

THE DICTATOR OF THE DARK



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By Suryadevara Ram Mohan Rao

As the night embraced pitch darkness and was frightfully still...as wild-dancing death awoke quietly...as the inmates' hopes turned into endless illusions...and after the prison clock chimed ten times like a loud death knell, the whole place was eerily still again.

Occupying a sprawling fifteen acres, the prison was at least a century and quarter old.

The twenty-foot high wall around the jail, though deteriorated, was strong enough to frustrate even hardened prisoners hell-bent on escape. They further despaired of any such attempt because of the three-foot-high electric fencing above the wall. In the moonlight the wires glowed faintly and looked like snakes waiting to bite. At the east of the prison was its entrance. The ten-by-twenty-foot doors of wood and ebony were so massive that the combined effort of six or seven guards was required to open or close them. They were opened to let in or out only the larger vehicles. In the right door was a smaller opening measuring five feet by three for persons to enter or leave. There was no other access to the prison.

Almost nothing that went on inside the fortress-like prison – the screams or shouts of any prisoner under torture, for example – could be heard or seen outside the prison. The terrifying security of the prison sent shivers down the spines of new convicts entering it. They despaired of any attempts at jail-breaking. Four watchtowers atop the prison walls at their four corners were manned by alert and armed sentries. At night, they were aided by dazzling searchlights that further frustrated any prisoner's escape attempts. Access to the towers was only by steel ladders. Once the guards exchanged duties, the ladders were removed and kept away in a secure place. Guards on the evening shift entered the towers at 5:00 in the evening, and stayed on till 6:30 the next morning. The prison was thus guarded securely round the clock.

Around the fort-like prison was a 25-foot-deep moat filled with water throughout the year. Poisonous snakes and hideous crocodiles waited eagerly for victims. Prisoners escaping the sight of prison guards, if at all, would find the high wall around the prison insurmountable, and if they did climb it, the high-voltage electric fencing above the walls would thwart their attempts. Added to this were the watchful eyes of the sentries with their guns. If by chance one could overcome all this, the moat could swallow them. A drawbridge across the moat provided access to the fort and out of it. After those to be let in or out entered or left the jail, within seconds the drawbridge folded back, taking away entry into or exit from the jail, which then became an island beyond anybody's reach.

Half a mile from the prison was a small community. Some of the people worked as daily wage-earners in the prison.

All that was visible of the prison that night was its grim outline against the dark sky. The flashes of the searchlights pierced the darkness as they turned in arcs, but the darkness again enveloped the place as they turned aside.

Inside the jail, on either side of a spacious porch, was a row of cells with sturdy steel-barred doors, with heavy locks hanging on them. Four armed sentries quietly guarded the place. It was December, with its characteristic biting cold. Thick fog spread a hazy blanket that enveloped the interior and the environs of the prison. The inmates of the cell, not totally warmed by the blankets provided to them, and curled in the fetal position for additional warmth, looked like bundles of flesh. Those unable to get sleep had put their heads out to avoid the stink of the blankets and worms infesting them, and dozed.

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Gold Coast, Chicago, Oak Street – a posh neighborhood with rows of beautiful houses. There was a rather small house near them, slightly apart from the rest. In the middle of the night, it looked like a star thrown aside from a galaxy. The whole neighborhood was still and dimly lit in spite of the street lamps dotting the streets. A woman on the balcony of the house was staring at the lamp whose rays reached her across the buildings. She was around sixty-five years of age. Her hair had greyed. Her eyes, looking glazed, were sunken, and her cheeks were wrinkled. She looked as though she had lost everything in her life. Nothing appeared to interest her any more.

Not far from there could be seen the vague outlines of the rows of mansions showcasing architectural splendor. The woman turned her eyes toward them now and then. The string of mansions on the hillside around, the rows of lamps that shone from afar, and the house she was in, apart from the rest, made her feel quite lonely. Blasts of cold wind blowing now and then would make any person in their normal state of mind shiver, but not this old woman. She appeared totally insensitive to the vagaries of the weather.

“How long are you going to keep staring like that, Lucy dear?” said the man who had approached her from behind.

She didn’t seem to hear him. He wondered how his sister, in her flimsy clothing, was able to bear the cold wind. He had on a sweater, and a woolen hood pulled over his head.

“Dear Lucy,” he said louder, shaking her by the shoulder.

His words gave her quite a start, and she seemed to come back to her senses from her world of imagination. She looked at him with her glazed eyes that conveyed nothing.

