

BOOK STUFF

#35

'You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was books that taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, who had ever been alive.' James Baldwin

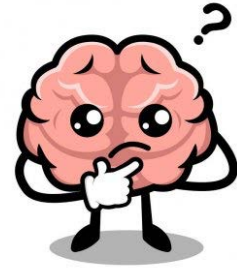
A New Year's brain teaser

The case involves the trial of three men, A, B, C, for participation in a robbery. The following two facts were established:

- i) If A is innocent or B is guilty, then C is guilty.
- ii) If A is innocent, then C is innocent.

Can the guilt of any particular one of the three be established?

From Raymond Smullyan, *What Is The Name Of This Book?*



Promise by Jackie Kay

Remember, the time of year
when the future appears
like a blank sheet of paper
a clean calendar, a new chance.

On thick white snow
You vow fresh footprints
then watch them go
with the wind's hearty gust.

Fill your glass. Here's to us. Promises
made to be broken, made to last.

A bookish quiz to start the year

1. What type of stories did the Grimm brothers write?
2. What is the subject of Desmond Morris's *The Naked Ape*?
3. Which detective first appeared in 'A Study in Scarlet' in 1887?
4. Who wrote *Das Kapital*?
5. What was Bram Stoker's most famous monstrous creation?
6. For which Salman Rushdie novel did the Iranian Ayatollah issue a *fatwa* that called for his death?
7. In which building does the murder take place at the start of *The Da Vinci Code*?
8. Abdulrazak Gurnah won the 2021 Nobel Prize for literature. Gurnah comes from Zanzibar, an island off the east coast of Africa. To which country does Zanzibar belong?
9. *The Day of the Jackal* is about an assassination plot. Who is the target and who wrote the novel?
10. Who wrote *The Talented Mr Ripley* and what pets did she famously carry around with her, often in her pocket?



A new beginning?

Brilliant Silence

Two Alaskan Kodiak bears joined a small circus where the pair appeared in a nightly parade pulling a covered wagon. The two were taught to somersault, to spin, to stand on their heads, and to dance on their hind legs, paw in paw, stepping in unison. Under a spotlight the dancing bears, a male and a female, soon became favourites of the crowd. The circus went south on a west coast tour through Canada to California and on down into Mexico, through Panama into South America, down the Andes the length of Chile to those southernmost isles of Tierra del Fuego.

There a jaguar jumped the juggler, and afterwards mortally mauled the animal trainer; and the shocked showpeople disbanded in dismay and horror. In the confusion the bears went their own way. Without a master they wandered off by themselves into the wilderness on those densely wooded, wildly windy, subantarctic islands. Utterly away from people, on an out-of-the-way uninhabited island, and in a climate they found ideal, the bears mated, thrived, multiplied, and after a number of generations populated the entire island. Indeed, after some years descendants of the two moved out onto half a dozen adjacent islands, and seventy years later when scientists found and studied the bears, it was discovered that all of them, to a bear, were performing splendid circus tricks.

On nights when the sky is bright and the moon is full, they gather to dance. They gather the cubs and the juveniles in a circle around them. They gather together out of the wind at the centre of a sparkling, circular crater left by a meteorite that had fallen in a bed of chalk. Its glassy walls are chalk white, its flat floor is covered with white gravel, and it is well-drained and dry. No vegetation grows within. When the moon rises above it, the light reflecting off the walls fills the crater with a pool of moonlight, so that it is twice as bright on the crater floor as anywhere else in that vicinity. Scientists speculate that originally the full moon had reminded the two bears of the circus spotlight, and for that reason they danced. Yet, it might be asked, what music do the descendants dance to?

Paw in paw, stepping in unison... what music can they possibly hear inside their heads as they dance under the full moon and the Aurora Australis, as they dance in brilliant silence?

Spencer Holst



Answers

1. fairy tales
2. human beings
3. Sherlock Holmes
4. Karl Marx
5. Dracula
6. *The Satanic Verses* (pub. 1988)
7. The Louvre
8. Tanzania
9. target: Charles de Gaulle, President of France; author: Frederick Forsyth
10. Patricia Highsmith; pet snails

Brain teaser: By (i) we know that if A is innocent, then C is guilty; by (ii) we know that if A is innocent then C is innocent. Therefore if A is innocent then C is both innocent and guilty, which is impossible. Therefore A must be guilty.

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