

170 LOST AND FOUND

**AN ORNAMENTAL
DAGGER.**

Any claimant will be asked
to describe the item
telephonically.
Contact e-mail
dagger@gmail.com

Win, Win, Win

The route I often take through the city is frequented by some shady characters posing as so-called "car guards". They collect petty cash from supposedly guarding the cars but make their real income from robberies of all kinds. You have no idea how quickly they can get into locked cars or lift a handbag - unnoticed or with the aid of a knife.

One morning, as I was walking past these "car guards", a police van had stopped and motioned a group over. The one closest to me dropped a gleaming object on the grass behind him.

I stopped, bent down, took out my handkerchief, wrapped it around the item and walked off. Thinking I'd not been noticed.

I thought of handing it over to the police but changed my mind when I examined it.

The object was an ornamental or ceremonial dagger with a gold hilt and handle, the latter which was encrusted with, what I later learned to be, ice-white flawless diamonds.

I placed an advert in all the national papers and received the usual rash of fake claims. No-one could even vaguely identify the item over the phone.

A while later I was on my usual route when I was accosted by the thug who had dropped the knife.

The conversation went something like this:

"You stole knife. I want it."

“Your knife? No, you stole it. I’m trying to find the real owner.”

A further brief exchange followed before he lost it. He pulled a knife and thrust at me.

I deflected his knife arm with one hand and simultaneously hit him with a throat strike. Unfortunately my adrenaline kicked and in and it was far harder than I had been taught. He fell to the ground, clutching his throat and gasping for air. Then his body jerked and he lay still. A voice behind me said, “Blerry good. We’ve been after this swine for a long time. Dankie.”

I refrained from saying anything to the policeman as he would be my prime witness in the charge that would be brought against me.

Fortunately for me he’d been passing when he saw the argument developing and had stopped to intervene.

“Phone an ambulance,” a well-dressed lady urged.

The policemen merely replied, “It’s too late.”

The subsequent autopsy found that my blow had fractured his thyroid cartilage and impeded his breathing and that the blow had probably triggered the heart attack that killed him.

With the policeman’s report and his evidence the court proceedings were over quickly with a verdict of justifiable homicide.

All the while e-mails kept coming in with false claims.

Then I received one that made my heart leap.

Good Day, I’m hoping against all hope. An elderly lady in our neighbourhood is struggling financially and she wanted to sell a valuable dagger she had inherited to supplement her meagre income. Unfortunately it appears to have been stolen as she cannot find it anywhere. I’m hoping for a miracle that the item you found may be hers. It’s a fancy dagger with a gold handle full of diamonds and very small initials of JMC L-M on the hilt.

I immediately telephoned her and listened to the whole story.

“That’s wonderful. I’ll be in your city next week and you can introduce me to her.”

It was an emotional meeting.

The three of us had a long discussion about the dagger's origin and her current plight. She showed me around her very neat but slightly shabby home.

Finally, over a cup of tea, she said, "Oh thank you, thank you again. I'm so pleased. Do you think I could sell it for enough to supplement my pension?"

"Yes, of course. But do you really want to do that? And how will you control the money with all the sharks out there?"

"Yes, that is what worries both of us," said her friend.

Turning to the old lady, "Tell me, how much would you like per month?"

"If I could just get just another five to seven thousand it will really make my life easier."

"Good. Here is what I'd like to suggest."

I outlined my suggestion concluding with, "Then the last part of the deal is that I will, firstly, pay for all the little repairs you need around your house and put in new equipment - like a new stove and fridge - to make your life a little easier and more comfortable. Then I'll set up a life annuity for you paying 15,000 per month, increasing by ten per cent per year for the rest of your life."

She clapped her hands around her mouth while, speechlessly, the tears of joy rolled down her face.

Her friend just started sobbing.

Having listened patiently to my story a member of the group responded with, "I think you robbed her."

"Really? Well she agreed to my suggestions."

Before he could respond another one chipped in with, "What if the old girl dies within a year?"

"Well, that's a win, win, win."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, she gets to be comfortably off for that period, or for the rest of her life. The insurance company wins as it pays for a shorter period and I can do what I like with the dagger."

“What good is that? It’s probably so valuable that you’d have to lock it in a safe.”

“No, it will be on display.”

“Where will you display it?”

“Where it belongs - in the Imperial War Museum.”

“What?”

“I had originally discussed the item with the curator of the local museum who thought it was of Indian origin. I confirmed this with the old girl who told me the dagger was a gift from the Maharajah of Rajapoo to her Great-Great Grandfather, Major General Locksley-Mason. The family had passed it on to each senior surviving heir. After her father’s death it devolved upon her as the sole surviving family member.”

“Why do you suppose he was given the dagger?”

“No idea. But the old boy had obviously impressed both the Maharajah and his superiors as he had also been awarded the Indian Order of Merit (1st Class).

“What was that?”

“An Indian campaign medal that was replaced by the Victoria Cross in 1917.”

The ‘you robbed her’ gentleman responded; “So, I suppose the citation will say donated by your bloody Good Samaritan self.”

“Au contraire, my sarcastic friend, it will read:”

Donated by: Miss Anna Rose Margaret Locksley-Mason. The great-great granddaughter of Major General Locksley-Mason, IOM(Mil).
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Ray Hattingh