

A Question of Trust

Summary: This story is about a thief who gets a taste of his own medicine. Horace Danby can be termed as a thief with a difference. He steals only once in a year. He is fond of books and spends most of his booty on buying books. He plans meticulously before attempting a burglary. During his burglary attempt at a big house, he gathers all the necessary information and enters the house for stealing from the safe. He is cheated by a lady thief, who claims herself to be the owner of the house. Finally, Horace ends up in prison only to repent at the way he was deceived by a person from his own profession.

Question 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?

Answer: It is difficult to guess before the story ends. The incidence of the lady calming the dog gives some hint but it is not strong enough. Her statement of getting the safe repaired can make some reader to think but this can also be a case of fear of a strict husband.

Question 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?

Answer: Her confident walk, her act of touching up her make-up and the ease with which she picks cigarette from the right place are enough to deceive anybody. Horace was too frightened to think properly so he didn't suspect anything.

Question 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?

Answer: Danby's habits were not typical of a thief. He was fond of books. He used to steal only once in a year so he was never stealing more than his needs. Act of theft is still a crime no matter how good a thief behaves, so Danby can't be termed as completely honest. He is not a regular offender like other thieves so he can't be categorized as a typical thief.

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

Answer: Horace Danby failed to get enough information about real occupants of the house. He seems to be too occupied with collecting information about house map, wiring and location of valuable things. Although he was smart enough to know the dog's actual name but overlooked getting identity of each and every occupants of the house.

Once he was in problem then probably his clever mind gave way to carelessness leading him to open the safe without wearing gloves.

Question 5: Do you think Horace Danby was unfairly punished, or that he deserved what he got?

Answer: He deserved what he got. A crime is a crime no matter if it is committed a hundred times or just once.

Question 6: 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?

Answer: "Ends do not justify means", this is a very old and time tested saying. For own benefit nobody should harm others. But this world doesn't function on idealism. There are many examples of people duping people for quick gains. These acts should be deplored and dealt with severely.