

THE CASE of THE MISSING CASE

by Gary Beatty

It was 40 years ago on a beautiful October morn in 1864 when I took on my weirdest case. My name is Adam Koch and I am a Private Eye. I am licensed in New York and New Jersey. This particular case took place in New York. My office is at 14 Front Street, up one flight. I was finishing up some paper work before I left on vacation when I heard a knock at the door.

“Come in!” I shouted. The door swung open and in stepped a tall thin gray-haired gentleman. I say gentleman because he was immaculately dressed from the shine on his shoes to the stiff collar on his neck. He had sparkling eyes but his face revealed great concern. When he spoke it was a voice of great diction and refinement. “Sir, my name is Theodore Krist, you may call me Ted,” he said. “I am looking for Private Investigator Adam Koch; would that be you, sir?”

“Yeah, that’s me all right, what can I do for you, Mr. Krist?” I interrupted his reply. “Ted, you can call me Adam.”

“Well, Adam, I am in the employ of Mr. Ferdinand Meyer and he is in need of your services.” “You mean the Ferdinand Meyer who lives in the brick mansion on Chestnut Street?” “The very same sir, I mean Adam. As you know, he is the founder and CEO of Meyer, Meyer,

Meyer, and Meyer, soon to be Meyer, Meyer, Meyer, Meyer & Meyer.”

“Stop with the Meyer stuff, Ted, ‘cause I can’t help you, buddy. You see the ‘Spirit of The Sea’ is docked in Brooklyn and I’m leaving on her tomorrow evening for Key Largo.”

“But you don’t understand, Mr. Koch, Mr. Meyer is most upset with this matter and is willing to pay top price to resolve it.”

I could see the unrest in his face and sensed the urgency from his tone so I decided to give a listen. “Take a seat, Ted; here, have a cigar.”

“Oh, no thank you, I’m a pipe man,” he replied.

“Well, pipe away while we talk,” I told him. With that, he took out a handsome pipe, lit it and settled back in my dear grandmother’s high back chair. “Do you know a Mr. Jacob Pinkerton?” he asked. “Of course,” I responded, “I’m sure everyone in New York City and the Boroughs knows him. Why, I even partake of some of his finer whiskeys. My father loves the JACOB PINKERTON WAHOO & CALISAYA BITTERS. He swears it makes his joints feel better.”



Wahoo & Calisaya Bitters, Jacob Pinkerton (Meyer Collection)

Ted continued: "Mr. Meyer and Mr. Pinkerton have been friends since childhood. Mr. and Mrs. Meyer were married on Halloween night. Well, Mr. Pinkerton had brewed a special recipe of Wahoo & Calisaya Bitters consisting of the very best Kentucky Bourbon with a blend of Udolpho Wolf's Apricot Schnapps. It was aged seven years and delivered a week ago. You see the Meyers' 40th anniversary is this Halloween. The case of bitters was delivered four days ago and has come up missing. Mr. Meyer has planned a big gala event for Halloween night and has invited many of his clients and friends. He had informed them that he had a special tasty surprise for them. Now the Wahoo Bitters are gone and he wants them back. That's two days from now."

"That's a tall order," I replied. "We have been told if anyone can get it back it would be Adam Koch. We are told you are tenacious, especially where bottles are concerned."

"Well, I don't know about that? Tell me Ted, who are these special guests he is trying to please?"

"Well, let's see, there is the honorable Mark Vuono, U.S. Senator, from Connecticut; Mr. Alan DeMaison, New York's largest pharmacist; Mr. John Pastor, a famous Michigan editor; Mr. James Hagenbuch, an auctioneer of fine arts from Philadelphia; Mr. Jamie Houdeshell, the mayor of Findlay, Ohio; Mr. P. T. Barnum and many more. Oh, I almost forgot Miss Jenny Lind, the Swedish Nightingale, will give a special performance."

"Wow, that's some lineup," I said. "I'll tell you what, Ted. I will take the case on two conditions. First, I get \$10 an hour plus expenses, and if I solve it, a \$200 bonus."

Ted looked at me for a second and then said, "That is acceptable." "I jumped up, shook his hand and told him I would be at the mansion by 2 p.m. to view the scene. He agreed and with that he left. I wandered over to the window and looked down to the street below. Ted got into a magnificent closed carriage with a gold fancy K on the door and two beautiful dapple gray horses pulling it. As Ted rode away, I wondered where all this would lead.

I arrived right at 2. It was a magnificent brick home surrounded by a 5-foot-high iron fence in the shape of spears. I stepped up to the front door and gave the lion's head knocker a rap. Ted opened the door and greeted me with a smile. As I stepped into the foyer I looked straight ahead at an ornate stair case, half way up was a beautiful large stained glass window.

"Wow! That will smoke your socks! What a beautiful window!" Ted smiled, and said it was made by Louis Comfort Tiffany and he will be at the party. "Follow me, Mr. Koch, and I will show you where the theft occurred. I followed Ted into what was obviously Mr. Meyer's study,

which had beautiful chestnut walls and book cases. Ted turned toward me and said, "You must agree to never reveal anything I show you. Is that agreeable with you?"

"Yeah, sure, my client's business is strictly confidential," I responded. With that Ted pressed an ornamental design on the mantel and one of the book cases swung open. He picked up a lamp, lit it, and said "in here." Inside the secret room, I adjusted my eyes and soon saw much wealth, gold coin, script silver and other priceless objects including jewelry.

"Over there against Mrs. Meyer's jewelry chest is where the case was set. I'm afraid there is not much to go on," Ted said with a sigh.

"Who all was present when the bitters were delivered?" I asked. "Well, there was of course Mr. & Mrs. Meyer, Mr. Pinkerton the house staff and that's it." "How many house staff," I asked?

