

☀ Chapter 4: A Question of Trust

Author: Victor Canning

Book: *Footprints Without Feet*

Genre: Short Story | Crime | Deception

📖 Summary in Simple Words

Horace Danby appears to be an honest man. He is a **lock-maker**, lives with a housekeeper, and is around **50 years old**. But there's a **secret side** to him — once every year, he becomes a **thief** to buy rare and expensive books he loves.

This year, he decides to rob a house named **Shotover Grange**, when the owners are away. He sneaks in carefully and starts opening the safe. But suddenly, a **young woman** appears. She **pretends** to be the owner and tricks Horace into opening the safe for her. She leaves with the jewels.

Later, the **real owner** (an old woman) returns and files a police complaint. Horace is caught because his **fingerprints were on the safe**. He realizes that he was tricked by **another thief** — smarter than him.

👤 Main Character: **Horace Danby**

🧬 Character Traits:

- Intelligent & Skilled (makes locks)
- Loves books deeply
- Secretive – steals once a year
- Careful planner, but overconfident
- Suffers from **hay fever** (sneezes a lot)
- **Trusting** — gets fooled by someone cleverer
- Not violent or greedy
- Ends up in **prison** because of one mistake

🔄 Character Arc:

- **Beginning:** Calm, confident thief who believes he's clever
- **Middle:** Feels fooled but thinks he helped a 'lady'
- **End:** Realizes he was tricked, loses trust in others, feels cheated
- In jail, he regrets **trusting someone** more than stealing

👤 Secondary Character: **The Young Woman (Fake Lady of the House)**

🧬 Character Traits:

- Smart and cunning
- Bold, confident speaker
- Dresses richly to look convincing

- Knows how to manipulate
- **Pretends to be the owner** of the house
- Actually a **thief** like Horace
- **Outsmarts** him without using violence

Character Arc:

- **Beginning:** Appears charming and sweet
- **Middle:** Acts helpless to win Horace's trust
- **End:** Disappears with the jewels – never caught
- Represents the idea: “**No honour among thieves**”

Key Dialogues & Clues:

- The woman says, “I forget the number to open the safe.”
→ This tricks Horace into opening it for her.
- Horace doesn’t wear gloves while touching the safe.
→ Leads to his arrest due to fingerprints.

Important Themes:

Theme	Explanation
Trust & Deception	Horace trusted a stranger and got tricked
Crime Doesn’t Pay	Even a smart thief like Horace ends up in jail
Appearances Mislead	A well-dressed woman turned out to be a thief
Overconfidence	Horace was careful but got careless due to pride
No Honour Among Thieves	The woman betrayed Horace, though both were criminals

Word Meanings:

Word	Meaning
Hay fever	Sneezing due to allergies
Burglar alarm	Device that alerts in theft
Inconvenience	Trouble or disturbance
Interfere	Get involved unnecessarily
Safe	Strong box for valuables

✅ Exam Questions & Answers:

Q1. Why did Horace Danby rob once a year?

👉 He loved **rare books** and stole just enough money to buy them.

Q2. How did the lady trick Horace?

👉 She **pretended to be the owner**, acted helpless, and made him open the safe.

Q3. Why was Horace arrested?

👉 He left **fingerprints** on the safe, and the real owner filed a complaint.

Q4. What does the story teach us?

👉 Don't trust blindly, and **crime doesn't pay** – even smart people can be fooled.

🧠 Moral of the Story:

Even if someone is clever, **trusting the wrong person** can lead to downfall. **Crime, no matter how small or well-planned, leads to trouble.**