

No Luck of the Dice

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By : Mike Stevens

The 3rd and final 'Oren Trough' series story

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The dice rolled on the table like two drunken sailors on shore leave. My whole paycheck was riding on the outcome. As they came to rest, I said a silent prayer to the good-luck gods, and shut my eyes. The crowd watching the action, like a sharp-eyed eagle looking for a good place to land, let out a scream, and I slowly opened my eyes, and, I saw snake-eyes.

“Damn it all to Neptune!” I shouted. I had lost, and was feeling as low as hitting a speed-bump going 80 miles-an-hour in a car with no left front tire. I stormed up to the cashier, and said,

“I need to borrow some more money.”

He answered, “I’m sorry, Mr. Trough, but I’ve been instructed by the management of this casino not to extend you any more credit.”

I felt my spirits sink like a swimmer wearing 50 pound ankle weights, and begged, “Please? I’m this close to a big payday.”

The man answered, sounding like a broken record in a china shop, “I’m sorry, Mr. Trough.”

I angrily stormed away and stomped towards the exit. That’s when, behind me, gunshots rang out, people screamed, and a body hit the floor, like a disco dancer on a Saturday night. I yelled,

“My name is Oren Trough, and I’m a private detective, nobody move! Did anyone see the crime?”

No one answered, like a crowd of mute’s at a dentist’s convention. Someone must have seen something, “Does anyone know the victim?” I asked, but I was greeted only with silence.

“No one knows this gentleman?” I said, pointing at the victim with a finger like a bony pointy death deal. Well, it appeared nobody knew the victim; that is almost nobody. One of the people staring at the dead man like a hungry dog looks at the dinner frying pan, was the killer!

Someone had fired two .357 magnum bullets into the unfortunate victim. His blood was everywhere. I started my investigation by questioning each and every person in this room of death. The way I saw it, there were two gentlemen who peaked my curiosity. They both wore an “I’m guilty” expression on their face, the way a homemade doll might that’s been fashioned out of a bar of soap. I took the 1st gentleman into a spare room.

“Have a seat.” I started out. I wanted to make him think he and I were close and friends, that in driving terms I was staying well-back. Yet, like the way an object in your car’s mirror is closer than it appears, I was this close. He would think I was following at a safe distance, when in reality I was riding his a**. What a minute, I didn’t mean that the way it sounded. I just meant I was following his trail; maybe one of innocence, maybe of guilt.

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“Why, thank you,” the suspect answered. Good, it was working. He thought I was on his side, when I was in reality watching him like a hawk on steroids.

“Now, buddy, tell me why you did it.”

He recoiled from me and shouted, “I didn’t do anything.”

Well, I’d see about that, like a telescope aimed at the truth. “Well, that’s all the questions I have for you at this time, but don’t make yourself scarce, like cherry pie at a Labor Day picnic.” I had turned my attention to my other suspect, and, as much as I was feeling like a black cat in a white bag, I was anxious to question the guy. I took the 2nd suspect into the same spare room, and he marched past me as a man with no neck might on his way to a hanging, eyes darting back and forth. I started to say,

“Have a seat” when he took off running; and as he was running, he was shouting,

“Why are you asking me and pestering me with all these crazy questions?” I was immediately suspicious, as a man would be suspicious of a wobbly wagon wheel on a cart full of dynamite traveling on a road of flames, and yelled to him as I was chasing,

“Why so suspicious? I haven’t even asked you a question yet. You want to know what I think? I think you’re somehow mixed up in this, and know something.” Oh, he definitely knew something, and I would get to the bottom of it, like a homemade go cart with no brakes. Then he turned and took a shot at me, and yelled,

“You’re too good, how did you ever figure out it was me?”

I knew then I probably had my killer. “Because that’s why I’m a detective, to follow the trail of clues always left behind by the killer: like a family who leaves on vacation, accidentally leaves behind their pet, and it gets so hungry it’s liable to chow down on its own hind leg; after a while, even the dip-s*** neighbor would notice how the dog was missing a leg. Answer me this: how are you going to like being guest-of-honor at a gray-bar party?”

He suddenly whirled around like the inside of a dryer and tried taking another shot at me, only I had gotten too close to him. His arm had no room to rise, and I hit him, so he dropped, as a bad stock in your portfolio would. After the suspect had been hauled off to jail, I finally allowed myself to relax. I needed to unwind. It had been just another day, and as a donkey with amnesia might, I pawed around for another case.

The End

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