

## The Misplaced Manuscript of Alfred Hitchcock

A small box lies in a corner. It was one of the last items off-loaded from the last delivery truck for the day that needed to be gone through. A staff member picked up the box and moved it to a waist-high work table.

Throughout the day, the table of polished steel and its cold, hard surface had processed uncounted unwanted items. Serviceable or salable items were tossed into a series of blue plastic containers on the other side of the table. Delicate items were carried to shelves lined along the walls, later to be taken out to the sales floor. The balance of materials was destined for the trash compactor.

The box, sealed with a single strip of cellophane packing tape, contained the word *books* marked on top. It was heavy, but not too heavy considering its content.

The operator easily peeled the tape from the cardboard and opened the flaps confirming the books inside. Two stacks of books, arranged by size, with the largest on the bottom filled the space.

Grabbing the first six books, the operator fanned them noting they all were titles of children's books. They were in fair condition, so she threw them into one of the blue containers on the other side of the table.

On her next grab, the book sizes were larger, thicker. She only picked up three. Nestled between the books *Oliver Twist* and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, a one-inch binder slipped from between and fell onto the table. The attendant added the books to the growing pile in the tub, then picked up the binder.

The cover was made of a black leather-looking material. Two oversized brass binder post and screws secured the papers inside. Not sure what to do with the binder, she opened the cover. Approximately ninety yellowed pieces of paper held typed pages. The first page only contained a title: *Criminal Mind*.

"Sara, I found this," she said, holding up the binder to a co-worker, "in this box of books. I don't know what to do with it."

The girl approached and took it from her. Flipping through the pages, turning it over, and then handing it back, she said. "I'd toss it in the trash."

"But it looks to be a story someone wrote. The cover is in good shape. Surely, someone will pay a few bucks for it."

"I'd still throw it away. The title is creepy, and it doesn't even have the author's name on it. But you decide." She returned to her own pile of material.

The attendant shrugged and pitched it into the blue bin. All the other books in the box followed, filling the container.

"Is this ready to go out onto the floor?" a young man asked, placing his hands on the edges of the container.

"Yes," she replied.

He slid the bin onto a wheeled cart and pushed it through the swinging doors out to the sales floor.

Two weeks later, a middle-aged man walked through the doors of the Salvation Army store. He wandered his way along the knickknack and glass aisles where he picked up a few pieces and studied them.

Then, he moved to the display of books, posters, and pictures. He examined an eight by ten-inch framed picture before moving over to the book shelf. He ran his hand along the top row of published material. It consisted mostly of paperback books. The second row contained larger, hard-backed books. One caught his eye.

He twisted his head to read the spine: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Lewis Carroll.

Sliding the book out, he opened it to the copyright page. He noted it was illustrated by Charles Robinson, and printed in the year 1907 by Cassell & Company, London. He tucked it under his arm, then bent over to view the contents of a lower shelf.

In the corner, a leather-looking binder was jammed against the side of the shelf. The front cover and a few pages of yellowed paper were folded back by a thick book pushed up against it. He reached in and tugged on the exposed edge and managed to wedge it out.

While straightening the folds on the first part of the binder, a young woman pushing a wheeled cart stacked with books moved next to him. Glancing at the folder in his hand, she said, "I was hoping someone would be interested in that."

Not sure what she referred to and holding out the binder, he asked, "You mean this?"

"Yes. It came into the facility along with that book under your arm," she said, pointing. "I almost threw it in the trash, but I had a feeling someone might find it useful."

He flipped to the first page. "*Criminal Mind*," he read aloud. Then, turning the next few pages as well, said, "This looks to be a manuscript."

"That's what I thought," she replied. "No reference to whom the author is though, or when it was written."

He grabbed the children's book from under his arm and put the two together. "You said these came in together. Do you know from where?"

She began to place the books from her cart onto the shelves. "Collected from somewhere in West Hollywood. I know the driver who makes the pickups in that location. They were in a box that was one of the first items taken off his truck. I didn't see it again until I processed the contents later that day. The box contained all books, mostly children's books. And in good condition, too. That binder was the only odd piece, but like I said, I thought someone would find it useful."

