

Also Starring

At precisely 11:00 a.m. (PDT) a man who looked like Harry Dean Stanton entered a savings and loan on Wilshire, waved a pistol at a cashier and demanded money, as much as she could stuff in the brown paper bag he gave her. Once this was done he backed toward the door, saluted jauntily to the closed circuit cameras mounted overhead and made his escape.

The staff film buff immediately identified him. The cops who responded to the alarm were skeptical. Still, they did some checking and learned that the actor was on location, costarring in the new David Lynch film which was wrapping up six weeks of shooting in Gainesville, Florida. The plot of the movie was not immediately known but when pressed the publicist admitted that Stanton played the role of a depraved bank robber. All agreed that it was an interesting coincidence.

Less than a week later a Wilford Brimley look-alike held up a jewelry store. It was strictly a "smash and grab" job but it was carried out with homespun perfection. Someone recognized him from his cereal commercials. The actor was briefly detained but his manager and a freelance photographer provided convincing alibis.

It was clear that a pattern was developing. A man impersonating fine character actors was on a crime spree. A team of detectives were assigned to the case which was given top priority by their superiors. A spokesperson promised quick results.

The police gained the complete cooperation of the Screen Actors' Guild and its counterparts. They investigated dozens of disgruntled actors, professional makeup people and wannabees. Acting on a tip, they staked out Paramount Pictures.

Two days later Maureen Stapleton knocked over a 7-11.

The city was in an uproar.

Edward Herrmann and Joe Pesci were accosted on the street. Both had to be hospitalized for their injuries. It was reported that Michael J. Pollard had gone into hiding for his own protection.

The major studios hired extra security personnel. New copyright laws were enacted which made the impersonation of famous figures punishable by heavy fines and jail terms. Several distraught drag queens committed suicide. Rich Little declared personal bankruptcy.

Then, a break.

A man reportedly a dead ringer for Ned Beatty was seen loitering outside an exclusive men's clothing store in Bel Air. A swarm of police officers converged on the scene, cordoned off several city blocks. The real Mr. Beatty was located in San Francisco.

The imposter somehow became alerted to the presence of police, dashed across the street and disappeared into a throng of curious onlookers. Unfortunately he emerged as Charlotte Rampling, accent and all. He was ordered to halt and shot several times while attempting to remove something--later identified as a compact--from a small, stylish purse.

As the imposter lay dying, ringed by police and bystanders, there were no clever parting words, no glib one-liners like "Made it, ma! Top of the world!" or even "the horror, the horror".

Many marvelled at how he stayed in character to the very end, batting those lovely lashes, pursing those thin, sensuous lips and expiring with grace and aplomb.

Like Charlotte would have.

End

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