 'Damn Your Eyes'?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm going to tell you about one of the dirtiest pieces of work imaginable. My God! the theatrical crowd. There's a girl—a Yankee girl—a perfect stunner—"

Bundle's heart sank. The grievances of Bill's lady friends were always interminable—they went on and on and there was no stemming them.

"This girl, Babe St. Maur her name is—"

"I wonder how she got that name?" said Bundle sarcastically.

Bill replied literally.

"She got it out of Who's Who. Opened it and jabbed her finger down on a page without looking. Pretty nifty, eh? Her real name's Goldschmidt or Abramier—something quite impossible."

"Oh! quite," agreed Bundle.

"Well, Babe St. Maur is pretty smart. And she's got muscles. She was one of the eight girls who made the living bridge—"

"Bill," said Bundle desperately, "I went to see Jimmy Thesiger yesterday morning."

"Good old Jimmy," said Bill.

"Well, as I was telling you, Babe's pretty smart. You've got to be nowadays. She can put it over on most theatrical people. If you want to live, be high-handed, that's what Babe says. And mind you she's the goods all right. She can act—it's marvelous how that girl can act. She'd not much chance in 'Damn Your Eyes'—just swamped in a pack of good-looking girls. I said why not try the legitimate stage—you know, Mrs. Tanqueray—that sort of stuff—but Babe only laughed—"

"Have you seen Jimmy at all?"

"Saw him this morning. Let me see, where was I? Oh, yes, I hadn't got to the rumpus yet. And mind you it was jealousy—sheer, spiteful jealousy. The other girl wasn't a patch on Babe for looks and she knew it. So she went behind her back—"

Codder's Party

Bundle resigned herself to the inevitable and heard the whole story of the unfortunate circumstances which had led up to Babe St. Maur's summary disappearance from the cast of 'Damn Your Eyes.' It took a long time. When Bill finally paused for breath and sympathy, Bundle said:

"You're quite right, Bill, it's a rotten shame. There must be a lot of jealousy about—"

"The whole theatrical world is rotten with it."

"It must be. Did Jimmy say anything to you about coming down to the Abbey next week?"

For the first time, Bill gave his attention to what Bundle was saying.

"He was full of a long rigmarole he wanted me to stuff Codders with. About wanting to stand in the Conservative interest. But you know, Bundle, it's too damned risky."

"Stuff," said Bundle. "If George does find him out, he won't blame you. You'll just have been taken in, that's all."

"That's not it at all," said Bill. "I mean it's too damned risky for Jimmy. Before he knows where he is, he'll be parked down somewhere like Tooting West, pledged to kiss babies and make speeches. You don't know how thorough Codders is and how frightfully energetic."

"Well, we'll have to risk that," said Bundle. "Jimmy can take care of himself all right."

"You don't know Codders," repeated Bill.

"Who's coming to this party, Bill? Is it anything very special?"

"Only the usual sort of muck Mrs. Macatta for one."

"The M.P.?"

"Yes, you know, always going off the deep end about Welfare and Pure Milk and Save the Children. Think of poor Jimmy being talked to by her."

"Never mind Jimmy. Go on telling me."

Among Those Invited

"Then there's a Hungarian, what they call a Young Hungarian. Countess something unpronounceable. She's all right."

He swallowed as though embarrassed and Bundle observed that he was crumpling his bread nervously.

"Young and beautiful?" she inquired delicately.

"Oh! rather."

"I didn't know George went in for female beauty much."

"Oh! he doesn't. She runs baby feeding in Budapest—something like that. Naturally she and Mrs. Macatta want to get together."

"Who else?"

"Sir Stanley Digby—"

"The Air Minister?"

"Yes. And his secretary, Terence O'Rourke. He's rather a lad, by the way—or used to be in his flying days. Then there's a perfectly poisonous German chap called Herr Eberhard. I don't know who he is, but we're all making the hell of a fuss about him. I've been twice told off to take him out to lunch, and I can tell you, Bundle, it was no joke. He's not like the Embassy chaps, who are all very decent. This man sucks in soup and eats peas with a knife. Not only that, but the brute is always biting his fingernails—positively gnaws at them."

