

SMART

(A Short Story)

By RICHARD HILL WILKINSON

It looked to me like a pretty hopeless case and I said so. "That's because you ain't a detective," Moriarty said. "Thank the Lord!" I told him. "See that!" he said, pointing to the marks made by a tire in the soft earth. "Sure," I said. "I've been looking at it for a couple of hours. 'So've you and nine other coppers. So what? Jack Newbury is still dead and the killer's still at large and you're stuck as to how to catch him.' "That's the imprint of a Brimstone tire," said Moriarty. "We know that whoever killed Newbury brought him here in an automobile and left him, figuring the body wouldn't be discovered for weeks. He figured wrong. He forgot that the hunting season was open and that a couple of sportsmen might happen along

Many Guests At Healing Springs

Guests at Healing Springs Hotel last week include the following: Rev. and Mrs. L. D. Ussery, Mouth of Wilson, Va.; Mr. and Mrs. Paul Osborne, Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Duncan, Mr. and Mrs. J. G. Greene and son, Robert, Gwyn Gambill, and Mr. and Mrs. M. F. Rhodes, all of North Wilkesboro; Mr. and Mrs. Roland Pope, Claremont; Mr. and Mrs. Doyt Owens, Statesville.

Marvin Sasser, Frances Sasser, Clinton Sasser and P. D. Watts, Indian Trail; Mr. and Mrs. Ira T. Johnston and Mr. and Mrs.

Thomas S. Johnston, Jefferson; Mrs. J. K. Wharton and daughter, Nancy, Raleigh; Miss Betty Taylorville; Mr. and Mrs. Baxter Hayes, Taylorsville; Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Gambill, Pittsburg, Pa.; all of Galax, Va.; Mr. and Mrs. Cornelia Spoelstra, Rowayto, P. V. Breneman, Statesville and Conn.; Fred J. Roberts, Miss Mr. and Mrs. Richard Griggs, Grace Bishop, Miss Lelia Bishop, West Jefferson.

cular year that the Brimstone people made tires bearing the pattern that was found in the imprint near the body. And that year the Chalmers automobile company had equipped all their cars with Brimstones. The order was a big one and, coming unexpectedly as it did, the Brimstone people weren't able to meet the demands of retail dealers. Hence, in that particular year only Chalmers cars had Brimstone tires, and most all of that model were blue.

It was easy, of course, to find out all the blue Chalmers of that year that were registered in and around Hayden. It narrowed the list of possible suspects down to 250.

Even so, the next time I saw Moriarty I snorted at him. "You've got a fat chance of collecting this guy," I said. "Suppose he came from out of town? which is likely. Suppose he came from Detroit or some place like that? How many blue Chalmers of that year do you think are registered in Detroit? Oh, my! Or suppose he borrowed the car or stole it or something?"

"We've already got the guy," he said. We went into the inspector's office. The inspector was there and two other coppers that I knew fairly well. We sat down and waited and pretty soon a couple of plain-clothes guys came in bringing a big husky, good looking chap with them. The husky was mad and indignant. He yelled a lot about this being an outrage and that sort of thing, but you could see he wasn't quite sure of himself.

None of the coppers said a word. They just sat around and stared at him. Pretty soon the husky stopped yelling and looked from one face to the other, and you could see he was scared. I felt sorry for him.

He asked in a quiet voice what they'd brought him here for, and the inspector said for the murder of Jack Newbury, and opened up his desk drawer and took out a hammer and laid it on his desk.

"This was the hammer that killed Newbury," he said. "We found it in the tool-kit of your car. Your fingerprints are on it."

The husky stared at the hammer a minute and then leaped out of his chair with a yell and began running wildly for the door.

"We figured he'd break like that," Moriarty told me later. "You have to try different systems on different guys. This one was easy."

"Smart, aren't you?" I said. "Now tell me how you did it?"

"Why, it was easy," said Moriarty. It was that Brimstone tire mark. We simply gave out the story that the Brimstone people only made tires with that pattern for a particular year and that Chalmers automobiles of that year were equipped with them. Blue Chalmers. Then we waited."

"Waited for what?" I said. "You mean that story you gave out wasn't true?"

Moriarty shrugged. "I dunno. We gave it out anyway, and the papers printed it. Then we kept our eyes on all the paint shops around, and after awhile a guy with a blue Chalmers with Brimstone tires that fitted the pattern came in to have his car painted. And that's how we happened to pick up this jigger," he grinned.

"Smart, aren't you?" I snorted.

"Yeah," said Moriarty. And we both grinned.

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