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CHAPTER XX

Snatches of fancy flitted through Tubby's brain. He was a piece of coal being burnt, an ox being roasted whole, a Christian martyr at the stake. He flared up, glowed in a heap of embers, shrivelled away to ashes and nothingness. All of which was most distressing and uncomfortable—and then he awoke to find himself lying on a grassy bank, cold, stiff and ill beneath the stars.

It was some time before he could collect himself sufficiently to realize what had happened. The smouldering heap of what was left of his motorcycle some distance away helped him. So they had set fire to that, had they?—after, apparently, mercifully pulling him clear. He staggered to his feet—and sat down abruptly. Confounded the earth! What made it spin like that?

It was half an hour or more before he found he could walk without experiencing an apparent terrestrial upheaval that sickened him. During that half-hour everything came back to him, and he found little cause for pride in the result of his sleuthing. He had been properly fooled. Even P.C. Dodson, grower of prize fuchsias, would hardly have walked so confidently into so obvious a trap.

Where were Kelly and the rest of the gang now? Miles away, no doubt of that, but in what direction?

Painfully, he followed the tracks of the car, visible only when he struck matches to inspect the ground. Yes, they had turned to the right here, up a by-lane which looked as if it swung round again to meet the main road. Doubtless it did, and once back on that they could have taken many routes—down into Cornwall or Devon, or—perhaps more likely—the opposite direction towards London. Anyway, they were clear away from him, and presumably, since they hadn't bothered to kill him, were quite confident of remaining so. He had made a pretty mess of things.

Gingerly, he felt his head. There was a lump of large dimensions at the back of it, and sharp pains kept shooting through it which warned him that he had been somewhat badly hurt. His arms and shoulders were also stiff and bruised, for they had taken some of the blows. Doefully, he wondered what he should do.

Go back to the road? It was a good distance off, and who would be abroad on it now? His watch told him it must be nearing dawn—he had been a long while unconscious. A house? There should be one somewhere. In his weak state he felt that he needed warmth and rest.

A low wall nearby promised to be a vantage spot, and he clambered on to it. But even this low elevation made him dizzy and it showed him nothing that signified a house. He climbed down, feeling pitifully inclined to sit on the grass and weep.

In the end he wandered on along the lane, thinking vaguely that this must bring him somewhere eventually. But, without knowing it, he became light-headed, climbing over stiles and crossing fields, singing snatches of songs, crossing and recrossing his own tracks, meeting no one, for even the conflagration of his burning motorcycle had attracted no attention in this desolate neighbourhood.

It was broad daylight when at last he reached a cottage, and as he did so the cottager, setting off to his early morning toil in the fields, came out of his doorway and regarded him with surprise and doubt.

"Hullo, master," he said. "Who be you and what d'you want?"

Tubby regarded him with an owlish solemnity.

"I'm the Shah of Persia," was his somewhat disconcerting response, "and I've just roasted my aunt."

Then he pitched forward on his face and lay still.

"Sakes alive!" muttered the astonished countryman, as he picked him up and bore him into the house. Some what fortunately, having regard to Tubby's petrol-soaked trousers, he did not place him near the fire, but carried him straight up to his own warm bed. There he stripped him, and wrapping him in his own nightshirt, placed him between the blankets and called his wife.

"Mother," he grinned, "ere's royalty come to stay!" Explaining how he had

discovered Tubby, he examined the bump on his head.

"Dunno how he came by that," he muttered, scratching his own head. "If 'e don't get better soon, you'd best go for doctor over to Hartland village. I've got to be off, or varmer 'e'll say summat."

Ten minutes later Tubby opened his eyes, only to close them again after a smile at the good woman which completely won her motherly heart, and slept till the afternoon. When he awoke it was to find himself much refreshed, his brain clear.

"Golly," he murmured, "I'm hungry." As if she had heard what he said, his nurse entered a few moments later carrying a large bowl of bread and milk, and any doubts she may have felt at her patient's recovery were dissipated by the manner in which he wolfed it.

All agog to know what had brought him there, she began to ask questions.

Tubby parried these as best he could, saying that he had had a motorcycle accident, and must have hit his head and then wandered about until he reached the cottage. Moreover, he asked for his clothes, and announced his intention of getting up.

She tried to dissuade him.

"Best lie there for a bit longer," she said. "You've had a nasty knock."

But Tubby was adamant. It dawned upon him that Mearcroft—not to mention Marjorie—would be wondering where on earth he had got to.

Eliciting from his hostess that the lonely little village of Hartland lay two miles off across the bleak landscape, he dressed, finding to his delight that save for a dull ache in his head he was himself again. But Kelly, he told himself ruefully, was doubtless many miles away by now. He would send a telegram to Mearcroft, announcing his return. If he couldn't find a conveyance in Hartland he must fall back on the Cottles' car. An ignominious finale, but he had to face facts.

