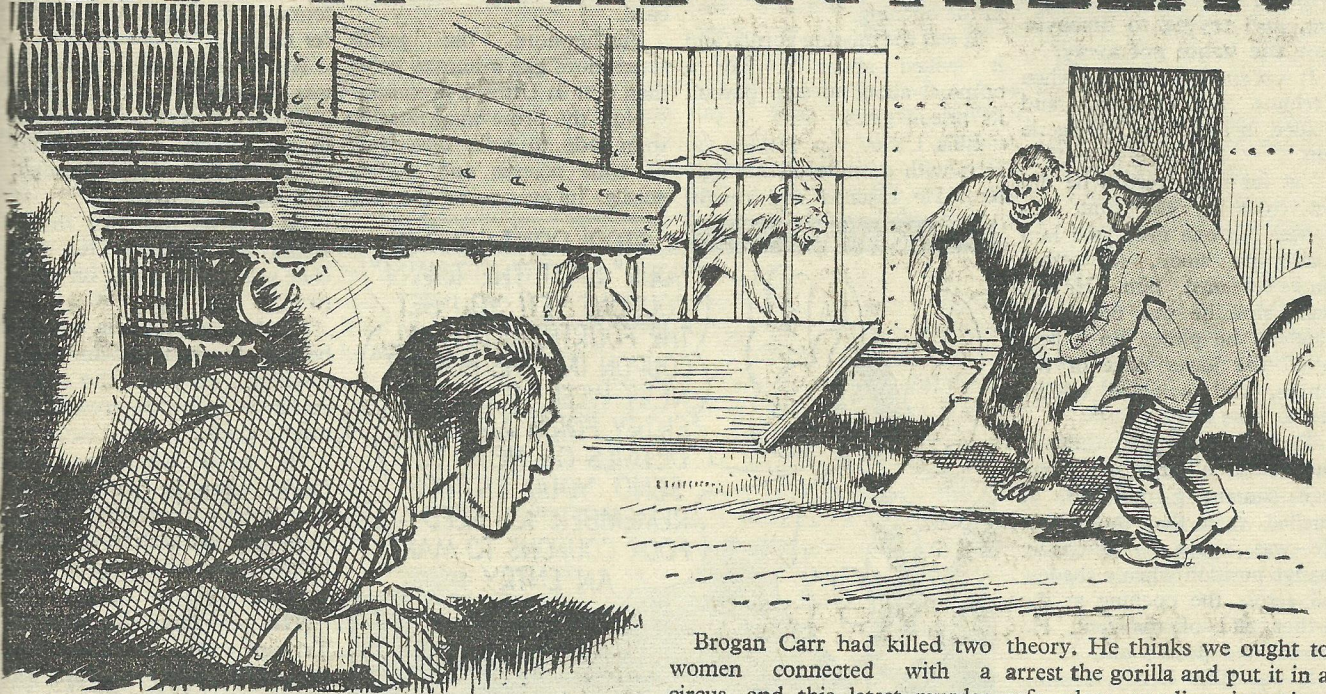


Only Ellis Uttley could handle Chako, and the animal handler had hidden the gorilla in a place no police would search—the lion's sleeping quarters!

WAS IT THE GORILLA?



PAUL TERHUNE switched off the electric-light, pulled up the blind to let in the dawn light, and settled down to the bundle of manuscript before him.

There was something he wanted to re-read, and he meant to find it in spite of the fact that it was five o'clock in the morning, and he had not been to bed all night.

The manuscript was headed, "Life On the Bench, by Judge Hahn," and was neatly typewritten.

Terhune had glanced through it before, and at the back of his mind there was a memory that there was something he would like to go over more carefully.

The manuscript he was now reading was the one on which the Judge had been working when he had been murdered.

"Demons on trial!" he read. It was a significant title, and referred to those criminals whom Judge Hahn considered the most brutal and dangerous he had ever tried.

"Of all these, probably the most outstanding was Brogan Carr," the Judge had written. "His case was a sensational one, for he had killed three women with no apparent motive.

"It was my personal opinion that he was mad, but alienists denied this. They said he had an extremely clever brain, a brain that was warped but fully conscious of his actions.

"During the trial he told the jury that if they convicted him they would regret it.

"When I was passing sentence, he interrupted to tell me that if I pronounced sentence of death, he would come back and kill me even after he was dead."

Paul Terhune lay back in his chair and gazed at the ceiling. He was trying to imagine the impression this man had made on the learned Judge if the memory had stuck so many years afterwards when Judge Hahn was an elderly man.

He wished there had been a picture of Brogan Carr, and wondered if there was one anywhere in the dead man's effects.

He had come to the end of the particular paragraphs that interested him, but there was still something that eluded him.

Brogan Carr had killed two women connected with a circus, and this latest murder had been committed in a circus. Furthermore, the gorilla which was at present their chief suspect, belonged to a circus. Was there any connection?

He fell asleep before he had come to any decision, and awakened cold and stiff when the telephone bell rang about eleven in the morning.

It was Lieutenant Staunton, sounding weary and depressed. "Terhune, have you got any new line?"

"I'm afraid not. I've got one or two ideas, but they will take time before they can be followed up."

"We've got no time," was the impatient reply. "Maybe you haven't seen the morning papers. They're tearing the police to pieces. Three murders in less than thirty hours in Spring City is something of a record.

"I've been talking things over with the District-Attorney, and have told him about your theory. He thinks we ought to arrest the gorilla and put it in a safe place pending investigations."

It was arranged that he would be round at the District-Attorney's office in half an hour.

He kept his appointment, and with Howson, the spruce young District-Attorney, Lieutenant Staunton, and four other police, crowded into a car to speed to the waste ground where the Red Star Circus was camped.

Colson, the acting-manager, came forward, and they told him their intention of taking the gorilla into preventive custody.

"You'd better take Uttley with you as well," he suggested. "He's devoted to that gorilla, and can handle it better than anyone I know."

They were still questioning him about minor matters, when a commotion on the steps resulted in Uttley bursting in on them.

"Mister Colson—sir!" he gasped. "Mister Colson, Chako has vamoosed!"

"What?" roared Lieutenant Staunton, rising to his feet.

"Yes. One of your men came to me to say it was the manager's orders that Chako's cage should be closed up ready for travelling. I went to carry out the order, and the cage was empty. The door was fast locked, but he was gone!"

FOR NEW READERS.

Lieutenant Staunton, of the Spring City, Pennsylvania, police, had invited Paul Terhune, the famous English detective, to work on a case with him. Terhune was on a visit to America to study police methods there.

A murderer had killed Judge Hahn, a retired Criminal Court judge, by twisting his neck until it broke. A retired refrigerator salesman, Osbert Layton, had been killed in the same way.

Terhune had discovered that Chako, a gorilla at the Red Star Circus, had been loose at the time of both murders, although its keeper, Ellis Uttley, declared it was harmless.

Jules Cyrano, the circus owner, was about to state where he had bought the gorilla, when he was killed by a knife thrown through the open window of his caravan.

After seeing Chako demonstrate his amazing knife-throwing ability, Terhune started to study the autobiography of Judge Hahn.