A Question of Trust

Everyone thought that Horace Danby was a good , honest citizen . He was about fifty years old and unmarried , and he lived with a housekeeper who worried over his health . In fact , he was usually very well and happy except for attacks of hay fever in summer . He made locks and was successful enough at his business to have two helpers . Yes , Horace Danby was good and respectable --- but not completely honest.

Fifteen years ago , Horace and served his first and only sentence in a prison library . He loved rare , expensive books . So he robbed a safe every year . Each year he planned carefully just what he would do , stole enough to last for twelve months , and secretly the books he loved through an agent .

Now, walking in the bright July sunshine , he felt sure that this year’s robbery was going to be as successful as all the others . For two weeks he had been studying the house at Shotover Grange , looking at its rooms , its electric wiring , its paths and its garden . This afternoon the two servants, two remained in the Grange while the family was in London , had gone to the movies . Horace saw then go , and he felt happy in spite of a little tickle of hay fever in his nose . He come out from behind the garden wall, his tools carefully packed in a bag on his back.

There were about fifteen thousand pounds worth of jewels in the Grange safe . If he sold them one by one , he get at least five thousand , enough to make him happy for another year. There were three very interesting books coming up for sale in the autumn. Now he would get the wanted to buy them.

He had seen the housekeeper hang the key to the kitchen door on a hook . He was always careful not to gloves , took the key, and opened the door. A small dog was lying in the kitchen. It stirred , made a noise, and moved its tail in a friendly way.

“ All right , sherry ,” Horace said as he passed . All you had to do to keep dogs quite was to call them by their right names , and show them love.

The safe was in the drawing room, behind a rather poor painting . Horace wondered for a moment whether he should collect pictures instead of books. But they took up too much room . In a small house, books were better.

There was a great bowl of flowers on the table, and Horace felt his noise tickle. He gave a little sneeze and then put down his bag. He carefully arranged his tools. He had four hours before the servants returned.

The safe was not going to be hard to open. After all, he had lived with locks and safes all his life. The burglar alarm was poorly built. He went into the hall to cut its wire. He come back and sneezed loudly as the smell of flowers come to him again.