

Anyone -who has had dealings with a book club lately will readily 'agree with me that this next story is frighteningly plausible.

COMPUTERS DON'T ARGUE

Gordon R. Dickson

Treasure Book Club
PLEASE DO NOT FOLD, SPINDLE
OR MUTILATE THIS CARD
Mr: Walter A. Child Balance: \$4.98
Dear Customer: Enclosed is your latest book selection.
"Kidnapped," by Robert Louis Stevenson.

437 Woodlawn Drive
Panduk, Michigan
Nov 16. 1965

Treasure Book Club
1823 Mandy Street
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Sirs:
I wrote you recently about the computer punch card you sent, billing me for "Kim," by Rudyard Kipling. I did not open the package containing it until I had already mailed you my check for the amount on the card. On opening the package, I found the book missing half its pages. I sent it back to you, requesting either another copy or my money back. Instead, you have sent me a copy of "Kidnapped," by Robert Louis Stevenson. Will you please straighten this out?
I hereby return the copy of "Kidnapped."
Sincerely yours,
Walter A. Child

Treasure Book Club
SECOND NOTICE
PLEASE DO NOT FOLD, SPINDLE
OR MUTILATE THIS CARD
Mr: Walter A. Child Balance: \$4.98
For "Kidnapped," by Robert Louis Stevenson
(If remittance has been made for the above, please disregard this notice)

Treasure Book Club
1823 Mandy Street
Chicago, Illinois

437 Woodlawn Drive
Panduk, Michigan
Jan. 21. 1966

Dear Sirs:
May I direct your attention to my letter of November 16, 1965? You are still continuing to dun me with computer punch cards for a book I did not order. Whereas, actually, it is your company that owes me money.
Sincerely yours,
Walter A. Child

Mr. Walter A. Child

437 Woodlawn Drive
Panduk, Michigan

Treasure Book Club
1823 Mandy Street
Chicago, Illinois
Feb. 1.1966

Dear Mr. Child:

We have sent you a number of reminders concerning an amount owing to us as a result of book purchases you have made from us. This amount, which is \$4.98, is now long overdue.

This situation is disappointing to us, particularly since there was no hesitation on our part in extending you credit at the time original arrangements for these purchases were made by you. If we do not receive payment in full by return mail, we will be forced to turn the matter over to a collection agency.

Very truly yours,
Samuel P. Grimes
Collection Mgr.

437 Woodlawn Drive
Panduk, Michigan
Feb. 5, 1966

Dear Mr. Grimes:

Will you stop sending me punch cards and form letters and make me some kind of a direct answer from a human being? / don't owe you money. You owe me money. Maybe I should turn your company over to a collection agency.

Walter A. Child

FEDERAL COLLECTION OUTFIT
88 Prince Street
Chicago, Illinois
Feb. 28, 1966

Mr. Walter A. Child

437 Woodlawn Drive
Panduk, Michigan

Dear Mr. Child:

Your account with the Treasure Book Club, of \$4.98 plus interest and charges, has been turned over to our agency for collection. The amount due is now \$6.83. Please send your check for this amount or we shall be forced to take immediate action.

Jacob N. Harshe
Vice President

FEDERAL COLLECTION OUTFIT
88 Pnnce Street
Chicago, Illinois
April 8, 1966

Mr. Walter A. Child

437 Woodlawn Drive
Panduk, Michigan

Dear Mr. Child:

You have seen fit to ignore our courteous requests to settle your long overdue account with Treasure Book Club, which is now, with accumulated interest and charges, in the amount of \$7.51.

If payment in full is not forthcoming by April II, 1966, we will be forced to turn the matter over to our attorneys for

immediate court action.

Ezekiel B. Harshe
President
MALONEY, MAHONEY,
MACNAMARA and PRUITT
Attorneys

89 Prince Street
Chicago, Illinois
April 29, 1966

Mr. Walter A. Child
437 Woodlawn Drive
Panduk, Michigan

Dear Mr. Child:

Your indebtedness to the Treasure Book Club has been referred to us for legal action to collect.

