

***The Adventure of the Broken Chessman - Brok***  
*The Dragnet Magazine*, September, 1929  
*The Memoirs of Solar Pons*

Date

Copper/June, 1928

Patrick/June, 1928

Quotes

- *Dear me! How careless of us! I am afraid our prisoner has escaped.*

The Case

A body is found dead in Landon Hall's rooms. M. Parenin, Russian Consul, visits Pons to tell him the body wasn't Hall, but evil secret agent Pyotor Propov. Parenin asks Pons to keep Scotland Yard from solving the case; he does not want the killer captured. Visiting Landon's rooms, Pons finds that a chess game was disrupted by the killing and a king is missing.

Comments

- Brok is only the second Solar Pons story to be published. It is one of three written by Derleth (along with *The Missing Tenants* and *The Late Mr. Faversham*) after he sold *The Adventure of the Norcross Riddle* to *The Dragnet's* Harold Hersey, who encouraged him to submit more Pons tales.
- The first reference to chess in the Pontine Canon. The killer's fondness for chess is a clue for Pons in *The Three Red Dwarfs*, and the *The Beginnings of Solar Pons* tells us that he wrote a monograph upon the subject.
- This is the first case in which we read of Pons allowing a killer to go free. He follows his own definition of 'justice' rather than the narrow confines of the law.
- Pons baits a trap with information planted in a newspaper and then catches the killer when he acts upon it. This device was first seen in *A Study in Scarlet* and Pons uses variations of it in the future.
- Jamison is surprised at seeing Pons at the scene of "so ordinary a crime." However, the inspector says that he was ordered by the Foreign Office not to disturb anything until Pons had visited the scene.

We can interpret the first comment as meaning that Inspector Jamison did not expect Pons to be called at all for a common investigation. He was informed that Pons was coming but didn't understand why.

- How did the Foreign Office know that Pons would be called into the case? No one from that austere body contacted him, including his brother Bancroft (not yet

mentioned in any of the tales). Did they request or pressure the Russian Consul into consulting Pons?