

42. Which headmaster, who shares his name with a London borough, was once praised as a nurse of the old?
43. Who got poetic justice when the traditional life sentence was commuted to a ten year term in May 1999?
44. Initially, who was remembered by a Lord in 129, but later 59 was added in 51, and then 39 added in 72?
45. Whose final engraving in England's green and pleasant land was unmarked?
46. Who is the patron saint of pawnbrokers?

Wasted

## IV what The Thunder said (12)



was not ready for what awaited me as I pushed open the door of the pawnbrokers that the barmaid had mentioned. It was a small store which sounded like it owed money [8], and a classy dame sat behind the counter, so engrossed in some old book that she didn't even notice my entrance. There was an ironing board at her side, and she kept holding pages up to the candlelight and peering, as if she was endeavouring to peer through the very eternal light itself. She was looking so intently I worried that she might lose her sight. Perhaps then a blind date might be on the cards?

Something in the book amused her, and as she smiled, I realised I was already in love with her. It was love at first sight, the only kind of love in my book. I stood moved by this darling girl, and yet transfixed - it felt like I'd been sapped with a blackjack and had fallen down.

There are blondes and blondes and it is almost a joke word nowadays. She was definitely the pale, pale blonde with anaemia of some non-fatal and incurable type, languid and very shadowy. I could tell all this just from the second book she was reading. There was no meaning in the first one.

I searched desperately for the words, any words. They came at last. But one was missing. "Err, excuse me, Miss, err ... Miss...?" She looked up with a sudden start. "Oh I'm so sorry! Its Miss Stanley," she exclaimed, slightly embarrassed. "These old books, you just don't realise the little treasures that are hidden within their pages. Simply divine, darling!" she said in a voice like the stuff they use to line summer clouds with. Seen this close she was almost paralysing. I wondered if she had a husband yet.

I fumbled to get my tobacco pouch out and handed it to her. Looking at me quizzically, she felt about in the shag. "Are these what you're offering for hock?" she said lifting up one of the golden coins on her palm. "I'll give you five pounds," she said in a tone that, as far as enthusiasm went, could have provided more.

As I was just looking for somewhere to hide my hot haul, I didn't much care on the amount. But I did care to stand there all day talking to her. So I haggled. We finally ended down at two. She handed me a ticket numbered 820, and asked me to fill in my name and address. As I did so, I tentatively asked her if she was busy that evening. "Perhaps I could take you for an Italian? I know a first rate place." After all, you don't win a prize without getting a ticket.

She blushed very fetchingly, and thanked me politely. Apparently she was otherwise engaged. She was clearly love-lorn, but something told me it had nothing to do with me. I was desperate for a date, preferably two. In a show of petulance peculiar to spoilt children and jilted lovers, I screwed up the hock ticket and grabbed my coins. "No date, no gold!" Outside, I regretted my actions immediately. I vowed to tell her where I was going in my life in a grovelling letter soon.

My partner was long gone, and the flow of cases had swollen to a raging trickle. I was sat in my office one September morn, smoking a tab and generally working hard at doing nothing, when the phone rang. I extinguished my butt carefully.

"Hello there," oozed an unmistakable voice from the past. It was Bob. "Listen, can we meet? Certain information has come into my possession that may interest you. You know that I have always been concerned for your well being." I remembered only to well. I asked him where, really not caring.

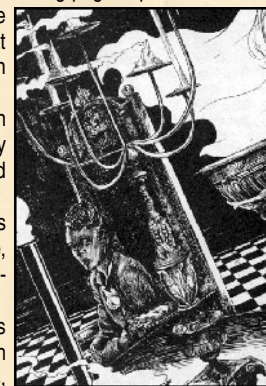
"I have to go away on business, but my route takes me past where you grew up. What say we share a gimlet at Chequers?" I couldn't really refuse. As I put the phone down I felt my dry throat tighten, a condition that seemed best remedied by a generous shot from the office bottle. I downed it in two.

Bob was waiting for me when I arrived at the bar. Some two-bit pub singer was excitedly belting out the latest pop hit on a makeshift stage in the corner. "Come live with me...", he crooned, whilst what might have been his son accompanied him on the lute. His passion may have partly stemmed from the beer, but it sounded like a corking tune anyway. There was a short break in their set, and I hailed Bob with an intoxicated greeting before those mercurial characters returned [13] to the stage.

He was all insincere concern. "I'm worried for you," he sleazed. "I've heard rumours on the grapevine. Some people in high places don't like the cut of your jib. They think you're a bit of a loose cannon in the verbals department. They want to shut you up. They think concealment is something you don't have a clue about.

