

A Question of Trust



Victor Canning

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Victor Canning, a prolific British writer was born on 16 June 1911 in Plymouth, England. His initial writing work started with short stories. His first novel, *Mr. Finchley Discovers His England*, was a bestseller. He died on 21 February, 1986.

SUMMARY IN POINTS

- Horace Danby was a good person. He was fifty years old but still unmarried. He was a locksmith. He was very successful in his business. But he was not completely honest.
- His hobby was collecting rare and expensive books. For this purpose, he robbed a safe in one year. He bought these books secretly.
- For two weeks Horace had studied the house of Shotover Grange. He had to burgle this house. It had fifteen thousand pounds worth of jewels in the Grange safe. He had also thoroughly examined the entire home.
- Horace entered the house when the servants were away. A small dog lay in the kitchen. He silenced it by calling it by name. The safe was in the drawing room. There was a great bowl of flowers on the table. But Horace started sneezing because he had an allergy to flowers called hay fever.
- Suddenly he heard a young lady's voice saying that she could cure him. He then saw her appear in the doorway. She was young and pretty. She was dressed in red.
- Danby requested the lady to let him go home. She asked him to open the safe as she needed the jewels but she had forgotten the number. Danby willingly opened the safe without gloves.
- So Horace opened the safe for her and handed her the jewels to get his freedom.
- After two days Horace was arrested for the jewel robbery at Shotover Grange. Horace's fingerprints were found, as he had opened the safe without using his gloves.
- When he told the police that the lady of the house had asked him to open the safe, he was surprised to learn that the actual lady was a 60 year old woman. There comes the twist in the story: the woman whom Horace met in that Grange house was not the real owner but was also a thief.
- He was sent to jail. He worked as the prison's assistant librarian. He often thinks of the charming and clever young lady. She was in his profession. She had simply tricked him. Now he didn't believe in the thought of 'honour among thieves.'

SUMMARY IN HINDI

होरेस डेनबी एक अच्छे इंसान थे। वह पचास वर्ष का था लेकिन अभी भी अविवाहित था। होरेस डेनबी एक ताला बनाने वाला था। वह एक बहुत ही सफल व्यवसायी थे। उसकी सहायता के लिए उसके दो सहायक थे। अच्छा और सम्मानित होने के बावजूद, वह पूरी तरह से ईमानदार नहीं था। उन्हें दुर्लभ और महंगी किताबों का शौक था। उसने उन्हें किसी भी कीमत पर खरीदा। इसके लिए वह साल में सिर्फ एक बार तिजोरी लूटता था। उसने ये किताबें गुप्त रूप से एक एजेंट के जरिए खरीदीं। चोरी करने से पहले उसने अच्छी तरह से योजना बनाई। इस बार उन्होंने शॉटओवर ग्रेंज में दो सप्ताह तक घर का निरीक्षण किया था। उन्होंने उस घर की छोटी-छोटी बातों का भी अध्ययन किया। परिवार अब लंदन में था। घर के दोनों केयरटेकर सर्वेंट मूवी देखने गए थे। वह बगीचे की दीवार के पीछे से कूद कर घर के अंदर आ गया। उसने किचन के दरवाजे के हुक से चाबी ली थी। फिर, उन्होंने दस्ताने पहने। उसने दरवाजा खोला। वह बहुत सावधान था कि कोई भी उंगलियों के निशान न छोड़े। मेज पर फूलों का गुलदस्ता रखा था। फूलों की महक ने नाक में दम कर रखा था। वह बार-बार छींका, फिर उसने एक युवती की आवाज सुनी। वह उस घर के मालिक की पत्नी होने का नाटक करती है। उसने उससे कहा कि वह अचानक वहाँ आई थी क्योंकि वह चाहती थी कि उसके गहने रात में पार्टी में पहने।

डेनबी ने महिला से उसे घर जाने देने का अनुरोध किया। उसने उसे तिजोरी खोलने के लिए कहा क्योंकि उसे गहनों की जरूरत थी लेकिन वह नंबर भूल गई थी। डेनबी ने स्वेच्छा से बिना दस्ताने के तिजोरी खोली। युवती को जेवर मिले। होरेस डेनबी खुशी-खुशी चला गया क्योंकि वह कैद से बच निकला था। तीसरे दिन एक पुलिसकर्मी ने उसे शॉटओवर ग्रेंज में गहना लूट के आरोप में गिरफ्तार किया था।

लूटे गए स्थान पर उसकी उंगलियों के निशान मिले हैं। उसने कबूल किया कि उसने घर के मालिक की जवान पत्नी के लिए तिजोरी खोली थी। लेकिन असल में मालिक की पत्नी की उम्र करीब साठ साल थी। उसने कहा कि कहानी सच नहीं थी। किसी ने डेनबी पर विश्वास नहीं किया। अब पुलिस ने उसे गिरफ्तार कर लिया है। वह जेल में सहायक पुस्तकालयाध्यक्ष थे। वह हमेशा आकर्षक, युवा महिला के बारे में सोचता था जो उसी पेशे में थी जो वह थी। अब वह 'चोरों के बीच सम्मान' के विचार में विश्वास नहीं करता था।

TEXTUAL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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 realise this, and how?

