



THE FULL MOON CONSPIRACY



Radek Pędzik

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By Radek Pędzik

CHAPTER I

From the early morning, the only thing that was being talked of was the event at Lord Grasshopper's estate. Various theories spread like wildfire. The police restricted all access to the Grasshoppers' property so that investigations could be conducted without hindrance.

When Inspector Bunny arrived at the scene of the tragedy, it had been about an hour since the accident had been reported.

A sergeant from the local police station reported to Inspector Bunny about an unfortunate accident in the stable. Lord Grasshopper had allegedly been kicked by a horse, with a fatal outcome.

The doctor confirmed the death of the lord and the lord's relatives were informed.

Inspector Bunny asked if there were any witnesses to the incident. The sergeant stated that Lord Grasshopper had been alone in the stable.

Inspector Bunny was informed that Lord Grasshopper would visit his horses every morning just before breakfast. He usually spent about an hour with his beloved horses. The lord liked to spend time with his horses and he often talked to them without expecting any reply. He considered these animals his friends and he put much effort into their care.

The employees commenced work every day at seven o'clock. At this time, the lord would be just leaving the stables, or he would have already left.

The inspector calmly asked questions: "Who found the body?", "What time was it?" and "Where exactly was the body?" The sergeant provided him with all the answers he had gathered so far.

The lord's body was found right next to a stable, which the lord had purchased two months earlier. The stable belonged to one of the lord's horses; her name was Sparkle. The first person who had come to work that day was Strawberry, the groom, and he was the one who found the body. Strawberry said that the horse's pen was open, and the horse was standing outside at the other end of the stable.

Before calling for help, he tried to help his employer. He soon realised that Lord Grasshopper had no sign of life, and he immediately called an ambulance on his phone. An ambulance from a nearby hospital arrived a few minutes later.

The doctor said that the death of the lord was probably due to serious damage to the head. It was most likely that he had died immediately after the impact or series of impacts. So, it was too late for any help. Inspector Bunny asked the doctor if it was possible that a

horse could have caused these injuries. The doctor replied that usually a horse's kicks would not cause such serious injuries, unless the horse was wearing horseshoes. However, it could not be excluded that the horse had kicked him in another part of the body and then the lord had hit his head on a hard surface. "We will know far more after the autopsy," said the doctor.

"Everything seems to indicate that it was an unfortunate accident," said the sergeant.

"If everything indicates an unfortunate accident, maybe it wasn't an accident then?" Inspector Bunny replied under his breath. He looked over at the police photographers who were photographing the crime scene.

Later, Inspector Bunny ordered all fingerprints to be collected from the mare's enclosure and all trace evidence was to be carefully collected and recorded. The whole area was sealed off and no unauthorised persons could enter. The sergeant, for whom this matter seemed perfectly obvious, did not quite understand the sense of these actions.

"Inspector, such accidents happen quite often," said the sergeant. "People think that they know everything about their animals; they believe that their animal is completely tame and that is why they sometimes lose their alertness, common sense even. They feel relaxed in their animal's company - too relaxed."

"Do you have an animal in your home, sergeant?" asked the inspector.

"Yes, I have a dog," said the sergeant.

"Has he or she ever bitten you?" Inspector Bunny continued.

"No, I have a Labrador and dogs of this breed are not aggressive at all," said the sergeant in surprise.

"So, maybe we should check if horses of this breed are not aggressive too?" said the inspector, getting into the car.

The next morning, the whole Grasshopper estate was in a gloomy mood. Everyone was aware of the gravity of the situation, and a sober silence seemed to prevail. Only the quiet sound coming from the kitchen, where the members of the staff were preparing breakfast, disturbed this quiet mansion.

At the same time, Inspector Bunny at the scene of the accident was conducting his investigation. He asked employees about various things. Some questions were unrelated to the events of the last morning. At least, this seemed so to the employees of the estate. From time to time, the inspector wrote something down into his notebook.

Around noon, when everyone in the residence was busy with their duties, Inspector Bunny turned up in the company of the butler.

The inspector was looking for the late Lord Grasshopper's wife.

The butler told him that Mrs. Grasshopper was not feeling well and would like to remain alone.

The inspector showed understanding and tact in this situation.

Taking the opportunity, he asked the butler a few questions about his observations. The inspector queried if maybe he had noticed something that was out of place on the beaten paths of everyday life in the residence.

The butler replied that he knew his work well and knew what his duties were. If something suspicious or inappropriate had happened, he would have reacted accordingly.

Then he pointed out to the inspector that this was not the time for a conversation of this nature.

He stated that if the inspector had any further questions, he would know where to look for him.

"With all due respect. I must go back to my duties." The butler said and left, leaving the inspector alone in the middle of the hall.

The inspector scratched his head and was about to reach for a cigarette when he realised it could be far-reaching impropriety to smoke in these circumstances.

While waiting for news of Lord Grasshopper's autopsy, Inspector Bunny wandered around the garden near the stable. Suddenly his attention was drawn to a small boy who turned pale at the sight of the inspector. The appearance of his childish face seemed to ask the heavens to make him invisible at that moment.

CHAPTER II

"How do you do?" said Inspector Bunny.

"How do you do?" replied the boy.

"May I know your name?" asked the inspector.

"Ee... Henry, sir" he said, with slight hesitation.

"What are you doing here, Henry my boy? Should not you be at school at this time of the day?" the inspector asked in a half-hushed voice.

"I do not have to go to school today, sir" he replied

"What makes you think that you do not have to go to school today? Children of your age should be at school to gather knowledge, learn about different matters," noted the inspector.

"But I am learning all the time, sir" said the boy resolutely.

"Like all of us. We are learning all the time. But the difference is that some of us must work and some of us must go to school. Do not you think?" asked the inspector kindly.

"But I am working today," the boy said.

"Are you? What are your duties, then?" kept asking Inspector Bunny

"I am helping Mister Yolk, sir," the boy answered.

"So, you are saying that Mister Yolk needs your help? Are you not?" asked the inspector.

"Well, yes, sir," the boy answered, with a hint of doubt in his voice.

"Does Mister Yolk know that you are helping him?" inquired the inspector

"Of course he knows. He even pays me for my job," the boy replied.

The boy was slowly beginning to gain confidence. The conversation with the inspector, who seemed to him to be quite a nice man, was getting increasingly friendly.

"I believe you must be well rewarded for your job," the inspector said seriously.

"Well, Mister Yolk is not giving me money, sir. But I get a lot of interesting things from Mister Yolk in return for my job," the boy said, in a rush to explain.

"May I know what these interesting things are?" asked the curious inspector.

"Medical equipment!" the child answered seriously.

"Good Heavens! What do you need medical equipment for?" the inspector enquired with interest.

"One day I will be a doctor like Mister Yolk, and I will need medical stuff," the boy explained.

"I understand then that Mister Yolk is a doctor?" asked Inspector Bunny.

"Yes. He is an animal doctor. Don't you know Mister Yolk?" asked the boy, a bit perplexed.

"I do not know him, but I would be glad to meet him. With your help maybe?" he asked kindly.

"Mister Yolk is a very busy man. He looks after the Lord Grasshopper's horses. But we can go and ask him," the boy said.

"Very well my boy. Let's meet Mister Yolk, if you do not mind. By the way, did you know Lord Grasshopper?" said Bunny

"Well, I knew him, but he did not know me, I am afraid. He preferred talking to horses than talking to people like me, sir," the boy said, with a pinch of sadness in his voice.

"Perhaps he was a very busy man? Like Mister Yolk. And he did not have much time to speak to everybody." Bunny was trying to excuse the lord's behaviour for some reason.

"Well, maybe you are right, sir," the boy said.

The day was coming to an end. The sun was hiding behind the horizon and dusk was slowly falling. The first stars appeared on the darkening sky.

"I need to go home now, sir. It is getting late," said the boy to the inspector.

"Yes. You are absolutely right. You must get home before night fall. I will meet Mister Yolk another time," said the inspector.

"I am not afraid of the night," answered the boy bravely.

"I am sure you are not afraid of the night. Boys like you are usually not afraid of anything," said the inspector.

