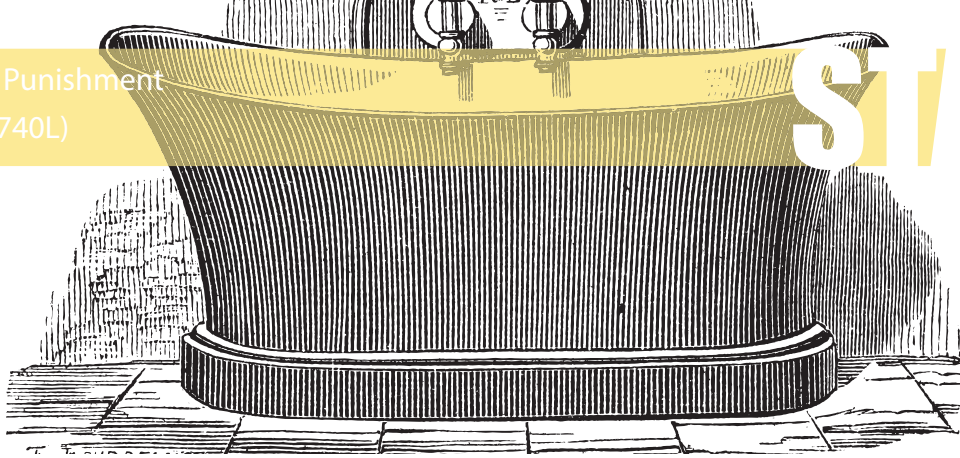




The Case Of The Silver Snake

I still remember my first case working out of Scotland Yard. We nicknamed it the Case of the Silver Snake. It was one of the oddest cases I've worked so far.

It all began when a wealthy heiress was found unconscious in her bathtub. Madam Pearl Dearheart had been taking her monthly bath and had been quite overcome by something. We spoke to her husband, who informed us that she wasn't prone to fainting. I couldn't find any evidence of an attack when I examined her head.

Here we had an otherwise healthy young woman who suddenly lost consciousness in the bathtub. She was in a very bad way when she finally woke. She wasn't able to recall what had happened. She hadn't seen or heard anybody enter the room. All she remembered seeing was a silver snake swimming through her bathwater right before she passed out.

Unfortunately, the water had been drained away and the victim dressed before we arrived. There was very little evidence left in the bathtub. Certainly, there was no snake.

We said our goodbyes to the family and promised to follow up with them if we had any new ideas. You can imagine my surprise when we were called back out to the house the following day. Madam Dearheart had decided to have another bath and once again had passed out. This time, she was in a very bad way. Her heart was racing, and there were burn marks across her leg. Her only memory once again was of a silver snake swimming towards her.

"I have seen marks like this before," my partner said. "I once investigated a man who had touched an electric wire. He had the same marks, and his heart was racing."

Little did my partner know, but he had just given me the information I needed to crack the case. Further investigation of the bathroom revealed a small hatch in the ceiling, directly above the bathtub. I requested a ladder to get a closer look. I was pleased to see that there were damp marks around the edge of the hatch. It looked almost as if something wet had passed through it.

"Is there any other entry to the attic?" I asked Mr Dearheart. He told us that there was another hatch above the landing, and I sent a detective off to keep an eye on that.

No sooner had he reached the hatch than it was flung open and a burly gentleman dropped into

his lap. He was quickly arrested and brought into the bathroom.

“Do you know this man?” I asked Mr Dearheart.

“This is Douglas Haversham. He is Madam Dearheart’s brother. He was supposed to inherit their father’s fortune but was cut out of the will after he tried to steal the crown jewels.”

“I think I understand what has happened here,” I said, turning to my audience with a smile. “Mr Haversham was angry that he had missed out on his father’s fortune. He must have known that if Madam Dearheart died, he would inherit it all. This is why he tried to electrocute her.”

“But how?” Mr Dearheart said.

“Simple. He has recently been on a journey to South America. He is wearing a bracelet made by the Madi tribe of the Amazon. Whilst he was there he collected a fish known as the electric eel. Then it was simply a case of waiting above the bathtub. Once Madam Dearheart settled down to bathe, he lowered the eel into the tub for it to electrocute her. He then winched it back up into the roof, leaving a wet mark against the hatch.”

One day I hope to find a case as interesting as the Case of the Silver Snake.

VOCABULARY FOCUS

1. Which word tells you that Madam Dearheart wasn’t awake?
2. What does the phrase “otherwise healthy young lady” tell you about her?
3. Find a synonym in the text for “definitely”.
4. What does the word “revealed” tell you about the small hatch?
5. What is a hatch?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

- | | |
|----------|---|
| I | Why was it nicknamed the Case of the Silver Snake? |
| P | What do you think the silver snake was? |
| I | How did the author feel when they were called back the next day? Use a quote from the text to help explain. |
| S | Why was Mr Haversham angry? |
| E | Explain how the author’s understanding of the case changes over the text. |

Answers:

1. Unconscious
2. She wasn't ill/there was nothing else wrong with her
3. Certainly
4. It was hidden or concealed/hard to spot
5. A small entrance/hole into the ceiling

I: The lady kept seeing a silver snake

P: The electric eel

I: They were surprised. They wrote "imagine my surprise".

S: He was supposed to get their father's money. He was arrested for trying to steal the crown jewels and didn't get anything.

E: At the beginning, the author is confused and doesn't know what happened. By the end, they have solved the case.