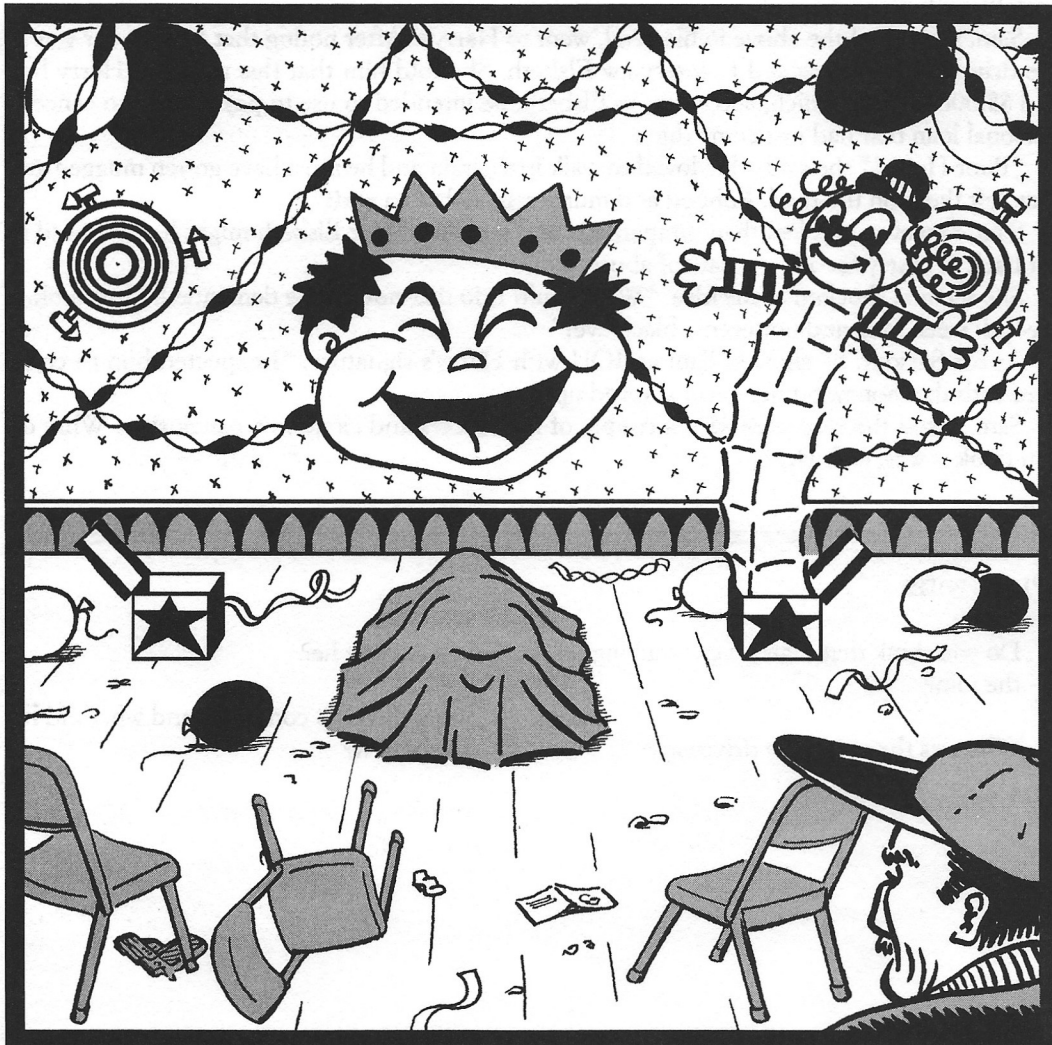


OF GHOULS AND GOBLINS



Algernon Meany, a small man in a small off-island town, was hated by many and loved by none. He had recently bought an old-fashioned vaudeville troupe and immediately fired half the players and cut everyone else's salary by 40 percent.

On Hallowe'en, when he gave a party to all children under the age of nine, he was temporarily forgiven his sins. The affair was held in the Community Center. Adults had to wait outside, while kids were screened at the door and given masks of ghouls and goblins and incubi. Naturally, Meany took over the stage himself, chiefly to show off his line of new toys, which was the main purpose of the evening.

The event ended spectacularly, in a burst of firecrackers and a blinding blaze of light, at which time Meany stepped forward and proclaimed himself King of All Toyland. Dramatic to the end, he was shot in the middle of his finale and fell with an unearthly screech that scared the kids into a panic and sent them rushing into the waiting arms of their parents.

Sam, who happened to be present as the colleague of Amos Kerplunk, the Deputy Chief of Police, was immediately pressed into service and agreed that the empty jack-in-the-box was too small to hold even a child. Thoughtfully, Sam looked on as Kerplunk found the murder weapon underneath a chair near the front of the hall, as shown.

Kerplunk, in a hoarse voice that scared children into immediate submission, rounded up the ones who had been sitting near the gun and questioned them one by one—or tried to.

He started out with Amy Fanz. According to her, Billy Jones had sat in the chair under which the gun was found, but Billy interrupted her to say he hadn't been anywhere near there, and Henry Maxim backed him up, but Henry Hopkins disagreed and said Henry Andrews had sat there, but Milly Perkins claimed that was where she'd sat, only Sylvie Marsh called her a liar, and one of the Henrys said James Finney had sat there, only Henry said James hadn't even been in the theater, and James, who hadn't been there, backed her up, but Amy interrupted to say...

At that point, Kerplunk gave up and turned the whole investigation over to Sam. Sam thanked all the children and told them to go home. With Kerplunk wondering what Sam had in mind, he followed Sam to Meany's nearby office. After studying the names and specialties of everyone in the vaudeville troupe, Sam told Kerplunk whom to arrest.

Whom did Sam accuse, and why?

Questions

1. Could the shot have gone unnoticed in the confusion of noise and lights?
2. Could a seven-year-old have fired the gun?
3. What did Sam see on the stage that sent him to Meany's office?
4. Whom did Sam accuse of killing Meany?

Solution on page 55.