

Just One More Thing

“Are you sure you were not followed?”

Two men were meeting in a dark corner of the bar room in a busy inn that's famous for its dark corners. Despite dressed in subdued coats, sharp eyes would be able to tell that the two men were nobility due to the quality of the coats themselves, let alone the matching fancy rings both men have on their left middle finger. But this inn prided itself on its lack of sharp eyes. At least, it's professed lack.

“Of course I wasn't. Do you think me a fool?” said the second man, anxiously looking around the room.

“What has you so worried? The constabulary has nothing on us, I've made sure of it.” The first man, clearly not perturbed, takes a sip of his wine, grimacing at the taste. “Ugh, I know this place is well known for its discretion, but I do wish it served better. Even that destitute baron had better wine than this.”

“That's just it. There's this constable that always seems to be wherever I am, always with another question. He sounds like he's just asking for my expert advice, but some of the questions border on the absurd.” The second man takes out an embroidered handkerchief and wipes his brow, before taking a drink of the wine in front of him. Seeming to recover a bit of his composure from this act, he takes a deep breath.

“Absurd?” The first man looks questioningly at the other. “What do you mean?”

“Well, it started simply enough. Wanting to know my whereabouts, what I knew about the baron, who his political rivals were. The usual questions, you know. But, then he started asking about how magic works, what sorts of things people could do with it, and the specialities of those in the Royal court.”

“So the constabulary just assigned an idiot to the case. Why does this bother you so much?”

“That's just it, though,” the second man takes another sip, looking a little bit more relieved now that he has someone he can confide in. “These questions are too focused to be simply the ramblings of a fool. I initially gave him the answers he was looking for, aside from the ones that are state secrets or that even I don't know, but after that he just kept showing up, wanting to run whatever his latest theory was by me for my opinion.”

“You? But why?” The first man raised an eyebrow at this, confused.

“That's just the thing!” The second man started to get a little loud, then covered his mouth and looked around to see if anyone noticed, before hunching back down and talking in a hushed tone

again. “I asked around my sources to see if there was anyone else he was asking, and no one could tell me anyone else that the constable was talking to about the case.”

“Maybe he is just a star struck fool, then. Probably has never worked a case in the Noble District yet, and wants to make an impression on you.” Nearly finished his glass, the first man raises a finger towards a passing waitress, who nods and heads into the back.

“I hope that’s all it is...”

“So, why did you call me here, anyway? It wasn’t just to commiserate about a dumb constable, I hope.” The waitress comes back with a fresh glass for both men, taking the now empty ones away.

The second man, picking up the glass and downing it, looks straight at the first man. “I am looking for your assistance in silencing this constable, if it seems he is getting too close.”

“Hmph. A waste of time, if you ask me, but I’ll put one of my men on him if it’ll put you at ease. There’s a lot at stake and we can’t have it fall apart because you got spooked by an idiot. If that is all, then I will take my leave. It would not be good to have us seen together, after all. Have another drink to steady your nerves before you depart. It’s already on my tab.”

The first man stands up and makes another motion to a waitress, before walking across the room and leaving out one of the side exits intended for people to use when they wanted to leave discretely.

With the weight taken off of his shoulders, the second man visibly relaxes finally, and slowly drinks the third glass that was brought to him. Now that he isn’t as anxious, he also grimaces at the taste, clearly used to a finer vintage.

A few minutes later, the second man finally finishes the glass and also stands up, putting his hat back on and walking towards the bar room’s main entrance. Just outside, though, he is met with the last person he wanted to see that night.

“Oh, Count Desrocher! I was hoping to see you. See, I had a new theory I wanted to run by you. You’ve been such a good help in my investigation, and I think I am just about to crack the case.”

It was the strange constable that the second man, Count Desrocher, was just talking about with his co-conspirator. Now slightly inebriated, the Count started sweating as he stumbled over his words. “W-w-w-what could I..I..I help you with tonight, Constable?”