This indebtedness is now in the amount of \$10.01. If you will send us this amount so that we may receive it before May 5, 1966, the matter may be satisfied. However, if we do not receive satisfaction in full by that date, we will take steps to collect through the courts.

I am sure you will see the advantage of avoiding a judgment against you, which as a matter of record would do lasting harm to your credit rating.

Very truly yours,
Hagthorpe M. Pruitt, Jr.

Attorney at Law
437 Woodlawn Drive
Panduk, Michigan

May 4, 1966

Mr. Hagthorpe M. Pruitt, Jr.
Maloney, 'Mahoney, MacNamara and Pruitt
89 Prince Street
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Mr. Pruitt:

You don't know what a pleasure it is to me in this matter to get a letter from a live human being to whom I can explain the situation.

This whole matter is silly. I explained it fully in my letters to the Treasure Book Company. But I might as well have been trying to explain to the computer that puts out their punch cards, for all the good it seemed to do. Briefly, what happened was, I ordered a copy of "Kim," by Rudyard Kipling, for \$4.98. When I opened the package they sent me, I found the book had only half its pages, but I'd previously mailed a check to pay them for the book.

I sent the book back to them, asking either for a whole copy or my money back. Instead, they sent me a copy of "Kidnapped," by Robert Louis Stevenson which I had not ordered; and for which they have been trying to collect from me.

Meanwhile, I am still waiting for the money back that they owe me for the copy of "Kim" that I didn't get. That's the whole story. Maybe you can help me straighten them out.

Relievedly yours,
Walter A. Child

P.S.: I also sent them back their copy of "Kidnapped," as soon as I got it, but it hasn't seemed to help. They have never even acknowledged getting it back.

MALONEY, MAHONEY,
MACNAMARA and PRUITT
Attorneys

89 Prince Street
Chicago, Illinois
May 9, 1966
Mr. Walter A. Child
437 Woodlawn Drive
Panduk, Michigan

Dear Mr. Child:

I am in possession of no information indicating that any item purchased by you from the Treasure Book Club has been returned.

I would hardly think that, if the case had been as you stated, the Treasure Book Club would have retained us to collect the amount owing from you.

If I do not receive your payment in full within three days, by May 12, 1966, we will be forced to take legal action.

Very truly yours,
Hagthorpe M. Pruitt, Jr.

COURT OF MINOR CLAIMS
Chicago, Illinois
Mr. Walter A. Child
437 Woodlawn Drive
Panduk, Michigan

Be informed that a judgment was taken and entered against you in this court this day of May 26, 1966, in the amount of \$15.66 including court costs.

Payment in satisfaction of this judgment may be made to this court or to the adjudged creditor. In the case of payment being made to the creditor, a release should be obtained from the creditor and filed with this court in order to free you of legal obligation in connection with this judgment.

Under the recent Reciprocal Claims Act, if you are a citizen of a different state, a duplicate claim may be automatically entered and judged against you in your own state so that collection may be made there as well as in the State of Illinois.

COURT OF MINOR CLAIMS
Chicago, Illinois
PLEASE DO NOT FOLD, SPINDLE
OR MUTILATE THIS CARD

Judgment was passed this day of May 27, 1966, under Statute \$15.66
Against: Child, Walter A., of 437 Woodlawn Drive, Panduk, Michigan. Pray to enter a duplicate claim for judgment
In: Picayune CourtPanduk, Michigan

For Amount: Statute 941
Samuel P. Grimes
Vice President, Treasure Book Club
1823 Mandy Street
Chicago, Illinois

437 Woodlawn Drive
Panduk, Michigan
May 31, 1966

Grimes:

This business has gone far enough. I've got to come down to Chicago on business of my own tomorrow. I'll see you then and we'll get this straightened out once and for all, about who owes what to whom, and how much!