She scanned the shelves. "Looks like all the other books have found homes."

He took note of the price stickers. Orange round stickers displayed six, ninety-nine on Alice's book and five dollars on the leather folder.

"My daughter will like this one," he said, tapping a finger on the hardcover kid's book. "The other," he shrugged, "well, it has a neat cover. Maybe I can use it for something else."

Emptying her cart, she said, "I'm just glad you're interested. It would be a shame to discard it."

Then, moving in the direction of the sorting room, she said over her shoulder, "Have a nice day."

Upon returning home, the man presented Alice's Adventures in Wonderland to his daughter. Being an avid reader, she was thrilled to receive it and immediately made herself scarce.

The man turned his attention to his own prize and opened the leather file. Thankfully, none of the numbered pages was missing. He turned back to the first page re-reading the title: *Criminal Mind*. Then, he read the next two pages:

*It was not an accident I found myself sitting in this room. Yet, I found it surreal I was here at all ... waiting. When I think about the circumstances that brought me here, I am both amazed and shocked. Me, of all people, sitting here ... waiting – waiting to go through the inevitable process that always follows these events. Events that were in my control to prevent, but I had not wanted to prevent them. Now, I question my frame of mind at the time of the first incident. What could I have done differently? I can't think of anything to do now. If I close my eyes, I can see it all again.*

*... her eyes darted about, taking in the positions of everyone around her and what they were doing.*

*I was sitting in my easy-chair, idly turning the pages of a magazine, when I began to see what she saw. For a moment I didn't respond, I simply let the image play before me. It took some time for the full significance to sink in. After I'd comprehended, it seemed odd I hadn't noticed it right away.*

*The reference was clearly to a criminal act. Vague chills assailed me. I tried to picture the eyes. Did they dart to consider the consequence? The result indicated not. Instead, they seemed to challenge anyone to stop her. The rest was quick, easy, almost without remorse. Rather rapidly, it all occurred. Then, I saw his body lying there, writhing. Moments later, the significance through her eyes amplified.*

*... her eyes moved from person to person standing nearby. Stunned looks on their faces.*

*There it was in a nutshell. The eyes had clearly detailed the entire incident. My heart pounded and my breath choked in my windpipe. I had experienced something that was unbelievable, something remarkable. Yet, to anyone else without my background, would have found it impossible to comprehend, sickening. For me, it was perfectly natural – which suggested I should be held accountable as well. The images continued:*

*... slowly, calmly her eyes fell on her next victim. The knife-edge was a blur before it found its mark.*

*I suddenly became part of the scene, cheering her on. Do it! I silently commanded. Do it! Being a criminologist, I should have at least felt indignant at my own words. I lay back in my chair watching the new horror unfold before me, gratified that I could participate.*

*The next incident followed a few days later. I was in the garage, hammering the last board to a dog house I made. I drove in the last nail when it happened. Initially, I trembled, then my hand tightened around the handle.*

*... he put his arm around his friend. The friend forcefully removed his arm and stepped away. Noticeably upset he yelled – his face contorted with contempt.*

*“Do it!” I said under my breath. “Take the bat and bash his head in.” He immediately did so, with a smile. I did not see what he did with the body. I didn’t care. The full meaning was there, staring me right in the face. I had the ability to control other people’s minds. To make them do criminal things without any after-effect to myself. My suspicion was later confirmed after reading about the two separate incidences in the newspaper. I had really stumbled onto something here. My mind reeled as I imagined what my colleagues would say.*

*... I’m afraid there’s no doubt about it. Poor Bill has lost his mind.*

*Which would be followed by:*

*... Bill just couldn’t take the stresses of his job.*

*It was I who would have the last laugh.*

The man thumbed through the other ninety or so pages. They looked to have been typed on a manual typewriter. The alignment of the c’s and t’s were printed slightly

below the type line. The yellowed paper indicated an age which could not be determined, but the man had seen enough old books and such to know the pages were old. Nothing else about the binder and its content gave any indication of its history. It was just another story someone wrote. From what the man read, it wasn't even an interesting story.

The man's daughter interrupted his study of the binder.

"Dad, who is Pat?"

"I don't know, sweetie. Where did you hear the name?"

