

MACMILLAN READERS

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**ELEMENTARY LEVEL**

PHILIP PROWSE

# L. A. Winners



**MACMILLAN**

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## California Dreaming



I was dreaming about Hawaii. I was dreaming about my holiday. In my dream, I was on the beach in Hawaii. The hot sun was shining on my face. The sound of the sea was all around me.

But it *was* a dream. Three weeks ago, I *had* been lying on a beach in Hawaii. But I was not in Hawaii now. I was dreaming in my office in Los Angeles. I had returned from my holiday and there was no work for me. Nobody wanted to hire me. I went to my office every day, but the telephone didn't ring. So I slept in my chair and I dreamt about Hawaii.

I was dreaming a wonderful dream. The sun was hot. The noise of the sea was loud and there was a beautiful woman standing next to me.

Suddenly, there was a voice in my dream. Somebody was calling my name.

'Mr Samuel! Mr Samuel, wake up! Please, wake up! I want to talk to you.'

I opened my eyes. It was April in Los Angeles. The hot sun was shining on my face. The sun was shining through my office window. And there was a woman standing beside me. She was calling my name. But she was angry with me.

'Mr Samuel. Wake up! Why are you sleeping at 11.45 in the morning?'

The woman was about twenty-five years old. She had long dark hair. She was wearing a short green dress and a brown leather coat. She had a lovely face.

'Perhaps this woman is a client,' I thought. 'Perhaps she'll hire me. Perhaps she has a job for me.'

I smiled at the woman. But she did not smile at me.

'Are you Lenny Samuel, the private detective?' she asked.

'Yes, I'm Lenny,' I said. 'Please sit down.' I pointed to a wooden chair on the other side of my desk.

The woman looked around my office. She looked at

the old furniture and the dirty windows. She looked at the broken blind and the plastic coffee cups in the waste bin. Then she looked at me. I hadn't shaved. And my suit and hair were untidy. The woman didn't speak.

Suddenly, she took a handkerchief out of her bag. She wiped the dust from the chair and she sat down.

'Mr Samuel,' she said. 'I saw your name and address in the telephone book. Are you cheap? And are you a good detective?'

'I'm not *good*,' I replied. 'I'm the *best*. The best private detective in L.A.'

The woman laughed. 'Are you joking?' she said. 'The best private detectives have secretaries. And the best private detectives don't have dirty, untidy offices. But I want to hire you. Will you do a job for me, Mr Samuel?'

'What do you want me to do?' I asked.

I didn't like the woman. She was rude. But I needed money. I needed money quickly. My holiday in Hawaii had cost \$1000. I had borrowed the money. Now I had to pay back the money.

I hadn't borrowed \$1000 from a bank. I had borrowed it from Herman. Herman was a bodyguard. His office was next to mine. He worked for film stars. He was very tall – more than two metres – and he weighed one hundred and forty kilos. Now Herman wanted his money back. And when Herman wanted something, he always got it.

I smiled at the woman again.

She didn't smile at me. She got up from her chair and walked to the window. My office is on the fourth floor of an old building.

The woman looked down at the street. Then she turned round.

‘Mr Samuel, I want you to find The Chief,’ she said. ‘He disappeared yesterday morning. Something has happened to him – something bad.’

‘OK,’ I said. I took a notepad and a pen out of my desk. ‘Describe him, please. But I must tell you something. I’ll do almost any work. But there is one thing that I won’t do. I won’t look for husbands who have disappeared. Is The Chief your husband?’

‘No,’ the woman said. ‘The Chief isn’t my husband. The Chief is a horse!’

## 2

### Sandy Bonner

I looked at the woman in the green dress.

‘A horse?’ I said. ‘You want me to find a horse?’ Was the woman joking?

‘Yes,’ she replied. ‘I want you to find a horse.’

‘Miss,’ I said. ‘I don’t know anything about horses. Horses have four legs and they run around. I don’t know anything more about them.’

‘OK, now you’ll learn more about horses, Mr Samuel,’ the woman said.

There was a noise outside my door. The woman turned and looked at it. Suddenly, she was frightened.

Somebody knocked at the door. It was a glass door. The words L. SAMUEL – PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR were written on it in big black letters.

The person who was outside the door knocked again. He knocked very hard.

‘Come in!’ I shouted. ‘Don’t break the glass!’

The door opened and a huge man walked in. He was very tall – more than two metres – and he weighed one hundred and forty kilos. It was Herman.

‘Hi, Lenny,’ Herman said. ‘I’ve come for my money. Have you got it?’

Then Herman saw the dark-haired woman sitting by the desk. He smiled at her. Herman had lots of white teeth.

‘Oh, I’m sorry, miss,’ he said. ‘I didn’t see you when I came in. Are you talking about business with Lenny? I’ll come back later.’

Herman smiled at the woman again. Then he turned and left the room.

‘Who’s that?’ the woman asked. She wasn’t frightened now. ‘He’s big and strong. Perhaps he’ll help me to find my horse.’

‘No! No, he won’t,’ I replied quickly. ‘That was Herman. He’s a bodyguard. He’s not a detective. I can find the horse that you’ve lost.’

‘But I haven’t *lost* the horse,’ the woman said. ‘People don’t *lose* horses, Mr Samuel. Horses run away or —’

‘Or someone steals them?’ I asked.

‘Yes,’ she replied.

‘OK,’ I said. ‘Tell me the facts. Describe the horse, please.’

‘He’s twelve years old and two metres high. He has brown hair and brown eyes,’ she replied.

‘I’m sorry,’ I said. ‘That description won’t help me. Have you got a photograph of him?’

The woman smiled. ‘Yes,’ she said. ‘Here’s a photo of The Chief. The picture was taken after his last race.’