“How many days left until the moment of death?” Her voice was at its gravest.

It gave him a start. He knew the answer, but did not dare to tell her.

“Isn’t it quite close?” she mumbled, as though she were talking to herself. There was a deep tinge of sorrow in her voice.

Her name was Lucy – Lucy Hayward. He was her younger brother, Alex Sheldon, in his early sixties. He nodded in agreement.

“Can’t we have it put off?” she said, following him into the room. He looked helplessly at her. He couldn’t control the tears rolling down his cheeks.

“No power on earth can alter certain things, Lucy – especially things that fate has ordained,” he said softly. The next moment he felt a slap explode on his cheek. For a minute he could not understand what had happened. He could not understand when his sister, a few feet away from him, came close and slapped him. He took a few moments to recover from the shock.

“Fate?! You talk of fate?” he heard her saying, in a fury. “You call a conspiracy by a few unscrupulous wretches fate? An airplane without any mechanical defect crashing– if you call that fate – I agree. If you call natural disasters like a landslide killing a number of people, fate – that’s acceptable too. Call it fate if a train following another train that has passed before it safely derailed, killing the passengers. But we, I mean our family, hasn’t been ruined by any such incident. In our case, it was all the doing of a few villains who, for their selfish reasons, made us scapegoats.” She was now trying to control herself.

He hadn’t yet recovered fully from her slap. He was wondering how so old a woman could hit him so hard.

“I’ll take fate into my hands,” she was saying resolutely. “I’ll outsmart fate. The date of death should be prolonged.”

How she proposed to do it, he was unable to understand, try as he might.

“We should put up for sale all our belongings in the house,” she said with the same determination.

“How can we sell the house without clearing the loan on it? Also, it is all you are left with. That’s your only sustenance. How can you hope to live without it?” he asked her, mustering all his courage.

She burst into laughter that lasted for at least a few minutes. At last she calmed down a bit and said, still chuckling, “I said all our belongings—I didn’t mention the house, did I?”

Mike realized his mistake.

“What do you mean by sustenance?” she asked, suddenly turning serious. “In your opinion, it is food, shelter, and clothing, isn’t it? I don’t any longer live on or for those things. What sustains me now is revenge. If I had the desire to live, if I clung to life, I would need the sustenance you talk of. But life doesn’t appeal to me now. Having lived happily and healthily for the past sixty-five years, I don’t need or want it any longer. I’ve already lived the average lifespan of an American. The extra years I have lived, and am going to live, are only a bonus, aren’t they?” she said. An air of resignation was evident in her attitude.

“The sale should happen tomorrow, mind you,” she said. “Strike the best bargains you can. I need the cash very urgently. I want the money. With money, you can buy even fate. If you

can buy fate itself, what can't you buy in this country? I am confident we can buy even justice, law, and more!

"See that everything is settled by tomorrow evening," she continued. "I need to have the cash in my hand by then. The day after that, I must visit the prison. Get it done; no more arguments." She left for her room without waiting for his response.

Alex was speechless for a few minutes.

The wind whetted the cold of the night. The temperature was very low. The time was exactly 1:00 in the morning. The otherwise quiet prison echoed with the alert signals that different groups of entries passed on to one another. The row of cells at the rear of the prison was at least two four yards across from the rows on either side of the massive gates at the entrance of the prison. So long as the alert signals and shouts of the guards, the chimes of the jail clock tower and the blinding flashes of light from the watch towers were heard and seen without any interruption, the situation in the jail could be taken as normal. If any of these was missing, automatic alarms would go off, signaling that something was seriously wrong, sending the whole staff into a tizzy. Immediately there followed a prompt and thorough check-up of the whole prison.

In the twelfth block of the jail, Cliff and Andy, the two sentries in charge, reached the end of the block and as the clock was about to strike the hour for the changing of the guard, they started looking for their replacements. They took out cigarettes from their pockets and lit them. As the smoke filled their lungs they felt warm, and exhaling, they began to chat.

"Where do you think Bert Hughes has hidden the money?" said Cliff.

"If I knew that, I wouldn't be doing this rotten job," Andy said with some irritation, after a moment's pause.

"Bert is a brainy bastard, a smartass, and a hardened criminal. He must have stashed it away in some secure place," returned Cliff.

"Do you seriously believe that he didn't lose it to others, after all?"

"Lose it to others?! You must be nuts to think so, Andy."