"That's right. I am not even scared of the moon," shouted the little boy.

"Well, people do not have to be afraid of the moon. It is too far away from us. Silly boy," said an amused Bunny.

"But Lord Grasshopper was afraid of the moon," added the young fellow.

"Why would he be afraid of the moon?" asked Bunny.

"I do not know why. My dad told me so".

Henry hurried toward the property, waving goodbye to the inspector.

Bunny pulled out a phone to call someone.

"Do you have something I don't know?" He spoke briefly over the telephone.

After listening to what the other person had to say, he just added: "Then take this test also for the horse. But today!"

The inspector switched off the telephone and then looked towards the Grasshopper estate and began to wonder intensively. As if something in the mechanics of his mind started to grind and work together.

CHAPTER III

The following morning, the weather was not favourable for people who appreciate communing with nature. It was raining heavily, and a strong wind was blowing. The only people who were outside were the employees performing their duties.

Meanwhile, quite a few cars had arrived in the parking lot, adjacent to the property.

Bunny barely found a place to park his small car.

The butler, standing in the doorway, welcomed him with a half serious, half contemptuous expression.

"What's going on? Will the funeral take place so soon?" asked Bunny

"The funeral date of the late Lord Grasshopper is not yet set," he said casually. "Today was supposed to be a family reunion. The lord's family was to come today from all over the world." Butler said it in such a way as if he was doing a favour to the inspector.

"Speaking of family. How is the lord's wife? Is she well?" asked the inspector.

"Don't you think that your questions are rather intrusive, considering the recent events? Bad mannered, even?" remarked the butler.

"I think you are right," said the inspector, in a very kind way. "Let me ask you this question once more though".

The butler lifted his chin, saying nothing.

"Is Mrs Grasshopper feeling any better today? I would not like to be disturb her in such difficult times," said Bunny, kindly again.

"Lady Grasshopper is in her room. I will send someone to her ... room to see if she needs anything," said the butler impassively.

Bunny was left alone. He neither needed nor felt like asking more questions to the slightly pompous butler.

Someone else caught his attention. A man stood near the flowerbed which was covered with white and red roses. It looked like something was bothering him. The inspector wondered not so much about the gentleman's behaviour, but rather his clothing.

Although the suit was impeccably cut, the inspector's eyes were immediately drawn to a bright yellow cravat that matched the rest of the attire like an ox matches the royal carriage.

"I wonder what makes people dress like so?" thought Bunny aloud. "Perhaps it's alluring for women?" he continued under his breath. "I do wonder if it works," he muttered.

At that same moment, the owner of the fancy cravat looked at Bunny. Their eyes met, for a moment. Both gentlemen exchanged courtesy bows.

Bunny approached the man slowly, brought about both by duty and curiosity.

"The falling petals slowly take away the charm of these beautiful flowers," Bunny said to the stranger.

"Yes. Autumn is approaching inexorably. Reminding us that everything passes," said the stranger.

Bunny noticed that the stranger was holding a hat in one hand, which was more suited to a cowboy than a member of an aristocratic family. Bunny thought that perhaps the stranger had found this hat and was now looking for the owner.

"Are you here for Lord Grasshopper's funeral?" Bunny asked.

"Yes and no. This was not what I expected when I was coming here," replied the stranger.

"Sometimes life likes to surprise us," said the inspector, casting a glance at the muddy shoes of his new acquaintance.

"Are you related to the lord's family?" asked Bunny straightforwardly.

"Here you are! I have been looking for you for over an hour!" said a young woman, who seemed to appear out of nowhere.

Bunny had the impression that she had suddenly sprung out of the earth. It rendered him speechless for a while. The stranger looked to be feeling the same way.

"Arthur, have you decided to bore the inspector with your stories?" she said flirtatiously.

He looked like a lonely child in the fog. Half-confused, half-lost.

The embarrassment on his face would have been visible from a mile. He was desperately trying to utter a sound that might justify his awkward feelings. It took him a good while to collect his thoughts together in order to produce a well-founded explanation.

"Oh. My dear sister-in-law. I wanted to be left alone for a while. I decided to take a long walk in the park," said Arthur, trying to calm his emotions.

"Arthur, don't you wish to introduce me?" the young woman said, grudgingly.

"You are absolutely right my dear. Let me introduce you to the inspector," said Arthur, feeling that he was finding his way out of the fog. He looked at the inspector, now with more understanding, of who the inspector was. The inspector, who, surprised by the turn of the situation, felt as if he suddenly found himself on the set of some bad film.

"It seems like I'm guilty in this circumstance. Not introducing myself. Please accept my apologies." Bunny said quickly as if trying to come to the rescue of a puzzled Arthur.

"Let me introduce my sister-in-law. Elisa is ... ," said Arthur.

"I have heard a lot about you inspector," interrupted the young woman.

"I do not know what you have heard but I hope that my reputation remains intact." Bunny answered politely.

"If I were to ask someone for help, you would certainly be first on my list," Elisa replied.

"Thank you kindly," said the inspector, bowing his head.

"Ah, Arthur I was looking for you because there are some matters of great significance I think!" Elisa said to Arthur.

"Of great significance! That sounds very serious," noted Bunny.

"In fact, it is a matter of signing of a few papers regarding family's businesses. Since the tragedy, many things have changed. Alas. We have to face new circumstances now." Elisa explained hurriedly. And not wanting to say anything more, she grabbed Arthur's hand.

"Then, let us go Arthur. Let's not disturb the inspector's duties," said Elisa to Arthur.

The inspector stood alone, staring at the flowers. Then something caught his attention, diverting him from his thoughts. A beautiful yellow butterfly perched on one of the roses, spreading its coloured wings, as if to present and show off its beauty.

"Common brimstone or *Gonepteryx rhamni*," said a voice behind the insepctor's back. "It's you, sergeant. Are you interested in entomology?" asked Bunny, turning to the sergeant.

"It is my hobby. Insects I mean," said the sergeant.

"Good for you! It is important to have an interest in life. Not many people have passions," said Bunny and then he asked, "Do you have some other equally important information?"

"Well, we couldn't find the key to Lord Grasshopper's office. But it has been found. It was in the riding clothes," the sergeant reported.

"So, let's go to the lord's office. Maybe we will be able to gain more understanding of the aristocracy's life and customs," the inspector said smiling.

Bunny, sergeant and the butler entered the lord's office. The room was small. In the middle, was a spacious oak desk. A large silk-lined sofa stood by the window. A carelessly rolled blanket lay on a chair beside it. The remaining space of the room was filled with shelves of books. Bunny looked for a moment as if looking for a book in the library. There was orderly disorder on the desk. This could suggest that its owner was a very busy man, in the middle of work. Among the few pages and pens was a large leather-bound book. The inspector came closer to look at the book. He read on the cover. "Gulliver's Travels". The inspector put on gloves, looked around and found a telephone in the drawer of the desk. The battery was dead.

"Is this Lord Grasshopper's office?" asked Bunny. To make sure it was the right place.

"Yes. It is, indeed, Sir Grasshopper's office," answered the butler.

"How many people have access to this office?" Bunny asked.

"Only Lord Grasshopper. Sometimes the lord's brother would come here. You met him today," responded the butler.

"Is Arthur Lord Grasshopper's brother?" the inspector asked, slightly surprised. He could not resist the feeling of being in a class B movie again. Everyone seemed to know everything as if they were following a script or they had eyes at the back of their heads. How did the butler know that the inspector had met Arthur?

"For Arthur, the lord always left the door wide open," continued the butler.

"And could the lord's wife come in here equally freely?" asked Bunny.

"I didn't get the impression that Mrs. Grasshopper was interested in her husband's affairs. She preferred to stay with hers," the butler answered quite curtly.

Bunny, seeing that he was dealing with a 'riddle man' who had probably missed his calling, decided to change his strategy.

"I would like to talk to Mrs. Grasshopper. I think she's in a better mood today," said a calm but definite Bunny.

"I'm afraid that is not possible. She's not here right now. She had to go to Edinburgh," replied the butler.

"She must have had a serious reason for leaving the preparation of the funeral to go to Edinburgh," said the inspector.

The butler remained silent.

