

Bridge

THE SILVER WAY

A Third Collection of
Bridge Stories



David Silver

Tim Bourke



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Master Point Press

331 Douglas Ave.
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
M5M 1H2

(416) 781-0351

Internet: www.masterpointpress.com
www.masteringbridge.com
www.bridgeblogging.com
www.ebooksbridge.com
Email: info@masterpointpress.com

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Silver, David, 1934-
Bridge the Silver way

ISBN 978-1-55494-071-4

1. Contract bridge - Fiction. 2. Canadian wit and humor (English).* I. Bourke, Tim. II. Title.

PS8587.I272B74 2000 C813'.54 C99-932385-7
PR9199.3.S54B74 2000

Cover design and Interior : Olena S. Sullivan
Editor : Ray Lee

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Some of the stories in this book derive at least a portion of their plot-line or characterization from the classics of literature and the screen. Readers may be interested to compare the bridge versions with the originals, which are:

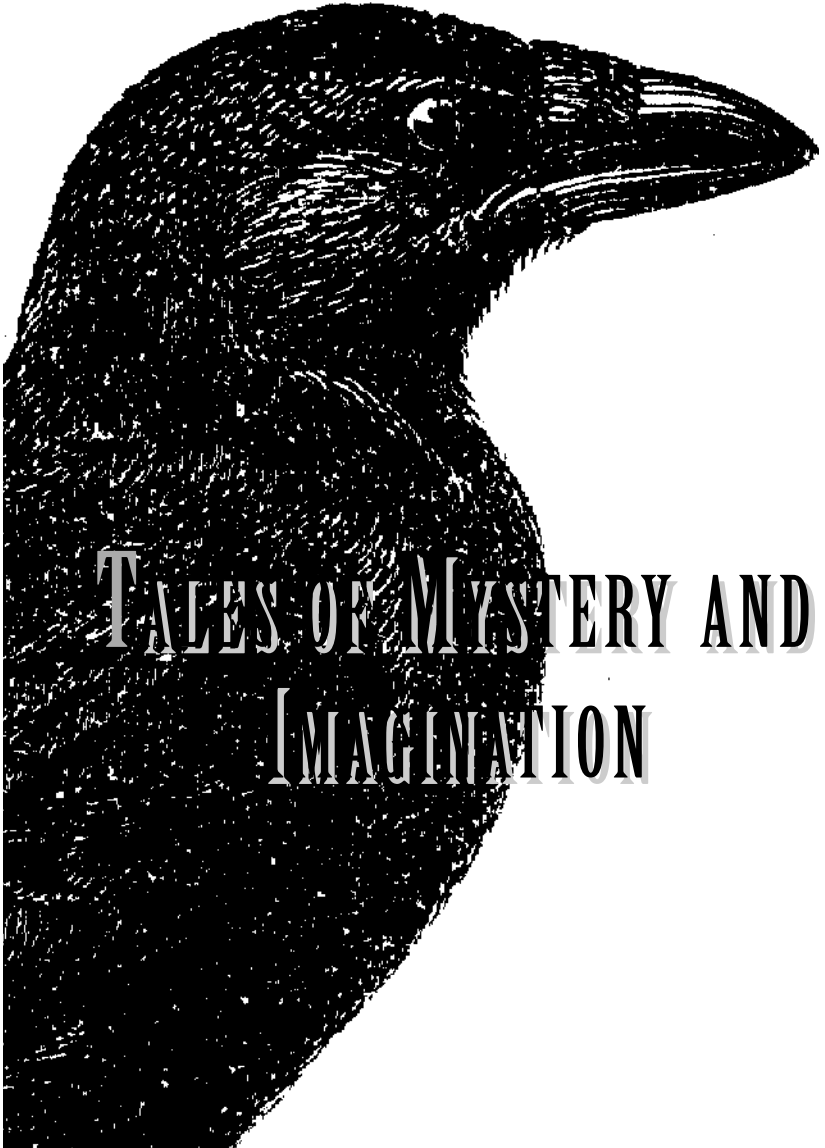
- Chapter 1** 'Through the Window' by K. R. G. Browne
- Chapter 2** 'The Lost Sanjak' by Saki (H. H. Munro)
- Chapter 3** 'Citizen Kane,' a movie
- Chapter 4** 'Star Trek: The Next Generation', TV Show
- Chapter 5** *She* by H. Rider Haggard
- Chapter 8** 'The Lady or the Tiger' by Frank R. Stockton
- Chapter 11** 'Blade Runner' (movie based on *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* by Philip K. Dick)
- Chapter 12** *A Christmas Carol* By Charles Dickens
- Chapter 13** 'The Killers' by Ernest Hemingway
- Chapter 14** 'The Devil and Daniel Webster' by Stephen Vincent Benét
- Chapter 15** 'Casablanca', a movie
- Chapter 18** 'A Straggler of 15' by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

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SECTION 1



TALES OF MYSTERY AND IMAGINATION



MURDER AT THE BRIDGE CLUB

Tell me, Professor, have you ever solved a crime?" asked Wright Cardinal. "With your powers of deduction and analysis, I bet that you would make an excellent detective."

