

Act VI Scene 1



The stranger examined the joint for the umpteenth time. Uncertain as to whether he had accounted for virtually every hitch in his plan, he proceeded to run through his mental checklist once more.

Overhead, the blue street lights hummed and buzzed and gave the whole scene an entirely depressing look, and the rain-stained asphalt streets shimmered in the darkness.

He raised his right hand, which was fully encased in a black cashmere glove, and balled it into a fist.

He extended his thumb. Doors — two of them. Main door — revolving; bulletproof glass; tightly surveilled by electronic security measures. Back door — heavy steel; primarily used for service; secured with three internal bolt locks and a booby-trapped heavy-duty chain lock. Unguarded and unwatched, the back door was certainly the right way to go.

He extended the index finger on his right hand and repeated the process. Alarm. Laser beams — bring aerosol spray. Silent — alerts police and store owners. Trip that, and you've got a couple of minutes, tops. Blind spots in the corners and along the walls. Hug the walls and you should be all right.

He extended yet another finger and continued. Showcases — strong, with internal laser alarms; difficult to smash and grab. Valuable merchandise spread all around the showroom, with more expensive pieces being more prevalent towards the back of the room.

And that was how the stranger spent the next half-hour, thinking about windows and escape routes and vaults and lights and vents and so on and whatever; crossing off his mental checklist and brainstorming contingency plans where possible.

When he was finally satisfied that the operation was good to go, he slapped himself in the face a few times to drive away the fatigue and the fear that had perhaps clouded his mind. He put on his bright blue balaclava to hide away an impressive shock of unkempt ginger hair — a disturbing red that came off as jet black under the piercing street lights.

The stranger emerged from his cover. It was the dead of night in this sleepy suburban neighbourhood, and not a shred of activity was present on the streets. He wandered, as discreetly as he could, over to the back entrance of the jewellery store.

Face to face with his quarry, he exhaled gently, and reached into his pocket for the skeleton keys. Gently, he inserted the three keys into their respective keyholes. A fluttering of wings up above him spooked him momentarily, and one of the keys dropped to the ground with the loudest of harmonic dins. He froze.

So much for discretion, he thought.

Stooping low, he found the cold and unforgiving metal of the skeleton key once more and picked it up. Then, with a bit more confidence and a bit more scorn, he rammed the key into the lock and



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twisted it to the left. He repeated the process with the two other keys, and, with a satisfying thunk, he felt the tension in the door ease.

He reached for the handle and pushed.

The door would not budge.

“Huh?” he pondered aloud. This was... unexpected.

Confused, he took some time to re-assess his approach, and, realising his mistake, proceeded to pull the door towards him. The door opened with the rustiest of creaks, and he was in.

The stranger pulled out his aerosol can and proceeded to give the entryway a spray. There were no lasers. Relieved, he crept tentatively into the store, stopping occasionally to spray everything from wall to wall, and from ceiling to floor.

Still nothing. Further along the corridor, he could just about see the incredibly faint red glow of the electronic security system.

He smiled to himself. The security measures in this place were sorely lacking, he thought. There was no way that he should be allowed to enter so deep into the store.

He glanced up.

And that was when he realised that the top of his balaclava had clipped, and was continuing to clip, a laser beam positioned at head height.

“Shoot!” he shouted in frustration.

Realising that time was now firmly against him, he sprinted into the store, picking up the fire extinguisher along the way and smashing-and-grabbing his way through the cabinets.

Sirens wailed in the distance.

Estimating that he had about thirty seconds remaining, the stranger moved at a frantic and furious pace, foregoing the smaller pieces, and reaching straight for the more expensive ones. He shoved the jewellery into his small linen sack in a slapdash manner, actions driven by an adrenaline-fuelled frenzy. He probably collected more pieces of broken glass than jewellery in the process.

