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the side of the rubbish bin with an ear-smashing clang. We would then wake up quickly, rush out to the front door and catch the burglar as he ran through the gate. It seemed simple enough—the only problem was to find a way to fix the bucket.

My brother stared at the bucket and the rubbish tin like a house-surgeon contemplating an operation.

"Black cotton!" he rapped out. I brought it.

"Knitting needle!" I brought two in case of accidents.

"Thus and thus," he demonstrated, and surely enough there evolved a most ingenious burglar-trap. The black cotton stretched across the path, over a post and round the knitting needle; the knitting needle slipped through the handle of the bucket, and the bucket dangled temptingly over the rubbish tin. I stared at my brother with amazement. Heath Robinson's best effort was a feeble thing compared with this. Just let a burglar come now, we gloated, just let him come.

THAT night nobody slept. We were waiting for the ear-smashing clang. That night not a breath stirred, the silence was deeper than eternity, and next morning the black cotton was still stretched tautly and tauntingly across the path. Was the child of our fertile brain to become a dead pigeon? Next night we tried again, and the next. The night after that we set the trap more as a habit than anything else. The sleepless nights were wearing us down till we had become sunken-eyed and petulant. That night we fell asleep as soon as we crawled into bed.

IT was the dead of night, as the sensation stories say, and sleep hung over everybody. I was asleep too. In fact there was no reason to be awake, for everywhere was peace and quiet. Then like the crack of doom came an ear-smashing clang. I leaped out of bed, snatched up my shoes and hurled them at the rubbish bin—and our cat went squealing round the corner of the house.

As it streaked round the corner the street light caught its shadow with a curious twist, and there, etched on the pathway, was the long, thin shadow of a man, slipping round the corner of the house.

—V.C.

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