

Nothing is Impossible

by Hoch, Edward D.

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by Edward D. Hoch

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Crippen & Landru Publishers
P. O. Box 9315
Norfolk, VA 23505
USA

Email: crippenlandru@earthlink.net
Web: www.crippenlandru.com

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INTRODUCTION

Over the seventeen years I worked with Edward D. Hoch at *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, I had the pleasure of editing twelve of his long-running series. And that was less than half of his output for *EQMM*, where he had a thirty-four-year unbroken streak of publication in every monthly issue of the magazine.

My favorite of all of his excellent series was that starring Dr. Sam Hawthorne. Many fans of this series, which began in 1974, cite its locked-room and impossible-crime puzzles as what chiefly attracts them to the stories. In the Hawthorne tales one finds some of the best Hoch plots, perhaps because he liked to save the most difficult kind of puzzle, that of the locked-room, for his country doctor.

As brilliant as the plots of the Hawthorne stories are, however, they are only a part of the magic the series has for me. Ed Hoch had many exceptional talents beyond plotting. One of them was the ability to create a milieu that readers could look forward to returning to again and again. Set in the New England town of Northmont in the 1920s through '40s, the Hawthorne stories have a certain parallel to the Miss Marple stories and novels of Agatha Christie, whose early cases were set in roughly the same period of time, in the English village of St. Mary Mead. The settings of both series are relatively self-contained; both create ambiances in which the occurrence of crime should be an anomaly; and both include some returning supporting characters. But Northmont has always felt to me a more real and vital place than St. Mary Mead, and I think that may be partly because, unlike Miss Marple, Dr. Sam Hawthorne is not primarily an observer of his town—he's an active participant in all that goes on.

As a young, single doctor, Dr. Sam is involved in all sorts of relationships—personal, professional, and civic—with characters who turn out to be suspects, victims, and witnesses. He has a stake in what happens that goes beyond achieving justice, and his supporting characters become more important, as the series progresses, than they ever could be were his primary role that of observer. The supporting characters of Northmont are part of Dr. Sam's *personal* story—a story that, spun out over some seventy

adventures, provides as compelling a reason to continue reading the stories, for many readers (myself included), as are the astonishingly clever puzzles each story contains.

You have in your hand a volume from the second of more than three decades of the Hawthorne series. If you've read collections of the earlier stories, you won't find the good doctor the same in this one, because this is one fictional series that progresses in something like real time. Hawthorne moves on, and so do the times. With each case told as a reminiscence, we're guided by an elderly Dr. Sam through the decades of his youth, with all of the attendant changes to Northmont, the country, and the world. Part of the pleasant expectation with which I used to open the manuscript of a new Hawthorne story was that of seeing how the milieu, and the characters, had changed. And Ed Hoch always delivered. One of the things being his editor for so many years proved to me is that he was a scrupulous researcher. Using primarily his own extensive personal library, he brought to bear the kind of detail that made his settings places I felt I could walk right into. And I can honestly say that I never detected a historical error in any of his stories.

If you are newly making Hawthorne's acquaintance, there's a respect in which I envy you: You don't know yet how Sam's life turned out. Although his creator died suddenly and unexpectedly in 2008, he had revealed, only a short time earlier, answers to two of the key questions that had kept readers going over the decades: Did Northmont's most eligible bachelor ever marry? And how old is the retired Dr. Sam who narrates the tales? I won't chance spoiling your reading of future collections by answering those questions for you. I think the author himself had some reservations about resolving all of that. Although he believed that Nick Velvet—an eccentric and endearing thief who became the subject of a French television series—was his most popular sleuth, he too seems to have believed that Hawthorne was one of his most important creations.

I'd like to add one final, more personal, note about this remarkable series: Into Sam Hawthorne Ed Hoch infused the qualities of character for which he himself was best known: kindness, decency, and compassion. He, like Hawthorne, always had a ready smile and a willingness to forgive. He is an author whose work should not be forgotten, and a person who never will be forgotten by those, like me, who counted him a good friend.

Janet Hutchings

Editor

Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine

THE PROBLEM OF THE GRAVEYARD PICNIC

“This time I promised you a graveyard story,” Dr. Sam Hawthorne said as he poured a little brandy all around. “But one without ghosts or thunder or dark of night. It all took place in the daylight—but that didn’t make it any less mysterious . . .”

