



# **DALLAS BRIDGE MURDER\***

**By B. K. Barry**

***A Charles Earl Short Mystery, Featuring the Earl Family Brain Trust***

***Dedicated to Edwin B. Arlinghaus whom we first saw in Dallas.***

(For an interactive reading experience, please read with a smartphone equipped with a QR code reader in hand—you might even read it with a child or grandchild and have a fine interactive, intergenerational, reading experience together!)

The eyes of Texas are upon you  
All the live long day  
The eyes of Texas are upon you  
And you cannot get away

Do not think you can escape them  
From night till early in the morn  
The eyes of Texas are upon you  
Till Gabriel blows his horn

John Sinclair, 1903

## ***Training Wheels?***

“Charles, riding the Amtrak Texas Chief is so much fun—I think we are coming up on St. Louis—see, there’s the Gateway Arch; beautiful at night,” Judy Earl exclaimed to her mathematician, bridge-playing husband. “The last time we came to Dallas to an American Bridge Congress (ABC) national tournament,” she continued, “the timing was different, so we are seeing different things this time. Great!” Charles and Judy Earl sometimes drove their car and sometimes took the train to national or regional bridge tournaments. When they did take the train it was usually on long trips...with a roomette for each of them, across the hall from each other. That way, they had a view out of both sides of the train. Charles Earl didn’t really care too much about the view, but his wife, Judy Earl (a geographer), just loved to see all that there was to see.

“Look, Charles, at the lights reflecting in the Mississippi—Wow—there’s an orange harvest moon in back of the orange twinkling lights on the bridge we just went under. High-crime lighting serves many purposes! You know I was also reflecting on our last trip to St. Louis. I remember that that was when we first opened the Alma Mater chain of restaurants...thought I saw the headquarters when we passed the Arch...hard to tell at night, though.” As a sideline to their academic careers, the Earls had created a chain of fine food facilities, named in honor of Judy’s mother, Alma, and also in honor of both of the Earls’ (and their extended families’) lifelong interest in academics. That sort of double entendre greatly pleased them both. Judy served as CEO of the chain and Charles oversaw the implementation of the plans in his role as President. The couple owned the chain jointly.

Finally, Charles spoke: “Yes, Judy, the initial one was in St. Louis at the foot of the Eads Bridge. It’s doing well. We have one in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin; one in Bay City, Michigan; one in Louisville, Kentucky; one in Phoenix, Arizona; and, our most recent one opened up just a month ago in Dallas—I think it’s quite different from the others. You’ll see it when we get there. Perhaps the most important person in seeing that these new places

get off the ground is the young waiter named David; I understand that he is currently working in Dallas. He really does a fine job training new staff and is particularly good with menu items to fit local tastes...he has a knack for quickly grasping local preferences. For example, the asparagus salad was a big hit in Phoenix, but I don't even know if it will be on the menu in Dallas. We shall see..."

As the train wheels created a rhythmic clickety-clack over and over again, Judy began humming and singing in anticipation of their arrival in Dallas—jumping back and forth between two songs, interspersing lyrics from 'The Eyes of Texas Are Upon You' and 'I've Been Working on the Railroad'... "What fun, we'll have, Charles!" Charles quietly closed the door to his roomette.



The Eyes of Texas Are Upon You



I've Been Working on the Railroad

### ***The Big D—The View from the Top***

In the morning, the train arrived in Dallas. It was a short walk across the lobby, through an underground connection passage, to their hotel. They rolled their suitcases onto the escalators and took them up to the lobby and checked into the hotel. Judy noticed that the view from this level looked out over a grassy area; she gasped as she noted the Texas School Book Depository Building that she remembered from when JFK had been assassinated. She forced that sad, nostalgic moment from her mind; she knew when she came to Dallas that that memory would arise. She had not known how evident the view of long ago images would be from the lobby area. They rolled their suitcases to an elevator and went up to their room on the top floor.



“Charles,” Judy commented, “this room is just perfect—nice room itself, but more important, a great view! Look, we are up here among the skyscraper towers, and the sky itself seems to go on forever, a deep blue, that reaches out at infinity to embrace the Earth’s crust on the horizon—wonderful—I can gaze at that for weeks and not tire of it, I’m sure.” “I’m glad you like it,” her husband replied, “in fact, it is quite similar to the view from our new restaurant in the Alma Mater chain. Now, let’s get unpacked and then go see for ourselves and also have a bite to eat there, perhaps a late lunch.”

## ***The Dallas Alma Mater***

“Well, hello there David,” greeted Charles, “how’s it going here at the latest in the Alma Mater chain?” “Fine, thank you, sir! May I suggest a seat on our outside rooftop patio area?” “Great,” said Judy, “sounds good to me and yes, the view is breathtaking.” Charles and Judy sat and enjoyed the scenery; colorful umbrellas shaded them from too much sun. An attractive bar had been set up along one edge of the patio, close to the doors to the interior. At one end of the bar, there was a refrigerated cabinet filled with soda pop of various kinds, bottled water, and fruit juice bottles, presumably open to guests. The opposite wall held refrigerated carts, grills, and basically an entire outdoor kitchen loaded with interesting food: salads, protein to suit every palate, and desserts. At the far end was a coffee/hot drink area complete with Styrofoam cups, lids, and assorted bags of tea, sugars, and dried creamers. Privacy nooks around the edges offered opportunity for more intimate conversation; one of them contained a fountain feature. Each was unique.