She pointed to the last page in Alice's book. There, a passage was written that read: *To my daughter, Patricia, on her tenth birthday. May every day find you in wonderland. Daddy*

It's a used book, honey. I guess the first owner was named Patricia.

Satisfied with his answer, she wandered away.

But, the man himself was not satisfied. The girl at the Salvation Army store had told him both books came from the same box. And, the box came from the West Hollywood area. He began to think that perhaps the book had belonged to someone important, someone of prominence.

The next day, he returned to the store seeking out the girl who engaged him by the book area. He found her placing items on the knickknack shelves.

"Remember me?" he asked.

"You're the guy who bought the leather folder," she said. "How did your daughter like Alice's book?"

"Loved it! She called my attention to a notation in the back of the book written to a 10-year-old girl named Patricia. You indicated the book may have come from West Hollywood on one of your delivery trucks. I wondered if this Patricia was someone who could be, uh, from a prominent family. I was hoping you might be able to help me pin down a specific area in West Hollywood where it was picked up. You said the box was one of the first off the truck."

"That's right, I remember the driver passing it down to me. I read the word *books* on the top of it. I placed it on a cart, and another employee pushed it into the store."

"Well, if it was the first off the truck, it had to have been picked up at one of the driver's last stops. Do you think you could ask him where his last few pickups occurred?"

"You must have been born lucky, because they're unloading his truck now. I can't let you go through the sorting room, but if you go around back, I'll meet you there and introduce you."

I wasted no time in driving to the rear drop-off area where she met me, along with a bearded young man.

"This is Ned. He usually drives the West Hollywood route. I briefed him on what information you're looking for."

We shook hands. He offered his comments before I asked.

“I usually pick up in that area once a week,” he said. “I was sick last week, so you’re probably talking about two weeks ago?”

“Yes,” agreed the girl. “That’s when you brought the box to us.”

“I make three stops over that way. Two are in Santa Monica off I-10. The other is off I-405 near a VA hospital located on Wilshire Boulevard. I don’t remember in what order I picked up from those locations that day. Sometimes, I vary my route depending on traffic. Sorry I can’t be of more help to you. We pick up a lot of discarded items. One box or bag looks like another to me.”

“Appreciate the information. If I learn anymore, I’ll get back to you,” he said to the girl.

Back at home, he thought about the reasons people get rid of things and how they dispose of them. The box wasn’t thrown in the trash, so, whoever dropped it off thought the contents still could serve a purpose. The container held mostly children’s books which could have been given to friends, but instead were donated. And while there could be value in some of the books, they weren’t sold on eBay suggesting whoever dumped them didn’t need the money. Then, there is the personal note in the back of Alice’s book. That, suggests the books may have been treasured property at one time. The remaining question being, why get rid of them? Perhaps the owner died, or simply outgrew them and wanted to give them a good home. Was this the result of a general housecleaning, or ... A thought hit him.

He went to his computer and began a search of recent celebrity home sales in the Santa Monica and West Hollywood areas. Three possibilities appeared on his screen. One came up in Santa Monica. Jennifer Lawrence sold her property there, but that was a year ago. Two came up in Bel Air. One was once owned by the famous film director and producer Alfred Hitchcock. The other was a property owned by Jackie Collins.

*Books, he thought. She was an author of books.*

He quickly performed a search on her biography looking for clues to family members. No one named Patricia was found.

He picked up the manuscript from the store and thumbed through it. Jackie was a romance novelist. This is more suspenseful, almost macabre. A light went on.

Searching the biography of Sir Alfred Hitchcock, he discovered that his only child is named Patricia.

*Could it be?* he wondered, poking the keys. *How do I get in touch with her? It’s not easy to contact celebrities.*

Further research yielded information on Patricia’s children. She had three daughters, two of which have recently been active in the film industry. The second eldest daughter appears to be involved with project 78/52, an upcoming documentary about the iconic shower scene in the 1960 movie, *Psycho*.

“H-m-m-m,” he sounded, jabbing at the keypad.

Weeks later, his cell phone rang. “Mr. Stinson?”

“Yes, this is Mr. Stinson.”

