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CLASS - X

ENGLISH

Footprints without Feet

CHAPTER - 2

A QUESTION OF TRUST

Part – 1

Horace Danby - Respectable Robber

Nipa Das

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Victor Canning (16 June 1911 – 21 February 1986) was a prolific British writer of novels and thrillers who flourished in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. He was personally reticent, writing no memoirs and giving relatively few newspaper interviews.

This is an intriguing story about Horace Danby, a respectable locksmith with a secret life as a thief. Obsessed with rare books, he robs safes once a year to fund his hobby.

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BEFORE YOU READ

It is said that you must set a thief to catch a thief. But it is also said that there is honour among thieves. Which saying does this story illustrate?

honour : সম্মান
Illustrate : অংকন



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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.

honest : সৎ

Hay fever : ধূলি বা ফুলৰ ৰেণুৰ পৰা হোৱা এলার্জী

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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 had served his first and only sentence in a prison library.

Sentence : আদালতে দিয়া শাস্তি

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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 bought 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.

rare : দুর্লভ

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For two weeks he had been studying the house at Shot over Grange, looking at its rooms, its electric wiring, its paths and its garden. This afternoon the two servants, who remained in the Grange while the family was in London, had gone to the movies. Horace saw them go, and he felt happy in spite of a little tickle of hay fever in his nose.

In spite	:	স্বত্তেও
Tickle	:	সুৰসুৰা

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He came 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 expected to get at least five thousand, enough to make him happy for another year.

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There were three very interesting books coming up for sale in the autumn. He had seen the housekeeper hang the key to the kitchen door on a hook outside. He put on a pair of gloves, took the key, and opened the door. He was always careful not to leave any fingerprints. A small dog was lying in the kitchen. It stirred, made a noise, and moved its tail in a friendly way.

Stirred : লৰচৰ কৰা

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"All right, Sherry," Horace said as he passed. All you had to do to keep dogs quiet 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.

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There was a great bowl of flowers on the table, and Horace felt his nose 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.

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The burglar alarm was poorly built.

He went into the hall to cut its wire.

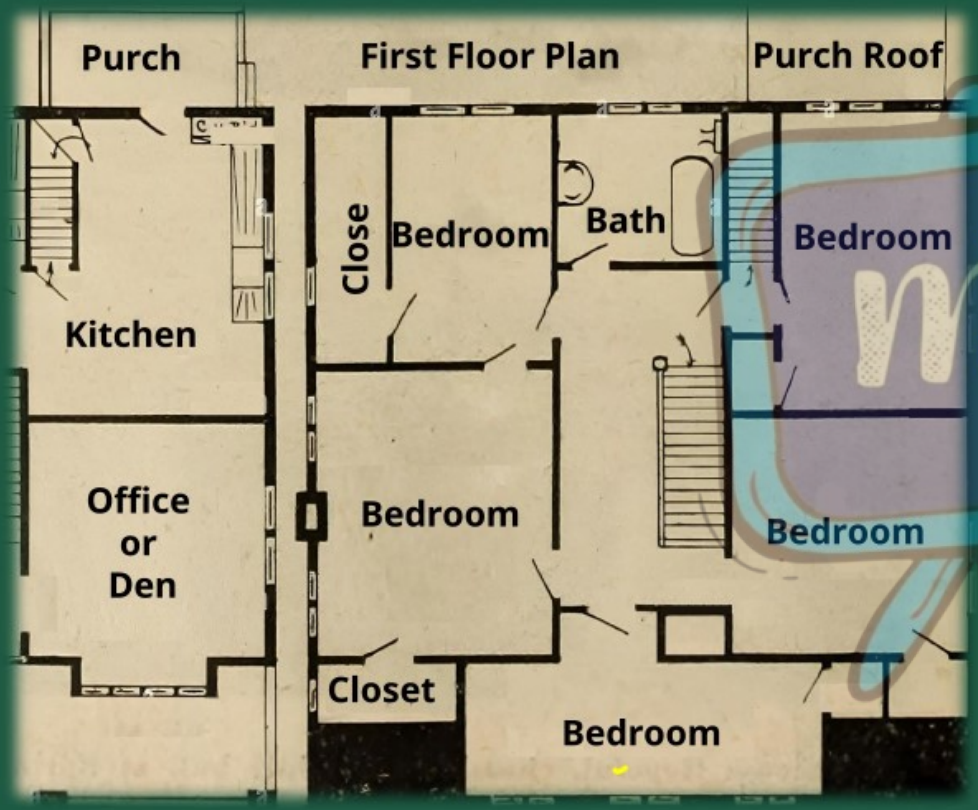
He came back and sneezed loudly as the smell of the flowers came to him again.

How foolish people are when they own valuable things, Horace thought.

Burglar	:	চুৰ
Valuable	:	মূল্যবান

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A magazine article had described this house, giving a plan of all the rooms and a picture of this room. The writer had even mentioned that the painting hid a safe!

But Horace found that the flowers were hindering him in his work.

Hindering : বাধা দিয়া

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He buried his face in his handkerchief.

Then he heard a voice say from the doorway, "What is it? A cold or hay fever?"

Before he could think, Horace said, "Hay fever," and found himself sneezing again.

The voice went on, "You can cure it with a special treatment, you know,

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if you find out just what plant gives you the disease.

I think you'd better see a doctor, if you're serious about your work. I heard you from the top of the house just now."

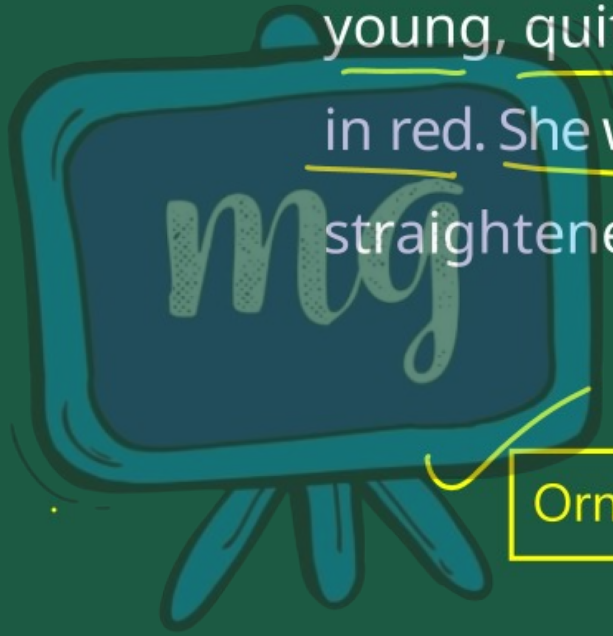
It was a quiet, kindly voice, but one with firmness in it. A woman was standing in the doorway, and Sherry

Firmness : দৃঢ়তা

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was rubbing against her. She was young, quite pretty, and was dressed in red. She walked to the fireplace and straightened the ornaments there.



Ornament(s) : গহনা

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ASSESSMENT

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1 What is Horace Danby's profession?

A Locksmith

B Jewel thief

C Housekeeper

D Police officer

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2 How often does Horace Danby rob a safe?

A Every year

B Every five years

C Every month

D Every two years

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3 What was Horace's initial feeling after studying the house and seeing the servants leave?

A Excitement

B Fear

C Nervousness

D Sadness

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4 Horace Danby loved ___ books and had a collection of them.

A rare

B old

C science

D fiction

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5 The safe was hidden behind a ___ in the drawing room of the Grange.

A curtain

B painting

C sofa

D mirror