Lucy Edwards

Cat Burglar Extraordinaire

Walter Smith

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Author's Footnote

This story is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, organizations, places, events are the product of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events or locales is entirely coincidental.

Walter Smith

About the Author

Walter Smith took up writing in his retirement, in Norfolk, after a long and productive career, including being a class-act goalkeeper.

Walter grew up in London and experienced post-World War Two London as a teenager. So, the background to this, his debut novel, is a place he directly saw and experienced which is perhaps why the story oozes authenticity.

Walter has developed his own unique writing style that gives the work originality, flare and page-turning appeal. It's a refreshing change from the tired, formulaic and mediocre style that comes out of so many modern writing courses.

The backdrop to Walter's writing is the murky, somewhat lawless environment of the time. On top of that, Walter has used his insightful experiences of human nature to introduce a story of ghostly happenings, a murder mystery, a love interest, elements of raunchiness, and personal discovery.

Walter's debut novel "Violence is my Shadow" was published early in 2026 and attracted a lot of positive comment and attention.

Walter had already written this sequel which is based upon one character in the first novel, and there is a further novel in the pipeline.

PROLOGUE

Lucy sat at the back of the court and watched her father while the police gave false evidence, lied to the judge and the jury, who found him guilty, sentencing him to five years' in goal.

He was well known to the police as a professional cat burglar, but they had never been able to catch him red-handed with the loot. The chief constable, Richard Cummings, along with detective inspector Armstrong and the help of a judge, Sir Antony Scribes, all agreed on a stitch-up plan, arranging together to get him off the streets and out of their hair. Lucy's dad had given the police, many times, the proverbial two-finger V sign after being held in their cells overnight and then, the next morning, released by his female lawyer; they had begun to loathe and hate him.

David Edwards was a first-class cat burglar, known for his daring ability to climb with speed and skill into any type of building in any weather, which made him special. He was able to enter and leave without leaving any trace that he had been in the building and had been engaged many times by certain people in the world of crime and business to infiltrate rival gang headquarters or civil offices, government and council for private and personal information. This time, the job went wrong; the weather was bad. Throughout the early evening, heavy downpours had made his climb very difficult. From nowhere, the police arrived at the front of the building, entering easily through the front door, dashing up the stairs and using the lifts to reach the level of the floor he was on. Realising it was a set-up job, he was out of a back window, down the drainpipe, on which, fifteen feet above the alley, sheared away from the building wall, sending him crashing to the ground, breaking his leg and leaving him helpless, unable to escape before the police captured him.

The police gleefully surrounded him, handcuffed and searched him for evidence that he was in the building; none was found. No bag with stolen goods, no burglary tools on him. A search was carried out of the area, the rain making it difficult. He was threatened to reveal where he had hidden it, with a kick from inspector Armstrong to remind him he was theirs to do whatever they wished for that information. While they were frantically searching, a young girl had stopped to watch what was going on. Standing under her umbrella and carrying a shopping bag, she stood there until Armstrong angrily told her to clear off as this was important police work. Shrugging as she turned to leave, she had looked down at the man on the ground; she had winked at him. He gave a slight nod and winked back up to her. "Come on, girl, get out of here, or I'll have you arrested!" roared the angry Armstrong, "Get her out of here," pointing to a young constable who led the young girl out of the alley. She looked back into the alley and saw Armstrong slapping and kicking her father. With tears running down her face, she walked away from the area, vowing that she one day would gain her revenge on that fat bastard.

From an early age, Lucy had been involved with her father's dangerous life. When her mother had run off with his best friend, she had become the little housewife, helping him out, sharing the chores, cleaning and shopping as best she could. They had become very close, inseparable – a good dad-and-daughter team. His hobby, to keep himself in prime condition, was rock climbing. Regularly, they would go off for a weekend climbing trip, sharing a tent, cooking outdoors and bathing in the streams. At night, sitting side by side, they would look at the starry sky. He would relate stories of his dangerous occupation, its thrills and fear moments, elation when he had successfully completed another robbery and the payment from the pawnbroker and fence who handed over a cash payment for the loot. For a little girl, it was sheer heaven.

Over the next few years, he had taught her the basics of climbing. He found that she possessed a natural ability; she was brave but sensible, quick to sort out the best way to climb very tricky situations. One time, he had left her below to watch while he climbed a hard section of rock face; she had passed him, climbing with no ropes, leaving him behind, and then waited for him to arrive at the top of the summit. He knew that she was an outstanding climber, far better than himself. That's when she started showing interest in his criminal ways. He introduced her to the seamy world of crime that he worked in, showing her where he stored the items stolen in a secret hiding place. Teaching her how to plan a robbery, to check the building, its area and, if possible, a means of escape before attempting to enter the target, how to open different locks on doors and windows, advising her to enter by the highest means of entry, saying people tended to leave them unlocked, thinking that no one could reach them. His work tools were one soft bag, which could be folded up and put into a pocket, one stainless steel blade to open window catches, a lock pick, glass cutter and small suction pad; all could be thrown away when being chased by the plod. If she was caught, there would not be any criminal tools to be able to arrest her. If asked why she was there, she should say that she was caught short and wanted a pee.

On her first visit to the prison hospital to see her father, before she could see him, she was body-searched, which was more like a blatant fondling than a brief search made by a beady-eyed, wet-lipped, leering prison officer who lingered his hands over her private parts. On entering the ward, she could see her father lying in a bed at the far end of the room. Alongside stood another warder who had remained there during her visit. She could see the bruises and cuts on his face; his broken leg was suspended in a sling, which held his leg off the bed sheets. Crying, she leant over to kiss him and was told by the warder that there would be none of that and

to sit in the chair by his bed. Ignoring him, she cuddled and kissed him a number of times before he pulled her off him and pushed her into the chair. Her father shouted at him to leave her alone; the warder laughed, then hit her father's leg, which sent waves of pain making him cry out. Lucy flew out of the chair, screaming and raging at him, and with her hands like claws, went for his eyes.