"Five hundred million bucks in hard cash!" said Andy. "Stacks of crisp bills, solid hard cash, just cash, and nothing in kind. Before the cops could lay hands on it, he stowed it away God knows where. What's he going to do with such a lot of money? He has lost an arm and is slightly lame; no wife or kids, and nobody else to inherit it after him, either. The police stopped at nothing to find out where he had hoarded the money, but drew a blank. He lied to them that it had been stolen, they say."

“That could be true, couldn’t it?”

“You are a stupid if you believe that, knowing as you do our deputy jailer Ron Wesley, who is the wildest guy around,” said Cliff. “*He* confirmed they could not get the dope on the dough, try as they might. Bert had hidden the treasure in some specific place or places. After the court had convicted him, and before being brought here, he had some strange fever and spent a day in the hospital, with the tightest security around. That night, however, he liberally greased the palms of everyone around, slipped out of the infirmary, and spent the whole night outside somewhere. The guess is that during that night out he must have hidden all the money, but nobody knows where.” Cliff heaved a deep sigh.

“They say that because he was afraid he would lose all the money if he hid it in one place, he divided it up and kept it in different places. Only the deputy jailer, Ron Wesley, knows the secret. Once when he was drunk, he blurted out that he knows where the money is.” Cliff sighed again and lapsed into a thoughtful silence.

Neither spoke for a long minute. They walked another round and returned to the place where they had started.

“Bert has another two years to go. He is going on sixty now,” Cliff went on. “He is not in the soundest of health, either. Even if you tried to hang him, he would not breathe a word about the money, dead or alive. A number of people in this jail are tired of it, because Bert would not open his mouth about it. Since he doesn’t have long to live, I want to be good to him so in return for my goodness, at least”

“Don’t be a fool. You won’t get even a dime of it,” said Andy.

“Then what the hell is he going to do with all that money, when he will never be free and alive to enjoy it?” Cliff wanted to know.

“That beats me too. But I suspect some serious purpose in his holding on to it. If we find out what he intends, and we can help him, we might, I think, get some of it.”

“Suppose we offer to help him get what he wants?” Cliff said hopefully.

“You are too innocent if you think that will work on Bert. Have you forgotten his past? When he was an active thug, he made the whole city shake with fear.” Despair was evident in Andy’s tone.

Breaking the otherwise still night, the clock struck 2:00. With a start, the two guards recovered from their reverie of riches and came back to reality. Thankfully, they welcomed the two other guards that had come to relieve them.

It was 3:00 in the morning. The guard on his rounds stopped at Cell 118.

“Haven’t you slept yet? Or are you up early to practice yoga?” the guard questioned the dozing inmate of Cell 118.

The prisoner, a young man, startled, looked up. Prison rules did not allow prisoners to stay awake at night. The guards wouldn’t let them.

“Don’t you stare at me, you punk. What’s keeping you up?” the guard demanded in a threatening voice. The nature of the work the guards did was perhaps to blame for their hard hearts and their rudeness.

“It is too cold in here and I’m unable to sleep,” mumbled the young prisoner, shivering at the guard’s threatening voice and stares.

“This isn’t a posh hotel to provide you with finest woolen blankets. Keep your trap shut and lie down. Don’t want to be flogged, do you?” barked the guard, and moved on.

The prisoner didn’t know what to do. Tears were welling up in his eyes, as he could not control his sorrow. His stinking blanket with two or three holes was hardly five feet in length. Added to his physical discomfort was the grief knifing through his heart at being sentenced for something he was not guilty of.

Hunger tortured his stomach...tears flowed unceasingly from his eyes...his past was a beautiful dream that had just slipped into memory...and in addition to all that, there was the biting cold that he couldn’t protect himself from. Hearing a little noise, he lifted his head and looked up. The noise had come from the cell across the corridor from his cell.

He saw the prisoner there, standing at a full six feet, missing one hand, and strong-looking even at sixty. The prisoner was doing sit-ups.

The inmate of 118 could not understand why the other prisoner was doing what he was doing. Was this a punishment for something wrong that he had done the previous day? He wondered. Even if it was, why would he be doing this exercise now, and in such cold? He could not turn his eyes from the prisoner as he continued with his fitness drill. The sweat that poured from his body soaked the prisoner’s uniform. The inmate of 118 knew that Cell 127 was occupied by a man named Bert Hughes. The inmate of Cell 127 turned toward the young prisoner in Cell 118 and smiled gently at him.

“You feeling cold? Unable to sleep?” Bert asked, moving toward the bars of his cell toward the young man across from him.