The spring of 1932 was a depressing time for everyone (Dr. Sam continued), with people out of work and businesses failing. There was some wild talk of revolution as the presidential election neared. Northmont was little better off than the rest of the country, but we were cutting back in just about every way we could, and even I was affected.

After ten years at our little office near the center of town, my nurse April and I were packing up to move. Northmont’s Pilgrim Memorial Hospital, an eighty-bed facility opened with much fanfare in 1929, had proven far too large for the town’s needs. As a result, one whole wing—some thirty beds—was being converted to professional offices. The hospital’s governing board had offered me attractive rent for the first year, and with patients behind in their bills and my own debts beginning to rise, I was in no position to refuse.

April was excited because the new office nearly doubled our floor space, but I was dubious. “We’ll be two miles from town. What about the patients who can’t drive out to see us or are too elderly for a horse and buggy?”

“Most of them had to make the trip into town anyway, or else you had to go see them. And it’ll be a lot easier for you to make your hospital calls.”

“I suppose you’re right,” I agreed reluctantly.

On the warm April morning we moved in, Dr. Fenshaw, one of the hospital administrators, was there to greet us. “Newly painted, Sam, just as you wanted.” He was a short man with a squeaky voice and a nervous manner better suited to hospital boardrooms than to bedside care.

“Thanks, Dave. It looks fine. The van with my office furniture should be right along.”

“Nice view out the window,” he commented.

I couldn’t resist a bit of sarcasm at that. “Nice if you like cemeteries. Some of my patients may not like the reminder.”

“Spring Glen is more like a park than a cemetery,” Fenshaw argued, and I had to admit he was right. The place even attracted occasional picnickers. From my window I saw only one small group of headstones along the trees and winding paths. The glen that gave the place its name had a small spring-fed creek running along the rocky edge. This time of year, when there was still melting snow on Cobble Mountain to the north, the creek was wider and deeper than usual. It rushed through Spring Glen like a miniature river.

We spent the rest of the day moving furniture and getting settled. April worked a few extra hours so we’d be ready for patients in the morning. Sheriff Lens even came by to see us in our new quarters, bringing a basket of flowers from his wife. “The town’s really gettin’ spruced up for this summer’s centennial,” he told us.

“We celebrated our three hundredth anniversary five years ago, Sheriff. How can they have a centennial this year?”

“That other was the pilgrim thing. This is the official founding of Northmont.”

“I’ll think about it when it gets closer.”

He gave one of his typical grunts. “You goin’ to Matt Xavier’s funeral in the mornin’?”

“I can’t get away on my first day here, but if things are slow I’ll walk over to the cemetery around noon.” Xavier was one of Fenshaw’s patients, a 92-year-old man who’d finally released his stranglehold on life.

Things were slow in the morning, with more inquiries about our new location than actual patient calls. A little before noon I saw the funeral procession turn into the cemetery and decided to walk over. Matt Xavier had been an important citizen and I had no wish to boycott his funeral just because he chose a different doctor to minister to his ills.

The graveside service was brief, and as it ended the gravediggers—two brothers named Cedric and Teddy Bush—moved in with their shovels. Teddy Bush, the younger of the two and somewhat slow, saw me and waved. I waved back and strolled down a path to investigate my new surroundings.

Ahead of me, just off the road under some budding willow trees, was a black Model-T Ford. I could see a couple picnicking on the grass about fifty feet away. It was a pleasant spot, as yet unused for burials, and I couldn't blame them for taking advantage of the place. I could see they were young, about my age, and they were just finishing their sandwiches. But as I started toward them, the young woman suddenly rose with her back to me. She had black shoulder-length hair and was dressed in navy-blue slacks and a blue polka-dot blouse. Almost at once she started running away from me toward the path.

The young man seemed agitated. He jumped to his feet and called after her, "Rose! Come back!"

But she kept running, and something made me run after her. The path led to a stone footbridge about ten feet above the swollen creek. As she reached the center of it, she seemed to trip and toppled over the stone railing into the water. Her sudden terrified scream was cut short by her gasping impact with the rushing creek. I watched helpless as she was swept downstream by the savage current, vanishing from sight before I ever thought of diving in after her.

"What happened here?" Sheriff Lens asked, lumbering along the path twenty minutes later in answer to my urgent summons. I'd sent the young woman's distraught husband to telephone him while I worked my way downstream in an effort to locate her.