“You see, Count, as you know I originally had this theory that the Baron was poisoned by some kind of magic, but thanks to your assistance I discovered that the only thing that was magically affected in the room was a second glass that had been magically cleaned, and then the door was magically locked. Boy, it’s sure incredible, isn’t it? Thankfully the boys at the lab have this tool that can detect faint traces of magic, and a couple of them can even reverse the effects of some spells.”

The constable was very excited to talk about the people who ran the crime scene analysis division, but Count Desrocher was starting to get anxious again.

“That’s fascinating, but what does that have to do with me?”

“Oh, I wanted to know what you thought about this, since your family’s specialty was manipulation magic, exactly the kind needed in order to so finely lock the door once the deed was done.” As the constable said this, an aide ran up and handed him a report.

“Mmm, I guess it does sound possible. My brother is probably the one you should talk to instead, though. He’s the researcher of the family.” Count Desrocher once again took out his handkerchief and wiped his brow, starting to get visibly concerned.

“You’re right, you’re right. Well, I did actually ask him, and you know what he told me? He said that you were the most skilled at this type of manipulation magic, at least of those who are currently in the capital. His son is more skilled, but we already confirmed that he’s been stuck at the academy ever since the avalanches.” The constable continued to flip through the report, nodding at points.

“Oh, I see. Well, yes, makes sense that you would want to come and ask me about it. I had forgotten that poor Albert is still stuck out there. I hope he is doing fine.”

“I hope so as well. Ah, here we go. This is what I actually wanted to ask you about, Count. I wanted to know why your fingerprints were on the glass that contained the poison, especially since you claimed you were not even at the party that night.”

At that point, the sleepy look on the constable’s face suddenly vanished, replaced by a blazing sharp glare, focused directly on the Count.

“W...what ever do you mean.” Count Desrocher started to stumble backwards. “Fingerprints? What are those?”

“Oh, I guess you wouldn’t know about them. It’s a new technique I figured out recently. You see, everyone has a unique pattern of grooves on their fingertips, and a ‘print’ of those grooves, so to speak, gets left behind on surfaces when we touch them.” The constable started waving the report towards the Count, while making a motion to another aide. “Since these grooves are unique, we can compare them in order to tell who touched that surface. Magic sure makes this far handier than I was used to, let me tell you.”

“Get to the point, peasant.” The Count, finally starting to feel the liquid courage, decided this was the time to push back and assert this authority.”

However, it was at this time that another aide brought out an evidence cage, with a pair of glasses in it.

“Wait, how do you...” the Count started to stammer.

“Oh, these?” The constable motioned to the glasses. “We got these from you and your partner as you were just having a drink. After comparing the fingerprints on your glass, we determined it was a match. Did you know that the Royal Prosecutor was very excited about fingerprints? Very interesting, very interesting.”

“T...this doesn't mean a thing! This is a falsehood, and you are slandering the good name of the house of Desroches! I will see you hung for this!” The Count was getting very animated by this point, stomping and pointing as he yelled at the constable.

“I see, I see. I don't know if I'll ever get used to this part. Well, Count, you are under arrest for the murder of Baron Adele. Guardsmen, if you would be so kind?”

After the constable gave this statement, a pair of Royal Guardsmen stepped up from behind Count Desroches and placed anti-magic manacles on his hands and feet, before leading him towards a waiting carriage.

“You won't get away with this!” yelled the Count, as he fruitlessly tried to break free of the grasp he found himself in.

“Oh, right. Before I forget, I just have one more thing, Count,” the constable said, turning towards the Count as an aide opened the door to the constabulary's carriage. “What's your relationship to that man?”

Inside the carriage was the other man that Count Desroches was talking to, head hung low and also in manacles. Upon seeing that his saviour was also in the same predicament, the Count collapsed where he stood, having lost all energy and hope, and was eventually dragged and thrown into the carriage. The door slammed shut and it drove away, taking the two nobles off to the prison in order to be more thoroughly interrogated.

“Phew, guess I still haven't lost my touch.” The constable said, as he walked towards a small, old, beat up carriage that was parked just around the corner. He hopped up onto the driver's seat, picked up the reins, and started driving down the road. It was late at night, and he didn't want his wife to stay up late waiting for him.