The young prisoner nodded in agreement.

“New to prison?”

118 nodded again.

“Are you a habitual offender?”

118 shook his head again to say no.

“Name?”

“Clive,” mumbled the young man.

“Clive? Clive what?”

“Clive Hayward,” he muttered nervously.

Bert could not control his laughter at Clive’s fright.

“What are you convicted for? Murder? How many – one or ten? The sentence is the same whether it is one or a hundred. You aren’t hanged or made to sit in the electric chair a hundred times, even for a hundred murders,” said Bert, still laughing and wiping the sweat off his face.

Even for a hundred murders, you are punished only once...I wonder why? Clive thought. In his confused state of mind, he did not understand that once you were sent to the chair or were hanged, you wouldn’t be alive for more any more hangings or any more seats in the electric chair. He wanted to ask Bert, but did not, out of fear.

Fear, fear, fear of everything . . . that had been haunting him, but why? Fear of even wondering why he had the fear. Just as he opened his mouth to ask Bert something, he heard the hobnails of the guard’s boots approaching. His mouth, which had opened to ask Bert a question, stayed open for fear of the guard. His vocal cords went dumb. Afraid that the guard might see him awake, he suddenly lay on his bed and pretended to be sleeping. “The guard is gone,” he heard Bert telling him, as the sound of the guard’s boots receded in the distance. Clive sat up again.

“Your blanket can’t keep you warm--is that it?” Bert said.

Clive wanted to tell him it couldn’t, but was too afraid to open his mouth in the stillness of the place, so he just nodded.

“Even without the blanket, you can stand the cold,” Bert said.

Clive was puzzled. He could not make out what Bert was saying.

“Think it out, and you will know how,” said Bert, resuming his workout.

Trying to find out whether he had said this as a joke or meant it seriously, Clive looked at Bert’s face. It was quite serious. *So he meant it*, thought Clive.

“Someone said that if I smoked I would feel warm, but I don’t smoke,” Clive said in a low but clear voice. “But even then, who would give us cigarettes here?”

“So you aren’t mute, and can speak. That’s good. Yeah, you can keep warm even without the rotten blanket. I mean it,” Bert said.

“I heard that liquors like brandy and whisky keep us warm too, but we can’t get them here, can we?”

Is this guy that innocent? wondered Bert. He smiled in sympathy. “If you are serious, there’s nothing that you can’t get in our jails. Don’t worry...it’s just know-how. But even without them, you can stand the cold.”

Clive was utterly confused. Was Bert trying to fool him? He was convinced that he wasn’t. On the other hand, his words seemed to be challenging him to find out how. It set him thinking, but he was clueless. Then suddenly something struck him.

“It’s by having a woman, isn’t it? But I am against that, even if it is possible in a jail,” he said aloud. He wasn’t thinking anymore of the guard or the sound of his boots.

Bert let out a big laugh. “It’s none of those things,” he said, relaxing. “Still, you can keep yourself warm. Think about it; inquire. Inquiry sharpens your thinking. Try again.”

Clive relapsed into his thoughts. He was thinking very seriously now, but not of what Bert had told him, not even of his hell-like jail life, of his impending execution, of his shattered beautiful dreams, or the pretty life that he had imagined once and hoped to make his own.

Seconds...minutes...were flowing away in the fast stream of time. He was now absorbed in thinking deeply about something. Even the guard on his next round was amazed. He was about to fly into a rage when he didn’t find Clive asleep, but calmed himself, on Bert’s orders. He resumed his rounds. Bert was amused to see Clive so deeply immersed in thought. If only, Bert thought, Clive had properly understood his words that study sharpens thinking, he wouldn’t have had the need to think so deeply. He could even have borne the cold.

Clive was not shivering in the cold now, as he had been. Why? What happened? Had the jail become warm? Bert tested his own ability to withstand the cold. In no time he understood that it was even colder now than before. But then why wasn’t Clive complaining anymore? Bert was no longer amused. He was now very serious. All of a sudden a loud noise shattered the stillness of the early hours of the morning. It gave Bert a start. He looked at Clive. He was still...very still. His face showed no reaction to the loud noise. He was as still as he had been before. He was in deep thought as before.

The searchlights flashed by turns and threw their light on the cells along the corridors and on the prisoners. Following it came the clack-clack of the hobnailed boots of the guards and the sentries, accompanied by the shouts of their code words, and the noise of the crickets. Bert stared at the young man as none of these affected his stillness and silence. How was it possible?

