

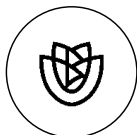
Luca Doninelli



**tre nuovi enigmi
per l'insuperabile**

Wickson Alieni

illustrazioni di Nicole Donaldson



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LUCA DONINELLI
THREE NEW ENIGMAS
FOR THE UNSTOPPABLE WICKSON ALIEN

translated from the Italian
by Alice Kilgariff

SAMPLE COPY

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THE MAN WHO HOOKED CLOTHES

On a night in London, in the month of November, in a badly-lit street in the outskirts of town, steps can be heard in the fog...but there is no one to be seen.

Who is it? It's WICKSON ALIENI!

The Sad Thieves

Spending all day in prison certainly isn't the best way to stay happy. After spending a few days boasting about their robberies, Milton Bobbitt and Roger T.L.L. grew increasingly sad, until they just sat down on their bunks, their heads in their hands, and stopped moving altogether.

The guards came by with their lunch:

“Hey, you two, your slop's here. You prefer rice and potatoes, or potatoes and rice?”

The guards really liked this joke, so much that they repeated it every day at every cell, and then they'd just laugh to themselves.

No one ever answered their question, no one laughed, so they just filled the bowls with rice and potatoes and left it on the ground outside the cells, without making any more bad jokes. Then, after an hour, they came back to collect them. Milton and Roger's bowls were still full, the poor souls were no longer hungry.

"Hey, idiots," the guards said, "if you don't eat, it'll be worse for you."

But Milton and Roger just sat there with their heads in their hands, stock-still, thinking.

London Has A New Problem

People in London thought they'd seen it all, but they were wrong. They had seen an aeroplane that sucked up all the clouds, they had seen shops without a single herring left, and clocks without the number five.

But they had never seen the man who hooked clothes.

He was a distinguished gentleman dressed in black, with a bowler hat on his head and wearing a red bowtie. He was very polite, he greeted everyone courteously, and if someone stared at him, he would say:

“Can I help you with something?”

The problem was that you could encounter this gentleman anywhere, even in your own home.

You would go to the clothes horse to take a jacket, and out he would jump:

“Good morning,” he would say.

“Hey, what are you doing here? This is my house”. “Dear sir,” he would respond, “I am the man who hooked clothes. Would you really like to know why I am here?”

“Of course I do!”

At this point, the distinguished gentleman dressed in black with the red bowtie, instead of responding, would pick up a stick that was about a metre long, with a hook on the end, and begin to hook all the clothes: jackets, overcoats, raincoats, shirts, blouses, skirts, trousers. He made no distinction. He seemed to be happy

with any clothes, the important thing was to be able to hook them.

He didn't steal anything or kill anyone, but he ruined clothes.

People would run to call the police, but when the police arrived, the man who hooked clothes was no longer there.

Other times, the man would appear in department stores, fashion shops, local markets. I'll give you an example. He would walk up to the shop assistant and say:

“I would like a Burberry overcoat, size medium. Blue. Thank you, madam.”

But as soon as the shop assistant moved away, he would take out his damned hook from under his coat and begin to hook any clothes he could find.

When she returned, all the shop assistant would hear was “if only Wickson Alieni were here!”

At that point, Wick entered and asked the inspector, “Why do you need Wickson Alieni?”

“He's the only one who can help me.”

“Why not try calling him?”

“I don’t know if he would want to help me.”

“Why not?”

“Because he is angry with me: he solves all my cases but I take all the credit.”

“Then promise him you won’t do that anymore.”

“Not do it anymore?”, the inspector roared, “I will always do it, because I am the chief of the London police, and so the credit is always and only mine, understand?”

“Try calling him anyway.”

The inspector took the telephone and dialled Wick’s number, without realising that Wick was standing half a metre from him.

“Hello,” said Wick, holding his thumb and little finger up to his ear as if it were a telephone.

“Wickson, my dear, marvellous colleague.”

“Get to the point, you old fool.”

“The clothes hooker is vexing me! Help me!”

To tell the truth, Wickson wanted to have a little more fun with the inspector and the whole of the London police force, but then he looked at the inspector’s jacket collar and saw that it was all torn, as were the sleeves.

“Hmm,” he thought, “that damned perforator must’ve been to your house as well.”

“Very well,” he said, “I’ll help you.”

The inspector thanked Wickson profusely and ended the call.

“Belisario,” he said to the barber. “You must make me look my best. I am about to defeat the man who hooked clothes.”

“My name’s not Belisario,” said the barber.

“Very well,” said Wickson. “That means you’ll have to deal it with yourself. I’m off on holiday. So long, inspector.”

The inspector looked at the disconnected telephone, then looked at the barber.

“Who said that?”

“I don’t know,” answered the barber.

“Do you want to bet that Wickson Alieni was here?” “Indeed, he was,” said Wick, who was still there.

“Thank you,” the inspector and barber answered in chorus.

Luca Doninelli

Three New Enigmas For The Unstoppable Wickson Alieni

TRE NUOVI ENIGMI PER L'INSUPERABILE WICKSON ALIENI

The comeback of the most discreet detective in the world. So discreet that nobody can see it!

What happens if somebody goes around London at night ripping apart clothes and dresses? And what if the most famous criminals, Milton Bobbitt and Roger T.L.L. run away from prison? And what if somebody decides to steal the whole London? That's easy: you must call for Wickson Alieni. Especially if you are the chief of police Frank Fellikke and your first worry is the welfare of your only hair named Filippo.

LUCA DONINELLI was born in 1956 and lives in Milan. For Bompiani he published *Fa' che questa strada non finisca mai* (2014) and *Le cose semplici* (2015, Selezione Campiello Prize) and *Tre casi per l'investigatore Wickson Alieni* (2017, Strega Ragazzi Prize).

THREE CASES FOR DETECTIVE WICKSON ALIENI SOLD 5,000 COPIES
STREGA RAGAZZI PRIZE 2019
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