"Woman fell off the bridge," I called back to him.

"Is she a good swimmer? She might be taking a swim."

"Rose can't swim at all," her husband said, hurrying along behind the sheriff.

"I'll drive farther along in my car," the sheriff said grimly. "I know a place we might find her. There's a dead tree across the creek down there."

"Come on," I told the husband. "Let's go with him."

"All right."

"I'm a doctor," I told the curly-haired young man as we hurried to the sheriff's car. "Sam Hawthorne."

"Bob Duprey, from Shinn Corners." It was a town about twenty miles away. "My God, if Rose is dead I want to die, too! We've only been married for three years—"

“We’ll find her,” Sheriff Lens promised as he started the car, not bothering to speculate on her probable condition.

We passed the grave of the recently deceased Matt Xavier, and I noticed only one of the Bush brothers was there digging. Teddy had gone off somewhere, maybe for coffee. The sheriff negotiated the rutted road with skill. Bob Duprey was silent until we reached the fallen tree at the edge of the graveyard.

“There she is!” he shouted. “I *see* her!”

I saw her, too—the black hair and polka-dot blouse caught among the tree’s dead limbs. Duprey cried out as I left the car and ran forward. I was the first one into the chilly water, clinging to the dead tree as I worked my way toward the body. The other two were right behind me and somehow we managed to rip the blouse free of the tree and get her to the grassy bank of the swollen creek.

I worked over her for twenty minutes, trying to pump the water from her lungs and replace it with air, but I knew it was too late. Finally, as Sheriff Lens stood silently by and her husband sat against a tree, sobbing, I pronounced the terrible words. “It’s no use. She’s gone.”

“If she’d made it past the tree she might have been O.K.,” the sheriff said to me. “The creek flows into Duck Pond and loses its force.”

Behind us, Bob Duprey was repeating her name softly to himself.

“Can you tell us what happened?” I asked him. For a long time he simply stared at her, wiping the tears from his face.

Finally, when Sheriff Lens repeated the question, he replied, “I don’t know. She wanted to come on a picnic. I lost my job last month and she thought it might cheer me up. We drove over from Shinn Corners and got here about eleven, I guess.”

“Which of you suggested having the picnic here in the cemetery?” I asked, while the sheriff got a blanket from the car to cover the body.

“Rose did. Some friend told us how nice it is. God—”

“You can’t blame yourself,” Sheriff Lens said.

“We were talking and eating when suddenly she stood up. Something seemed to have alarmed her and she started running away down the trail. The only person in sight was Dr. Hawthorne here. All I could think at the

time was that she took him to be a cemetery employee come to chase us away—but that doesn't explain her running like that.”

The sheriff turned to me. “What did you see, Doc?”

I described it as accurately as I could. “She just seemed to trip and fall over the side. But there was nothing to trip on. The path up there is smooth. I ran onto the bridge myself and if there was a wire or something like that I'd have seen or felt it.”

“Did your wife ever have dizzy spells, Mr. Duprey?”

“Nothing like that, Sheriff. She's never even fainted so far as I know.”

“How about enemies?” I asked. “A jealous suitor?”

“Of course not! Why are you asking that? No one caused her death!”

Sheriff Lens beckoned me aside. “He's right. Doc. It's an accident. You can't make anything else out of it.”

“The whole thing is very strange,” I insisted.

“Look, it's bad enough I have to put up with that nutty nephew of Xavier's who keeps saying his uncle was murdered!”

“All right,” I said, not wanting to hear about Xavier's death just then. I looked down at Mrs. Duprey's blanket-covered body, knowing I'd witnessed either a tragic accident or an impossible murder, but for the life of me not knowing which of the two it was.

Sheriff Lens came to see me at my new office the following morning. “Did you get the autopsy report on Rose Duprey yet?” he asked.

I nodded. “I asked for a copy just now. There's nothing at all unusual. Death by drowning. No other injuries except one or two bruises from the fall and being swept downstream.”

“Could she have been drugged somehow?”

“Now you're sounding like me, Sheriff. No, her stomach was empty and there was no evidence of drugs or alcohol in her bloodstream. She was a perfectly normal young woman.—In fact, the autopsy shows she was about two months pregnant.”

“Pregnant!”

“It does happen to married couples, Sheriff.”

