

Terrance Dicks is not only the man who masterminded Doctor Who for years, but he is also a huge fan of detective fiction, a genre which he has ably essayed with his own young adult series, The Baker Street Irregulars. In this story, Terrance has brought together two of his idols, Maigret, a character whom, at one time, he tried to produce for the BBC, and G-man Lemmy Caution, who seems forever incarnated by expatriate American actor Eddie Constantine, and asked himself what happened...

Terrance Dicks: When Lemmy Met Jules

Paris, 1951

So I am kickin' my heels on temporary assignment in Tulsa, Oklahoma, chasing some guys who been selling oil-wells with no oil in 'em to some mugs in New York with more dollars than brains when the Agent-in-Charge sends for me.

"Lemmy, you're off the hook. We gotta tip your old friend Willie-the Goof Santana cleared half-a-million on the Zelda Van Huyten kidnap and took off for foreign parts with the loot."

"Did they get the girl back?"

"Yeah. Dead. Willie don't like witnesses."

Just to put you guys are in the picture, this Willie-the Goof is a small-time hood from Chi. His gimmick is he looks and acts like a sap, not to mention he looks like Mickey Mouse's sidekick. He looks like a clown but Willie's mean as they come. He's a quick-draw artist too. Last time we meet he puts a slug in me before I could unsling my rod... Lucky for me, Willie is a vain kinda guy and packs a .22 so as not to spoil the set of his suit. I have time to break his jaw before I keel over.

I say, "Willie's going up in the world. Holding up Mom-and-Pop grocery stores used to be his limit."

The boss shrugged. "So he branched out and got lucky. Anyway, the Director wants you should go and bring him back before he spends all the Van Huyten spondulicks."

"Do we know where he's at?"

"He's gone where all good Americans go when they die—Paris, France! Since you been there before on a couple of jobs, not to mention you and Willie are old buddies, you're a natural for the assignment."

So I shake off the dust of Tulsa—believe me, they got plenty of dust in Tulsa—and head for Gay Paree...

When I arrive, I report to the main cop joint on the Quai des Orfèvres and show my credentials to the Chief. He says in the interest of Anglo-American relations, he'll assign me one of their top guys to help. He goes off for a minute and comes back with this big, sleepy-looking pipe-smoking guy, who looks more like some hick farmer than a cop. To be honest with you mugs, I'm wondering just how much use he's gonna be. He looks half-asleep, dead on his feet.

The pipe-smoking guy tells he is currently tied up having a little chat with some poor mug who took a knife to some dame who gave him the air. This chat has been going on for 18 hours, and he reckons the guy will crack in another three, tops, after which he personally will be going home to catch a few z's. He suggests we meet for a drink later that night.

I say this is fine by me as I am a guy that will take a drink anytime and Willie is the sorta louse who won't show himself in daylight anyway...

*They sat at a corner table in a Montmartre nightclub called Picratt's. Two big men, one considerably older and heavier than the other. There was a bottle of champagne on the table, but it was only for show. The older man sipped a glass of cool white wine from the Loire and placidly smoked a pipe. The younger, a broad-shouldered tough-looking type with a pleasantly ugly face, drank Bourbon and smoked cigarettes from a pack of *Lucky Strikes* on the table before him.*

*The little nightclub was crowded, the air full of the buzz of excited chatter and the drifting fumes of *Gauloise*. On the tiny stage, a plump young girl removed a spangled G-string, the last of her clothes, posed awkwardly for a moment in the spotlight, then disappeared through the door behind her, to a scattering of desultory applause.*

Immediately, another girl took her place.

The younger man gazed at her with approval. "Back home, girls get arrested for an act like that."

His French was fluent and idiomatic, though with a broad American accent.

The other raised his eyebrows. "*C'est vrai?* I understood *le striptease* was originally an American invention."

"Maybe so. With us, there's always more tease than strip! Swell joint this, Jules."

"You asked to see one of our typical Parisian *boites*. A place where American tourists might come."

The other looked around. "Don't see any."

"It's early yet. The boss of this place bribes taxi-drivers and the doormen of other clubs to hand out cards to departing clients... 'Finish the night at *Picratt's*, the hottest spot in Paris.' "

"And is it?"

The French detective shrugged. "The place pretends to be very wicked but it is harmless enough really. That's Fred Alfonsi, the Proprietor." He nodded towards a short, thick-set man in evening dress standing close to the stage. "One of his girls was murdered a while ago. A messy business, one of my young inspectors was in love with her. Fred was a suspect for a while, turned out to be innocent—well, innocent of the murder. He's a rogue, but likeable in his way. Somehow we became almost friends."

The younger man nodded. "I noticed we weren't being hustled any."

In between doing their acts, girls were circulating amongst the tables and booths, blandishing the customers into buying them champagne. Always champagne— if you believed the label. They made no attempt to approach the corner table, though several nodded and smiled at the pipe-smoker and stared appreciatively at his companion.

The older man sighed and puffed smoke from his pipe. "I always seem to get on better with villains than with respectable people—like magistrates! And speaking of villains... How do you propose to set about finding this Willie Santana?"

"I already started. Apart from being a killer, a kidnapper, a robber and a hood, Willie's just your average American tourist. He's on the loose in Gay Paree with his pockets full of dollars and he ain't gonna be hitting the monuments and museums. He'll turn up somewhere where there's drinks and dames—somewhere just like this."

"Do you realize how many places just like this there are in Montmartre alone?"

"So I see a lotta strip shows and drink a lotta Bourbon—a tough job but someone's gotta do it. Unless I get lucky..." He tensed. "Jules, I think I just got lucky."

A tall man in evening dress had just lurched into the club, a bedraggled girl on each arm. He was loose-limbed and gangling with a long, comical face.

The American sprang to his feet and strode across the floor to meet him.

"Willie! Long time no see!"

The tall man flung off the two girls, freeing his arms. "Lemmy! I shoulda smelled the stink of Fed when I came through the door."

"Let's not be unfriendly, Willie. I came all the way to Paris to escort you back to the States. I hope you haven't spent all that ransom money." His hand moved inside his coat as he spoke, but suddenly there was a gun in the gangling man's hand. A big gun.

"I see you changed your tailor, Willie."

"I changed my gun as well. I don't make the same mistake twice. This is a .45, Lemmy. It'll blow you apart. This is it, G-man."

Something spun across the room and struck the tall man on the shoulder. It was a heavy champagne bottle. He staggered a little as he fired and the shot went wide, shattering a wall-mirror. Women screamed. Before Santana could raise the gun, the other sprang forward and struck. There was an audible crack and the gangling man crumpled to the floor.

His attacker looked down at him. "Waddya know, I busted his jaw again!" He looked back at the table. "Thanks, Jules."

"*De rien.*" The pipe-smoker snapped his fingers and two men in raincoats came through the door. "Lucas, Torrence, escort Monsieur Santana to Headquarters, by way of the Infirmary. Take his gun with you. Oh, and find out where he was staying and get a warrant to search the premises." He turned to the thick-set man. "Sorry about all this, Fred, it's all over." He turned to the younger man who was rubbing his knuckles. "I am sorry to cut short your stay in Paris, Lemmy, but we don't tolerate people like that here. Let's celebrate your success. Fred, some champagne. Real champagne, mind..."

We found the loot in the mattress at Willie's hotel and he's currently residing in the Tombs, waiting for a trip to the hot seat. So that was my trip to Gay Paree, short and sweet. And I'm telling you mugs, I learned one thing. That big French cop just ain't nearly as sleepy as he looks...