

he had picked up a handful of gnarled russets. "Okay?" he shouted. "Could I trouble you for a loan of my rifle, Ed?" Uncle George asked Trooper Gilligan.

Before Molloy could protest, the trooper had handed it to him.

"Okay!" Uncle George shouted at Joey.

From under the tree Joey threw an apple high in the air. Uncle George's gun rose quickly and he fired. The apple exploded in mid-air, and so did the next four Joey threw in rapid succession.

Nobody spoke. Joey came running back from the tree, eyes shining. "You hit that last one a little off center, Uncle George," he said.

"I guess I was kind of watching Mr. Molloy out of the corner of my eye to see if he was impressed," Uncle George said, apologetically. "Convinced I was aiming at the hat, Mr. Molloy?"

Miss Millington had a faint smile of triumph on her lips. The shiner was a beaut! "I'm convinced, Mr. Crowder," she said. "I'd have sworn you couldn't do it, but you've convinced me. Do you admit you were wrong about that, Patrick?"

Patrick Aloysius Molloy flushed a dull red. "It would seem that perhaps —"

"Convinced or not, it was a crime to shoot at me," Mr. Twining blustered. "And I'll prosecute!"

Uncle George didn't look at Twining. "Three things I believe in, Mr. Molloy, come hell or high water. The first one is the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights. The second one is my ability to William Tell anyone any time I've a mind to. And the third one is my dog Timmy's nose. Timmy picked up Mr. Twining's trail right outside the house here."

"Absurd! Nonsense!" Mr. Twining said. He flapped a hand at Timmy who sat happily beside him, smiling a dog smile. "Go away, dog!"

"You'll find the deer that Grabowski boy killed hanging where he says it is," Uncle George said to Molloy. "You don't have to prove yourself wrong about the bloodstains on his shirt by sending it to the laboratory. You'd be wrong. It's blood from that deer. Now, about that coffee can. Do you maybe concede I wouldn't be unbalanced if I offered ten grand for it?"

"I'm listening," Patrick Aloysius said, unhappily.

Miss Millington's smile was beatific.

"You didn't bother to ask me what I was doing here — what me and Joey were doing here," Uncle George said. "Care to know?"

"Please," Patrick Aloysius said, almost humbly.

"Joey likes to play around here. Fascinating place for kids. Old autos. Old machinery. He was playing here this afternoon. Dave went up to him and asked him to carry a message to me. He asked Joey to tell me he needed advice," Uncle George looked innocently at Patrick Aloysius. "I'm a lawyer, you know, Mr. Molloy. Some of my old friends still come to me."

"Well, Dave needed advice. He'd

bought a potbellied stove that was cluttering up the outbuildings on Mr. Twining's place in town. Bought it from Mr. Twining's housekeeper. It was a good stove, Dave told Joey; better than the one he had here.

"So he took the one he had in the shack out and set up the one he bought from Mr. Twining's housekeeper. But when he went to light a fire he found something in the stove," Uncle George's eyes twinkled. "I'll still offer ten grand for that old coffee can, Molloy. Deal?"

Patrick Aloysius moistened his lips and remained silent.

"What Dave found, he told Joey, was forty-six thousand two hundred eighty-four dollars in cash," Uncle George said. "Dave didn't use it for kindling! He took it out and put it in that coffee can and he sent Joey to me for advice."

"Gilligan!" Patrick Aloysius said. Gilligan disappeared into the shack. Uncle George glanced at Mr. Twining who seemed to have shriveled inside his tweed suit. Gilligan reappeared, carrying the coffee can, his eyes as big as saucers. He showed the can's contents to Patrick Aloysius.

Uncle George broke the silence. "I suppose Mr. Twining came home from the bank this afternoon and got the news from his housekeeper she'd sold that old stove. Now I think you'll find I wasn't unbalanced, Mr. Molloy, when I suggested the Lakeview National Bank was in trouble. I think Mr. Twining stashed away a little getaway money in that old stove. He had to get it back."

"So he started out on his afternoon constitutional, only I think he was carrying a package with him. A package containing a pair of coveralls and a blue work shirt. Changed into them up in the woods somewhere and smeared his face with lamp black or something. He came to Dave's. Must have nearly fainted when he saw the stove set up and a fire burning in it."

"Maybe Dave recognized him. Maybe he just killed Dave because he had to get at that stove. He dumped the fire. Didn't find traces of the money, but he had no chance to look elsewhere because Miss Millington showed up."

Uncle George drew a deep breath. "You'll find those clothes up in the woods where he hid 'em. I wasn't guessing much, Mr. Molloy. But Timmy wasn't guessing at all."

"You see, Mr. Twining didn't bother to change his shoes. Nobody would notice his shoes — except a dog. A shoe has a very special aroma to a dog. So, do you see now how it was, Mr. Molloy?"

Patrick Aloysius Molloy drew a deep breath. "I was wrong, Mr. Crowder," he said. "I apologize."

"Darling!" Miss Millington said. Then a faint frown creased her lovely forehead. Projects number one and two were in good shape. But as she looked at Uncle George, and the small boy standing blissfully beside him, and the setter smiling up at a shattered Mr. Twining, she made a mental note. She would have to tell Hector Trimble she didn't see her way clear to interesting Joey in stamp collecting. — The End

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