“Yeah,” he admitted. “Did her husband know about it?”

“You'll have to ask him. Does she have any other family?”

“Parents and a brother. They're pretty broken up.”

Something else occurred to me. “You said Xavier’s nephew thinks he was murdered.”

Sheriff Lens nodded. “The nephew is Scott Xavier. You know him, don’t you?”

“I think I met him once at a Grange meeting.”

“Well, Scott says his uncle was murdered and Doc Fenshaw is covering it up.”

“What does Fenshaw say?”

“That Xavier died of old age and Scott is off his rocker.”

“What do you think, Sheriff?”

“Scott’s off his rocker, all right. Everyone knows that.”

“Maybe I’ll go see him.”

“You really want to find a murder, don’t you, Doc?”

“Only if there’s one to be found,” I assured him.

Scott Xavier was a grey-haired man in his early fifties who’d farmed some land outside of town until he lost it at the beginning of the Depression. That had seemed to unbalance him somewhat, making him see plots where none existed. When I found him later that morning he was down at the courthouse, arguing to have his uncle’s just-buried body exhumed.

I rested a reassuring hand gently on his shoulder. “Remember me, Scott? Dr. Sam Hawthorne?”

He appraised me. “Yeah, I remember. You’re a friend of Fenshaw’s.”

“He’s a fellow doctor, that’s all. What’s the trouble?”

“Uncle Matt was murdered. Fenshaw poisoned him.”

“Do you have any evidence of that?”

“Of course not—he destroyed the evidence! That’s why I want them to look again!”

“You can’t make baseless charges like that, Scott.”

“I know what I know!”

“I saw you at the funeral yesterday. A young woman drowned in the cemetery creek about that same time.”

“I heard.”

“Know anything about it?”

“What would I know?”

Talking to him was getting me nowhere. “Forget about your uncle,” I advised. “He died a natural death.”

“Like the woman who drowned?” he asked slyly.

As I was leaving the courthouse I spied the older of the Bush brothers lounging against the cemetery’s pickup truck, apparently waiting for some bags of fertilizer to be loaded inside.

“Hello, Cedric,” I greeted him. “How are you today?”

“Can’t complain, Dr. Sam.”

“Where’s Teddy?”

“Over at the lunch counter gettin’ his morning shot in a cup of coffee. You think Roosevelt will really come out for Repeal if he gets nominated?”

“I wouldn’t be surprised if both candidates support it.” Cedric was halfway intelligent, unlike Teddy who never read anything more uplifting than the barber-shop copy of the *Police Gazette*. “Did you finish with Xavier’s grave yesterday?”

“That’s what we’re paid for.”

“I passed by around noon and Teddy wasn’t there.”

“He went off in the bushes to relieve himself.” He laughed. “He was gone so long I thought he was lost.”

“He’s a hard worker, though.”

“Some of the time.”

“You heard about the young woman who drowned in the park?”

“Everybody heard about it. Someone from Shinn Corners, wasn’t it?”

I nodded. “You and Teddy didn’t see it happen?”

“I didn’t.”

I left him standing against the truck and headed down the block toward the lunch counter. For some reason I was growing more certain that Rose Duprey had been murdered. Some fact, still buried in my subconscious, was guiding me in that direction. But how, and why?

Teddy Bush wasn’t at the lunch counter, though I was told he hadn’t been gone long. I was about to drive back to my office when I saw Sheriff Lens hurrying toward me. “I need you, Doc!”

“What’s up?”

“Teddy Bush just tried to hurt a girl. I had to arrest him.”

The girl was frightened but unharmed except for several black-and-blue marks. She was a pretty young redhead in her early twenties named Susan Gregger, from Cabin Road on the way to Shinn Corners. She'd driven the family Hudson into town alone to do some shopping, and as she'd walked across the parking lot behind the lunch counter Teddy Bush had approached her.

"I could smell liquor on his breath," she told me as I completed my examination in a private room off the sheriff's office. "He said something I couldn't understand and then grabbed my skirt. I screamed and—"

"You can dress now," I told her. "You're a lucky young lady."

Back in the sheriff's office, he filled me in. "I heard her scream and came runnin'. By that time Teddy had her on the ground. I had to pull him off and handcuff him."

"I can't believe it of Teddy," I said. "Let me talk to him."

