

THE door swung open at the gambling house. Light burst in. Josiah Topp looked up from his cards, squinting in frustration. Who were these intruders? And why were they about to interrupt his big win, right on the eve of (checks notes) Nelson's victory against the French?

"Open up, it's the police."

"The door's already open, punks," said Josiah. "What seems to be the problem, officer?"

"I'm not an officer," said the recently hired constable. "Mr Topp?"

"That's me, Mr Not An Officer," said Josiah. He rose from his seat, pushing the chair to the table with a squeaky scrape, and moved close to the policeman, looking up into his face. "What do you want?"

"We have some news for you, Mr Topp," said the policeman. "It's your son."

Josiah hesitated for a moment, then drew back, drawing one large hand through his short blond hair. "Damn," he muttered. "Damn it. My son. Damn."

"I'm afraid so."

"I –" Josiah took a deep breath and then muttered, "I ... didn't know I had a son."

"Oh." The policeman frowned. "But ... that big tall gentleman who always spends time with you? The one who's always crying and wailing all the time? Isn't he your son?"

“West?” said Josiah, momentarily taken aback. “No, he’s ... he’s not my son. He’s my ... he’s ... West.”

“Right,” said the policeman. “Well – he’s been kidnapped.”

“Kidnapped!” Josiah exclaimed. “Why? By whom?”

The policeman shook his head solemnly. “We have reason to believe it was ... random.”

“Oh,” said Josiah. “Oh ... God.”

“You see the gravity of this situation,” said the policeman.

“I do,” said Josiah. “What are we waiting for? We must find him at once.”

They hurried into the policeman’s vehicle waiting outside: a magnificent horse and trap. Josiah had hastily donned his dark glasses for the chase, but he lingered for a moment to admire the horse. It really was a remarkable horse: dark, sleek, long-haired. He stroked the horse’s mane with one huge hand, sighing in delight as he felt its soft hair.

“Um, Mr Topp?” said the policeman.

“Sorry,” said Josiah. He climbed into the carriage beside the policeman, suddenly aware that they were close – so close their knees were touching. He watched as the policeman confidently took the reins and set the horse to trotting with a confident flick. He (unfortunately for the narrator) hadn’t even asked the policeman’s name.

They rode for a long time, in the driving rain, the blazing sun, the resulting thematically appropriate but anachronistic rainbows. After some time, Josiah was starting to feel hungry.

He gripped the policeman's shoulder and whispered into his ear. "I'm hungry. I need food."

"There's no appropriate food around here, Mr Topp," replied the policeman, facing forward with a grimace.

"It's OK," said Josiah. "I'll eat ... anything."

"Anything?" said the policeman.

"Anything."

After a hasty meal of salvaged scraps of iron, they arrived at the place where West was held. He was in a sorry state: crying and wailing. On the other hand, he was always crying and wailing.

"If someone with very small hands could reach through and unlock the door from the inside," said the policeman nonsensically, "that would be enough to free him. But unfortunately, I have completely average-sized hands."

"It's OK," said Josiah, raising his own.

"Mr Topp," said the policeman, "you have enormous hands."

"It's OK," said Josiah again, serenely. "It loops around."

And he unlocked the door, and then his West was in his arms again, crying and wailing in that wonderful way only he could.

"Fill me with your dick right now," West cried and wailed.

"Not now, love," said Josiah. "Not in front of a stranger."

"No, right now," West cried and wailed again.

"Oh," said Josiah, "OK."

And the policeman watched.