CHAPTER IV

In the late afternoon, Bunny was in the stable. He talked to employees. The supervisor was not there. Bunny was told that he had left for business matters three days before and was supposed to return that day.

The inspector went to the stables, where the unfortunate accident had occurred.

Strawberry, the groom, entered the stable. He brought some boxes and put them against the wall.

Bunny approached him and asked if he could remember anything else of importance.

"No. I have already said everything I know about this," said the groom.

"And do you also think that it was an accident? Do you think the horse kicked the lord accidentally when he stood behind him?" asked a curious Bunny.

"These things happen, inspector. I just don't understand why Lord Grasshopper was so careless," replied Strawberry.

"Maybe the horse didn't notice the lord, and something scared him then?" asked Bunny.

"Sir. The horse couldn't not notice Lord Grasshopper. A horse can see almost 360 degrees around them, without moving its head. And when a horse wants to kick someone, it will usually do it precisely. Besides, horses that kick are marked in some way. They have a red ribbon on their tail, for example. However, this horse was always calm," replied the groom.

"How is it possible for horses to see 360 degrees?" Bunny asked.

"Inspector. I didn't say that horses see everything around them. I said they could see around. They can see what's behind them, but then they are not able to see what is in front of their heads," explained the groom.

"Maybe when the lord came into the pen, the horse looked elsewhere?" Bunny asked, in a way a student asks a teacher.

"Sir. Lord Grasshopper knew a lot about horses. He was aware in which direction horses were looking at that moment. This can be recognised by the ears. Where the horse looks, there its ears are directed," explained Strawberry.

"It is very interesting, indeed. What is in the boxes you just brought in?" asked Bunny.

"This is electronic equipment that will be mounted in the stable. Cameras, sensors and more," said the stable man.

"Was it decided that after the accident had happened to mount CCTV?" Bunny asked.

"It had been decided much earlier, because the stable did not meet the requirements set out in regulations," said Strawberry.

"The stable did not meet the requirements set out in regulations?" repeated the inspector.

"No. About six months ago, there was an audit here. It was found out that the horses did not have enough space in their enclosures," said the Strawberry.

"And these cameras are also the recommendation of this audit?" Bunny asked.

"I think so. You should ask Mr Caterpillar about that. He has brought these things," said Strawberry.

"Is Mr Caterpillar your supervisor who left three days ago in connection with business affairs?" asked Bunny.

"Yes sir. He is back now. You can find him in his office," answered the groom.

Bunny wrote something down in his notebook. And then he asked the groom why this one-horse pen was different from the others.

"I do not know. Maybe it is bigger because it is in the middle of the stable?" replied Strawberry.

"It is larger and has no rectangular shape. It differs significantly from the others," noticed Bunny.

A voice was suddenly heard. Someone was calling for Strawberry, expressing at the same time, vocabulary that was not too flattering.

"I need to go. I have some work to do," said Strawberry, and left the stable.

Bunny went to the supervisor's office. He found him sitting in front of the computer.

"Good afternoon. You are mister Caterpillar, the supervisor of the stable?" asked the inspector.

"Yes. And you are probably a police inspector?" responded the supervisor

"I have some questions for you. Regarding the recent events at this estate," said Bunny.

"I don't know if I can help you, inspector. As you know, I haven't been here for the last few days. I had to leave to do business in connection with the renovation of these stables," the supervisor started to explain.

"Yes. I heard about it. The renovation will surely cost a lot?" Bunny asked.

"Indeed. For Lord Grasshopper, this was probably not an obstacle. He loved the horses. And there was mutual love," said Caterpillar softly.

Bunny looked thoughtfully toward the computer standing on his desk among the various handwritten notes. Then he said to the supervisor, "I see you have a lot of work to do.

That's why I won't take too much time, I hope. I was at the stables. I looked at all the stables for the horses. I wonder why there is one horse pen different from the others."

"Do you mean the one in which the accident happened? There is nothing strange about this. This pen is for pregnant mares. They must have more room in case of delivery difficulties. We may then need more room," explained Caterpillar.

"I understand. Is this why this place is so brightly lit?" asked Bunny.

"All horse pens have the same lighting. It can't be too light or too dark. Before leaving, I installed light bulbs myself," answered the supervisor.

"In my opinion, this one bulb shines much brighter than the others," added Bunny.

"I'll have to check it out. Maybe that bulb had burned out and someone exchanged it for another," said the supervisor

"You said something about the right lighting?" asked Bunny.

"Yes - horses have good eyesight and see well in the dark. Better than people. The only difference is that the horse's eye need much more time to adjust to a change in light intensity," explained the supervisor.

Someone knocked on the door. It turned out to be Henry, who was carrying a bag with some clothes in it. He said he had found a red jacket which belonged to Lord Grasshopper. "I found it in the attic of the stable," said Henry.

"First of all, what were you doing in the attic? Secondly, it's not the lord's jacket," said Caterpillar loudly.

"The attic was open. There were people putting in computer and cameras," Henry explained.

"How many times do I have to tell you not to come here alone? This is not a place for children. I'll talk to your father about it," said the supervisor crossly.

"But the lord's jacket ...," Henry whispered.

"This is not his jacket. The lord's jacket is marked with the family coat of arms. And this one has no such thing," said Caterpillar quickly. As if he did not want to waste his time on such unimportant matters.

"Then this is the doctor's jacket. He has the same," said little boy leaving the office, with the jacket.

CHAPTER V

Bunny returned to Grasshopper's house. There was a large crowd of people outside the house. The inspector recognised Arthur, Elisa, the butler and the sergeant.

When the sergeant noticed the inspector, he immediately directed his steps towards him.

"Who are these people?" asked Bunny.

"These are family members and the accountant. The lord's wife has just arrived from Edinburgh. And the older gentleman is Lord Grasshopper's father," he reported.

"Why is everyone standing outside the house?" Bunny asked.

"The younger brother of the lord, Arthur, did not feel well. It seems that the weather here does not suit him well. He spends most of his time at his home in Dallas. He hasn't been here that long and has probably not yet acclimatised," said the sergeant.

The inspector stood for a moment, noting something in the notebook. Then he pulled out a piece of paper and handed it to the sergeant.

"Please call this hotel and ask how long the power failure lasted," Bunny said, and then walked toward the mansion.

He was not surprised when he met the butler outside the door, standing there like Cerberus guarding Hades.

"Inspector, Mrs. Grasshopper is in the living room. She's waiting for you. You wanted to talk to her," said the butler, with solemnity.

"Tell her that I have some duties to do now, after which I will meet with her," said Bunny.

At that moment, an elderly gentleman entered the house. It was the father of the late Lord Grasshopper.

Bunny took the opportunity to talk to him, without the ubiquitous witnesses.

"Please let me introduce myself. I'm a police inspector," said Bunny.

The elderly gentleman looked at Bunny earnestly.

"Are you investigating this accident?" he asked calmly.

"Well. These are the procedures. Can I ask you a few questions about your son?" the inspector asked politely.

"What do you want to know?" asked the older man.

"First of all, what kind of man was your son?" asked Bunny.

"My son had a complicated personality. He was very responsible and ambitious at the same time. He always strived for perfection in whatever he did. He was a bit of a dreamer

too. He believed that the world could be different. Better and fairer. He loathed a lie and cowardice," said the father.

"Did he have any enemies? Was there anyone who had a grudge against your son?" the inspector asked.

"Do you think it wasn't an accident?" asked the somewhat surprised older man.

"I don't claim that. However, I must examine every eventuality," said Bunny

"I don't think anyone would want to hurt my son. He would never hurt anyone," replied the elderly gentleman.

"I understand. One more question I would like to ask you," added the inspector.

"Please ask," he said, looking at the inspector inquisitively.

"I heard that your son was afraid of the moon. I know it might seem trivial but I would like to know something more about that," Bunny continued.

"It is not true that he was afraid of the moon. He could not sleep during the full moon. This is probably connected with his stay in the army a long time ago," said the old man

"Tell me about it," Bunny asked with interest.