“I am responding to the ad you took out in the Los Angeles Times referencing a manuscript entitled *Criminal Mind*,” a woman’s voice said.

His heart began to beat faster. “Yes?”

“Are you free to meet with me this afternoon? I prefer a neutral location. I can meet you at the central public library on west 5th Street about two o’clock if you agree.”

His mind raced summoning all sorts of possibilities. He swallowed hard and attempted to regain his composure before replying. “Yes, that would be fine.” Then, as an afterthought, “How will I know you?”

“I won’t be far from the entrance. Lavender scarf. And bring your manuscript,” she added, before disconnecting the call.

Mildly shocked, he returned the phone to the inner pocket of his sports coat.

The man arrived at the library fifteen minutes early, hoping to be there before the mysterious woman entered the building. He was too late. Off in a nearby corner, he spotted a middle-aged woman sitting at a desk and wearing a lavender scarf.

Approaching, he nervously announced himself. “I’m Mr. Stinson.”

She looked up as if startled by him, then smiled. “Have a seat Mr. Stinson.”

He sat across from the woman. She was attractive, but beginning to show her age. He tried to remember as many of the internet’s images of the Hitchcock girls as he could. None seemed to fit the face of the woman sitting across from him.

She returned his gaze, letting him fully examine her. “I’m not any of them,” she finally said.

Gathering his composure. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to stare.” Then added, “One of whom?”

She replied, “Anyone connected to your manuscript. May I see it?”

He reached into a shoulder-bag he had placed on the floor when he sat, extracted his leather-looking binder, and handed it to her. It was then he noticed a replica of his folder sitting on the table in front her.

She thumbed through his document, nodding her head as she turned the pages.

Holding his binder, she slid the folder in front of her toward him.

He looked down.

“Open it,” she invited.

He tentatively opened the cover. The first page read: *Criminal Mind*.

He turned to the next page and read the first few sentences:

*It was not an accident I found myself sitting in this room. Yet, I found it surreal I was here at all ... waiting. When I think about the circumstances that brought me here, I am both amazed and shocked. Me, of all people, sitting here ... waiting – waiting to go through the inevitable process that always follows these events.*

She noticed his eyebrows raise with the widening of his eyes.

“It’s a carbon copy of your manuscript, Mr. Stinson. Literally, a carbon copy. Made on the same typewriter using a piece of carbon paper between sheets of paper. Notice the alignment of the c’s and t’s match the ones on yours. Also, the e’s and s’s aren’t as clear as they could be because of ink buildup in those types.”

“I never noticed that,” he said.

Looking up from the pages, he asked, “Are you the author?”

“Heavens no,” she exclaimed with a soft giggle. “Those pages were typed in the 1940s. I hope I don’t look *that* old, Mr. Stinson.”

He flushed red.

“My name is Alma. I am the personal secretary to Mary Stone. You know who she is, don’t you?”

He nodded.

“She saw your ad in the newspaper. It clearly intrigued her. She wondered if your *Criminal Mind* was the same as her copy. So, she sent me to check it out. As you can tell, they’re identical, except yours is the original. She has many of her grandfather’s original scripts, but not this one.”

“But, how...”

“But how can this be?” she finished for him.

He nodded again.

“The manuscript was presented to her grandfather by an author who wrote several of his movie scripts. Mr. Hitchcock considered making it into a film, but decided against it. Not wanting the story to get into other hands, he bought the original and the copy. Somewhere along the way the two documents became separated. Miss Stone would like to know what amount you would consider to sell it to her.”

A dazed look manifested on his face. His hands signaled what his mouth couldn’t say as they fluttered in the air.

“I know this is a lot to accept, Mr. Stinson, but you have a piece of history. History at least to the Hitchcock family. What do you say?”

“I-I don’t know what to say,” he replied, considering his options.

She sat quietly waiting for him to regain his control.

He slid her manuscript across the table. “Please tell Miss Stone I am happy to return her property. My daughter loves to read, but is challenged by dyslexia. If Miss Stone would consider a donation to the Dyslexia Foundation, I would be very appreciative.”

The woman smiled. "Miss Stone would be more than happy to contribute to your cause, Mr. Stinson.

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