Bert wondered. He began to take Clive seriously. Time was fleeting as if with vengeance. From a distance was heard the pathetic cry of a dog. It was now 4:00 in the morning. Bert remembered his words to Clive: "Inquiry sharpens thinking." He had not practiced so far what he himself had suggested to Clive. He looked at Clive and began to think. By doing what he had suggested – sharpening his thinking – Clive, who had shivered so much in the bitter cold half an hour earlier was now able to withstand the cold, Bert realized. Clive's action, Bert thought, had given an interpretation to his own suggestion.

Bert in fact had resorted to the workout so that with the heat it generated, he could get over the cold. He had thought of advising Clive to do so as well. But then he had not wanted to make it so simple for Clive, so he suggested the maxim that inquiry sharpens thinking. Clive, taking it very seriously, followed it, and was now in deep thought. Clive, Bert thought, had just started thinking and had overcome the cold. So what did this show? That the body did not need to be warmed up. Just persuade yourself that you were warm, and you would be. Clive's action was conveying just that, Bert realized.

This thought excited Bert. He further realized that diversion was the device to overcome not only cold, but anything else. What if you directed your mind toward new thoughts, if you focused them on something different from what was troubling your mind? What if we shifted the focus of our concentration? It was the brain, Bert thought further, that made us conscious of cold, fear, and suffering. If the mind were diverted and made to think of more serious things, then the possibilities were immense, Bert felt.

If the mind were further diverted by creating some other thing to think about, a person could withstand even more formidable things than mere cold: agony, shame, suspicion, disgrace, even traumatic situations, Bert was convinced. Such a technique could help control even the nervous system. Was this how spiritual gurus gained control over their senses? As he thought he was nearing a conclusion, he turned again to Clive. Clive was, Bert felt, still seriously thinking of how to overcome the cold.

"Hi, sir; still awake?" asked the guard with mock respect.

Bert did not miss the mockery in his tone, and was silent.

"What are you going to do with all the dough you've stashed away?" the guard asked.

"Wouldn't it be better if everyone minded their own business?" Bert's tone was a bit serious.

"Of course," responded the guard and moved ahead, turning to Clive on the right side cell.

Put in a nasty mood by Bert's warning, the guard turned his ire on Clive. "Why the devil are you still awake? Planning an escape, or what?" he barked, pulling the butt of his rifle against the bars of the cell, making a loud noise. But it didn't disturb Clive's concentration. If Bert had thought of it, he could have stopped the guard. But he wanted to test Clive's concentration.

Clive was unmoved, though the bang of the rifle resounded across the room. That irritated the guard further. As he was preparing to pass the rifle butt through the bars and slam Clive's head, Bert understood his intention and said gravely, "Leave him alone, will you?" As though the words cast a spell on him, the guard gave up his attempt and moved on, muttering obscenities.

Bert reflected. Even the slightest problem or loss was enough to send a person into a tizzy. However, a bigger problem or loss would distract them from the earlier, lesser ones. They even tended to forget them. The magnitude of a problem was purely relative. There was no such thing as an absolutely big problem or the worst of problems. The worst problem was not always bad enough. A series of problems could only harden us. They could even make us psychologically doubly resistant to the trouble that diseases would cause. They might even lead to emotional shutdown, and make us unresponsive to suffering. Balance of mind would be the nearest approximation to it, Bert concluded.

Diverting the mind from the problem or suffering on hand, Bert further reflected, and concentrating on something else, would reduce the intensity of the problem or suffering. As such thoughts filled his mind, Bert felt happy that he had discovered a new truth.

Even as the jail authorities and the staff felt assured that the prison was quiet and secure, a dangerous idea was taking shape in Bert's mind. If the jail gates were thrown open, a whole city could be in turmoil. There were enough prisoners with enough potential to cause such havoc. Bert was contemplating some such thing right now. Five years after entering the jail, Bert began to think along such lines.

Clive had been in his state of deep thought for an hour now. Bert took a piece of bread he had had with him, aimed it at Clive, and threw it at him. It hit Clive on his face. Startled, he opened his eyes. It took a full two minutes for him to understand what had happened. Slightly ashamed, he said in a low voice to Bert, "Sorry; I couldn't know immediately." For a few minutes after that, Clive felt the bite of cold again.