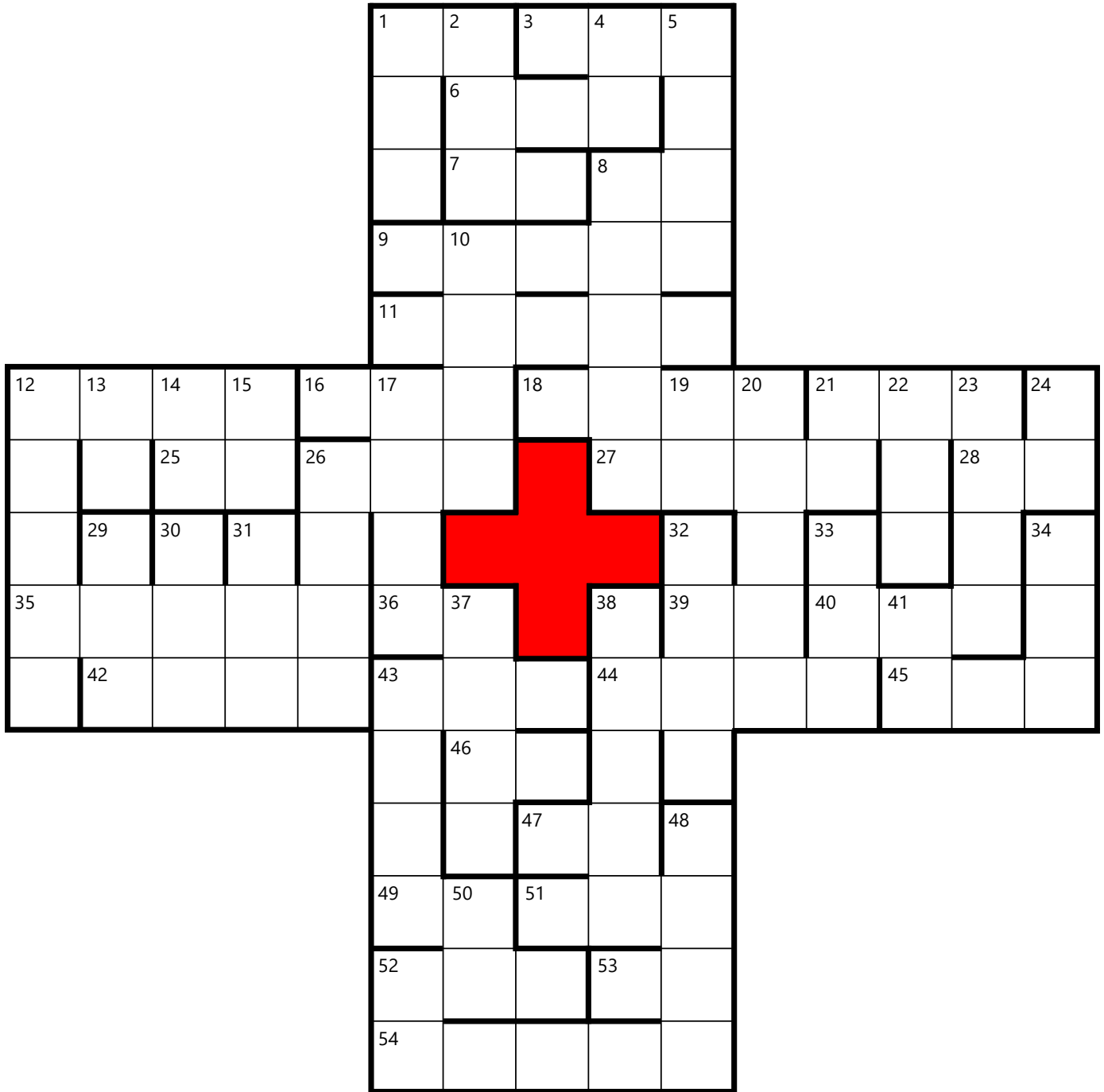
Finally, realising that the game was about to be over soon, he raced for the exit, departing the way he came.

All things considered, he had about a ten-second headstart.

The chase had well and truly begun.



BLOODY OATH





Act VI Scene 1

ACROSS

- 1 Someone who whinges a lot
- 3 Where 14-down goes after doing hard yakka
- 6 "Great!"
- 7 Type of telly program typically shown on SBS
- 8 A sheila who plays basketball for Straya
- 9 Tucker that you fix in the morning
- 11 "C'mon, ____, C'mon!"
- 12 Skippy, for example
- 16 Someone who is annoying
- 18 Truckloads or oodles
- 21 Rabbit or waffle
- 25 "Great!"
- 26 Played by the Pies and the Souths
- 27 Alternative to a longneck
- 28 From Moreton Bay, for example
- 35 Traditional tucker cooked on 26-down
- 36 An affectionate insult for an unfashionable person
- 39 The captain who rediscovered Straya
- 40 "Ow ya goin?"
- 42 Grog shop
- 43 A government payment you might bludge
- 44 Not sheilas
- 45 What tinnies are commonly packaged into
- 46 Cheerio or toodle-oo
- 47 Someone who never burns out from burnouts
- 49 Fruity Lexia, for example
- 51 Comfy boot
- 52 Pants, commonly trackies
- 53 What a billy can is used to brew
- 54 Between a kickboard and surfboard in size

DOWN

- 1 A bushman's bed
- 2 Caught going over the limit
- 4 The chair of the ABC, after Justin
- 5 A member of parliament
- 8 You might blow your dough playing these machines
- 10 Where you might keep 27-across cool
- 12 Where you send the ankle biters before they start prep
- 13 "Great!"
- 14 Someone whose job involves wheelie bins
- 15 The time of day most people knock off
- 17 Bugged or knackered
- 19 Also a middy or a schooner
- 20 If you do this, don't forget to Slip-Slop-Slap
- 21 You might catch one in a farm dam
- 22 Passion Pop and VB, for example
- 23 Wild horse
- 24 To ditch class
- 26 Redheads can be used to start this
- 29 A marsupial missing from our dollars and cents
- 30 To be really excited about something
- 31 Someone you often hang out with at Chrissie
- 32 The night before he ties the knot
- 33 Bathers or swimmers
- 34 The Yarra has two of these
- 37 These are a species of cockie
- 38 Where someone who uses 1-down might camp
- 41 Snitches
- 43 Someone who is incompetent
- 48 Slagged off or copped a bit of flak
- 50 A small corner where you might find a daddy long-legs
- 52 A Blue Heeler, for example