"Pretty foul."

"Isn't it? I believe he invents things—something of the kind. Well, that's all. Oh! yes, Sir Oswald Coote."

"And Lady Coote?"

"Yes, I believe she's coming too."

Bundle sat lost in thought for some minutes. Bill's list was suggestive, but she hadn't time to think out various possibilities just now. She must get on to the next point.

"Bill?" she said. "What's all this about Seven Dials?"

Bill at once looked horribly embarrassed. He blinked and avoided her glance.

"I don't know what you mean," he said.

"Nonsense," said Bundle. "I was told you know all about it."

"About what?"

This was rather a poser. Bundle shifted her ground.

"I don't see what you want to be so secretive for," she complained.

To Seven Dials

"Nothing to be secretive about. Nobody goes there much now. It was only a craze."

This sounded puzzling.

"One gets so out of things when one is away," said Bundle in a voice.

"Oh! you haven't missed much," said Bill. "Every one went there just to say they had been. It's boring really, and my God, you can get tired of fried fish."

"Where did everyone go?"

"To the Seven Dials Club, of course," said Bill, staring. "Was that what you were asking about?"

"I didn't know it by that name," said Bundle.

"Used to be a slummy sort of district round about Tottenham Court Road way. It's all pulled down and cleaned up now. The Seven Dials Club keeps to the old atmosphere. Fried fish and chips. General squalor. Kind of East End stunt, but awfully hard to get at after a show."

"It's a night club. I suppose," said Bundle. "Dancing and that?"

(To Be Continued Tomorrow)

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Miss Florence Coutler, Bark...
my nerves, could not sleep at...
and felt tired all day long.

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BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus

BY GOLLY-IF IT ISN'T ONE THING IT'S ANOTHER I GOT RID OF MAGGIE'S BROTHER NOW I'VE GOT RHEUMATISM IN MY FOOT SO BAD I CAN'T WALK.

DID YOU RING FOR ME SIR?

DO YOU THINK I WUZ RINGIN' TO AMUSE MESELF? GO AN' PHONE DOCTOR SPOOF AN' TELL HIM TO COME RIGHT OVER

HE'S THE BEST DOCTOR IN TOWN I GOT TO GIT RID OF THIS RHEUMATISM SO'S I KIN GO TO DINTY'S CHOWDER PARTY TO MORROW

I PHONED HIM-BUT HE CAN'T COME OVER HE'S GOT RHEUMATISM IN HIS FOOT

O-U!

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AH-MR. JIGGS- I'M LUCKY TO FIND YOU IN!

I'LL SAY YOU ARE WE CAN'T ALL BE LUCKY.

WILL YOU HAVE A CIGAR?

YES! IS THAT ONE?

YOU KNOW- I SMOKE AN AWFUL LOT OF CIGARS-

I KNOW IT- THIS IS ONE OF THEM.

WHY THESE CIGARS ARE TWO FOR A QUARTER-

YOU MUST HAVE THE TWENTY CENT ONE

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OH DEAR- I DO HOPE JIGGS GETS ME A RESERVATION ON THE STEAMSHIP LA FRANTIC I KNOW HE FAVORS MY CULTIVATING MY VOICE

HERE HE COMES NOW I HOPE HE HAS GOOD NEWS-

OH-YOU DARLING YOU GOT THE TICKETS-HOW IN THE WORLD DID YOU EVER DO IT? I HEARD IT WAS NEXT TO IMPOSSIBLE TO GET TRANSPORTATION-

NEVER MIND I GOT IT AN' THERE YOU ARE

MOTHER IS PROUD THAT YOU WERE SMART TO GET TICKETS TO EUROPE

HUH-IF SHE ONLY KNEW THE OWNER OF THE STEAMSHIP LINE LIVES UPSTAIRS AN' WHEN I TOLD HIM MY WIFE WANTED TO GO TO EUROPE TO STUDY SINGIN' HE GAVE ME THE TICKETS-

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