We went upstairs to the cellblock. Teddy was on a cot with his eyes closed. He looked up and said, "Hello, Doc."

"What happened, Teddy? What were you trying to do?"

"Nothin', Doc. It was the drink I had—it went to my head."

"So you went outside and grabbed the first woman you saw? That's not like you, Teddy."

"I don't know, Doc. I don't want to talk about it."

"Teddy—"

"I was drunk, that's all!"

I sighed and left him. "What'll happen to him?" I asked the sheriff as we went back downstairs.

"He didn't hurt her much. It'll depend on whether she wants to press charges against him."

I suddenly remembered Cedric, waiting for his brother back at the truck and told Sheriff Lens I'd better go get him.

When I found Cedric, he listened quietly to what I told him. "That damn fool," he grumbled when I'd finished.

"Come on, Cedric," I said. "I'll take you over to the jail to see him."

Around noon, alone with Sheriff Lens, I was feeling depressed. "I'm frustrated, Sheriff. I can't get a grip on this case."

“Maybe there isn’t any case, Doc. Every unexplained death isn’t murder. You want things too neat. You’d like a solution that ties up Matt Xavier’s funeral and the Duprey death and Teddy’s attack on that girl all in one big bundle. But life’s not like that.”

“Maybe not,” I admitted.

“Look, I’ve got the husband, Bob Duprey, coming in at one. Want to stay and talk with him?”

“What’s he coming for?”

“Funeral arrangements. They want to bury her at Spring Glen tomorrow morning and I have to release the body. No reason why I shouldn’t.”

“No reason,” I agreed.

When Duprey arrived, he was pale and nervous, still not fully accepting the tragic event. “I’m surprised you want to bury her here,” Sheriff Lens said as he signed the release papers for the undertaker.

“She always liked Spring Glen.”

“Mr. Duprey, did you know your wife was pregnant?” I asked.

He nodded. “She just found out from Dr. Fenshaw last week.”

“And she was happy about the baby? No cause for depression?”

“None at all. We were both looking forward to it.”

I took a deep breath. “Did you ever hear of a man named Teddy Bush?”

“No.”

“Might your wife have known him?”

“I doubt it. What are you getting at?”

“She seemed to be running away when the accident happened. Bush is a gravedigger at the cemetery. I wonder if she might have been running from him.”

“You were the only one in sight.”

“I know, but she never really looked at me.”

After he’d gone, Sheriff Lens said, “Do you think he might have killed her somehow?”

“The husband is always a prime suspect, but he was in my sight all the time. He didn’t throw anything, or pull any wires. If she was killed, it had to be someone else.”

“Maybe whoever it was used a fishin’ tackle to cast a line at her and yank her off the side of the bridge.”

“I’d have seen it. We were in bright sunlight. And she wasn’t yanked over. She simply toppled over.”

“There were no drugs in her system—you said so yourself. Hell, let go of this one, Doc. It was an accident. Maybe she got dizzy and fell because she was pregnant. You’re startin’ to sound like Scott Xavier, tryin’ to see a murder where there isn’t one.”

“I suppose you’re right,” I admitted. “I guess I’d better get back to the office.”

“By the way, that girl decided not to press charges against Teddy. I’ll let him sweat a few more hours and then turn him loose.”

“Well, that’s good news, anyway. I just wish we knew what made him do it.”

“And if he’s likely to do it again.”

Back at the office, I found Dave Fenshaw waiting for me. I was beginning to realize the drawbacks of my location in a wing of the hospital.

“I need a word with you,” he said, perching on a corner of my desk.

“What about?” I asked, glancing through a few messages April had left on the blotter.

“I hear you were down at the courthouse this morning talking to Scott Xavier. The man’s really crazy, you know.”

“Is that your medical diagnosis?”

“Look, Sam—Xavier was an old man. He died a natural death.”

“You protest too much, Dave. But I believe you.”

That seemed to satisfy him. “I just don’t want trouble with Scott Xavier.”

After he had gone, I started playing with theories. Dave Fenshaw had killed Xavier and Rose Duprey had found out somehow—she was a patient of Fenshaw. She’d suggested the graveyard picnic so she could observe Xavier’s funeral, and when Fenshaw saw her there he’d killed her, too. Or maybe he had another reason for killing her.

But how? By magic? Hypnotism? Could a person who didn’t swim be hypnotized and made to jump off a bridge into a creek?