"Actually, I once had a taste of crime-solving and I didn't care much for it."

"Tell me about it; was it a serious crime?"

"Quite serious, the most serious crime imaginable," he mused. "It happened so long ago that everyone involved is now dead, so I suppose there's no harm in telling the story; but it's strictly *entre nous*. There is no statute of limitations on murder and I could be considered an accessory after the fact."

"Murder!"

"The hour, if my Timex was to be believed, was quarter past four on a bright, June morning and I was homeward bound from an evening that had begun well with a sumptuous dinner and had ended profitably with a high stakes rubber bridge game. Both I and the world were young and although I was not without my troubles, at that moment, they weighed nothing for I was in that mellow frame of mind which comes from an admirable meal, the company of friends and a measure of luck with the cards. And so it was in this ebullient state that I stopped for a cup of coffee and a cigarette at the donut shop near the bridge club and then retraced my steps on my way home. As I drew near the club's entrance I met a policeman.

“He was a tall, broad, and efficient-looking policeman and he stood on the sidewalk blocking my passage. A policeman walking his beat was not an unusual sight fifty years ago, Cardinal, and I murmured greetings as I attempted to pass by. He, however, barred my way and surveyed me in the way a naturalist might survey a beetle of whose exact species he was a little doubtful. He was a comparatively young policeman, being of my own age or thereabouts.

“Now, you must understand, Cardinal, it had never been my habit to engage policemen in conversation. On that morning, as it happened, I was feeling conversationally inclined and this policeman was obviously bored and melancholy. I felt that it was my duty as a tax-paying citizen to cheer him with a kindly word.

“‘Good morning, officer,’ I said, having read somewhere that it gratifies a policeman to be so addressed.

“‘Good morning,’ answered the policeman; and if he was gratified, he did not show it.

“‘I’ve been playing bridge all night,’ I said — not meaning to boast, but feeling an urgent need to explain my presence in Forest Hill so early in the morning.

“‘Oh,’ said he. ‘That’s a game I used to play, a long time ago now. Did you encounter any interesting hands?’

“‘Oh yes!’ I replied, surprised and delighted at this unexpected turn to the conversation. I held:

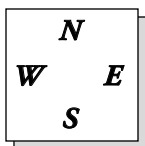
♠ — ♥ QJ5 ♦ AKQ9872 ♣ QJ4

“And this was the auction:

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	PARTNER		YOUNG SILVER
	1♣	pass	2♦
dbl	redbl	2♠	3♠
pass	3NT	pass	4♦
pass	5♣	pass	5♦
pass	6♦	all pass	

“The ace of hearts was led, the dummy put down, and I contemplated my strategy.

NORTH
 ♠ K 6 5 2
 ♥ K 9 3
 ♦ 5
 ♣ A K 9 6 3



YOUNG SILVER
 ♠ —
 ♥ Q J 5
 ♦ A K Q 9 8 7 2
 ♣ Q J 4

“I won the heart continuation in my hand and played the ♦A to which West followed with the ten. On the diamond king, West showed out throwing a spade.’

“‘Bad luck,’ said the policeman. ‘But do you have the dummy entries to execute a trump coup? Let’s see, king of hearts and two clubs leaves you one entry short. Oh I see, you lead the club four out of your hand and finesse the nine, that gives you three club entries to ruff spades, you have to play East to hold three clubs.’

“‘Intelligent move, officer, but you don’t know your opponents; they are tough professionals. That wouldn’t work, West would simply play a blocking ten on my four of clubs which would sink me.’

“‘So how did you make the slam?’

“‘By playing for the only combination of cards that would let me make it, a doubleton ten of clubs with West. Lend me your notepad and I’ll write the hand down.’

NORTH			
	♠	K 6 5 2	
	♥	K 9 3	
	♦	5	
	♣	A K 9 6 3	
WEST	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block; text-align: center;"> <i>N</i> <i>W</i> <i>E</i> <i>S</i> </div>	EAST	
♠	A Q 9 7 4	♠	J 10 8 3
♥	A 10 7 6 4	♥	8 2
♦	10	♦	J 6 4 3
♣	10 2	♣	8 7 5
YOUNG SILVER			
	♠	—	
	♥	Q J 5	
	♦	A K Q 9 8 7 2	
	♣	Q J 4	

“I played my ♣Q and overtook it, ruffed a spade, and led my ♣J, West playing the ten. I overtook, winning in dummy, and ruffed another spade. Now a club to the nine and the club six was played. East threw his heart and I discarded the heart queen. On the next trick he was forced to ruff and I overruffed with the nine and dropped his jack under my queen — making six diamonds.’