Such was his intention when he descended into the valley in which the village lies. And then something happened which once more changed his plans.

CHAPTER XXI

A car passed him, or overtook him rather, as he trudged along the road—just an ordinary four-seater about which he would never have given a second thought had it not splashed through a muddy and puddly piece of road just ahead. It was the track of the wheels in that miry patch which made him catch his breath.

If there was one thing which had impressed itself on his mind, it was the track of the car he had pursued with such disastrous results the night before. The off rear tire had been damaged—part of the rubber seemed to have been sliced bodily off—and it left a peculiar smeary mark on passing over soft ground. That mark was once again before him in the mud.

"Great snakes and ladders!" Tubby murmured. "So my little playmates haven't left the neighbourhood, after all."

He had enough presence of mind not to stop and examine the puddle. There was no need to, as a matter of fact—the trail was unmistakable. The question was—what should he do about it?

Ferret out the local edition of P.C. Dodson and denounce them? No doubt they would have an excellent alibi, and unless Kelly were with them, he would be utterly unable to identify them. And Kelly, Tubby suspected, whatever his confederate might be doing, would hardly be likely to drive openly about the countryside under the circumstances.

That opened up another question. Had they recognized him? They had given no sign of it, and unless Kelly was one of them it was quite likely that they hadn't. There were, moreover, two other points to be considered. With his knowledge of the ways of London motor-bandits it was possible that his assailants had borrowed the car for their operations the night before, and the present occupiers might be the real and innocent owners. Alternatively, it might be another car altogether, but in that case the coincidence of the sliced tire was a strange one indeed. Still, Tubby considered, it behoved him to proceed warily.

On entering the village he saw that it had pulled up for petrol at a garage

some distance away. There seemed to be two men in it—ordinary well-dressed individuals in raincoats and plus-fours. Both were talking to the garage man, and neither cast the slightest glance in his direction. In a few minutes they drove off, and Tubby approached the garage.

"Who were those two gentlemen?" he asked casually. "I half-thought they were friends of mine."

The garage man regarded him doubtfully. Evidently he found it difficult to place Tubby in his soiled clothes and two days' stubble on his chin. The newcomer's voice, however, proved a passport, and he decided to be civil.

"The two gents from the 'aunted 'ouse,' was the somewhat surprising reply. "Reynolds, I think their name is."

"The haunted house!" Tubby echoed. "Where's that?"

"What, mister," said the garage man, "you don't know that? Show's you're a stranger all right, that do. It's an house on the cliff about two mile north o' this. A ship was wrecked once with all 'ands on the rocks just below, and they say as the ghosts of the crew do walk about the 'ouse and grounds."

"Was empty for a long while till these 'ere Reynoldses took it a few months ago—quiet folks they be, us don't see much of them. They was speaking of a funny thing as 'appened last night."

"Were they?" said Tubby.

"Aye, that they was. Seems as the lock were picked of their garage and the car taken out and used. It was back again this morning, but they knew it 'ad been out 'cos of the broken lock and the petrol tank being very nigh empty."

"Good Lord!" said Tubby. It was not that he was particularly interested in the Reynolds' troubles, but it was certainly surprising to find his own surmise that something of this kind might have happened, verified so quickly.

"That's what I said, mister," said the garage man, pleased at the interest he was exciting. "You go to the piece, Mr. Reynolds, I says. 'The sauce some folks have in taking your car without so much as asking! You go to the piece,' I says."

"And will they?"

The garage man shook his head.

"Too easy by 'arf they be, I reckon. Just shook their 'eads and laughed. Said as since the car came back all safe and sound they wasn't going to bother. Only they'd put a better lock on the garage door and it wouldn't 'appen again. Soft, I calls it."

So did Tubby—suspiciously soft.

There and then he came to a resolution—to take a look at this "haunted house," and, if possible, its inmates. They might be all the garage man evidently thought they were, easy-going folk who took things philosophically as they came. On the other hand, if they were not so innocent as they appeared, this story of the "borrowed" car might have been spread of set purpose in view of possible developments.

Tubby strolled away from the garage, and going to a small general shop bought a pair of cheap jammies, a few other necessary articles of wear and a sponge and toothbrush. Next he visited the village barber for a shave, and finally arranged for a room at a clean-looking inn for the night. He had already said farewell to the good woman who had befriended him that morning, so there was no need to return there. Tea, a rest after it, some dinner, and he felt ready for the fray.