“If you order a beefburger, as many do when they come to Texas, please make sure to specify how you wish it cooked,” noted David, “if you do not, it will come well done; that appears to be the default in a number of restaurants I’ve seen in the broad region here; furthermore, if you order medium-rare, emphasize ‘rare’...err on the side of the undercooked term for your preference. That’s just general advice; if you place your order with me, the reverse might be true. I might add that our beef is excellent, absolutely the best—that is why I am going through so much discussion about it.” “OK,” said Charles, “I’ll have a burger, plain, and fries.” “And, I’ll have the half avocado stuffed with shrimp salad...is the onion marmalade that comes with it the same recipe as in the Phoenix restaurant...on the side of the asparagus salad (which I note you do not have here)?” asked Judy. “Yes, it’s the same onion marmalade...tastes seem to vary from region to region and we try to respond to that idea in our menu selections,” David said, “I will get those orders placed for you. Would you care for a drink while you wait? How about an ice cold craft beer from our bar?” “Fine,” said Charles, “you select, David...one for each of us.”

The couple enjoyed the sunny day and their beer and food. Other bridge players began to enter the patio and the indoor part of the restaurant. “Judy,” stated Charles, “this area is also the Concierge area for the hotel. Guests who pay a premium get to eat a free breakfast and have free food (but not alcohol). There is free soda pop and stuff in the refrigerated cabinet over there—that’s for anyone who wants it. Regular guests use this area as a general hotel restaurant where they pay, on their room charge, for everything except what’s in the soda pop cabinet. Our room keys have an electronic designation built into them so that whatever we choose to have we do not get charged—I understand the breakfast buffet, \$21.95 (all you can eat) for regular guests, is quite nice. We’ll see tomorrow morning.”

“Now, Judy,” Charles continued, “I think I’ll go downstairs and see about studying how the bridge events are set up and checking in with old friends...general reconnoitering...” “Go right ahead,” Judy said, “I’ll stay right here and have dessert and study the people and enjoy the nice day...see you at the bridge game this evening—I’ll eat the happy hour food as my dinner. Come back if you want; eat with your friends if you want...whatever works.” Charles left and took one of the elevators down to the floor that he guessed would house the headquarters office of the ABC. Judy ordered chocolate lava cake with raspberry sauce and a large framboise dessert cocktail.

She waved at a few bridge players she knew from elsewhere. Soon David and other waitstaff appeared and began stocking the outdoor carts with nicely prepared vegetables and dips, puff pastries of various shapes apparently stuffed with different items and sauces to go with them, deep-fried shrimp, and beefburger sliders with suitable accompaniments. Ah ha, it’s getting to be happy hour time...that’s part of our premium deal. Soon, guests started lining up. Hotel staff did ask for the room key. It all seemed very well organized.

After a while, there was a break in the organization...David went running over. “Ma’am,” he said clearly, “we do not allow that sort of activity in this facility,” he said as the woman began to dump the entire platter of sliders

into her Gucci purse. Judy felt her eyes bulge...what was this attractive older woman, with a white pageboy hair cut, long dark dress, expensive shoes and leather purse to match, doing?...surely she could afford to pay the premium on the room or just pay for the buffet. Judy thought this woman looked as if she belonged in a several million dollar condo on Park Avenue or somewhere in Manhattan near the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The woman never said a word but put the platter back and took a seat with the man she had come in with. She had a sour look on her face and seemed to turn up her nose at the whole crowd and situation.

Judy sat and watched and took her time with her large framboise cocktail. Soon, the woman went back to the buffet and helped herself to a large, but reasonably-sized, plate of food. Her male companion did likewise. After they returned to the table, she opened her bag and removed another bag from it. Then she sent her companion off to run an errand. While he was gone, she slid all the food from both of their plates into the bag she recently extricated from her purse. When her friend returned, she made an excuse and left the room with only the bag containing food; she left her purse at the table. After about 10 minutes, she returned to the patio—carrying no bags. She went back to the food and got another plate full, pulled out another bag, and repeated the same process. Judy observed this same activity four times in a row. After the fourth time, the woman pulled some knitting from the purse...clickety-clack, clickety-clack went the needles...sounds as if I am back on the train! But, no, now I have a good name for her: Madame Defarge—the Big D, indeed!

### ***The Breakfast Buffet***

“Well, Charles,” Judy said, “I think we are all set now with the bridge...the game last night was a good one. You are playing this morning and we will play this afternoon and evening. While you play this morning, I’ll go on a tour of Dealey Plaza and all the JFK stuff. Now, let’s go try out the breakfast buffet.”

David ushered Charles and Judy to the same table on the patio that they had enjoyed yesterday. They went to the buffet and helped themselves to

beautiful berries: strawberries, blackberries, raspberries, and blueberries. The eggs benedict with a side of grits with cheese were excellent—far better than the fast food take on the same—fried egg, Canadian bacon, and somewhat melted cheese on an English muffin with a side of hashed brown potatoes.

“Charles,” Judy noted, “see that woman who just came in with the white hair and long dress? Let’s watch her and see what she does—notice her bags.” “Judy,” Charles said, “you watch her, I am going to ‘watch’ a soda pop and another plate of food!” With that, Charles got up and went to the refrigerated cabinet for a soda pop. The woman with the white hair was standing there, rummaging through the contents of the cabinet. “You don’t stock enough diet soda,” she yelled at David, “no one drinks soda with **sugar**, yechhh, in it anymore!” “I’m sorry ma’am,” David said, “our aim is to please all tastes.” “Shut up, you fool, didn’t you hear me,” she continued, “I said no one drinks sugared slop any more. Fill it up with diet soda.” “Excuse me,” Charles commented, “I not only drink sugared soda, and enjoy it, I also believe it is healthier to drink cola with sugar in it rather than with a bunch of chemical sweeteners in it...not that either one is very good for you...both appear to be comfort foods. David, I think you have the right idea in stocking some of each kind.” Then Charles helped himself to a plain, sugared, cola and went back to his table. The woman in the meantime stomped off to the buffet.