Yours,
Walter A. Child
From the Desk of the Clerk

Picayune Court

June 1,1966

Harry:

The attached computer card from Chicago's Minor Claims Court against A. Walter has a 1500-series Statute number on it. That puts it over in Criminal with you, rather than Civil, with me. So I herewith submit it for your computer instead of mine. How's business?

Joe

CRIMINAL RECORDS

Panduk, Michigan

PLEASE DO NOT FOLD, SPINDLE

OR MUTILATE THIS CARD

Convicted: (Child) A. Walter

On: May 26, 1966

Address: 437 Woodlawn Drive

Panduk, Mich.

Crim: Statute: 1566 (Corrected) 1567

Crime: Kidnap

Date: Nov. 16, 1965

Notes: At large. To be picked up at once.

POLICE DEPARTMENT, PANDUK, MICHIGAN. TO POLICE DEPARTMENT CHICAGO ILLINOIS. CONVICTED SUBJECT A. (COMPLETE FIRST NAME UNKNOWN) WALTER, SOUGHT HERE IN CONNECTION REP. YOUR NOTIFICATION OP JUDGMENT FOR KIDNAP OF CHILD NAMED ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON, ON NOV. 16, 1965. INFORMATION HERE INDICATES SUBJECT FLED HIS RESIDENCE, AT 437 WOODLAND DRIVE, PANDUK, AND MAY BE AGAIN IN YOUR AREA.

POSSIBLE CONTACT IN YOUR AREA: THE TREASURE BOOK CLUB, 1823 MANDY STREET, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS. SUBJECT NOT KNOWN TO BE DANGEROUS. PICK UP AND HOLD, ADVISING US OF CAPTURE . . .

TO POLICE DEPARTMENT, PANDUK, MICHIGAN. REFERENCE YOUR REQUEST TO PICK UP AND HOLD A. (COMPLETE FIRST NAME UNKNOWN) WALTER, WANTED IN PANDUK ON STATUTE 1567, CRIME OF KIDNAPPING.

SUBJECT ARRESTED AT OFFICES OF TREASURE BOOK CLUB, OPERATING THERE UNDER ALIAS WALTER ANTHONY CHILD AND ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT \$4.98 FROM ONE SAMUEL P. GRIMES, EMPLOYEE OF THAT COMPANY.

DISPOSAL: HOLDING FOR YOUR ADVICE.

POLICE DEPARTMENT PANDUK, MICHIGAN, TO POLICE DEPARTMENT CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

REF: A. WALTER (ALIAS WALTER ANTHONY CHILD) SUBJECT WANTED FOR CRIME OF KIDNAP, YOUR AREA, REF: YOUR COMPUTER PUNCH CARD NOTIFICATION OF JUDGMENT, DATED MAY 27, 1966. COPY OUR CRIMINAL RECORDS PUNCH CARD HEREWITH FORWARDED TO YOUR COMPUTER SECTION.

CRIMINAL RECORDS

Chicago, Illinois

PLEASE DO NOT FOLD, SPINDLE

OR MUTILATE THIS CARD

SUBJECT (CORRECTIONOMITTED RECORD SUPPLIED)

APPLICABLE STATUTE NO. 1567

JUDGMENT NO. 456789

TRIAL RECORD: APPARENTLY MISFILED AND UNAVAILABLE

DIRECTION: TO APPEAR FOR SENTENCING BEFORE JUDGE JOHN ALEXANDER MCDIVOT, COURTROOM A, JUNE 9, 1966

From the Desk of

Judge Alexander J. McDivot

June 2, 1966

Dear Tony:

I've got an adjudged criminal coming up before me for sentencing Thursday morningbut the trial transcript is apparently misfiled.

I need some kind of information (Ref: A. WalterJudgment No. 456789, Criminal). For example, what about the victim of the kidnapping. Was victim harmed?

