

A Question of Trust

-By Victor Canning

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Read and Find Out

1. What does Horace Danby like to collect?

Answer: Horace Danby liked to collect rare and expensive books.

2. Why does he steal every year?

Answer: He stole every year so that he could buy the rare and expensive books that he loved to collect. Each year, he planned carefully, stole enough to last twelve months, and secretly bought the books, through an agent.

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Read and Find Out

1. Who is speaking to Horace Danby?

Answer: A lady standing in the doorway was speaking to Horace Danby. She was young and pretty, and was dressed in red. She said she had come just in time, or else her family would have been robbed by Horace. She, thus, pretended to be one of the members of the family living at Shotover Grange.

2. Who is the real culprit in the story?

Answer: The real culprit was the woman who pretended to be a member of the family living at Shotover Grange. She tricked Horace into believing her, and cleverly took away all the jewels that were kept in the safe.

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Think about It

1. Did you begin to suspect, before the end of the story, that the lady was not the person Horace Danby took her to be? If so, at what point did you realize this, and how?

Answer: Yes, one does begin to suspect before the end of the story that the lady was not the person Horace Danby took her to be. She was unusually calm on seeing Horace. This seemed strange enough. When she did not call the police, and instead asked Horace to take out all the jewels from the safe, even if it meant breaking it open, it seemed suspicious. Moreover, it also seemed unlikely that she would forget the numbers to open the safe. Therefore, it was evident, before the story ended, that the lady was not the person Horace had taken her to be.

2. What are the subtle ways in which the lady manages to deceive Horace Danby into thinking she is the lady of the house? Why doesn't Horace suspect that something is wrong?

Answer: Her confident walk, her act of touching up her make-up and the ease with which she picks cigarette from the right place are enough to deceive anybody. Horace was too frightened to think properly so he didn't suspect anything.

3. "Horace Danby was good and respectable – but not completely honest". Why do you think this description is apt for Horace? Why can't he be categorized as a typical thief?

Answer: "Horace Danby was good and respectable – but not completely honest". This description is apt for Horace. He was about fifty years old. He robbed only from rich people, and his purpose was to buy rare and expensive books with the money. He stole only once a year. The intention of buying books was good. However, the fact that he stole to

achieve this end showed that he was not completely honest. He cannot be categorized as a typical thief because he did not steal to eat or drink. He had a house. He made locks, had two people to help him, and was successful in his business. He only stole enough money to buy the books. For a couple of days, he even kept his promise to the lady he met at Shotover Grange by not stealing or planning any robbery.

4. Horace Danby was a meticulous planner but still he faltered. Where did he go wrong and why?

Answer: Horace Danby failed to get enough information about real occupants of the house. He seems to be too occupied with collecting information about house map, wiring and location of valuable things. Although he was smart enough to know the dog's actual name but overlooked getting identity of each and every occupants of the house. Once he was in problem then probably his clever mind gave way to carelessness leading him to open the safe without wearing gloves.

Talk about It

1. Do you think Horace Danby was unfairly punished, or that he deserved what he got?

Answer: He deserved what he got. A crime is a crime no matter if it is committed a hundred times or just once.

2. Do intentions justify actions? Would you, like Horace Danby, do something wrong if you thought your ends justified the means? Do you think that there are situations in which it is excusable to act less than honestly?

Answer: "Ends do not justify means", this is a very old and time tested saying. For own benefit nobody should harm others. But this world doesn't function on idealism. There are many examples of people duping people for quick gains. These acts should be deplored and dealt with

severely.