Charles related his adventures at the soda pop cabinet to Judy and then headed back to the breakfast buffet. When he saw that his new ‘friend’ was there helping herself to more food, he decided to back off and take Judy’s advice and just watch. Judy had uncanny instincts for reading people, sometimes just from scant evidence and small details she observed. Now the woman Judy called Madame Defarge pulled a stack of large Styrofoam coffee cups and lids from her purse. She dumped the bowl of strawberries into one, covered it, and put it back in her purse. She did the same with each of the three remaining bowls of berries. In the meantime, Charles helped himself to some honeydew melon, cantaloupe, watermelon, and pineapple chunks—there were still full bowls of those—the kitchen staff and David were rushing to try to keep things filled.

Madame proceeded as she had on the earlier evening...left with one bag. Came back, pulled out a new bag—took all the melons; left with that, came back, and so forth. Again, she made four trips. Judy said, “I think I’ll make a little photo essay of her activities and then turn it over to management.” “Be careful,” Charles said, “we do not know why she is doing this—could be some sort of mental instability—who knows what else she might do—she is skinny as a rail—she can’t be eating all that food herself.” Charles left to play bridge and Judy went on her way to the morning tour she had set for herself.

### ***Happy Hour on the Patio***

“Come on in, folks,” David said, “tonight we have a special program. Just as we try to tailor our menu to regional tastes, so too we try to create an entertainment program that responds to different groups staying in the hotel. Right now in the hotel we have two conventions: the bridge players at the ABC tournament and participants of the Steiff Society meetings—many of them are fanciers of stuffed animals and some brought stuffed animals, as well. Tonight we honor the latter group with a ‘Schnitzelbank Party’—come and join in this traditional German-American fun! We are featuring our signature dish, Alma’s Curly Dogs™ —a spectacular variant on a chili dog—of course, in the interests of presenting regional fare, we use a Texan chili recipe here.”



Schnitzelbank Song



Schnitzelbank Poster



“Oh, Charles,” Judy said, “think I’ll phone our Earl Family Brain Trust and others who came with us; they would love this idea!” “Sure, why not,” Charles replied, “in fact I think it’s a fine idea—perhaps they can help us figure out what Madame Defarge is up to—where does all that food go?” With that, Judy whipped out her smartphone and called Theodore E. Bear and explained the idea to him; Theodore assured her that he and the group that came to Dallas would be there immediately.

<b>Earl Family Brain Trust</b>		
		<b>Theodore E. Bear:</b> A sedentary philosophically-inclined bear. Kind and thoughtful. A clear-thinker interested in the balance between pragmatics and abstraction. He worries about personal issues, such as being made into the bed, as well as broad-ranging issues involving world peace and global politics among all creatures, real and imaginary. He views himself as a dignified and proper teddy bear wearing a tuxedo—NOT as a panda. He is a native of Detroit, MI.
		<b>Binker Bear:</b> Named after Christopher Robin's [A. A. Milne, <i>When We Were Very Young</i> ] "imaginary" friend Binker, as in "you can't see Binker." He lives largely in the realm of the imaginary, in the world of abstraction. In his "bear" persona he is physically quite large; he has a number of other personae he has been known to adopt. He is known to keep his cards close to his chest even when he is dummy. Binker is originally from Paris, France, and was born at Galeries Lafayette. He is also a part-time mystery story writer and trivia player.
		<b>Tine E. Bear:</b> Named for his diminutive stature. Tine focuses on the pragmatics of life. He feels he has to do so...as a small creature in the world of giants. He enjoys playing duplicate bridge, as an equalizer, and has a fine partnership with Binker who is large enough to use a bidding box. Tine emigrated from Paris with Binker, but is originally from a US Zone in Germany (as his tag says). His genealogy is rooted in the Vintage (mohair) Branch of the prestigious Steiff Family.

Soon, Theodore, Binker, and Tine appeared on the scene. "I've phoned Ludwig, Guillaume, Im, and Eeyore, to join us, they'll be along soon," said Theodore.

	<p><b>Ludwig von Bearthoven:</b> A native of Troy, Michigan, and a member of the illustrious Gund family. Ludwig is from a musical family and serves as the corporate Director of Entertainment for the Alma Mater chain. He also has considerable “undercover” experience as his soft hugs have lulled many to sleep. This experience translates elsewhere in a natural manner. “Freude !!” is a favorite greeting of his.</p>
	<p><b>Guillaume R. Squirrel:</b> A linguist who is the Master Teacher of all languages to all teddy-type creatures in the Earl world. Guillaume is highly articulate and will chatter endlessly on a vast array of topics—some of greater interest than others. He claims to possess a copyright and trademark on his unique pronunciation of the word “hmmmmph!!” which he uses to express a variety of feelings. Guillaume’s gray coloration, along with his natural athletic talent and structural engineering background, make him an ideal undercover agent in a variety of environments. Guillaume, a world traveler like some of the others, emigrated from Toronto, Ontario, but was born in North Korea.</p>
	<p><b>Im Possumble:</b> A possum native of Ann Arbor, Michigan, where he was handmade by a specialist. Im is an expert at both “hanging around” and at dealing with situations which might otherwise appear impossible to handle. He has been known to hang out at Alma Mater restaurants although that fact is often discovered only afterwards. He serves as a consultant in matters involving corporate restaurant spying and has even had a role on a mass media production that shows hidden cameras revealing restaurant and server inadequacies.</p>



**Eeyore, Baudet de Poitou:** Like Binker, Eeyore is also named after a character from A. A. Milne’s classic children’s work and like Binker is originally from Paris’ Galeries Lafayette. Eeyore worries about his tail, of course, but in recent years has learned to enjoy greatly the fact that real-world versions of himself, an endangered species, are once again rising in number. He is a kind and thoughtful, though stubborn, creature. His plodding ways and stubborn persistence, along with his gray coat, make him an ideal undercover agent in complex, but physically bounded, situations that appear drab in color. He has a background in problems associated with the hauling of materials. Eeyore persists until he gets to the bottom of things.

The happy group sat around a fire pit near the nook with a fountain. Soon, they were joined by a small turtle who climbed out of the water. “What’s your name, kiddo,” asked Guillaume, “my legal name is Achilles, you know from Achilles and the Tortoise, but my friends call me Speedy,” the turtle replied. “What are you doing here, Speedy?” Judy asked. “Well,” Speedy said, “it’s a long story...you see about 4 months ago I went to a meeting of the Montgolfier Society in Phoenix along with a bunch of colleagues. I had a bit of trouble keeping up with them and when their rides came, I got left behind. So, I started to walk; I just now got here...it’s nice to see friendly faces...maybe I saw some of you in Phoenix? Anyway, if you give me a head start, I’m fine; otherwise, I have trouble keeping up with the crowd.” Speedy joined the group and they offered the tired turtle a nice chair along with some water and snacks.



Achilles and the Tortoise



The Tortoise and the Hare

Theodore had motioned to David and asked him to bring drinks for the entire group. “And, let’s throw in three bottles of Cremant d’Alsace for the

group,” the generous bear stated, “I want my friends to have some bubbles, too!” Shortly, another group entered the patio. They were the German contingent attending the Steiff Society meetings in the hotel. “Oh, David,” Theodore called out, “please bring an extra bottle and ask that group to join us in celebration, as well.” “Judy, I think that bear is getting to be a bit too gregarious, not to mention loose with our hotel tab, don’t you?” Charles asked his wife. “Well, he is a bit over the top, but we are having a good time, too—I think....Uh Oh....here comes that food thief and I guess her partner or husband. Let’s at least make sure THEY don’t join us...maybe a large and diverse crowd is a good thing here,” Judy told her husband as Theresa and Ernest ‘Defarge’ entered the Alma Mater rooftop patio.



Speedy, the turtle, relaxes in Dallas after a 4-month long trek from Phoenix.

Soon the bears, the turtle, and the others were having a fine time singing along with Schnitzelbank and eating German food, drinking German beer and Alsatian ‘bubbly’. In the meantime, Theresa took food from the various food stations in quantities way too large to feed her slender frame. Only the bags under her table and near her feet enlarged. While the others sang and had fun, Judy watched as Theresa’s food stash grew and grew.

### Friends Attending the Steiff Society Meetings



T. B. (pronounced, Tay Bay), born in U.S. 1944 but lived in a German-speaking family.



Zotti, German immigrant, came to U.S. in the 1950s.



Baby Watson, in the plaid. From the U.S. in the 1980s; part of the same German-speaking family



Mausie, of mixed heritage, perhaps part Danish, part German, part U.S. She keeps an eye on Baby Watson whom she regards as a bit slow mentally. Mausie has her own den cloth so she can make herself almost invisible at times.

'I wonder how Theresa will get all of that out of here, Judy thought to herself. In between food-grabs, Theresa pulled out her knitting; it appeared to Judy that she was knitting a long, thin rectangle. After a bit, she started fiddling with it as if she were completing something. Maybe a scarf, Judy thought; it looked like a nice piece of work; nice even rows, tasteful coloration.

Soon there was a break in the Schnitzelbank merriment. Judy took the opportunity of quiet times to fill in the Earl Family Brain Trust on the activities of Theresa and asked for their help in figuring out where all the food could be going. Tine, who himself ate very little, suspected that perhaps there were unregistered guests in her room whom she was feeding. Theodore speculated that if that were the case, there would be a great deal of extra garbage and that the hotel staff would soon catch on—apparently they had not yet done so, and so he thought that perhaps she was doing something else with the food. Some of the others wondered if she might have an eating disorder of some sort.

As they sat there pondering the issue, Theresa jumped up and ran to the staging area of the patio where the Schnitzelbank props were. "Listen to me you fools...never mind this slop...here, is a real show!" With that she ripped off her shirt and bra and took her knit piece, pulled it down over her head to cover her breasts and started singing Edith Piaf songs while gyrating to the music..."now, that's the Möbius Strip!"



Möbius Strip



Milord, Edith Piaf

The stunned guests gasped. Hotel staff rushed the area and contained her. As staff worked to remove her from the patio, she screamed, "I must have my luggage...bring it downstairs to the sidewalk, I'll get a cab...and

be careful with it; it contains precious materials and if you open it and anything is missing you will be guilty of stealing.” “Eureka,” Judy exclaimed to the group, “now we know how she planned to get all that food out of here; with a convenient distraction that would even get hotel staff themselves to do her dirty work...nasty, but smart. I wonder what else happens with her knit works of art...”

To settle the crowd down a bit, Tine, who is a Steiff bear, suggested that Ludwig, of Germanic musical heritage, lead the Schnitzelbank singing as David pointed to elements of the poster, to really focus the crowd on this aspect of the planned evening fun. The rest of the evening proceeded in good fun and the Earl Family contingent headed off to bed at an early hour in preparation for the bridge events the next day.



Schnitzelbank Poster



Schnitzelbank YouTube

### ***At the Bridge Table***

“Charles,” Judy calmly stated, “I have the bears ready to go; their smartphones are fully charged and the network functions. They are set to see what they can find out about Theresa and the food; while you and I are playing bridge, they will look around. Theodore suggested having Mausie ride in Theresa’s handbag—she’s used to such activity apparently. However, someone will need to watch Baby Watson, so Zotti and T.B. are doing that when needed. Speedy will also assist our group; I gather he has spent some time in the fountain and is happy to go back there where he will not look out of place or arouse suspicion. Im will hang around outside on the rooftop patio, Eeyore and Guillaume, because of their natural gray coloration, are suited for darker or shadowy areas. Ludwig will continue as

master of entertainment at Alma Mater. Tine and Binker will play bridge. And, as usual, Theodore will direct the activities when we are busy elsewhere.”

“Good,” said Charles, “now, let’s go play bridge!” The couple left their room early enough to avoid the usual crush of bridge players in the elevators. Hotel elevator networks were not designed for activity of this sort where all the occupants want to take an elevator within a few minutes of each other. The more experienced tournament players studied usage patterns and went during gaps.

“Judy,” Charles warned, “there are a number of nice players in our section today; there are also a few you might not find as nice. Please try to remember not to let them upset you...remember my approach...if they are nasty, probably that is more distressing to their partner than to you. Hence, seize the opportunity to take a top score from them. It’s not about socializing; being pleasant is important, yes, but keep focused on the game...keep that in mind and maybe that will help you.” Charles was very protective of his wife’s sensitive and caring nature toward others. It was a fine quality in many ways, but it did not always work well at the tournament duplicate bridge table.

The first few rounds of the afternoon game were fairly straightforward. The opponents were reasonable, and the scores the Earls earned were reasonable. Charles was a much better player than his wife but nonetheless was delighted when she would agree to play with him; he hoped for a nice time at the table.

The next round, a couple of men came to the table and brought an extra chair with them. “Our kibitzer is in the ladies room,” one man announced to Charles, “I presume it won’t be a problem to you if we start before she returns?” “No problem,” Charles said, “thanks for asking.” They played the first board and had begun bidding on the second board when the kibitzer returned and sat down to kibitz one of the opponents—it was Theresa. “Oh, boy,” Charles thought to himself...“I hope she doesn’t upset Judy.” Once the bidding was over, and prior to the opening lead, Theresa looked

at the dummy and yawned. Then, she reached into her purse and pulled out her knitting...clackety-clack, clackety-clack. Charles thought that at least on the train when Judy was singing he could close the door so as not to be distracted; here, however, there was no such possibility. Not only that, as he looked at what she was knitting, it looked like another long skinny rectangle but this time with coloration to illustrate that six colors suffice to color any map on a Möbius Strip—did she know that?...the mathematician part of him wondered about her.

Further, he also thought about her antics of the previous evening and her ongoing food theft issues. Finally, it was Charles, not Judy, who took action: “Madam, you are barred from kibitzing; please leave the table immediately.” “What?” she said, “what did I do?” “The knitting is distracting in a number of ways,” Charles told her. “I’ll put it away,” she said. “Too late,” Charles stated a bit abruptly. “F\*\*\* U !!” she shrieked. “Director!” Charles announced clearly and immediately.

The Director came quickly to the table. After the situation was explained to him, he told the kibitzer that in the first place any bridge player has the right to bar one kibitzer per session and does not even need to give a reason. Charles had been completely within his rights and in fact had gone above and beyond what was required in explaining his rationale. She was also told that her behavior was one for which the ABC had zero tolerance; thus, she was required not only to leave this table but also would not be allowed to kibitz at any other table for the duration of this event. Theresa stomped off in the direction of the elevators. Charles hoped that Mausie wasn’t getting banged around too much. Judy wondered if this distraction too, like the Möbius Strip of the previous evening, were part of some premeditated devious plan.

The Earls finished the round against Ernest and his partner. The rest of the afternoon session was pleasant. Charles and Judy saw no further distressing events, enjoyed the game, and looked forward to a pleasant dinner at the Alma Mater Rooftop Patio.

## ***At the Patio, Again.***

As the Earls entered the patio, Speedy came rushing (for him) up to them...“there’s a man floating in the fountain pool...I can’t figure it out...I tried to talk to him and he didn’t respond. I dove under him...there’s no action there. The water turned color...honest, I used the men’s room...when I came back...well, he just appeared there while you were playing bridge. I don’t know him.” “Take it easy, Speedy” Charles said calmly to the anxious turtle. “Have I failed in my job?” Speedy asked. “Here, you come sit with me, Speedy,” Judy said, “Charles will go check it out.”

Charles and David checked out the under-utilized fountain nook. Sure enough, the man was dead. It appeared his throat had been punctured and slit in some strange pattern. “Call the police immediately, David,” Charles commanded. Soon officers and paramedics arrived, cleaned up the area, took the man away, and cordoned off the area with crime scene tape.

“Charles,” Judy asked, “did you know who he was? You know tons of bridge players from all your years in high-level bridge administration.” “No, Judy, I never saw him before in my life. I thought perhaps he was with the other conference, so I phoned Baby Watson (you know he has some background in investigative matters) and Zotti and T.B. They had never seen him either. So, we don’t know which group he goes with, if either. Perhaps we will find out later.”

## ***Reports of the Investigative Teams***

After the stunning situation was removed from the rooftop patio, Charles, Judy, and their team sat down at a large table to discuss the events of the day and to try to enjoy a few hours of rest, good food, and companionship before returning to the bridge table during the evening session. To keep things organized, they decided, as they had in similar previous situations to have formal reports, regarding the activities of Madame Defarge, from each of the special agents or teams of special agents.



**Report of Eeyore's Team (Eeyore and Guillaume),  
presented by Eeyore**

Guillaume and I went to the hotel Event Planner and told her what we had all observed regarding food theft. She said that the hotel had had occasional experiences of this sort with other groups. Since the hotel didn't really understand why folks do this, they generally just check to see if there are unregistered guests staying in the room with the thief. Guillaume and I volunteered to masquerade as food service people delivering meals to guests in rooms. Naturally, if we made a mistake in knocking on a room door where food hadn't been ordered, we would apologize...but, we'd get a look in that room. While she said that of course she could not really authorize such activity, she did let slip in our conversation where the freight elevator was. We knew that we could get hotel uniforms from laundry bins being trucked up and down there, so we went and found a couple of suitable sizes, washed and dried them, and put them on. We also commandeered a food delivery wagon and some empty plates with covers on them that hotel guests had left in the hallway. We put fresh flowers from the rooftop garden in a glass, and had really a nice looking room service array...a fake, without food, but who knew.

Anyway, when you went down to play bridge, we went to her room with the 'meal.' No one was there. We listened at the door for a while and heard nothing. The hallway seemed quite empty, so I boosted Guillaume up to look through the transom; he is really a good jumper...almost as if he has spring in his feet...very helpful! He saw nothing. The room seemed quite bare. No extra people, no extra luggage. In fact, no extra food or extra

trash. Clearly she was not harboring unregistered guests nor was she storing the food in her room.

Later, we tried again, and this time she answered and said that she did not order anything from room service. We apologized, but only after I had pushed the cart all the way into the room over next to the windows. I started to raise the windows for her...told her that some of them tend to stick and that I was really quite strong. I know the windows don't go up very far, but they do go up far enough to slide food through and out onto the fire escape or ledge. I looked. There was no food out there either. Then I dropped something on the floor and used that as an excuse to go in the bathroom and get a wet towel to clean up what I had done, of course apologizing about how clumsy I am. I saw nothing in the bathroom either. I noted that her Mobius Strip scarf was lying on a table and was able to feign more clumsiness that enabled me to get a snapshot of it. Here it is; quite a beautiful and intricate piece of handiwork. You see where it's tied together: knit a rectangle, give it a half-twist, and then tie the ends together. Very clever—untie it (see the bows in the photo) and it becomes a two-sided scarf. If we had not known so already, it became quite evident that we were dealing with a very smart, and crafty, woman.



So, we have concluded that whatever she is doing with the food, she is not using her room as the center of activity. That's about it from us.



### Report of Ludwig

After that outrageous 'Möbius Strip' performance of hers, things settled down on the entertainment end at Alma Mater, both inside and on the patio. I enjoyed time singing my favorite "Freude" as well as other German songs, such as Heidenröslein, Die Forelle, and other Lieder, that I had learned from my family over the years. I did notice that there was more activity on the patio during the afternoon session than I might have expected. But, I really didn't see anything terribly unusual about it other than its mere presence. I couldn't hear conversations though. Perhaps Im will be able to enlighten us there. He really is very good at hanging from tree limbs and looking absolutely sound asleep when he is not...I know, I know, that's where the phrase 'playing possum' comes from...it's obviously natural to him!



### Report of Im

Yes, I agree with Ludwig. There was unusually heavy traffic on the patio during the time when folks should have been playing bridge. Now, I am not a native speaker of German, but some of these folks were, I believe, speaking German, so I assume they were here with the Steiff Society and were not bridge players. I hung from a tree limb over one group of men who milled around in the fountain nook and nearby. They were all bridge players from the New York City area. I can't give you a number because one would stay for a while and then leave. Perhaps they were sitting out a match on a six man team. I don't know. It is possible that the man who was murdered was among them at some point. I did not get a clear look at his face in the pool around the fountain, but from what Speedy tells me, it is entirely possible. Anyway, that might offer a lead to his identity...check out if he is a bridge player from the New York City Area...not a small task I'm sure.

In terms of conversation, these men talked some about bridge hands, but not as much as some bridge players do. So, I assumed they might not be top flight players. In addition, they seemed to engage in some gossip about local players in New York, their marital problems, professional occupations, and so forth. It was the kind of conversation that would have seemed of no interest to anyone outside their local area, although they were all quite interested in all aspects of the discussion. At one point, the group dwindled down to two in size and the conversation in the nook became too quiet for me to hear. At that point, I needed to use the men's room. When I went in there, I saw Speedy just leaving to go back to the pool around the fountain. When I returned, of course, there was chaos; the man in the pool had been found. No one was sitting at the table where I last saw two men.



### Report of Tine's Team (Tine and Binker), presented by Tine

Our afternoon was also quite uneventful. We did, however, play a round against the two men, and Theresa was kibitzing (so we played them before Charles and Judy did). You had thought earlier that Ernest was Mr. Defarge. In fact, that appears not to be the case. Theresa is not married. She is engaged to Ernest and was kibitzing him. Theresa is apparently a widow. On the first hand we played, her behavior as a kibitzer was fine. On the second hand, I played it and Binker was the dummy. It was a tough hand. She looked at the dummy and pulled out her knitting. Ernest's partner was on opening lead and quickly led a heart.

	♠ 8 7 5	
	♥ 4 3	
	♦ A Q T 9	
	♣ K T 9 3	
♠ K Q 6		♠ J T 3 2
♥ J 7 6 2		♥ A K T 9 8
♦ 6 4		♦ 5 3 2
♣ J 8 7 6		♣ 2
	♠ A 9 4	
	♥ Q 5	
	♦ K J 8 7	
	♣ A Q 5 4	

<u>North</u> <u>Binker</u>	<u>East</u> <u>Ernest/Theresa</u>	<u>South</u> <u>Tine</u>	<u>West</u> <u>Leader</u>
		1NT	P
3NT	P	P	P

West has a difficult problem on opening lead. Both heart and club leads are from four to a jack, not necessarily appetizing. The club spots are a little better than the heart spots, but the opponents probably don't have a major suit fit. The King of Spades lead might find partner's suit. Yet West led a heart instantly, so I had no chance.

A club lead gives me 9 tricks at once (4 clubs, 4 diamonds, and a spade). With a spade lead, I must find 4 club tricks by myself. But when I cash 4 diamonds, I will discover East has 3. I would deduce that East had at least 5 hearts (without a H lead) and probably at least 2 spades (West didn't bid). So, East should have no more than 3 clubs, so cashing the A and Q of clubs will reveal the true club situation.



### **Report of Speedy**

I am new to all of this. I think all I did was find the body. I was badly shaken up by that. In fact, I still am; I did report briefly at the time and hope that report will be enough. Judy has been very kind. She knew that Gordo is our handler at the Montgolfier Society and she phoned him to come rescue me. I gather that he is here now, so if you don't mind, I am going to leave and go home with him. I hope to see all of you, my dear new friends some other time, but it has been a harrowing four months since Phoenix. Best wishes to you all.



Gordo rescues Speedy



**Report of Mausie's Team (Mausie, Baby Watson, Zotti, and T. B.), presented by Mausie**

I rode around all the time in Theresa's purse. The rest of the team was available, when asked, to say who was (or was not) a member of the Steiff Society (we get directories when we register). So, they were able to say that the group of men being talked about were not Steiff folks.

As for riding around in this woman's purse...what a mess! All sorts of yarn and knitting needles. There were little sheets of paper...looked like graph

paper with sequences of dots and blanks. Might have been some sort of knitting instructions. It was easy for me to get lost in the balls and skeins of yarn. The knitting needles were of differing weights and balance. I was able to snap my claws against them and hear that they gave out different musical notes depending on weight...much as one might do with glasses of water. She seemed preoccupied much of the time so I was able to look around quite a bit and sometimes even peek out of the top of her bag.

After Charles had us thrown out of the tournament, we did go back to the hotel room. I saw Eeyore and Guillaume when they came, although I presume they did not see me. As they observed, I saw no extra guests and no stash of stored food. Then, we went up to the rooftop patio. We must have arrived just as Im was on his way to the men's room. Theresa saw the two men and eavesdropped on them for an instant or two. During that time, I heard one of them say the words 'Ernest' and 'telling'...so, I don't know whether the reference was 'telling something *to* Ernest' or 'telling something *in* earnest' ....the two words sound the same even though they are spelled differently. I found an opportunity and left the bag to see if I could scamper around in back of the bar to talk to David. When I got to where I could see again, there was a body in the pool and a lot of chaotic activity before the police arrived.



### **Report of Theodore**

I see all these reports as they come in and have a bit of a sneak preview of them in advance of Charles and Judy. So, my thinking was a bit like Mausie's...that perhaps David should be talked to. I went up to the rooftop garden and talked to him while the group was coming up to get seated at dinner. He did verify that Theresa had been there shortly before the man

had been killed. He did not see the man being killed because he was busy at the bar. My take on this is that Theresa had the opportunity to kill the man and the means to do so. She could have slit his throat with one of her sharp knitting needles. Police analysis will tell that, no doubt. But, the real puzzler is why? What motive would she have had? Who was this man that no one seemed to know? Personally, I think she did it, but we have nothing to hang a plausible theory on if we have no motive. Charles, help!

### ***Charles's Analysis***

Once again, you have all done a terrific job. Congratulations! Let me tell you of my findings and of my analysis of them when coupled with yours.

#### *More Evidence*

This morning my friends Kent and Joe were ready to start our early morning walking group again. We walked about four miles around downtown Dallas. It was a fine walk. While we were out, I recounted our story of this woman we thought looked as if she were from New York and how she had been stealing food. Kent knew immediately who we meant and verified all of our assumptions. He added more information, as well. Her name is indeed Theresa, although of course Defarge is our last name for her. He knew about the food stealing. He'd seen her dump berries in cups, soda pop in her bag; he'd seen her clean out drawers and the refrigerator and then complain to staff about the stocking of the refrigerator. He'd seen piles of bagels go in her purse, along with butter, cream cheese, and so forth. Just as he was finishing saying what he had seen, we noticed that the trash barrels on the sidewalk near the hotel seemed to have unusual amounts of food in them; a group of street people hovered around. Perhaps we had become conditioned, from thinking about this situation, to looking for food?

He also had a few extra tidbits for us. He said that she is a fine bridge player, and in addition to tournaments also plays in various clubs in the broader New York metro area...he has played in clubs when she was playing there, always with a man. He thought that she had some sort of advanced academic degree. He said that local people are wary of her

because the local story goes that she and her boyfriend might have murdered her husband. Then she apparently turned in her boyfriend for that murder and is engaged again. Kent said there is no proof of this, and it may all be idle gossip, but that some of it can no doubt be checked.

So, I did a bit of checking, as much as I could using my smartphone between rounds. I phoned my colleague, Neal, in a major research university's mathematics department in New York. I described this woman to him, but gave him no name. She is easy to describe and people seem to react with certainty as to whether they know her. Anyway, Neal said "oh, yes, that sounds like Theresa." Neal has been there, as department chair, for over 35 years. Theresa came back to graduate school as a non-traditional student and got a Ph.D. in Mathematics, in Coding Theory. Subsequently, she took on dangerous missions in developing nations with various clandestine agencies.

She retired a few years ago, returned to New York, and apparently attends 'Math Tea' at Neal's place—it's a grand old tradition in a number of universities—faculty go there and try to impress others with how much they know, and graduate students do likewise. Since her retirement, Theresa spent time lording her bridge expertise over the other mathematicians at Math Tea who liked to play bridge. A small group of them could sometimes be seen off in a corner with a few decks of cards with Theresa berating her colleagues on their shoddy play of the hand.

### *Theory*

Theodore, I agree with you that Theresa must have done it. You are correct that she had both means and opportunity. With the new evidence above, I think we can now construct a logical motive. See what you all think. There are a number of issues here; some are more important than others, but I think we have sufficient evidence to explain them all.

Theresa's distracting behavior was, I think, something of a red herring. She was smart; she knew she was smart, and she liked to show off and also to shock people in various ways. We've probably all seen smart aleck teenage boys who do that; a bit more surprising in a woman who looks like Theresa, but it's the inner self and not the outer, superficial trappings that

matter. So, the intolerance of the Schnitzelbank may have come about from her experiences in the developing world; she is old enough that she may focus only on nasty associations with Germans. Too bad, and her behavior was ridiculous, but not really harmful. And, certainly it was a clever way to get food out of the hotel rooftop.

Judy wondered if her behavior at the bridge table the next day was planned. Perhaps. I know I had wondered if she were aware of what she was doing in terms of coloring sufficiency on a Möbius Strip. Perhaps it was that nagging curiosity that caused me, once I heard from Kent that Theresa had a higher degree, to assume that it was probably in mathematics and to use my precious phone time to choose to call Neal, a topologist (whose hobby is making tops!). Following my conversation with Neal, I became confident that she knew exactly what she was doing. But, so what...why flaunt it as a kibitzer at the bridge table? Brilliant people often do show off, but to whom was she showing off? Most bridge players have probably not heard of a Möbius Strip let alone of coloring problems in the plane or on other surfaces.



#### 4 Color Theorem: Coloring the Plane

So, I thought, perhaps her knitting does have to do with bridge. Here information from the Tine/Binker partnership, coupled with an observation from Mausie, were important. Remember that Theresa was an expert in coding theory. The clackety-clack of her needles upset me...perhaps it was the pattern of them that upset me. Was there a code to the dots and spaces in the knitting pattern and the associated noise from knitting needles that might translate into bridge information? Remember that she only pulled the knitting out when Ernest was defending and not on lead. I

think that she was tapping out a code to tell the leader either what to lead, or what not to lead. Evidence from Tine's report suggests that--the killing heart lead was whipped out at his table following her knitting. At our table, she tried the same thing, but I had her thrown out before she could transmit the information...hence her frustration with me. I have some understanding of coding theory myself, and perhaps I can later get a look in her bag to see if there is tangible support for this idea on the sheets of dots and spaces that Mausie saw. Again, it is an absurd waste of talent, but harmless in the broad spectrum of things.

Then, we have the unsolved mystery of what was she doing with the food. We now know that she spent time in developing nations doing very difficult and stressful work. I have known others who have, as well. Sometimes, they become hostile toward the excesses they see when back at home. Generally, though, they just comment on it, or devote their lives to folks in the developed world who are having a very hard time...as tireless workers devoted to various altruistic causes. They are wonderful folks with motivation that they transform from the hostile to the helpful.

I think that this motivation went over the top with Theresa. Think of it perhaps as the 'Robin Hood' syndrome. She was stealing food from the rich and giving it to the poor...in this case to street people or others...remember, when tossed out of the Patio party she had her bags sent to the street rather than to her room. Maybe she just put some of it in trash barrels on the streets, knowing it would be found by those who need it for survival and not as additional pleasure. Recall that on the morning walk we had noticed possibly unusual amounts of food, and activity from street people, in association with the trash barrels on the sidewalks near the hotel.

Probably Ernest had figured some of this out...after all, how could he miss it when she took food off his plate...but perhaps he didn't really care. He might have found it a bit bizarre, but harmless and well-meaning. He loved her for the caring person she was; caring about the world's most needy is not a negative trait and it must have been that trait that Ernest focused upon.

What Ernest probably did not know, however, was her history with her previous boyfriend. I suspect that the Robin Hood mentality with food got transformed into a much deeper, and sick, behavior pattern. She married a wealthy man, used up much of his wealth on her various 'altruistic' ventures, and then got rid of him when she thought he was no longer of use. I would add in passing that Ernest is quite a wealthy man.

Now, note that my friend Kent knew Theresa from club-level bridge in New York. I am guessing that he will also have known the murdered man once the identity is revealed. Perhaps the murdered man came to this tournament and saw Theresa hanging around with Ernest. He probably also knew Ernest. Mausie noted that someone might be mentioning Ernest's name shortly before the murder...important information. Theresa overheard this and assumed, perhaps correctly, that this man was going to tell Ernest about her past, to warn Ernest away from marrying her, and so she punctured and split his throat with her knitting needle and dumped him over into the pool...all perhaps in a hugging, touchy-feely scene that would not have been noticed in this remote nook of the patio. Keeping her past quiet would have been a strong motive, I believe; she wanted the Ernest goose to lay plenty of golden eggs for her to pass on to the poor.

So, to my way of thinking we now have all of means, opportunity, and motive. I would not be inclined to worry about her 'altruistic' nature: she is a murderer plain and simple, with no rationalization available. Shall I take it to the police and encourage them to search around for a bloody knitting needle? Did Madame Defarge once again make the heads roll as she sat around knitting her intricate patterns of life?

\* All characters appearing in this work are fictitious. Any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental. The photo of the Curly Dog™ was modified by the author from an original by Alma Lach. The photo of Speedy's handler is Gordo the Magician, Speedy's creator. Custom bridge hand and analysis created by William C. Arlinghaus.

The author acknowledges the fine photos contributed by Christa Schwing Broderick of her stuffed animals that in this story were attending a fictional Steiff Society meeting. In addition, she is the yarn sculptress that knitted the Möbius Strip. Christa is shown in the photo below modeling the strip as a scarf, while Baby Watson looks on.



Christa, wearing her Möbius scarf, and Baby Watson