"Myself, Mrs. Beatty the cook and Miss Phyllis the maid." "Are they here now? I need to speak with them."

"Yes, they are here and I will get them."

In a moment, Ted returned with the two ladies. I started with the cook and she was no help as she had not left the kitchen. I then asked Miss Phyllis what she had seen. "I didn't really see anything out of the ordinary," she said.

"Well, tell me what you do remember, please." "I was putting some fresh Iris flowers in the foyer when I saw Mr. Pinkerton come out of the study. He was about half way to the foyer when he stopped, then turned to go back into the study."

"Go on, go on, what happened next?" "Well, he started in but stopped at the door for a moment, turned, came back and went out to his coach."

"Is that it?" I asked. "Yes," she said, "but it seemed to me he was watching something in the study."

"Thank you very much, Miss Phyllis. Ted, I'm leaving, tell Mr. Meyer I will be back tomorrow at 3 p.m. sharp. Ask him to have Mr. Jacob Pinkerton here, please."

"Tell me, Adam, do you have a clue?" Ted asked eagerly. "Not sure, but I think so."

I went out to the street where my cabby David Grove was waiting for me.

"This will cost you another Eagle," he said. "I know, I

know, now take me down to 113 Front Street.”

We arrived at the Jacob Pinkerton establishment and I noticed an alley ran along one side of the building. I paid David and then proceeded to walk to the rear of the building. Once at the rear I surveyed the carriage house. I opened the side door and peered in, no one seemed to be around. I went on in to have a look. The coach horse was in the stall and the carriage was nearby. I looked around and then checked the carriage out. Bingo!

Sitting on the back of the carriage was a case of Jacob Pinkerton's Wahoo & Calisaya Bitters. As I looked in, I saw it was empty. Then I noticed a bottle lying on the floor. It, too, was empty. I started back up the alley when a man came staggering toward me. He obviously was under the influence. I asked him if he were sick and needed some assistance. He said no, he was suffering from a hangover.

“Do you live close by?” I asked. “Yes, I'm Jacob Pinkerton's carriage teamster. I had too much of some of his Wahoo Bitters. It's about 90 proof, you know. I had a hunch so I tried it.”

“Is that the case I saw you carrying out of Ferdinand Myers house?” “Why yes. Wait a minute, how did you know that?” “Oh, I just figured it out.” “Well, don't tell Jake you talked to me or I will be fired.”

“Don't worry, old timer, you're safe with me.” I caught a cab and went home satisfied I knew what happened to the special brew.

The next day I was at the Meyer mansion at 3 p.m. sharp. Ted let me in and took me straight to the study. Ted introduced me to Mr. Meyer and Mr. Pinkerton. Ferdinand spoke first.

“Well, Mr. Koch, I hope this meeting you called has positive news about my special Bitters. Do you know who took it?” “I'm convinced I do,” I replied. “I also must say I don't know why, but I am equally convinced that this was not a case of larceny with selfish intent. I don't think it had anything whatsoever to do with self gain or monetary value.”

Ferdinand speaks again: “You're painting a confusing picture, sir. If it was not for personal gain or for mischief, who would do such a thing?”

“Why don't we let Mr. Pinkerton tell us why he stole his gift back?”

“Why, what do you mean? Why would you make such a libelous statement, sir? You're totally off base here Mr. Koch. Why Jacob has been my friend since college, besides that, the Bitters was in my secret room and he doesn't know where that is,” insisted Ferdinand. “I demand an apology

sir, right now!” shouted Jacob.

“The only apology going to be given here is yours to Mr. Meyer. OK, Ferdinand, here is what you're paying me for. It's called facts. No one else came or left this house all week. No doors left unlocked, the staff didn't do it, I'm sure. The night Jacob brought you the special Bitters, it was just you, Mrs. Meyers and Jacob in the room. Ted was assisting the cook and Miss Phyllis was putting flowers in the foyer. Phyllis saw you leave the room, stop as though you forgot something, turn, go back to the study but stop short of entering. I believe at that moment Ferdinand was pressing the switch to open his secret room.

“You saw that, Jacob, and saw your way out of something you're going to tell us tonight. Miss Phyllis said you returned a day later saying you lost a cuff link and it might be in the study. She showed you to the study and then Mrs. Beatty called her to the kitchen. You opened the secret room, grabbed the case, closed the door, and took the case to the front door where your coachman was waiting. You then hurried over to the kitchen door, opened it and flashed a smile to Miss Phyllis and Mrs. Beatty while holding up your cuff link. They smiled and you departed. Now Jacob, come clean. What is this all about?”

“Ok, I might as well confess. Ferdinand, you have to believe me I meant no harm. You see, some incompetent employees of the Green River Bourbon Co. shipped the wrong case. The error wasn't revealed until I got a telegraph the day before I delivered a case to you. I thought if I delivered a substitute, you wouldn't know the difference. When I left the room I realized you would because there would be no hint of apricot. I turned to come back and confess when I saw you open the secret door. That's when I thought I might get it back and nobody would know who did it.

“Dear Ferdinand, I am so sorry I will leave and if you wish to prosecute, that would be fine with me.”

“Good grief, Jacob, do you think our friendship can be scuttled over your Bitters?” Ferdinand asked. “It's good, but not that good, my dear friend. You're forgiven, but remember this: ‘Oh what awful webs we weave when first we practice to deceive.’”

“Thank you, Mr. Koch, Theodore will see you out and take care of your charges. As for you, Jacob, we're going to have a drink, but it will have to be ST. Drake's Bitters, it's all I have in the house.”

“I hurried out where David Grove the cabby was waiting. We pulled up to pier 33 and I boarded the ‘Spirit of The Sea’ with an hour to spare. Another case solved by super sleuth Adam Koch.