Bert was, however, quiet. He looked at Clive steadily for a few minutes, as though he were preparing for his last test of Clive. A thin smile lighted his face. The smile, however, could not hide the desire for revenge behind it...a slight revival of the hopes that had lain in the layers of his schemes and plans. He found in Clive a means of executing his plans. Clive, however, was still at a loss as to why Bert was staring at him. He did not realize that Bert had found in him a potential weapon.

What do rabbits know of the experiments humans try on them? What do either rats or monkeys know of the findings of the experiments on them?

"Don't ask why and what for; just listen," Bert said at last to Clive, at the end of what seemed to him to be an interminable silence. "You will come to know it on your own at the proper time. Telling you of it now would be like feeding a toddler on meat. Come; now tell me who you are. Why are you here?"

Clive found Bert's behavior quite odd. However, having yearned for a friendly word for years now, he found a great deal of comfort in Bert's words. With tears in the corners of his eyes, he began to speak.

"On the charge of murder," said Clive without betraying any emotion.

"Murder, eh! You?! You aren't joking, are you?" said Bert incredulously, bursting into loud laughter.

Clive was silent for some time. But he was worried. The signs of his worry passed like shadows across his face.

"Murder? You mean you, who appear afraid of even of uttering the word murder, and whom a few drops of blood can scare...you mean you committed a murder?!" Bert said in utter disbelief. "I can't believe it. Committing a murder is not as easy as uttering the word 'murder.' Murder requires guts. It requires ruthlessness. I can see that you don't have either. There is not a trace in your eyes of what makes a murderer. Come now. Let me have the truth. What brought you here?"

Bert wasn't inquisitive; he was just trying to probe – no anxiety, just reflection – not at all purposeless questions, but steps that would help him implement his scheme.

"But it's true. I am here because I've been convicted for murder," asserted Clive, though in a sad tone that had behind it endless grief.

"I don't and I can't believe it," Bert said decisively.

"Believe it or not, as you choose. I am here on proven charges of murder." Clive was trying hard to restrain his tears.

"So, on *charges* of murder, but not because you really committed murder. That is the case, isn't it?" Bert's words at first confused Clive, but soon he understood their implication. Surprised, he looked at Bert.

"Did you confess to murder?"

"I did."

"Were you forced to agree, or did you agree on your own?"

Clive looked confusedly at Bert.

“You must have been forced to confess, or you must have admitted to committing the murder just to protect the culprit.” Bert spoke with conviction. Clive was astonished at his being so sure of himself.

“Hesitating to tell me the truth, aren’t you?” Bert went on. “Feel free to be honest with me. Out with it. I’m sure you didn’t do it. You took on yourself a misdeed someone else had done. I’m sure of it.”

The way Bert spoke, the logic behind his inferences, his psychological insight, his accent – all this was very confusing to Clive. Who exactly was he? With such an understanding of human affairs, and ability to read faces, Clive could not understand why he could not escape his own punishment. He was confused by all the conflicting thoughts in his mind: his anguish at his own condition on the one hand, and on the other his curiosity about Bert; his distress at his own misery on the one hand, and his amazement at Bert’s abilities on the other.

At last overcoming his confusion, he asked Bert, “How are you sure of my innocence, let alone whose guilt I’m blamed for?”

“By studying your eyes, your face, your words, and your conduct.” Bert sounded a bit philosophical.

“But so did the police, the public prosecutor, the attorneys, and even the judge. They even heard what I had to say. In spite of all that, why am I here?” There appeared to Bert some sense in Clive’s question. But he laughed again.

“None of them are students of Freud,” he said. “Neither are they psychologists. They see only the persons brought before them. They don’t see the workings of their minds. The police investigate, the attorneys study the case, the public prosecutor indicts, and the judge passes judgments. The case is over. The conviction is read out. A conviction isn’t always or necessarily a proof of guilt. Those guilty are convicted, perhaps...but not all those convicted are guilty, are they?”

Who is this man, reasoning like a veteran attorney? wondered Clive. Before being jailed, could he have been a police officer or an attorney, a public defender, or even a judge? If only he had been the judge in the court that tried Clive’s case! He expressed this thought aloud: “What would you have done if you had been a judge?”

Bert just smiled without any feeling, and eyed Clive indifferently.

“What binds us are solid handcuffs. But what binds the judges are the rusty and unseen shackles of the criminal procedure code. Even if I had been the judge in your case, I would have done the same, as I would have been bound by the evidence on hand, and the shackles that bind a judge.”

Clive was dumbfounded at his thorough understanding of the system, and restrained his tears with great difficulty.

End of Preview.

Rest of the book can be read @
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