

After a hard night's work of avoiding barbed wire and eluding venomous snakes, the demands of fine dining proved to be too much for two burglars to handle.

When Niessen and Janice Himmel returned to their Avondale home at 2 a.m. Sunday morning, following their routine weekend dinner and movie night, they found two men asleep on their couches. The surroundings could have suggested a dinner party, but the living room quickly turned into a crime scene after the Himmels found two bags near the men containing \$500,000 worth of their property.

Investigators are at a loss for how the men broke into the heavily guarded house, according to a spokesman for the Avondale Police Department. Alarms that are connected directly to the police department were not triggered. The three-story, Tudor style house is surrounded by a six foot brick wall that is topped off with barbed wire and broken glass.

A final layer of security is provided by several venomous snakes that are released in the yard each night. Both the black Mambas and Egyptian cobras employed by the Himmels are deadly and require them to employ two full-time snake handlers.

"I would never be caught dead on this property at night, it's just too dangerous," a detective said, according to the spokesman. "In all my life, I have never heard of a house this well protected."

## 2<sup>nd</sup> add Speech/Crime Story

After managing to evade all of the security surrounding the house, the two Muncie residents, 37 and 45, whose names are being withheld, pillaged through the Himmel home and eventually made their way to the kitchen. Instead of leaving with their loot, which included digital cameras, laptops, clothes, stamps, jewelry and the family's coin collection, the burglars chose to make themselves at home.

Detectives think that the men decided to celebrate their success by making steaks and salads for dinner. They then washed the Himmels' food down with a bottle of Chivas, a highly regarded Scotch whiskey, from the liquor cabinet and proceeded to fall asleep in the living room, where they would later be discovered by the Himmels.

"I'm sorry they wasted my fine whiskey, but I'm glad it contributed to their downfall," said Mr. Himmel.

When they found the burglars, Mr. Himmel held them at bay with a handgun from a gun cabinet while his wife called the police. "I am not their maid," Mrs. Himmel said regarding the plates of food and half-empty bottle left in the kitchen, "if they are going to break into our house and steal our food and our whiskey, the least they can do is clean up after themselves."

The suspects are being charged with breaking and entering, though more charges may be filed after the investigation is complete. Detectives are still working to figure out how the men got into the house, as neither suspect has commented to police about the crime.

More

3<sup>rd</sup> add Speech/Crime Story

The men both have criminal records for burglary and breaking and entering and one of the suspects was released from prison three weeks ago. A switchblade knife was found with one of the men, but there is no evidence indicating that they tried to get into the Himmels' gun case. A stolen getaway van that belonged to a family on vacation was parked across the street.

The men have no connection to the Himmels, and Avondale police believe that the break-in was the result of careful planning by the burglars. The extra protection around the house is due, in part, to the family's regular absence during the week. The Himmels spend their weekdays on a farm about 100 miles from Muncie and journey back to their Avondale home on the weekends.

In addition to the snake handlers, the Himmels employ several workers to maintain their house during the week. All of the employees had the night off on Saturday, and there is currently believed to be no link between the burglars and any of the staff.

The Himmels inherited their fortune from Mr. Himmel's father, a rich industrialist, and are active in the community. They enjoy socializing and supporting Avondale's art and culture scene. Whenever they have free time on the weekends, the Himmels enjoy organizing braai, the Afrikaaner word for barbeques. Unfortunately, due to the recent break in, the Himmels will need to buy some new steaks before they can have any more guests over.

###