He altered his mind about sending a telegram to Mearcroft. He had a strong repugnance to returning empty-handed, so to speak, or even reporting his whereabouts until he had accomplished something. If his survey of the "haunted house" came to nothing he could return next day. After all, he was still within walking distance of Roma Cliff.

Discreet inquiries from the landlord of the inn, and study of a large scale map of the district which hung in the hall showed him how he could reach the house, the real name of which was "Polzeath." Then, under plea of being a naturalist in search of rare night moths, he borrowed a key and announced that he might be expected in some time in the small hours.

By road "Polzeath" was three miles away, but by the field path, which he took, only two. He found it to be a low stone house of no great size, set in a hollow and protected by a grove of stunted firs through which the wind moaned eerily, mingling with the ceaseless wash of surf on the rocky shore 200 feet below. Overhead passed and repassed the faint intermittent gleam from Lundy Light, away to the north. "Certainly a ghostly spot at night," thought Tubby, "whatever it may be by day."

A drive led up to the house, which was in darkness, as if already, at 11 o'clock, its inmates had retired to bed. After a moment's hesitation, Tubby opened the gate and walked quietly up the path. He was alert, and yet not alert enough, for all at once his foot caught in a trip-wire which was stretched across the drive. With a startled cry he pitched forward on his face, and immediately two figures rose from the bushes and flung themselves upon him.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Child's Health Conference at Schumacher on Friday

The Child's Health Conference will be held in the basement of the public school, Schumacher, on Friday, June 26th from 3 to 5 p.m. Mothers with their babies and pre-school children are requested to attend.

Was Associated with Opening up of North

Late Hon. E. J. Davis Took Leading Part in Assisting Development of North.

Few in the North are familiar even with the name of Hon. E. J. Davis, yet this gentleman who passed away recently, took a notable part in the opening up of the North. His interest in the North was shown at a time when the mineral wealth of the North was not proven as it is to-day, and Hon. Mr. Davis deserves so much more credit for his vision and faith in the country on this account. He paid a visit to Temiskaming some 40 years ago and after that visit he was a leader in advocating the opening of the North. It is fitting that some tribute should be paid to the late Hon. E. J. Davis by this North Land. In its issue last week The New Liskeard Speaker says:—

"It is with extreme regret that The Speaker has to announce the passing of the Hon. E. J. Davis, for the writer associates his name with all that was best in the political life of Ontario's public men for many years following Confederation. Mr. Davis lived a most exemplary life, and associated himself with religious and temperance work as but few public men have done until declining years interfered with this good work."

"The Speaker has frequently made reference to the part Mr. Davis took in opening Temiskaming for settlement, although the initial steps were taken by the late Hon. A. S. Hardy, when Commissioner of Crown Lands in 1893, at which time Mr. Davis was Provincial Secretary. However, in 1894 Mr. Hardy became Premier and Mr. Davis took over the Crown Lands work, and hence the responsibility of opening up the great Northland—"New Ontario"—devolved upon him. It was he who asked the Legislature to vote the money necessary for paying expenses of railway engineering and the preliminary work, and he put much energy into the promotion of immigration to this North Land after having visited the country and obtained information concerning its importance to Southern Ontario."

Speaking of the life service to his country of Mr. Davis, The Globe said editorially, under the headline "Last of the Hardy Cabinet":

"Mr. E. J. Davis, outstanding citizen of York County, who died on Sunday in his eighty-fifth year, leaves a long and honourable record of public service, and an enviable reputation in the world of business. Throughout his busy life Mr. Davis had been associated with the leather industry, in which he was eminently successful, and became widely known in Canada. His factory at Newmarket is among the most important of its kind in the British Empire."

"Early in life Mr. Davis revealed his desire to serve the people in public office. This career he began as King Township Councillor, then Deputy Reeve, Reeve, and finally Warden of York County. He enjoyed the distinction of being elected by acclamation in nine out of ten elections; surely a tribute to his worth."

"In 1888 Mr. Davis entered the Ontario Legislature for North York. From 1899 to 1904 he was Commissioner of Crown Lands, and in 1906 he was appointed Provincial Secretary in the Hardy Administration, being the last surviving representative of the Cabinet of that period. He was an able and conscientious administrator of Cabinet offices and of all public posts entrusted to him."

"Mr. Davis was the youngest man ever elected to King Township Council; also York County's youngest Warden; and throughout his long and active life he retained the high regard of the public, of business associates and of private acquaintances—the reward of strict integrity in all his dealings. He also was zealous in the promotion of temperance and in the work of fraternal organizations, in several of which he held high office. By his death York County, and especially Newmarket, his home, loses a valued citizen, and the province a man who in his day served it well."