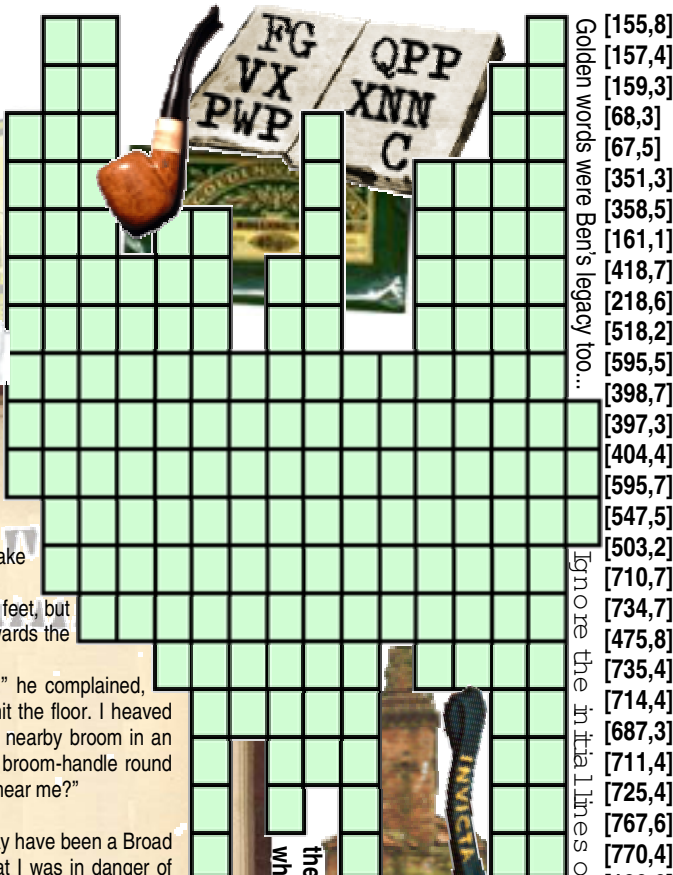
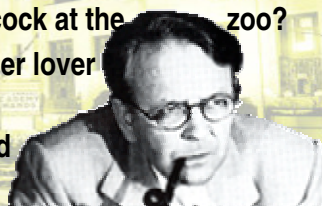
I shut up, and downed my gimlet in one gulp. I made a mental note - a gauntlet had been thrown down.

"Of course, you can always come back and work with me. We're always in the market for experienced operators. "His voice lowered to a conspiratorial whisper. "I've heard that you've, er, come into some money?" he weasled with a sly grin on his face. "If you were willing to, shall we say, redistribute some of your wealth, I could get these people off your back,





47. Which especially bass Sir first played on Gangsters in 1979?
48. Which builder became obsessed with saving time in 1907?
49. What is the missing number: 55, ?, 141, 142, 97?
50. Who got a friendly bite from a peacock at the zoo?
51. Who did Charles' friendly newspaper lover think was a beautiful reader?
52. Which repenting wit reportedly died of German wine and herrings?



Golden words were Ben's legacy too...

Ignore the initial lines of argument

Wasted

give a wrongly accused man a new identity, spirit you away somewhere..."

I was tempted, especially as the original identity seemed to be a mortal spun out of control. I ordered another gimlet. A double. I was pretty half-cut by now.

"I'll get back to you on that one," I replied with drunken bravado. Bob got up to leave. "Make sure that you do," he growled. I knew I was merely delaying the inevitable.

The pub singer finished his set as I stood up unsteadily. Bob might be the worst thing on two feet, but I wasn't too good on my feet either after a few too many gimlets. And either I was heading towards the eexxiit, or they'd employed a cowboy print setter here.

I failed to see the crooner descending the stage, and staggered straight into him. "Hey!" he complained, pushing me out of the way. I toppled backwards, cutting myself on some broken glass as I hit the floor. I heaved myself up, and grappled to draw my dagger. I lost my balance again, and reached out for a nearby broom in an attempt to stop myself falling. It didn't quite work. All I succeeded in doing was swinging the broom-handle round and clouting the crooner. He stormed off, cussing as he held his head. "I'll sue your ass, d'you hear me?"

The meeting with Bob only served to reinforce my fears that the net was closing in fast. It may have been a Broad church, but by May the writing was on the wall. I was so plagued with fear and paranoia that I was in danger of becoming a wreck.

There weren't too many ways out. Perhaps it was time for a knight to come to my rescue. Tom fancied himself as a patron of the arts (partly, I think, in his quest to become a Sir) and had in the past offered his place for my use as a literary retreat. I pulled his leg by calling him 'the knight'. Suffice to say, he was hardly pushed to keep the financial wolves at bay now.

I quickly packed some sundry over-night items into a white pig-skin suitcase, and called a cab. There was a secret compartment on one side, and I carefully slipped the tobacco pouch into it. The cab pulled up outside. "Take me to the bridge!" I demanded dramatically. There was only one. I just got there in time to catch the 11:03. I sat back in my seat and gazed sadly out of the window as the train pulled out. I had a strange feeling that I'd never see the city again.