"It was during some battle. My son commanded a platoon of soldiers there. When they were surrounded by the enemy, my son offered the command to carry out a very difficult action to get out of the encirclement. The plan was difficult but good preparation gave hope for success. Everything went well until it turned out that one detail had not been considered. That night was a full moon. And the bright light betrayed my son's platoon hideout. All were caught by the enemy," said the man.

"What happened next?" asked Bunny.

"After the liberation, my son left the army. Nobody blamed him for what had happened. However, he could not forgive himself. He had always considered himself a person who was careful and made no intentional mistakes. Everything had to be done perfectly. There was no room for shortcomings. After that event, he realised that this attitude may have led to endangering other people's lives. But nobody is perfect," said the old lord.

"Perhaps the full moon reminded your son of his imperfections and made him work harder on himself. Therefore, he did not sleep at that time," said Bunny perceptively.

"Did everyone know about this?" he asked.

"My son did not talk about it. Only the closest relatives know about it. It was not a topic for conversation at the dinner table. But you might be right. My son has been looking for perfection all his life," replied the lord's father.

Bunny said goodbye to the old man and went towards the sergeant standing at the front door.

"Do you think it may not have been an accident?" asked the sergeant.

"I can't say that. But too many questions remain without an answer," responded Bunny.

The inspector and the sergeant had a short conversation. Then the sergeant went hurriedly toward the exit. Bunny pulled the phone out of his pocket, stood to one side and phoned someone.

After a few minutes, Arthur entered the property, in the company of the accountant. The butler came in front of them and greeted them with a gentle nod.

When the men dispersed, the inspector approached the butler and asked about the wife of the late lord. He asked where he could meet her now. The butler's answer surprised Bunny. It turned out that the widow was mourning her husband in the stable.

"Good heavens. How strong do you need to be to despair at the tragedy site?" he thought.

"Let me take a look around here again," said the inspector to the proud butler.

The day was coming to an end and Bunny felt that he was in a kind of maze with no chance of getting out soon. Everyone seemed to know everything and only he was the one looking for something that did not really exist.

The inspector walked around the house. On the second floor, at the end of the corridor, was Lord Grasshopper's office. Bunny went inside and sat in the armchair. The documents from the desk and the telephone from the drawer were now in police hands. Only the book remained on the desk. The same one Bunny saw during his previous visit here.

This surprised the inspector and unsettled him at the same time. He ordered the policeman to secure everything that was on the desk and nearby and to take fingerprints.

"So why did not they take that book? Lack of professionalism or rather negligence?" thought Bunny

Putting on gloves, he picked up the book and began to flip through the pages slowly. As if he was looking for something that would give him some hint.

The ringing telephone interrupted the inspector's thoughts. He answered the phone and then was silently listening to what someone on the other side had to say.

After a while he answered. "What condition is he in? Wait for me. I will be there as soon as I can."

Leaving the house, Bunny noticed the sergeant talking to the butler. He nodded at him. The sergeant apologised to the butler and walked quickly to the inspector.

"Are you interrogating this butler? Getting information from him is a real art. He is more an android than a man. He speaks as if he's been programmed." said Bunny.

"I didn't get that impression. I asked him how often the horses were examined by a veterinarian," said the sergeant.

"And what reply did you get?" asked Bunny.

"Recently there have been some problems with horses in the stud. The veterinarian did his best but it didn't help much," told the sergeant.

"What was the problem?" asked Bunny.

"It's hard to say. Apparently, they were restless and even nervous for a reason. It worried the lord," replied the sergeant.

"It seems that horses in other stables are also nervous. I was just informed that a horse almost killed a man in another stable," said Bunny.

CHAPTER VI

After about two hours, both policemen arrived at the other stables where the accident had taken place earlier that day. It was already night and few employees were still at the workplace.

The stud manager, Mr Aries, greeted them. He told them about an unusual incident that had occurred.

"This was the first time I have come across such a thing happening. A generally calm horse went crazy. It is a miracle that no one was badly injured, or worse," said the manager.

"And the one that was kicked by the horse - where is he now?" asked Bunny.

"It was the groom, Newt. He's in my office now. His shoulder and head are bruised," replied the manager.

"The horse kicked him in the head?" asked the inspector.

"No. The horse kicked his arm. He hit his head when he fell to the floor," Mr Aries replied.

In the manager's office, they found a young man with a bandaged head and his arm in a sling.

The man was about to get up from the chair when he saw the policeman. Bunny motioned for him to stay where he was.

The sergeant asked the first question. "How did the accident occur?" he asked.

"I was just finishing work. All I had to do was check if all the horses were in place and then close the stables. When I opened the last pen and turned on the light, I noticed that the horse was a bit nervous. I thought I had just woken him up. I walked over to him and patted his rump. Then I noticed someone's hat on the floor next to me. I bent to pick it up and then the horse kicked me. Fortunately, at that moment, I was not behind the horse when I was reaching for the hat. All this lasted no more than twenty seconds," said a shocked and confused young man.

"Let's see this crazy horse then," said the inspector.

As they left the office, something caught Bunny's attention.

The stable man was wearing a red jacket. Very much the same as the one brought in by Henry.

"So, tell us, what were you wearing when the horse kicked you?" asked the inspector.

"I was finishing work and I was going to go home after closing the stable. I had my jacket on," answered Newt.

"Do horses distinguish colours?" asked Bunny.

"This is not fully explored. They are known to distinguish red and blue regardless of the background. As for the rest of the colours, it is much more complicated," replied the manager.

When they arrived at the place of the recent accident, they opened the pen and turned on the light. The horse stood still.

"Is he sleeping?" Bunny asked.

"Not anymore. He is not sleeping now," replied the manager.

"Can you tell where you were standing when the horse tried to kick you?" asked the sergeant.

Newt came over and pointed to the place behind the horse's rump. Then he pointed where the hat was.

"And to whom does that hat belong?" asked the inspector.

"Is it probably the property of one of the employees. Maybe it fell out of somebody's pocket?" the manager proposed.

"It was Dubois's hat," the groom said.

"Who is Dubois and what are his responsibilities?" Bunny asked.

"He is one of our volunteers," the manager replied.

"How many volunteers are working here?" Bunny asked.

"There are three or four at present. I haven't seen Dubois today. You know, we need hands to work. The work here is hard and requires commitment. We cannot employ more people. The stud belongs to the foundation. The volunteers are people who generally love animals. They are happy that they can work among the horses and at the same time, be useful in the stable," explained the manager.

"And where does Mr Dubois live?" Bunny asked.

"We don't have his address. He is a student from France, and he is probably renting a room in the town. I have his phone number. But I think it is off or out of range. I tried to call him this morning," said the manager.

"Don't you think there is too much lighting here?" the inspector asked, switching the topic.

"Yes, you are right. Someone has put in a light bulb that is too strong here. We will change it tomorrow morning," replied the manager.

Leaving the stable, Bunny asked the groom about his jacket. "Where did you buy a jacket in such vivid red colours?"

"My wife bought me it for me on sale yesterday, inspector," replied the young groom.

After a while Bunny told the sergeant to stay at the stud until next morning.

"Talk to employees and volunteers tomorrow when they come to work. Maybe someone saw or heard something suspicious," said Bunny to the sergeant.

"Yes. I will look around," the sergeant replied.

"What is the name of this foundation?" Bunny asked the manager.

"The Houyhnhnms," replied the manager.

"What?" asked the surprised sergeant.

CHAPTER VII

The next morning, Inspector Bunny, accompanied by Mr Caterpillar, went to the stable. The inspector asked about various matters regarding horses. How do they behave? What are they afraid of?

Bunny did not hide his surprise when he learned that these large and wonderful animals are so fearful. Even a plastic bag can make them have heart palpitations.

When they arrived, the manager opened the pen where the accident had occurred. A spacious, empty room was lit by a dim light.

"I see you have changed the light bulb," said Bunny.

"No. It wasn't me. I was too busy. Besides, the pen was locked up from yesterday afternoon," replied the manager.

"Someone changed the light bulb," Bunny noted.

"The key was in the office," replied Mr Caterpillar.

"And who looks after the animals at night?" asked Bunny.

"There is no need for someone to watch over them at night. My office is right next to this building. At night there is a caretaker who is guarding the property," explained the manager.

"On the night before the accident, who was minding the property?" asked the inspector.

"Mr Gossamer. He was doing the night shift last week. He's been working here for forty years now," said the manager.

"Mmmm. I thought nothing would surprise me here anymore. And yet I was wrong," Bunny muttered under his breath.

"I'm sorry. I don't understand. Do you think forty years in one place is too long?" inquired Mr Caterpillar.

"No. I didn't mean that," Bunny replied.

The first employees came to work. Both men were already leaving the stable. They saw Henry who was riding a bicycle on a narrow path.

"He probably won't be late today," said the manager.

"Who won't be late?" asked a surprised Bunny.

"Henry, son of the butler," replied the manager.

Bunny waved a hand at the little boy. He dismounted quickly and ran up to the inspector.

"Good morning," Henry said.

"Good morning. I see that today you decided to go to school instead of work," said the inspector smiling.

"I have to go to school if I want to become a doctor," Henry said seriously.

"Yes. You are absolutely right. I see that you have a lot of books in your backpack," said the inspector in a kind of worried voice.

"Well. Not only do I have books," the boy replied proudly.

"And what can there be in your backpack besides books?" Bunny inquired curiously.

"Medical equipment," Henry replied.

"Can I take a look at your treasures?" asked the inspector.

"Of course I can. There are no secrets for friends," Henry replied quite seriously.

Bunny turned serious and nodded.

There were several syringes in the backpack, as well as medicine boxes, a banner, a small black torch and plenty of other small items.

"Did you get all of these things from Doctor Yolk?" asked the inspector.

"Of course I have these from him. He always leaves me things he does not need anymore - he leaves them in the box under the clothes hanger," he answered with a sure voice.

"You know what Henry. I would love to see your treasures up close. What would you say if I could borrow them from you and then bring them back to you at school?" Bunny asked politely.

The boy hesitated for a moment. He didn't want to part with his property. However, the prospect of a visiting policeman at school to see him was too enticing to ignore.

"Well. Ok. It's a pity you don't have a uniform," said the excited boy.

"Then a uniformed policeman will come on my behalf. OK?" Bunny suggested.

"OK," the boy replied, with a grin on his face and getting on his bicycle.

"Oh, Henry. Was Mister Yolk happy when you brought him his jacket?" asked Bunny.

"He wasn't happy. It's not his jacket," said the boy.

"What did you do with this jacket?" asked the inspector.

"It's in my house," Henry shouted from afar.

After a conversation with the manager and a short exchange of words with little Henry, the inspector stood up and thought for a moment. Then he took out his phone to give someone a call.

"Sergeant. I have sent someone to help you. Did you find anything interesting?" Bunny said and then listened, for a short moment, to what the sergeant had to say.

"I understand that you questioned this Dubois?" asked Bunny rhetorically.

"Good. I'll come there in the afternoon," said Bunny.

After the conversation, the inspector went straight to the Grasshopper mansion.

At home, he found over a dozen people talking among themselves.

It seemed to him that the butler was trying to explain something to Lord Grasshopper's father and an accompanying couple.

Bunny approached them. When the older gentleman noticed him, he said to him, "Good, I see you, inspector. Have you met my son's wife?"

Bunny looked at the tall dark-haired and slender woman. He smiled slightly and said, carefully choosing his words, "It seems that providence did not allow me to have this honour for a reason I do not know." After which he added, "Let me introduce myself before I ask you to forgive me for unceremoniously walking around your house and looking for something that may not exist."

"I know from Cosmo about your stay here. Please tell us whether your search proved fruitful?" asked the widow.

"Unfortunately, my search did not prove to be as fruitful as I would have liked, madam." Then he added, "Maybe what I am looking for is not here. Who is Cosmo?"

"He's our butler," replied the woman.

Bunny looked thoughtful for a moment. Something seemed to bother him.

"We're just talking about family matters. A lot has become complicated lately," said the lord's father.

"In this situation, it's quite understandable," said Bunny.

"Unfortunately, it seems to be even worse than one would expect," the older man said and asked. "Have you met Mr Partridge? He is our accountant. He just told us that quite a large amount of money from my son's account was sent to the United States and it cannot be traced."

"Was it a one-time transaction?" asked the inspector.

"No, it was not the only one. Earlier, smaller amounts disappeared from Mr. Grasshopper's account," said the accountant.

"And what sum of money are we talking about now?" asked the inspector.

"Half a million pounds," replied the old gentleman this time.

"Perhaps the lord had some obligations he did not speak about?" Bunny asked.

"Perhaps. However, the transfer of such a large amount of money should be agreed with the family," the old man said.

The inspector politely said goodbye and went to leave. He passed the butler on the way, looked at him with understanding and was barely able to hold back a smile.

CHAPTER VIII

In the late afternoon, the inspector, accompanied by the sergeant, spoke to the volunteer, Dubois.

He was a young man of delicate girlish beauty. If it were not for the moustache and a slightly stooped body posture, one would say that he was rather feminine.

Talking with him was not easy either. Although Dubois was fluent in English, his strong French accent made him difficult to understand. Bunny couldn't understand how someone had learned a foreign language without working on its accent.

After a tiring conversation with the Frenchman, Bunny went out for some fresh air. He didn't learn much from this boy, who also did not seem forthcoming or helpful. As if that wasn't enough, the boy swigged down some brown medicine, straight from a small bottle, during the conversation. He claimed it was a medicine for anaemia.

An hour later, Bunny was a little excited while talking to someone on the phone. Perhaps he had heard the messages he had been waiting for.

At the same time, a few employees left the stable. Dubois was among them. They were carrying a large chest. They put it in front of the building and sat on stools around it. Soon all of them started to pull something out of the chest and placed items on their laps in order to give them a good clean with rags and brushes. It seemed to be horse equipment such as bridles, horseshoes and the like.

Bunny watched them closely. Something caught his attention.

Then the sergeant appeared and interrupted the inspector's considerations.

"Inspector, everything has been done as you ordered."

"Thank you, sergeant," said the inspector, without taking his eyes off the employees.

"Before we leave, we will visit the stables," added Bunny

A few minutes later they were both at the stables. Bunny looked at each enclosure in turn. He turned on the light in each of them.

When they had finished the rounds, they headed for the exit. At the door, the inspector noticed a small bottle. It looked like the same bottle as the young Frenchman had had. He picked it up carefully and wrapped it gently in a handkerchief. Then he opened the bottle and sniffed.

On the way back to the house, both policemen talked about various matters, seemingly unrelated to the matter of the horses.

Bunny asked the sergeant about insect habits. What impact did they have on the environment and did the environment have any impact on their lives.

The sergeant talked passionately about butterflies, moths and ladybugs. He also mentioned how important cycles of nature were, such as the phases of the moon, and how these cycles impact the insects' lives.

Night had already fallen when they arrived. The sergeant suggested that the visit to the property be postponed until the morning. However, the inspector had no such intention. He just said that some things could not wait.

A young maid opened the door. She announced that everyone was now gathered in the ground floor lounge.

Bunny asked her if she was at work the night before the accident.

"I was. In the evening, I prepared the Grasshoppers' bedrooms as usual," answered the maid.

"So, you always do the same things?" Bunny asked.

"Yes, I prepare the bedding, organise things in the bedroom and cover the windows if necessary," said the girl

"What does it mean 'If necessary'?" Bunny asked.

"I mean, when Mr Cosmo says so," answered the maid.

"Does he often order you to obstruct the bedroom windows?" he asked.

"No. Not so often. Only then when the moon is full. Mr Grasshopper could not sleep then," she said.

"And did Lord Grasshopper sleep as usual that night?" asked the inspector, a little confused.

"I don't know. I don't think so. In the morning I saw Mr Grasshopper leaving his office. I asked him if he wished to have breakfast," said the girl.

"Did you notice anything strange? Anything that might have attracted your attention?" Bunny asked.

"No. I don't think so. Maybe just that he was wearing crumpled clothes. It looked like he had slept in his clothes. He didn't want to eat anything. He told me to take his laptop to the kitchen," said the girl.

"Laptop to the kitchen? For what?" asked the inspector.