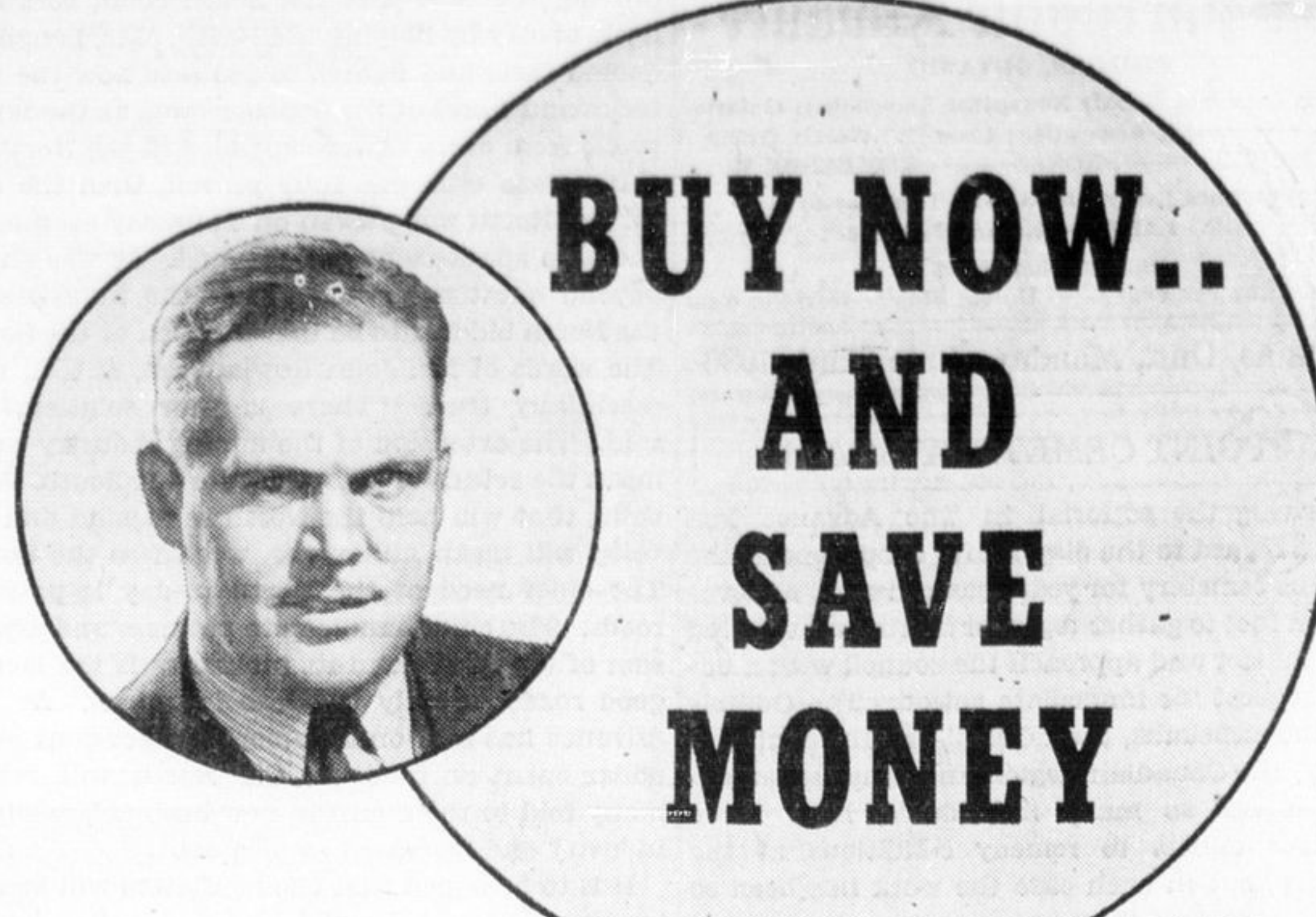
Small New Typewriter Makes Appearance Here

The smallest and lightest practical typewriter has made its appearance in Timmins recently. The product of a Swiss firm, the machine does more than could reasonably be expected from less than eight pounds of metal. So small is the thing that a good-sized brief case could accommodate it.

For those to whom an inconspicuous, almost featherweight typewriter is a dream, the tiny outfit is a revelation. It has a height of two and three-eighths inches, a width of 11 inches and an equal length. Enclosed in its strong grey steel cover, it weighs seven pounds, twelve ounces. Without the cover it weighs five pounds, 15 ounces.

The keyboard is of the same type possessed by the machine's big brothers and the majority of conveniences about a modern machine are there. Known as the Hermes Baby, produced in Switzerland with which country Canada has a large favourable trade balance (due mainly to the Swiss' consumption of Canadian wheat), the machine has been having wide popularity since its first production a short time ago. F. Bauman is the local agent.

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