Tom met me at the other end. As we drove back we caught up with what had been happening. He'd become the fourth man, and inherited a nice little country pile when his brother died. I told him that I'd come into some money too. He seemed to have extracted himself completely from that part of our lives which Big Frankie had run, although from what I heard, the influence of the Krays was still everywhere about here, and a certain underground society kept his place under regular observation. Still, the knight wasn't exactly riding the underworld roller coaster.

His manor was appealing. For a moment, I forgot all my troubles and just gawped. We drove up a beautiful tree-lined avenue, under a stone archway and over a quaint old wooden drawbridge towards a shady hill. It was the damndest looking house I ever saw. It was a square grey box, two stories high, but the cream of the joint was a tall turreted tower over the entrance from which there must have been a view of the whole valley. The chauffeur carried my bags in. "I am so confused," he muttered, "regarding the more mature trouser fashions, and female tastes in Renaissance art." I couldn't make head nor tail of his ramblings.

"Please carry up my newly arrived friend's bags to the Brown Chamber," Tom instructed the butler, whom I recognised as Nick's go-between. "Yes, sir," responded the serving man icily. He made no acknowledgement of our previous encounter as we headed up the White Staircase to my room, and I wondered just how much I'd upset his banking buddy. After he'd left, I turned on the radio to pass the time before dinner. The announcer was introducing the latest episode of some "detective serial"! Ha ha, I thought, some washed-up small-time operator sitting in an empty office, swigging on a bottle! But as the cast-list was read out, I recognised the name of my long-lost cousin Hugh. I'd forgotten he was an actor. He played the eponymous detective, who had to solve the mystery of a stolen string of pearls belonging to the daughter of some homely-sounding Major General's daughter. It was a little passé, but at least it wasn't too taxing on the brain. To guess whodunit, you didn't have to be psychic exactly!

I really could have cried, so happy was I to see Tom again. The knight entertained me with some amusing but informative tales after we'd eaten a magnificent Italian banquet - stufato al dente without the French dressing, served on a bed of spinach, and some kind of biscuit made up of nuts and preserved dates, coated on one side with chocolate. One tale that stuck in my mind concerned the French Count who had built the house. He literally fell in love with a beautiful, rich movie star, who sadly was unable to talk. The place was modelled on Blois, he was named after the tower, and the site was named after her. His wife caused his death, and the servants were greatly inconvenienced by the legacy, after which the house was purchased by one Mr. H. Potter. Its amazing these days what credit cards buy.

After that, if Big Ben had been having trouble applying his mascara, time could not have dragged more slowly. Tom was called away to the City on business the next day. "We'll do some catching up when I get back. Meanwhile, the Plod



the baccy tax is where the money is...

The Idle Valley Kitten knew my true identity...

THE BUTLER



THE BUTLER

[155,8]  
[157,4]  
[159,3]  
[68,3]  
[67,5]  
[351,3]  
[358,5]  
[161,1]  
[418,7]  
[218,6]  
[518,2]  
[595,5]  
[398,7]  
[397,3]  
[404,4]  
[595,7]  
[547,5]  
[503,2]  
[710,7]  
[734,7]  
[475,8]  
[735,4]  
[714,4]  
[687,3]  
[711,4]  
[725,4]  
[767,6]  
[770,4]  
[139,6]  
[179,7]  
[161,6]  
[210,7]  
[68,3]  
[63,6]  
[24,2]  
[282,1]  
[200,1]  
[18,5]  
[452,7]  
[169,2]  
[69,3]  
[563,1]  
[541,7]  
[56,5]  
[55,2]  
[229,4]  
[12,1]  
[2,5]  
[361,7]  
[95,2]  
[47,9]  
[179,2]  
[56,4]  
[197,4]  
[723,5]  
[749,6]



53. Who married Georgie and spent the summers after that living in a tower?

54. Where would you find reputedly the oldest living thing in Europe?

55. Originally, whose Kane was able to find the legendary temple that the missing husband had gone in search of?

56. Who is said to have appeared during every coronation from the first Charles to the fifth George?

57. Who died in a Georgian chair twelve years after committing high murder at Blackjack?

58. Which Emperor was caught in Sedan, and died in his bed over two years later in a Place of exile?

14

Wasted

Room is all yours to work in." But writing was easier said than done, and I struggled to wade through the quagmire of my mind looking for ideas. I even tried reading my old stuff for inspiration. You know you're washed up when you start doing that. Fairly soon, I did what all the great writers did in such situations. I turned to the bottle, hoping that as far as creativity went, it would be jam packed full.