"I don't know. Maybe it was broken?" said the maid shyly.

"Is this computer still in the kitchen?" he asked.

"No. I put it on the table. Then someone took it. I think a man from the service came for it," she said.

"One more thing. Were the curtains in the lord's bedroom covered in the morning?" he asked.

"No, they were not when I went into the bedroom," replied the maid.

The inspector asked a few more questions to the maid and then he went on to meet the residents of the mansion.

At the door stood the butler whose face turned serious when he noticed the inspector. The inspector nodded to the butler who, without taking his eyes from him, opened the door.

There were many people inside. When the lady of the house saw the inspector, she immediately approached him with an outstretched hand. Welcoming him like a family member.

"Hello, inspector. Did anything happen? Did you find anything?" she asked, appearing to not really be looking for an answer.

Bunny smiled slightly and gave a small reply.

"Not all secrets remain secrets, lady."

"You would probably like to meet friends of the family who came to support us during this difficult time?" she asked, pointing at her guests.

The inspector and the lady of the house walked towards a small group of people talking about something.

"You have probably met most of the guests," she said. After which she added, "Our veterinarian, Mister Yolk, looks after our horses and now he is trying to explain to us the intricacies of horse behaviour. I will never understand it. It is beyond my comprehension, unfortunately. I'd like to give away all these animals," she said being half-upset, half-sad.

"Indeed, but I have not had the privilege of meeting everyone," Bunny said. Then he turned to the vet.

"Our mutual friend told me a lot about you."

"I'm glad to be lucky enough to have friends of yours," said Mister Yolk, surprised.

"Well. It is our little friend. The butler's son," Bunny quickly explained.

"Ah. Henry. This little colt that is everywhere, always present," laughed the vet.

"I think you will have a worthy successor," commented the inspector.

"Perhaps. Time will tell," replied the vet.

"I have the feeling that soon, we will all know more," said the inspector, quite mysteriously.

"Have you had any news you can't talk about now?" asked the vet.

"Everything has its time. By the way, I'd like to ask you about your work," Bunny said, changing the subject of the conversation.

"What would you like to know, inspector?" the doctor asked suspiciously.

"You treat horses in the Grasshopper estate. Do you also treat animals in other places?" Bunny asked.

"Taking care of horses at the Grasshoppers' stables is my main occupation, but not the only one. Sometimes I examine animals even in other counties," said the vet.

"How often do you work elsewhere?" asked Bunny.

"It's always different. There's no pattern. Sometimes I must leave several times a week if it is necessary," replied the vet.

"Have you recently gone to treat animals elsewhere?" the inspector asked.

"I have travelled quite a lot recently for work purposes," answered Mister Yolk enigmatically.

"You are a busy man, doctor. It's hard to catch you," said Bunny, causing a shadow of uncertainty in the vet's mind.

Mrs Grasshopper approached the talking men to ask if they would like to drink something.

"Maybe a glass of cold water will do well for me. I'm feeling rather warm," said Bunny.

"I'll get staff to bring you some water," said the lady of the house.

"You said there were friends here. But I don't think that the all family is here tonight," said Bunny, looking questioningly at Mrs Grasshopper.

"Well, not everyone is here now. Everyone is dealing with this tragedy in their own way. But the day after tomorrow, all family members will probably be present at the funeral of my late husband," said the widow, seemingly surprised by the question.

"I mean Arthur and Elise. I think this is a very close family and they probably have a hard time coming to terms with the loss of their relative?" Bunny asked.

"Arthur is upstairs in his room. He is not well. Elisa is awaiting a divorce with my late husband's cousin. She is very busy with her own business now," explained Mrs Grasshopper.

It was approaching midnight. The guests were slowly leaving the Grasshopper estate. Only close family members remained. When the last guests were leaving the house with the butler bidding farewell, Bunny was also preparing to return to his home. As he passed the butler, he paused for a moment and tried to determine the mood hiding behind Mr Cosmo's stone mask.

"You know what. Today I spoke to one of the maids. The one whose job it is to prepare the bedrooms. She mentioned something about the lord's insomnia during full moon. It seems that your task was to protect Mr Grasshopper from the full moon," stated the inspector.

"Please, don't make Lord Grasshopper a man of foolishness. The lord was not afraid of the full moon. He could not sleep when the moon shone in through the windows of his bedroom. Obviously, during full moon, the moon shines most brightly. My task was to be aware of the phases of the moon to take care of the lord's comfort," he answered, in a lofty voice, suggesting his own importance in this matter.

"So, the lord was not afraid to sleep during the full moon? And did he know when the full moon would be?" Bunny asked.

"The lord was a very busy man and did not have time for astronomical issues. I repeat. He was not afraid of the moon. He could not sleep when the moonlight flooded his room with light. The next day he would be very annoyed and tired. Once, he said to me that it was a pity that humanity had not invented something to remotely turn off this ball of light," the butler said, in a monotone. As if he was programmed.

Bunny said goodbye and left.

CHAPTER IX

From early in the morning, guests were arriving. The sergeant was standing by the door. He was not wearing a uniform so as not to cause unnecessary confusion. Bunny had arrived earlier because he had wanted to talk to the night watchman, Mr Gossamer, before his shift was finished.

Bunny went to the stables to think calmly on his own. The members of staff were having their breakfast break. As he walked along the building, he came across Henry. The boy was carrying a small bucket filled with water.

"Hi, Henry. Where are you going to?" asked the inspector.

"Good morning. I'm going to the stable with water for the horses," answered the boy.

"Looks like you're working hard again," the inspector smiled.

"Someone has to do it," Henry answered quite seriously.

"You're right. Did you get your things back?" asked the inspector.

"Yes. Corporal Parsnip brought it to me personally at school." reported the boy, with some pride.

"Henry, my boy, tell me what scared you so much when you first saw me?" Bunny asked in a friendly way.

"I thought you would question my dad," Henry said unsurely.

"Why would I do that in your opinion?" he asked.

"Because when Mr Grasshopper died, I thought it was my dad's fault," the boy replied.

"Why did you think so?" the inspector asked.

"Because I saw Mr Grasshopper shouting at my father very loudly. And the next day he had an accident," said the boy softly.

"So, you think it was an accident?" he asked.

"I do not know," he said.

"Don't worry. Your dad certainly wouldn't do anything wrong," said Bunny, patting the boy's head.

At that moment, the silhouette of the sergeant appeared. The man was hurriedly approaching his boss.

"Did something happen, sergeant?" asked the inspector.

"Nothing really important. I have briefly talked to the servants. I asked about the routines of the estate and whether they saw anything that didn't fit," replied the sergeant.

"And did you find out anything?" asked the inspector.

"Nothing that could shed some light on this matter. By the way, have you heard that the lord did not like the moonlight? He could not sleep during full moon because the moon was watching him through the window," said the policeman with a note of disbelief.

"Yes, I heard about that. The butler said something about this," Bunny replied.

"Oh. Speaking of the butler. He told me that the lord had been very dissatisfied with the vet's work lately. He was shouting at him one day in the presence of the butler," said the sergeant.

"What was the reason for this?" asked the inspector.

"There was something wrong with the horses. They were unsettled and tired, according to the lord," said the sergeant.

"Have you seen Arthur and Elise lately?" asked Bunny.

"I saw them today in the company of that accountant," said the sergeant.

"I would like to talk to the accountant," Bunny muttered to himself.

"Inspector, tomorrow is the funeral. Maybe we should postpone our investigation for a day?" suggested the sergeant.

"Tomorrow will be too late!" said the inspector, walking slowly toward the Grasshopper estate.

After about a quarter of an hour, Bunny went undisturbed to Lord Grasshopper's office. He was not surprised when he found several people sitting in there. The lord's father, Arthur, and the accountant were in conversation.

"Good morning. Please accept my condolences again," said the inspector, turning to the older man.

"Did you find out something, inspector?" asked the old man.

"Many questions remained unanswered, sir, but not all," said Bunny.

Then he turned to the accountant. "Do you know anything about other bank accounts Lord Grasshopper might have had?" he asked.

"Well, no, and the lord had full confidence in me. I think I would know something," the accountant answered evasively, and showing concern about the question.