“‘Nicely played sir,’ said the policeman. ‘Is that the bridge club across the street?’

“‘Yes,’ I answered.

“‘I’ve been wondering why that window’s open. When I passed this way twenty minutes ago the window was shut and the lights were off. Now the lights are on, and the window, a ground floor window, is wide open.’ With that he strode off across the street.

“I was not far behind him, Cardinal, for if the open window looked a bit odd to the policeman, it looked no less odd to me. I was overwhelmed with curiosity and quickly crawled through the window

were in six hearts, down one after the lead of the ♦K. Obviously most were amateurs who went down when the finesse for the queen of clubs failed, Mr. Steele included.”

“‘But do you have to take the finesse?’ he asked. ‘I think it can be made on a dummy reversal. Let’s see, you ruff the second diamond with the heart king and play the ♥7 to the ♥10, ruff a diamond with ♥Q, play ♥2 to the ♥9 and ruff the last diamond with the ♥J. Now all you have to do is cross to dummy’s king of clubs and play the ace, drawing the last outstanding trump while discarding your losing club. Now play off your three top spades and ruff your last spade with dummy’s ♥3. Yes, that’ll work.’

“‘Indeed it will. Perhaps you might consider giving up law enforcement for a career in bridge?’ I asked, but he just shook his head and smiled.”

“So tell me about this Mr. Steele.” said Wright Cardinal.

“He was a thoroughly evil man,” Silver replied. “Extortion and blackmail were his most respectable vocations, and of course, he cheated at bridge too. I’d say there were at least fifty people who would have loved to break his neck and take the consequences. Even I was a suspect because of a public altercation we’d had the evening before. *The Toronto Telegram* cited me as ‘helping the police with their investigations’; but the testimony of the coffee shop proprietor disqualified me as a suspect. In the fullness of time an inquest was held, and at this inquest many unsavory facts concerning Mr. Steele were dragged into the light of day. Not one single voice was heard to regret his passing. Indeed, a dead Mr. Steele was so preferable to a live one that the absence of any clues whatsoever to the identity of his executioner was generally held to be a cause for satisfaction. The coroner’s jury concluded only that Mr. Steele had met his death at the hands of some person or persons unknown. Indeed, the foreman’s manner of announcing this decision implied that, in the jury’s opinion, the matter might very well be left at that. Which, as far as the police were concerned, it was.”

“But who did it?” asked Wright Cardinal.

“Why the policeman, of course,” said Professor Silver sardonically.

“The policeman?” exclaimed Wright Cardinal in amazement.

“Of course! I knew it the instant I saw the open window. Steele always kept the windows locked and would have heard the commotion from a forced entry and raised the alarm. Nor would a man with his enemies open the door for a stranger, but he would if a policeman in uniform knocked. The policeman had been observing the nocturnal habits of the bridge players for some time, so he knew that I would go to the coffee shop and then return. He gained entry to the club, throttled Steele, then calmly stood on the sidewalk and waited for me to reappear. He had no difficulty in striking up a conversation with me — what bridge player would walk away from a chance to boast of his triumphs? After a while, he drew my attention to the window he had opened and together we discovered the body.”

“Clever,” said Wright Cardinal approvingly. “So you provided him with an airtight alibi. Did you ever speak to him again?”

“Only once,” said Professor Silver. “Educated and intelligent man that he was, he rose to the highest ranks of the constabulary. There was an occasion when he was able to do me a trifling favor in the matter of a friend of mine who had run afoul of some asinine customs regulations.”

“But surely murder is a serious crime no matter how deserving the victim. Why didn’t you ever say anything, Professor?” asked Wright Cardinal.

“Well, the Nationals were on and I would have had to spend many dreary days in court. Besides, I had done some investigating myself and discovered the policeman’s motive. As a university student he had played a lot of bridge at the club; his younger sister occasionally met him there and, without his knowledge, had fallen under Steele’s influence. Eventually, Steele corrupted her and introduced her to a life of sin, degradation and vice. He turned her into a ...”

“Prostitute? Junkie?” asked Wright Cardinal.

“Worse,” said Professor Silver sternly. “He turned her into a professional bridge player. Her brother vowed revenge, dropped out of university and joined the police force. Later, he volunteered for the night shift and somehow acquired the Forest Hill beat. Of course, he had to give up playing bridge himself, which I would consider punishment enough for far more heinous crimes than the one he committed. Don’t you agree?”

“Oh indeed,” agreed Wright Cardinal, with fervor.