But old Uncle Jack, whom many an old hack had pleaded with for help, was fresh out of ideas today. I decided that I really needed to get out more. I went for walks but just ended up going round in a loop. I headed downtown. There was little there to interest me, except drink, so I ended up hanging around the bars. That's often how it starts.

It wasn't exactly 'happening, man!' The El Tapado bar sounded like the kind of thing I was looking for, but it turned out to be a strip joint. The Adonis Singles Bar seemed to be mainly full of guys in search of the opposite sex. I'd only just bought my first drink when a fight broke out over some dame. That was my exit cue, but I read later that some of the blokes had met their ends there.

Another pick-up joint was the equally optimistically titled Temple of the Second Planet - a tacky dive with a glass dance-floor and the standard issue Bacchus-and-grapes faded wallpaper. It was little better than an orgy of the Gods, with couples entwined in every nook and cranny. They really seemed to cherish lust around here, even the knight could be found chasing some female society to get a result [3]. All this sleaze just left me thinking of my well-versed and learned hero, Miss Stanley, and pining after her.

Within such sordid depravity lays the inspiration for others, and all of these anthropological insights served to stimulate my creative juices if nothing else. I had an idea, but some research was required. I drove down town to the main library. I found it there in a smallish red-bound book published in England. I copied what I wanted from it and drove back. The writer's block was over, I'd got around the void, and I was thinking out of the boxes again.

Tragic, then, that the daughter of my invention should be cut off in her prime. It was 20th May, I remember it was a Sunday because we were on our way to church. Tom had returned the day before, and chose this moment to tell me. His expression was grave. "Whilst I was in London, I bumped into some of Frankie's old crowd down the Rose of Denmark," he started in trepidation.

"A nice pint of Landlords actually, but that's beside the point. The word is, that your time is up, and they're looking to give you what for."

I nearly choked on the words. This was the news I had dreaded, although a certain part of me longed for the uncertainty to end. "But they don't know where I am?" was all I could think of to say in response to Tom's bombshell.

In my mind, the table had now been turned. I was now the hunted, no longer the hunter. Even at church, the rector (a hypocritical ass) turned out to be the brother of the doctor whom Tommy used to lambaste in the Nags Head. The service was the usual claptrap designed to keep the congregation in awe. It was even writ on the walls that Adam was the first man! They probably believed in Father Christmas as well! But I had a burial to attend to. I made my excuses and left before I was sold down the river again.

It had taken me a while, but back at the knight's castle my tobacco pouch was considerably lighter. I poured myself a scotch, and got the poem I'd started out of the drawer in the Plod Room. There was no time to lose, but I found myself staring out of the window over the water. It looked like a body of water that came from a bad leak [7]. I thought of Miss Stanley on the other side of the river, in her green, purple-lined dress with the flared sleeves, the gown with the red stain, and that veil with the flowery design. I looked at myself in the mirror - long hair, washed up. I was a fool if I thought she'd look twice at me, but I wanted her to know that I had cherished her burning beauty, even if it was killing me. And we need a lie about those we are infatuated with, especially when it's her doing the killing. These meditations constituted the writing of my intellectual will, hopefully leaving everything to her. If anyone could find it, she could. The damn fool public thinks if there's a lot of pages, there must be a lot of gold. Well, in this case, they might just be right, even if this basic theory lacked credibility.

The bell tolled ominously. In a minute, the game would be up. I heard footsteps shuffling towards the front door. The sounds of the bell returned to produce a soporific effect [10]. I hadn't finished the poem, but I'd done enough. I carefully aligned the manuscript sheets on the desk. I placed one of my business cards on top, and used the half empty whiskey glass as a paperweight to stop the sheets blowing away. I trusted Tom to get the thing published, by George!

This was it. With each passing second, my heart beat faster. Different voices outside the door grew louder, until they were silenced by a sharp rap. I was so much on edge that I started, and a little of the whiskey jolted out of the glass.

It would be no use to me where I was going anyway. The door opened ajar. The appearance of the old butler's head was the first indication that it was time to go [9]. "It's the police, sir. They wish to speak to you." A uniform appeared at the servant's side. "Lieutenant Maunder, sir. I have a warrant for your arrest". At least I knew why they called it the Plod Room now.



[759,8]  
[771,9]  
[771,1]  
[740,2]  
[299,3]  
[131,1]  
[86,2]  
[134,5]  
[135,3]  
[75,4]  
[138,8]  
[644,7]  
[687,3]  
[648,8]  
[662,7]  
[587,7]  
[538,7]  
[537,6]  
[588,5]  
[533,5]  
[355,3]  
[388,6]  
[716,3]  
[683,8]  
[685,8]  
[676,1]  
[657,6]  
[573,2]

Hyp-  
hens  
don't  
sepa-  
rate.



20 pts:

