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TALK OF THE GOWN

The Literary Police Blotter

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In a brazen attempt to attract students to the pleasures of reading by associating classic literature with acts of senseless violence, a professor at a well-known liberal-arts college ran the following log in the pages of the campus newspaper. The local bookstore noted a sudden spike in sales of *The Iliad*.

Bank Clerk Arrested

(Prague) A clerk at one of the city's leading banks was arrested yesterday in a dawn raid at his apartment. Details remain murky as authorities have refused to discuss the nature of the crimes the accused is charged with or the evidence that led to the arrest. Questioned whether the suspect remains in custody, the spokesman commented, "Yes and no." The police's silence suggests that the arrest of the bank clerk, said to be unmarried and in his early 30s, may be linked with continuing investigations of terrorist sleeper cells and money laundering, but even that will not be confirmed or denied. "All I can say," answered a spokesman, "is that we really don't know who this guy is and what he's done, but we're absolutely certain of his guilt." No court date has been scheduled.

Beach Slaying

(Cannes, France) This swank Côte d'Azur resort was shocked by news of a beach killing. Witnesses report that a Frenchman, apparently on vacation, pulled a gun and shot to death an Arab beachcomber. "It was completely unprovoked," said one eyewitness. "The guy just pulled the gun and pop, pop, pop. Just like that. It was a totally meaningless act." The suspect surrendered to police without a struggle but has otherwise refused to cooperate. Authorities are still at loss for a motive. "We're looking into the possibility that the killing might have been racially motivated," said a spokesman for the police. "There's a lot we don't know — the suspect won't even reveal his first name." Police will not comment on reports that the accused sought treatment for depression following the death of his mother earlier in the year.

Paralegal Seized

(New York) Police confirmed the arrest of a paralegal at a boutique Wall Street law firm on charges of loitering, trespass, and vagrancy. The paralegal had apparently refused to vacate his office after being dismissed several weeks ago for unspecified work-related infractions. When asked about the charges, the suspect preferred not to comment.

Farmer Slain

(East of Eden) Authorities announced the recovery today of the body of a young man. The man, whose name has been withheld pending notification of his family, was reported missing earlier in the week by his parents. Authorities suspect foul play. "The multiple stab wounds suggest this wasn't the work of a wild beast," noted one investigator. If ruled a homicide, the death would represent the first killing ever recorded in this idyllic community of four. The bereaved parents were unavailable for comment, but the victim's brother said, "Who would do such a thing?" Police are confident that they will soon make an arrest.

King Held in Murder

(Thebes, Greece) This hilly, picturesque city-state was rocked yesterday by the arrest of the king for the murder of his predecessor, killed more than 20 years ago in one of the great unsolved crimes of the age. Few believed the killer would ever be found. The cold case was recently reopened, however, and a steady accumulation of evidence turned attention to the king's involvement, leading to yesterday's arrest. The queen remained unavailable for comment. Investigators insist the evidence is horrific and incontrovertible. Said one blind oracle close to the case, "Let's just say that we've only revealed half of what we know. This guy did stuff that you would not believe. There's no word to describe what could drive a man to do what he did."

Prince Runs Amok; Many Feared Dead

(Elsinore, Denmark) The heir to the Danish throne went on a rampage yesterday, killing, it is feared, most of the members of the royal family. Details remain sketchy, but persons close to the scene report that the Danish prince killed his stepfather, the king; one of the king's leading ministers; and the minister's son. The prince's mother also is said to have died in the rampage; the assailant himself was killed in an all-out assault by authorities. The prince, believed to be in his mid-20s, had recently been placed under suicide watch after the death by drowning of his fiancée. A college acquaintance confirmed that the killer had been haunted by visions and nightmares since the death of his father some years ago: "He liked to talk about death and killing and stuff, but no one really took him seriously. He'd been saying the same thing for years." Said another unnamed source, "Everyone knew he was a little off, but he seemed pretty harmless. I guess we were wrong."

Charges Filed in Sledding Accident

(Starkfield, Mass.) A local man has been arrested for reckless endangerment and damage to a neighbor's elm tree after he crashed his sled into it. The suspect declined to comment, but his wife was eager to tell reporters that he seemed intoxicated. Local police have confirmed, however, that he passed a Breathalyzer test. The family maid was also involved in the accident, which has left her paralyzed. Her lawyer has said that she intends to file suit for damages and for unpaid Social Security benefits.