Ans. 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. 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?

Ans. Her confident walk, her familiarity with the dog Sherry, her act of touching up her make-up and the ease with which she picks a cigarette from the right place are enough to deceive anybody. Horace was too frightened to think properly so he didn't suspect anything. 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 categorised as a typical thief?

Ans. The description is apt for Horace Danby because he enjoys a reputation of being a good and respectable citizen. But he was really not honest. He was a thief but can't be categorized as a typical thief because he stole once in a year and concealed his stealing under the cover of his profession of making locks.

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

Ans. Horace Danby was a meticulous planner as he planned well how he could manage his whole year. He stole carefully and measured his needs. But he faltered. When he landed in trouble with the appearance of the young lady, his clever mind gave way to

carelessness, leading him to open the safe without wearing gloves.

Think about it

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

Ans. Though it seems that Horace Danby was unfairly punished in that stealing case, he deserved what he got. He was a thief who broke the safe and took out the jewelry. He might not have the material benefit out of the incident but he was the criminal. And in the eye of law he was a thief. So he deserved the punishment imposed upon him.

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?

Ans. Really, intentions can as well as should never justify actions. Horace Danny's first intention was to steal and his second intention was to escape punishment. If the lady was the real lady of the house and true to her words, Horace would have been safe. He was proved wrong with his intention to open the safe that did not justify his action. He had to go to jail. Like Horace Danby, I would do no wrong even if my ends justify the means. In situations of life it is inexcusable to act less than honestly.

WORD MEANING

Citizen-	inhabitant (नागरिक)
Rare-	uncommon (दुर्लभ)
expensive -	costly (कीमती)
bright-	shining (चमकदार)
fingerprints -	signs of fingers (उंगलियों के निसान) ;
stirred -	moved (हिला) ;
disease -	ailment (बीमारी)
quiet-	silent (शांत)
ornaments -	jewellery
seriously -	gravely
Gloves -	covering for the hand (दस्ताने)
frighten -	afraid
burglar -	thief (लुटेरा / चोर, सेंधमार) ;
described -	gave full account (पूर्ण विवरण दिया) ;
mentioned -	spoken about (उल्लेख किया) ;
hindering -	obstructing (रोकते हुए) ;
treatment -	cure (उपचार)

MCQ

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- Who is the author of "A Question of Trust"?
A) James Herriot
B) Ruskin Bond
C) Robert Arthur
D) Victor Canning
Ans. (D)
- What did everyone think about Horace Danby?
A) good
B) honest
C) both of these
D) none of these
Ans. (C)
- Who did he live with?
A) wife
B) friends
C) children
D) none of the above
Ans. (D)
- How old was he?
A) about 40
B) about 50
C) about 60
D) none of the above
Ans. (B)
- Where did the family who lived in the Grange go?

- A) London
- B) Las Vegas
- C) Los Angeles
- D) none of the above

Ans. (A)

6. What was Horace fond of?

- A) books
- B) robbing
- C) locks
- D) none of the above

Ans. (A)

7. Where was the safe hidden?

- A) behind a painting
- B) inside an almirah
- C) it was kept open
- D) none of the above

Ans. (A)

8. How did he come to know about the safe?

- A) servant
- B) eavesdropping
- C) by spying on them
- D) a magazine article

Ans. (D)

9. What was Horace's first thought?

- A) to kill them
- B) to shout
- C) to run
- D) to blackmail them

Ans. (C)

10. How does he justify his act?

- A) by saying he steals for a good reason
- B) by saying he steals only from those who already have plenty
- C) by saying he is not harming the society
- D) all of the above

Ans. (D)

11. Did anyone believe his story?

- A) yes
- B) no
- C) maybe
- D) none of the above

Ans. (B)

12. What did the lady say about his story?

- A) it was nonsense
- B) it was true
- C) it was a joke
- D) none of the above

Ans. (A)

13. What was Horace allergic to?

- A) dust
- B) smell of flowers
- C) pollen
- D) milk

Ans. (B)

14. Sherry is a ____.

- A) woman B) child
- C) dog D) cat

Ans. (C)

15. What colour dress was the woman wearing?

- A) red B) black
- C) green D) white

Ans. (A)

16. How did Horace think that she was the owner's wife?

- A) She was confident
- B) She knew the place well
- C) Sherry rubbed against her
- D) All of them

Ans. (A)

17. What does Horace do in jail?

- A) Clean floor
- B) Assistant Librarian
- C) Typist
- D) Accountant

Ans. (B)

A Question of Trust

VICTOR CANNING

Horace Danby: A Businessman and an Unusual Thief

He loved rare and expensive books. Horace robbed a safe every year to finance his expensive hobby

01

Horace Plans a Theft at Shotover Grange, London

02

Horace Got Arrested

Horace's fingerprints were found all over the room. He had opened the safe without using his gloves. He was surprised to learn that the actual lady was a 60 year old woman.

04

03

- Horace Meets a Young and Pretty Lady
- Lady's Condition for Horace's Freedom

Horace opened the safe for her and handed her the jewels to get his freedom.

05

He was the assistant librarian in the prison. He always thought of the charming, young lady who was in the same profession as he was. Now he didn't believe in the thought of 'honour among thieves.'

Final Realization