"Trust is very important in life. We had better never lose it. Although sometimes it may lose us," the inspector said, ambiguously.

CHAPTER X

FINALE

Late in the afternoon, during dinner, the residents of the property and their guests were discussing various matters. Nobody wanted to mention the recent past events and the next day's funeral ceremony. Everyone was already a little tired and tried to appear normal, as if nothing had happened.

A police car pulled up to the property. Bunny got out of the car, while talking to someone on the phone. The sergeant and other policeman also got out of the car.

The door of the house opened as the inspector and the sergeant approached.

Bunny asked the servant if he could speak to the widow.

"The lady and her guests are having dinner right now," the servant explained.

"Hello, inspector. Did something happen?" said Arthur, who was just entering the lounge.

"I have come to inform you that my investigation is coming to an end," said the inspector.

"I am glad. We all want to know the outcome. Would you like to inform the widow about this?" Arthur asked.

"Indeed, I would like to communicate this to everyone. But not now and not here," said Bunny.

"Oh! It must be very important. Would you like to wait a moment with this? After dinner, everyone will be going to the living room," Arthur said, a little confused.

"I propose that we all meet in half an hour at the stables," Bunny suggested, quite clearly.

"Of course. I will pass on your request to the widow," Arthur answered and left.

Everyone gathered at the stables. Some quite loudly expressed their dissatisfaction with the fact that they came to the stables shortly after dinner.

Bunny arrived, with the sergeant. He apologised to the waiting audience that they had to meet here, without knowing why.

"We hope that you will reveal to us the reason why we had to come here now," said the upset widow.

"I wanted everyone to come to the place of crime," said the inspector

"Crime!?" the victim's father expressed loudly.

"We hope you know what you are implying, inspector! Otherwise, you may not like the consequences of your behaviour!" the widow retorted.

"Who, according to you, did this shameful act?" asked Elisa to the inspector.

"The perpetrator of the crime was a horse," the inspector said clearly.

"Well, indeed, the fruits of your investigation are very impressive. You will probably be surprised, but we have known this right from the beginning," said the confused old man.

"Since we already know everything, we can go home," said the accountant.

Some of the group looked embarrassed for the inspector. Some began to wonder about the inspector's mental state. Perhaps the inspector was just overworked.

"I owe you an explanation. Well, the perpetrator of this crime was in fact only an instrument of a precisely planned crime," the inspector said.

"From what you say, have you concluded that it was the horse which first planned and then committed the crime?" the old man asked, clearly confused.

"I will say it differently. This horse is not here with us, but the perpetrators of this crime are standing here," said the inspector.

"Perpetrators?" the victim's father asked.

"Let's start from the beginning. The day before the accident, Lord Grasshopper was very busy. He sat in front of the computer all day, trying to deal with the problems of family business. He went to bed late that night. The bedroom was prepared at the request of the butler. The windows were to be obstructed because the full moonlight would have disturbed Lord Grasshopper's rest. The next morning, early, the lord left the house and went to the stable where he was kicked by the horse and subsequently died. The conclusion is obvious. Lord Grasshopper did not sleep all night because the light of the full moon kept him awake. Early in the morning, being tired, he decided to go on a horse ride. Then we know what happened. The question could be asked here. Why did the horse that knew the lord so well decide to kick him? Did the horse fear something or was the lord kicked accidentally?" asked the inspector.

"Maybe this horse didn't like my son, or the horse was sick?" said the lord's father.

"You haven't said anything new so far, inspector, that we could not all guess ourselves," said the widow.

"Do you confirm that your husband had trouble sleeping during the full moon?" asked Bunny.

"My husband did not really sleep when the moon was full. The next day he would be tired and irritable. So what?" she said.

"Did your husband sleep soundly that last night of his life?" asked Bunny.

"It's hard for me to say. I slept well. I don't know how my husband slept," the widow said with a slight embarrassment, probably realising her carelessness.

"Of course, you don't know how your husband slept. For he wasn't with you that night. He came tired that night to tell you that he had a lot of work and would be in his office.

Unfortunately, you were already sleeping," Bunny told the surprised woman.

"Lord Grasshopper was in his office all night. He worked. To be precise, he was looking for something in his computer records. Something did not match the money and balances on the accounts. He worked until late. Unfortunately, the computer turned off and he could not turn it back on. However, not wanting to disturb you, he lay down in his study. He covered himself with a blanket and fell asleep," the inspector said, drawing the listeners slowly into the content of his story.

"In the morning, the lord, leaving the office, came across a maid. He asked her to take the computer to the kitchen," continued the inspector.

"For what purpose?" asked the accountant.

"The last call from the lord's phone was to a computer service. Someone was to come and collect the computer for repair in the morning. The service centre has confirmed this.

"The lord used to go for a morning horse ride after a sleepless night. However, he slept that night. Maybe the sofa in the office was not the best place to rest, but it was probably better than his bedroom where the moon flooded in." Bunny stopped his monologue for a moment. He looked at the surprised listeners. He could see a mixture of confusion, fear and curiosity.

"When I spoke to the maid, she said that the windows in the lord's bedroom were obscured. However, when she arrived in the morning, she found the windows exposed." Looking at the lady of the house, he then said, "Lady Grasshopper was still asleep at that time. Well, it could be that for some reason she uncovered the windows that night or the maid did not speak the truth, afraid perhaps of Mr Cosmo's anger if she just forgot to fulfil her duty," the inspector said.

The inspector continued, looking at all the faces in the gathered group. "It was early in the morning when Mr Grasshopper went to the stable. But before he went, he first visited the watchman, Mr Gossammer, with whom the lord enjoyed talking. Both gentlemen had the same passion. Namely the horses. The visit to the watchman did not last more than a quarter of an hour. Lord Grasshopper told the watchman that the horses were behaving strangely. They were restless. The watchman suggested that there might be a problem with one horse and the others just sensed it. Such is animal instinct," here Bunny paused for a moment.

"After visiting the watchman, the lord went to the stable where he was soon kicked by one of his mares. Then the stableman Strawberry found him and called for help," Bunny said.

"So far, everything looks like an unfortunate accident, without witnesses. However, was it an accident?" he asked in a raised voice. "Maybe someone trained a horse to kick? It would not be that difficult," he said.

"For God's sake, why would anyone do that?" exclaimed the family senior.

"If one does not know why something happens, then it is usually about money. At least that is what wise people say," said the inspector and looked at the sergeant who was holding a bag.

The sergeant came over and pulled a red jacket from his bag. It was similar to what the lord had been wearing at the time of the accident.

"I mentioned that the lord was sleeping in his office. He was sleeping in clothes. He went outside and put on a jacket. Now we will try to recreate the moment of the accident if you allow," he said, then putting on the jacket and opening the horse pen. Inside was the same horse that kicked Lord Grasshopper.

Bunny turned on the light and approached the horse, then patted her rump. The horse was restless. The inspector went out and turned off the light.

"And what was that supposed to prove?" asked the accountant.

"I showed you how to do it. Is anyone willing to repeat my experiment?" asked Bunny.

"You're funny," said the accountant with irritation.

"I think everyone should do it in turn," said Bunny, and handed the jacket to the accountant.

He put on the jacket and did the same thing Bunny had done a moment ago. Then Arthur and the butler did it. When it was the turn of the vet, Bunny interrupted the experiment, saying "I think I forgot something. The notes left in the office prove that the lord was left-handed. Furthermore, Mr Gossamer who has known the lord since he was a child, confirms this. So, I propose that we now use the left hand," Bunny said.

The vet stood in a cold sweat. He was clearly afraid. "I think you've entertained us enough today. I have to get back to work," he said nervously.

"This will only take a moment," said the inspector.

"I don't have time for this. I demand clarification," he said and took off the jacket, handing it to the inspector.

"Then who is next? Perhaps you will be next?" Bunny looked at Elise and handed her the jacket.

"I also think you should explain what's going on here," said Elise

"Maybe you will agree to do so?" Bunny asked the widow.

"I don't know what you're up to. But I'll do it to finish this farce," the woman replied and put on the jacket.