I gave up and made myself concentrate on April’s messages. There were patients to see.

It was late afternoon, almost five o'clock, when April told me Teddy Bush was waiting outside to see me. I finished with my last patient and asked him to come in. He was obviously embarrassed and entered the office with his head down, averting my eyes.

"So you're out of jail, Teddy."

"Yeah, Doc. She—that girl's not gonna press charges. I don't know what came over me. I wonder if I'm sick or something."

"Sit down and let's talk about it. You were drinking this morning, weren't you?"

"Just one shot in a coffee cup, like always."

"A big enough shot can hit you hard on an empty stomach."

"I guess so," he agreed.

"So you went outside and saw the girl and tried to attack her."

"I—I wouldn't have—But, Doc, I saw her swimmin' naked in Duck Pond yesterday, and then there she was, right in front of me with her clothes on. I guess the drink just made me want her, and—"

"She's not even from town, Teddy. You probably saw someone else."

"No, I'd recognize that redhead anywhere. I was in the woods on top of the hill, near that grave we were fillin'. I looked down and there she was, swimmin' in the pond. I watched her come out and put on her clothes."

"So that's where you were when Cedric was looking for you."

"I guess so," he admitted. "I couldn't take my eyes off her."

"Teddy, I want you to stop drinking. You see what it can do to you. If you ever do anything like this again, you won't be so lucky. Sheriff Lens will lock you up and throw away the key."

"I know." He lowered his head again.

"All right, then. Get out of here and stay out of trouble."

"You don't think I need some sort of medicine?"

"Only common sense, Teddy."

When he'd gone, April came into my office. "Do I have any appointments tomorrow morning?" I asked her.

"Just a house call to Mrs. Wennis."

"Phone and say I'll be there after lunch. I want to attend Rose Duprey's funeral in the morning."

I went to the funeral with Sheriff Lens and we sat talking in his car for a long time before the service started. “You got no evidence, Doc,” he kept insisting.

“Let me give it a try anyway.”

He merely sighed, and later as we followed the funeral procession from the church at Shinn Corners to Spring Glen Cemetery he refused to talk about it. “Guesswork,” was all he’d say. “We don’t convict murderers on guesswork.”

The warm April weather had continued, along with the sunshine, and the day was much like the one on which Rose Duprey had died. As the procession of mourners moved toward the waiting grave, I saw Teddy and Cedric Bush standing off to one side with their shovels.

The dead woman had come from a large family and they trailed along after her husband, who led the procession alone. I turned and glanced around at the other spectators, surprised to see Dr. Fenshaw in attendance. Apparently he’d walked over from the hospital as I had on the day of Matt Xavier’s funeral.

The minister stood above the coffin, saying a few words we couldn’t quite hear. Soon it would be time for Teddy and Cedric to do their job. “Satisfied?” Sheriff Lens asked as the brief graveside service came to an end.

“Just about,” I said. I’d seen a flicker of color in among the trees. “Come on!” I urged, breaking into a run.

“Doc, what in hell—?”

It wasn’t far to the trees and I covered the distance in seconds. “The killer returned to the scene of the crime,” I said, reaching out to grasp the slim wrist and pull her from behind the tree. “Sheriff, let me introduce the murderer of Rose Duprey—Miss Susan Gregger.”

“You must be mad!” she screamed. “Let me go!”

Sheriff Lens looked unhappy. “Doc, I—”

But I hurried on. “You’re a good swimmer, Susan. You had to be, to fall off that bridge and swim all the way down the creek to Duck Pond. With a black wig and a blouse and slacks like Rose was wearing, you could pass for her so long as I didn’t get a good look at your face. When you reached the pond, you shed your wet clothes and the wig and came out to retrieve

your own dry clothes. That's when Teddy Bush happened to spot you. Was it unpleasant, swimming by that dead log where Rose's body was waiting to be found?"

"I didn't kill her," she insisted. "You can't prove any of this."

I counted off the points of evidence on my fingers. "Teddy Bush saw you swimming nude in Duck Pond, and the creek flows into it. I can testify that the creek water was chilly that day—it was coming down the mountain from melting snow, after all. No one would swim nude in such cold water just to cool off. Your friend Bob Duprey indicated I might have frightened his wife by my arrival. Actually, she kept her face averted—I never got a good look at it. Since it was really you, you couldn't risk that.