Pedophilia Ring Busted

(Ramsdale) Police have arrested an unemployed English teacher with a history of psychiatric problems in the shooting death of Clare Quilty, a controversial novelist and convicted pedophile. Police originally treated the killing as an act of vigilantism, but now believe the assailant himself was a pedophile long sought by the authorities for a predatory relationship with his own stepdaughter. The suspect is also charged with reckless driving and transporting a minor across state lines. An investigator close to the case confirms that the suspect has confessed "at excruciating length." "He's a sicko, for sure," the investigator said, "but no dummy. If someone put this stuff in a novel, the book would be banned."

Socialite Slain

(Great Neck, N.Y.) Police in this affluent suburban community have confirmed a bizarre murder-suicide. The victim, whose name is being withheld pending notification of his family, was found shot to death in his pool at the back of his sprawling estate overlooking Long Island Sound. The body of his assailant, identified as George Wilson, 41, of Flushing, Queens, was found nearby, apparently the victim of a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Police first believed the killing might have been connected to organized crime, as the victim, a wealthy North Shore socialite known for his lavish parties, had been under investigation for federal racketeering violations. But police now believe the killing may be related to an unsolved traffic fatality involving Wilson's wife that occurred a week ago on a service road off the Long Island Expressway, though the precise connection between that accident and the slaying has not been revealed.

Woman Charged, DA Criticized

(Boston) The police have arrested a local woman, a single mother of a young girl, for adultery. The charge, based on a state statute that has not been enforced in centuries, has raised eyebrows in liberal and civic circles. According to sources within the police department, the new district attorney has political ambitions and is eager to prove his toughness about protecting "family values." But apparently even the church has questioned the arrest; at least one prominent reverend has passionately urged that the charges be dropped.

Pair Sought in Property Destruction

(Southern Spain) Police have put out an APB for two suspicious individuals who have been taunting those they encounter and reportedly not paying their hotel bills. While the harassment to date has been, according to a police spokesman, "quite puerile," authorities are interested in questioning the pair in the beating of a farmhand and the destruction of a historic windmill. One of the individuals appears to have psychological problems and is sometimes reported to be wearing a makeshift armored suit. Police fear a connection to Basque separatists and urge caution in approaching the pair.

Sisters Slain

(St. Petersburg, Russia) An elderly pawnbroker and her sister were found murdered in their apartment yesterday. There are no suspects in the grisly killing, and the police have released little information. An unidentified source said to be close to the investigation confirmed robbery as the motive. "Why else would a young man — he must have been young to swing the ax with such force, right? — murder a stupid old miser except for money?" commented the source, who described himself as a neighbor. "As for the sister, the meddlesome hag was probably just in the wrong place at the wrong time. She probably surprised the killer, who then had to get rid of her, too, right? What other choice did he have, having already killed the old spinster? Of course, this is all speculation — wild speculation, if you will — because, alas, there were no eyewitnesses ... except the victims, but they can't speak, now can they? Ha, ha, ha. And the killer, he's also an eyewitness of sorts, right? But we can't exactly expect him to come forward, now can we? Ha, ha, ha."

Father Arrested in Attack on Son

(The Middle East) An elderly man was arrested this evening on charges of attempted murder in an aborted knife attack on his son. In a strange twist, the boy insists his father wasn't trying to kill him. But the police consider the evidence solid: "We have an eyewitness who saw the assailant bind the boy and raise a knife. Why he didn't follow through — we don't know." Police speculate that the assailant might have been startled by a passer-by. "We know for sure he then killed an animal to make it look like that's what he intended all along. Cunning." Neighbors expressed shock at news of the arrest. Said one acquaintance, "He adored that boy." At his arraignment, the suspect entered a plea of "not guilty," insisting: "I was just following His command." Police now believe that at least one other individual was involved and hope to make a second arrest soon.

War Crimes Indictment

(The Hague) The International Criminal Court has indicted a lone Greek soldier for war crimes. The soldier, said to be armed only with a sword and an elaborately detailed shield, has been linked to a series of massacres, apparently perpetrated single-handedly against entire armies. While he is believed to have a gimpy leg, he should be presumed to be extremely dangerous and should not be approached under any circumstances. Sources close to the Greek army confirmed that the soldier was recently treated for post-traumatic stress disorder following the killing of his closest friend. 4

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