Jack McDivot

June 3, 1966

Records Search Unit

Re: Ref: Judgment No. 456789was victim harmed?

Tonio Malagasi

Records Division

June 3, 1966

To: United States Statistics Office

Atta.: Information Section

Subject: Robert Louis Stevenson

Query: Information concerning

Records Search Unit

Criminal Records Division

Police Department

Chicago, III.

June 5, 1966

To: Records Search Unit

Criminal Records Division

Police Department

Chicago, Illinois

Subject: Your query re Robert Louis Stevenson (File no. 189623)

Action: Subject deceased. Age at death, 44 yrs. Further information requested?

A. K.

Information Section

U. S. Statistics Office

To: United States Statistics Office

Atta.: Information Division

Subject: RE: File no. 189623

No further information required.

June 6,1966

Thank you.

Records Search Unit

Criminal Records Division

Police Department

Chicago, Illinois

June 7, 1966

To: Tonio Malagasi

Records Division

Re: Ref: Judgment No. 456789victim is dead.

Records Search Unit

June 7,1966

To: Judge Alexander J. McDivot's Chambers

Dear Jack:

Ref: Judgment No. 456789. The victim in this kidnap case was apparently slain.

From the strange lack of background information on the killer and his victim, as well as the victim's age, this smells to me like a gangland killing. This for your information. Don't

quote me. It seems to me, though, that Stevenson the victim has a name that rings a faint bell with me. Possibly, one of the East Coast Mob, since the association comes back to me as something about pirates possibly New York dockage hijackers and something about buried loot.

As I say, above is only speculation for your private guidance.

Any time I can help . . .

Best,

Tony Malagasi

Records Division

MICHAEL R. REYNOLDS

Attomey-at-law .

49 Water Street

Chicago, Illinois

June 8, 1966

Dear Tim:

Regrets: I can't make the fishing trip. I've been court-appointed here to represent a man about to be sentenced tomorrow on a kidnapping charge.

Ordinarily, I might have tried to beg off, and McDivot, who is doing the sentencing, would probably have turned me loose.

But this is the damndest thing you ever heard of.

The man being sentenced has apparently been not only charged, but adjudged guilty as a result of a comedy of errors too long to go into here. He not only isn't guilty he's got the best case I ever heard of for damages against one of the larger Book Clubs headquartered here in Chicago. And that's a case I wouldn't mind taking on.

It's inconceivable but damnably possible, once you stop to think of it in this day and age of machine-made records that a completely innocent man could be put in this position.

There shouldn't be much to it. I've asked to see McDivot tomorrow before the time for sentencing, and it'll just be a matter of explaining to him. "Then I can discuss the damage suit with my freed client at his leisure.

Fishing next weekend?

Yours,

Mike

MICHAEL R. REYNOLDS

Attomey-at-law

49 Water Street

Chicago, Illinois

June 10

Dear Tim:

In haste

No fishing this coming week either. Sorry.

You won't believe it. My innocent-as-a-lamb-and-I'm-not-kidding client has just been sentenced to death for first-degree murder in connection with the death of his kidnap victim.

Yes, I explained the whole thing to McDivot. And when he explained his situation to me, I nearly fell out of my chair.

It wasn't a matter of my not convincing him. It took less than three minutes to show him that my client should never have been within the walls of the County Jail for a second. But get this McDivot couldn't do a thing about it.

The point is, my man had already been judged guilty according to the computerized records. In the absence of a trial record of course there never was one (but that's something I'm not free to explain to you now) the judge has to go by what records are available. And in the case of an adjudged prisoner, McDivot's only legal choice was whether to sentence to life

imprisonment, or execution.

The death of the kidnap victim, according to the statute, made the death penalty mandatory. Under the new laws governing length of time for appeal, which has been shortened because of the new system of computerizing records, to force an elimination of unfair delay and mental anguish to those condemned, I have five days in which to file an appeal, and ten to have it acted on.