"Third, Duprey and his supposed wife were just finishing sandwiches as I came along, yet the autopsy revealed that Rose Duprey's stomach was empty. Conclusion: the woman I saw fall off the bridge was someone else. Fourth, when I examined you after Teddy's would-be attack, I noticed some black-and-blue spots. But bruises wouldn't form that quickly, within minutes. The bruises were from the day before, in the creek. Fifth, Rose's body was barely bruised at all, despite supposedly being carried all that distance by the water. Why? Because she didn't travel that distance. The few bruises she had were caused by your knocking her out before you drowned her—probably right where she was found."

I saw Bob Duprey hurrying toward us, and Susan Gregger saw him too. "No," she said. "I'm not taking the blame for this. Bob killed her. *He* knocked her out and *he* drowned her. All I did was jump in the water in front of a witness. He wanted to divorce her and marry me, but when she found out she was pregnant she refused to let him go."

Bob Duprey was within earshot now, his face twisted with fury. "Shut up!" he shouted. "Shut up! You're convicting us both!"

That was all Sheriff Lens needed. He had his handcuffs out before Duprey could spring at the girl.

"So you see," Dr. Sam Hawthorne concluded, "I did manage to tie Rose Duprey's drowning in with Teddy's attack on Susan Gregger. What about Matt Xavier's death, you ask? Well, no, that *was* from natural causes as far as I know.

“Next time I’ll tell you about our centennial summer, and a bizarre locked-room murder that almost spoiled it.”

A DR. SAM HAWTHORNE CHECKLIST

Books

Diagnosis: Impossible, The Problems of Dr. Sam Hawthorne. Norfolk: Crippen & Landru Publishers, 1996. Contains Dr. Sam's first twelve cases.

More Things Impossible, The Second Casebook of Dr. Sam Hawthorne. Norfolk: Crippen & Landru Publishers, 2006. Contains Dr. Sam's next 15 cases.

Nothing Is Impossible, Further Problems of Dr. Sam Hawthorne. Norfolk: Crippen & Landru Publishers, 2013. Contains 15 more cases.

Individual Stories

All of Dr. Sam Hawthorne's reminiscences were first published in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* [EQMM]. Dates when the events took place are recorded below in brackets.

"The Problem of the Covered Bridge" [March 1922]. EQMM, December 1974.

"The Problem of the Old Gristmill" [July 1923]. EQMM, March 1975.

"The Problem of the Lobster Shack" [June 1924]. EQMM, September 1975.

"The Problem of the Haunted Bandstand" [July 1924]. EQMM, January 1976.

"The Problem of the Locked Caboose" [Spring 1925]. EQMM, May 1976.

"The Problem of the Little Red Schoolhouse" [Fall 1925]. EQMM, September 1976.

"The Problem of the Christmas Steeple" [December 25, 1925]. EQMM, January 1977.

"The Problem of Cell 16" [Spring 1926]. EQMM, March 1977.

"The Problem of the Country Inn" [Summer 1926]. EQMM, September 1977.

"The Problem of the Voting Booth" [November 1926]. EQMM, December 1977.

"The Problem of the County Fair" [Summer 1927]. EQMM, February 1978.

"The Problem of the Old Oak Tree" [September 1927]. EQMM, July 1978.

- “The Problem of the Revival Tent” [Fall 1927]. EQMM, November 1978.
- “The Problem of the Whispering House” [February 1928]. EQMM, April 1979.
- “The Problem of the Boston Common” [Spring 1928]. EQMM, August 1979.
- “The Problem of the General Store” [Summer 1928]. EQMM, November 1979.
- “The Problem of the Courthouse Gargoyle” [September 1928]. EQMM, June 30, 1980.
- “The Problem of the Pilgrims Windmill” [March 1929]. EQMM, September 10, 1980.
- “The Problem of the Gingerbread Houseboat” [Summer 1929]. EQMM, January 28, 1981.
- “The Problem of the Pink Post Office” [October 1929]. EQMM, June 17, 1981.
- “The Problem of the Octagon Room” [December 1929]. EQMM, October 7, 1981.
- “The Problem of the Gypsy Camp” [January 1930]. EQMM, January 1, 1982.
- “The Problem of the Bootleggers Car” [May 1930]. EQMM, July 1982.
- “The Problem of the Tin Goose” [July 1930]. EQMM, December 1982.
- “The Problem of the Hunting Lodge” [Fall 1930]. EQMM, May 1983.
- “The Problem of the Body in the Haystack” [July 1931]. EQMM, August 1983.
- “The Problem of Santa’s Lighthouse” [December 1931]. EQMM, December 1983.
- “The Problem of the Graveyard Picnic” [Spring 1932]. EQMM, June 1984.
- “The Problem of the Crying Room” [June 1932]. EQMM, November 1984.
- “The Problem of the Fatal Fireworks” [July 4, 1932]. EQMM, May 1985.
- “The Problem of the Unfinished Painting” [Fall 1932]. EQMM, February 1986.
- “The Problem of the Sealed Bottle” [December 5, 1933]. EQMM, September 1986.
- “The Problem of the Invisible Acrobat” [July 1933]. EQMM, Mid-December 1986.
- “The Problem of the Curing Barn” [September 1934]. EQMM, August 1987.

