

## Mr. Henderson's Chests

By Connor Wilson

The aura that surrounded the box that was placed on Mr. Henderson's doorstep was a strange one. The parcel featured no address. The abrupt plainness and suddenness of this package took Mr. Henderson by surprise, but he assumed he might have just been overthinking. He took it inside his home and grabbed his opener.

A hesitant slice of the twine, and he paused. *Dare I open this?* he wondered. He ruffled his moustache and got to opening the top. Mr. Henderson peered inside and found a small, green chest, big enough to hold a grapefruit. Reluctantly, Mr. Henderson removed the chest and took a peek. Inside was a key and a photograph of a bridge.

Mr. Henderson knew this bridge. It was a small cobblestone bridge that he had to cross over on the way to the bank, where he worked. *I wonder what this key opens, and why there? Why the bridge?* His mind pondered possible outcomes but none made any sense. Perhaps it was a co-worker pulling a strange prank? Perhaps someone was trying to kill him? The area of the bridge was rather quiet. It could be done.

He turned the photograph around. Harshly scribbled on the back, the note read, "Come find me."

Mr. Henderson took a gulp. He was both frightened and excited about the adventure before him. He could stay home and continue his life, but he would have to cross the bridge to get to work. And speaking of work, it was quarter to nine and he had to leave. With another ruffle of the mustache, he tucked the photo and the key into his suit coat pocket, along with his pistol, grabbed his cane, and fled his flat.

Walking amongst the people of the streets, Mr. Henderson found himself more focused than usual. He was carefully examining the eyes on him, the way people walked, those who weren't walking. Suspicious faces passed him left and right. *Relax. You're overthinking.* He took his turn to head towards the bridge and as always, it was quiet. The alleyways were darker than usual. He couldn't find any faces hiding in the shadows, but he did not want to try to investigate. He reached into his pocket and gripped his gun. His steps towards the bridge became increasingly careful.

With a loud crash, Mr. Henderson gave a small yip of terror and pointed his gun at a flock of pigeons fluttering from an alleyway.

"Show yourself," he called, his voice cracking. He waited for a moment for something, but nothing happened. Gun shaking, he crept to the alleyway corner. He took a deep breath and threw himself into the entrance way. His eyes, frantically darting, finally landed on a large piece of sheet metal that had been blown and landed against the opposite wall.

Mr. Henderson wiped his hand on his face with a deep sigh. After his moment of relief, he readied his pistol once more, and shuffled to the bridge. He scanned the bridge, and its surroundings up and down from its edge and concluded it was safe to continue. He placed his cane on the ground, pulled out the key, and step by step, examined the bridge. *No keyhole here. Where does this go? Perhaps, under?*

Walking down the moist dirt, he peered around the corner. At first, he saw nothing other than the water, the dirt, and the other opening. But, something caught his eye. A small object, glistening on the opposite side of his. *Another chest! How intriguing.*

In his excitement, he rushed to the chest, turned the key, yet carefully lifted the lid. He braced himself, but discovered a small note was inside. He unfolded the paper which read, “You’re late.”

Suddenly, a flash. Several hearty laughs blurted out. Mr. Henderson turned to see his fellow workers from the bank. He stood up under the bridge, and hit his head.

“We certainly got you!” one of them wheezed through his boisterous laughter.

“Yeah! You should see your face!” another said.

Mr. Henderson’s face went deep red as he shuffled from under the bridge. When he came out, his redness turned from embarrassment to anger.

“Well, if I’m late, then so are you, you ninnies!” he yelled, waving his finger.

The men’s faces and laughter went totally flat as they realized their fluke.

“Now, you destroy that photo and let’s get a move on. Mr. Jefferson will not be happy that the whole of his staff is missing.” Mr. Henderson said with a scoff.

The men mumbled in agreement and shuffled back to the office, leaving Mr. Henderson. He returned to his cane, picked it up, and strutted behind them, a smile hidden under his moustache.