Needless to say, I am not going to monkey with an appeal. I'm going directly to the Governor for a pardon after which we will get this farce reversed. McDivot has already written the Governor, also, explaining that his sentence was ridiculous, but that he had no choice. Between the two of us, we ought to have a pardon in short order.

Then, I'll make the fur fly . . .

And we'll get in some fishing.

Best,

Mike

OFFICE OF THE
GOVERNOR OF ILLINOIS

June 17, 1966

Mr. Michael R. Reynolds

49 Water Street

Chicago, Illinois

Dear Mr. Reynolds:

In reply to your query about the request for pardon for Walter A. Child (A. Walter), may I inform you that the Governor is still on his trip with the Midwest Governors Committee, examining the Wall in Berlin. He should be back next Friday.

I will bring your request and letters to his attention the minute he returns.

Very truly yours,

Clara B. Jilks

Secretary to the Governor

June 27, 1966

Michael R. Reynolds

49 Water Street

Chicago, Illinois

Dear Mike:

Where is that pardon?

My execution date is only five days from now!

Walt

June 29, 1966

Walter A. Child (A. Walter)

Cell Block E

Illinois State Penitentiary

Joliet, Illinois

Dear Walt:

The Governor returned, but was called away immediately to the White House in Washington to give his views on interstate sewage.

I am camping on his doorstep and will be on him the moment he arrives here.

Meanwhile, I agree with you about the seriousness of the situation. The warden at the prison there, Mr. Alien Magruder, will bring this letter to you and have a private talk with you. I urge you to listen to what he has to say; and I enclose letters from your family also urging you to listen to Warden Magruder.

Yours,

Mike

June 30, 1966

Michael R. Reynolds
49 Water Street
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Mike: (This letter being smuggled out by Warden
Magruder)

As I was talking to Warden Magruder in my cell, here, news
was brought to him that the Governor has at last returned for a
while to Illinois, and will be in his office early tomorrow
morning, Friday. So you will have time to get the pardon
signed by him and delivered to the prison in time to stop my
execution on Saturday.

Accordingly, I have turned down the Warden's kind offer of
a chance to escape; since he told me he could by no means
guarantee to have all the guards out of my way when I tried it;
and there was a chance of my being killed escaping.

But now everything will straighten itself out. Actually, an
experience as fantastic as this had to break down sometime
under its own weight.

Best,

Walt

FOR THE SOVEREIGN
STATE OF ILLINOIS

I, Hubert Daniel Willikens, Governor of the State of Illinois,
and invested with the authority and powers appertaining
thereto, including the power to pardon those in my judgment
wrongfully convicted or otherwise deserving of executive
mercy, do this day of July 1, 1966, announce and proclaim that
Walter A. Child (A. Walter), now in custody as a consequence
of erroneous conviction upon a crime of which he is entirely
innocent, is fully and freely pardoned of said crime. And I do
direct the necessary authorities having custody of the said
Walter A. Child (A. Walter) in whatever place or places he
may be held, to immediately free, release, and allow unhindered
departure to him . . .

Interdepartmental Routing Service

PLEASE DO NOT FOLD, MUTILATE,
OR SPINDLE THIS CARD

Failure to route Document properly.

To: Governor Hubert Daniel Willikens

Re: Pardon issued to Walter A. Child, July 1, 1966

Dear State Employee:

You have failed to attach your Routing Number.

PLEASE: Resubmit document with this card and form
876, explaining your authority for placing a TOP RUSH
category on this document. Form 876 must be signed by your
Departmental Superior.

RESUBMIT ON: Earliest possible date ROUTING

SERVICE office is open. In this case, Tuesday, July 5, 1966.

WARNING: Failure to submit form 876 WITH THE
SIGNATURE OF YOUR SUPERIOR may make you liable to
prosecution for misusing a Service of the State Government. A
warrant may be issued for your arrest.

There are NO exceptions. YOU have been WARNED.

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