“The Problem of the Snowbound Cabin” [January 1935]. EQMM, December 1987.

“The Problem of the Thunder Room” [March 1935]. EQMM, April 1988.

“The Problem of the Black Roadster” [April 1935]. EQMM, November 1988.

“The Problem of the Two Birthmarks” [May 1935]. EQMM, May 1989.

“The Problem of the Dying Patient” [June 1935]. EQMM, December 1989.

“The Problem of the Protected Farmhouse” [August or September 1935]. EQMM, May 1990.

“The Problem of the Haunted Tepee” [September 1935]. EQMM, December 1990. Also featuring Ben Snow.

“The Problem of the Blue Bicycle” [September 1936]. EQMM, April 1991.

“The Problem of the Country Church” [November 1936]. EQMM, August 1991.

“The Problem of the Grange Hall” [March 1937]. EQMM, Mid-December 1991.

“The Problem of the Vanishing Salesman” [May 1937]. EQMM, August 1992.

“The Problem of the Leather Man” [August 1937]. EQMM, December 1992.

“The Problem of the Phantom Parlor” [August 1937]. EQMM, June 1993.

“The Problem of the Poisoned Pool” [September 1937]. EQMM, December 1993.

“The Problem of the Missing Roadhouse” [August 1938]. EQMM, June 1994.

“The Problem of the Country Mailbox” [Fall 1938]. EQMM, Mid-December 1994.

“The Problem of the Crowded Cemetery” [Spring 1939]. EQMM, May 1995.

“The Problem of the Enormous Owl” [August-September 1939]. EQMM, January 1996.

“The Problem of the Miraculous Jar” [November 1939]. EQMM, August 1996.

“The Problem of the Enchanted Terrace” [October 1939]. EQMM, April 1997.

“The Problem of the Unfound Door” [Midsummer 1940]. EQMM, June 1998.

- “The Second Problem of the Covered Bridge” [January 1940]. EQMM, December 1998.
- “The Problem of the Scarecrow Congress” [late July 1940]. EQMM, June 1999.
- “The Problem of Annabel’s Ark” [September 1940]. EQMM, March 2000.
- “The Problem of the Potting Shed” [October 1940]. EQMM, July 2000.
- “The Problem of the Yellow Wallpaper” [November 1940]. EQMM, March 2001.
- “The Problem of the Haunted Hospital” [March 1941]. EQMM, August 2001.
- “The Problem of the Traveler’s Tale” [August 1941]. EQMM, June 2002.
- “The Problem of Bailey’s Buzzard” [December 1941]. EQMM, December 2002.
- “The Problem of the Interrupted Séance” [June 1942]. EQMM, September/October 2003.
- “The Problem of the Candidate’s Cabin” [October-November 1942]. EQMM, July 2004.
- “The Problem of the Black Cloister” [April 1943]. EQMM, December 2004.
- “The Problem of the Secret Passage” [May 1943]. EQMM, July 2005.
- “The Problem of the Devil’s Orchard” [September 1943]. EQMM, January 2006.
- “The Problem of the Shepherd’s Ring” [December 1943]. EQMM, September/October 2006.
- “The Problem of the Suicide Cottage” [July 1944]. EQMM, July 2007.
- “The Problem of the Summer Snowman” [August 1944]. EQMM, November 2007.
- “The Problem of the Secret Patient” [October 1944]. EQMM, May 2008.

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