Then she entered the pen and touched the horse with her left hand. As she left, she said to the inspector, "I hope you are happy now? Do I have to pat this horse with both hands?"

"I don't think it was supposed to be this way," Bunny said then added, "You should enter the pen and turn on the light and then pat the horse with your left hand."

The old gentleman said, "Are you sure you know what you are doing? What difference does it make which hand? And how does the fact that my son was left-handed have anything to do with it? He used his right hand too."

"Of course, he used his right hand. For greetings with people for example. I would like to draw your attention to the fact that when entering this enclosure, the horse is in front of us on the left. If a horse were in any other pen in this building it would always be to the right of entry and what's more, it would not be ahead of us." explained Bunny.

The inspector put on a jacket, opened the pen, turned on the light, and patted the horse. After which he quickly jumped aside, avoiding horse hooves that fully intended to kick him with all their might.

A small commotion arose. Only the inspector pretended that nothing had happened. He asked again if anyone wanted to repeat his experiment.

There were no one willing to take this risk.

"Before I can explain what happened, I would like to inform you that a similar accident happened recently at other stables. There was also a horse which kicked," said Bunny.

"And what do other stables have in common? Or is it an epidemic? Horses kick when someone pats them with their left hand?" asked the accountant.

"Both stables belong to the same owner. Or rather they belonged," said Bunny.

"But in order not to keep you in suspense, I will tell you everything from the beginning." he said.

"It would be good to finally know what's going on," said the victim's father a little nervously.

"So, Lord Grasshopper bought a declining stud or set of stables a few years ago. He invested money in it. He created a foundation for horses that no one wanted. Either they were old or injured. If it wasn't for Lord Grasshopper, they would probably have ended up on a meat label. The foundation was named Houyhnhnms. The name comes from the novel 'Gulliver's Travels'. Houyhnhnms are a fictional race of intelligent horses described in the story. The horses have a high moral character. They never lie. Unlike other characters who were called Yahoos - depraved and deprived of morality." Bunny was talking when Arthur interrupted him.

"Probably everyone here read this book!" he said.

Bunny continued, "Maintaining such a stud was not easy. Quite expensive in fact. So, the lord, being a good businessman but an even better friend of horses, came up with the idea that he would co-finance this stud's secrets. He sent money to Arthur in the USA and Arthur sent it on to the foundation's account. Because these were not large amounts, a few thousand dollars each time, no one realised what was going on. The problem arose when due to safety regulations, it was necessary to rebuild both stables. Then the lord sent half a million dollars to Arthur and Arthur sent the money to the foundation's account. Such a large sum did not go unnoticed. The accountant quickly realised and called Arthur for clarification. Unfortunately, Arthur could not provide a rational explanation. Then Arthur asked Elise for help, with whom he was in love. He had been besotted with Elise for a long time. Elise immediately informed the lord's wife about this large transaction. And this could have been the end of the story. However, this was not the case. The money could not be recovered, so both ladies came up with the idea to stop the wasteful lord. They had a plan for which they needed a helper. This helper prepared an intricate plan. Lord Grasshopper had to be disposed of. It was thought that the best way would be an unfortunate accident. And it would be best if it took place in a stud belonging to the Houyhnhnms foundation. The deceitful plan was that the crime would be carried out by a horse. So, the mysterious helper began to torment the animal to form the so-called unconditional reflex in it."

Bunny held his breath for a moment. "What was the reflex and how was it done?" the old man asked.

"With the help of this device," Bunny took out a small black flashlight

"I found it in the belongings of little Henry, which he got from the doctor. The doctor probably did not give him the flashlight, but it fell out of his jacket pocket into the box intended for the boy. Although it looks like a flashlight, it is not. It is a device for incapacitating an attacker. On the one hand, a strong blinding light and on the other, a stun gun with a power of 10 and a half million volts. It was with this device that the perpetrators trained horses. They changed light bulbs to a much more powerful one to blind the animal for a moment, then the horse was hit with the left hand and next shaken with a stun gun. After many such cruel actions, the horse had had enough and wanted to kick the villains. The red jacket was supposed to help the horse track his target. Besides, it was Lord Grasshopper who wore such a jacket." Bunny paused for a moment

"How many perpetrators were there and how did they train these horses?" the father asked, shocked.

"As I said, the accident was to take place at another stud. To this end, one of the perpetrators got employed there as a student from France. The horse was prepared, but unfortunately someone informed the father of the lord about the strange expenses and then the Grasshopper senior announced a family reunion to clarify the situation.

The conspirators had to change their strategy. For this purpose, they met twice in a small town near Edinburgh. Once before and once after the murder. They had to act quickly. It was necessary to prepare the horse. The training lasted several days but was quite intense. The other horses in the stable were very restless, which the lord had noticed," said Bunny. He stopped talking for a while and then went on with his monologue.

"The conspirators went to the meeting in secret. They did not take their phones. For this purpose, they used secret telephones. They did not want to leave any traces of their contact. However, one of them forgot or did not know that conspiracy phones could not be turned on in their place of residence, because then it's no longer a secret phone! The phone will remember this location. When Mrs Grasshopper was in Edinburgh, she left the phone in the hotel and surreptitiously went out in disguise to meet her partners.

Unfortunately for her, during her stay, there was a power outage in the hotel and the director ordered staff to check the rooms. Because no one was in Mrs Grasshopper's room, the door was opened with a spare key. No one was inside. The hotel camera caught the moment when the lord's wife got into the elevator. However, she left the elevator in disguise. She rode the elevator up and down so that she had time to change. At the meetings, the conspirators agreed on an action plan before and after the murder," he explained.

"Are you saying that my son's wife conspired and killed her husband? Who helped her in this?" the lord's father asked angrily.

Bunny asked the doctor, "You made the mistake of turning on a second phone in your home. It wasn't difficult to find your location then."

Then the inspector continued, "But that was not the biggest problem. The stun gun was lost. The doctor was looking for it. Mrs Grasshopper was looking for it too. Also, the volunteer, Dubois, returned to the stud for the same reason."

"Who is this Dubois? And how is he involved in this?" asked the senior family member.

"Ah, Dubois. You may know him better than you think." Bunny looked at Elise. "You pretended to be a man. Unfortunately, you couldn't control your female reflexes. When cleaning the horseshoes, you set them aside, removing them from your knees. By doing this, you unknowingly hugged both knees together. Which is natural for women. Men spread their knees in such a situation. And you were drinking vinegar when talking to me to change the timbre and tone of your voice. The tart taste stiffened the tongue for a moment, so you sounded less feminine. "

"This is bullshit," said Elisa.

Bunny continued, "Of course you will deny it. However, fingerprints on the bottle and on the stun gun and the stolen passport from the French student show your lies. Probably Alain Dubois will be surprised when he sees a photo of his passport in the foundation's employee records."

"I told you it was a stupid idea!" exclaimed Elisa to the widow.

The widow shouted, "These are all speculations."

The inspector asked, "How do you explain the money transfer to your doctor's account? Do you like veterinarians so much that you give them \$ 300,000?"

She said nothing.

"The doctor seems to be going to leave the country? He even bought a plane ticket," said the inspector calmly.

"You pathetic idiot! How could you lose the gun?!" shouted Elisa to the doctor.

"Calm down," answered the doctor worriedly.

Bunny continued, "In any case, the people who committed this crime deserve punishment. They killed an innocent man, with the help of his friend. Furthermore, they tried to blame the moon for their own crimes, hoping that the lord's 'fears of moon' would help them to hide their crimes. Unfortunately for them, the lord spent his last night in his office, not even realising there was a full moon. The windows of his office face north. The moon travelled from east to west during the full moon.

"There is one more thing. Arthur knew everything or guessed it. Therefore, first he tried to warn his brother and then his father. However, his love for his beloved Elisa did not allow him to act rationally," Bunny said looking at Arthur.

There was a wail of police sirens getting closer. Bunny stood looking at the flowerbed. The little yellow butterfly spread its wings. "Do you know that in the beliefs of some people, our dead do not come back to us as people but as butterflies to see us or pass something on?" said the sergeant, standing next to him.

"That's interesting indeed," replied the inspector.