Two warders had to drag her out of the ward, screaming, kicking and biting, finally ejecting her out into the street. Her father had shouted out for her to go and see his lawyer and get her to visit him; that was all she heard before they carried her physically to the exit. The next day, at the lawyer's office, Lucy related all that had happened to her. They had contacted the criminal justice court office and the prison governor with phone calls advising that a serious complaint would be made against the prison and both warders involved, followed by a visit by the lawyer to see her client the next day. Two things happened. First, a woman had knocked on the front door and introduced herself as her Auntie Hannah, who said that she would be staying to look after Lucy until things were arranged. Second, the next day, when they returned to the house after a day's shopping, they found that it had been entered. Every room was a mess; drawers and cupboards had been pulled out and the contents tipped on the floor, bed sheets and blankets ripped off, and mattresses lifted off beds, tipped on their sides. In the garden, the shed's door lock had been jemmied off; all its contents were strewn over the grass, leaving a jumbled pile, all soaking in the rain.

AUNTY HAN

Auntie Han had decided to stay, a tall fair-haired lady of twenty-six years, chubby-faced and always carrying a smile, with a curvy body and stunning legs. Taking Lucy under her wing, they settled down together in a hormone-filled women's world. There were occasionally odd flare-ups, but they were soon forgotten. Lucy loved her Auntie Han, who guided her through the problems of growing up from schoolgirl to becoming a young adult, alongside an ongoing lecture on men.

From the very beginning of her stay, Auntie Han had to accept Lucy's menagerie. At a very early age, it was noticed that Lucy had an uncanny magnetism with domestic and wild animals. In her bedroom, she had a number of cages with injured birds and animals that she was nursing back to health, and glass tanks housing mice, hedgehogs, and stick insects, giving her room an unladylike aroma. "The menagerie has to go outside," demanded Han. A big row flared up, which Han won, but she had agreed with Lucy that the garden shed would be turned into a home for all the animals.

One of Han's male friends turned up to repair its door and built a number of wooden cages, fitting them to the inside walls in two rows, one above the other. The menagerie was then transferred to their new homes, and Lucy's bedroom was stripped, redecorated, and furnished with a new carpet and curtains, along with a tall narrow full-length mirror in an upright wooden frame that finished the room off, stating that now it was a young girl's bedroom. Peace returned to the house; the crisis was over.

Lucy's father, who had recovered his health, was transferred from the prison hospital to a cell. A week later, he was moved to another prison down in the Hampshire

area, making it difficult for them to visit him regularly. The same week, Inspector Armstrong visited them, saying that he was going to search the house. Han asked to see the search warrant, but he pushed her to one side, claiming that he didn't need one. He walked into their front room and started to pull open drawers and look into cupboards and cabinets, pulling their items out onto the floor. Han went ape-shit, screaming at him to get out of their home, threatening him by saying that she had a friend who was a reporter on a national newspaper and would love to write a damning report about Armstrong's antics.

Growling, he said, "This isn't finished. I know that the bastard has stolen items hidden here somewhere. I will not forget that you threatened me, and I will make you or your father pay big time." He stormed out of the house, with a flow of loud foul words from Han ringing in his ears. He slammed the front door shut, walked to his car, and drove off.

A month later, Lucy's father was attacked in his cell by two other prisoners, stabbed and badly beaten, left on the floor in serious condition. When found, he was transferred to their hospital section and later taken to a local hospital, where he died from his injuries. Lucy and Han, at the loss of her father, were devastated; despair and sorrow filled their days. His body was returned to a local undertaker by the prison. Saddened, they arranged his funeral and afterwards took his ashes to his favourite area, scattering them from the top of the rocky range. Lucy, with tears streaming down her face, vowed that all who were somehow involved in her father's death would pay – everyone: Armstrong, Cummings, Scribes, and the prison warders would rue the day and regret their actions when she was finished with them.

A CRIMINAL LIFE

For the next few months, Lucy had studied her father's diaries, practised entering private and commercial buildings, not stealing, just familiarising herself with working in the dark and honing her skills in climbing, entering, and ghosting through their interiors, not leaving any trace of her being there.

The first job was a visit to the pawnbroker and fence's shop that had cheated her by only paying a small amount of money for the stolen items, knowing that her father was in jail; he thought that she would be unable to do anything against him. First, she checked out the pawn shop situated in the centre of a terraced row of identical houses, checking its area during the day, then at night. The building's front windows had iron grills; she knew that he had a guard dog which was let loose in the back garden at night. Her plan was to climb over the fence two doors up, climb onto its roof, walk along the top ridge, reach the pawn shop's roof, then loop a rope around its chimney stack, lowering herself down to the bathroom's small window and entering that way.

Two nights later, that's how it happened. Opening the window, she found that its shelf had a number of items on it; these she put into her bag, slid through, and replaced them on a glass shelf above the washbasin. Passing the main bedroom, its door slightly open, heavy snoring blasted the silence. Checking the two empty smaller rooms, she carefully went downstairs into the shop section. The first safe was found under the counter; its contents were cheap imitation jewellery, some loose change, a pistol, and a ledger. Placing the ledger on the counter, she closed the safe and locked it. Looking for the main safe, which was hidden in a cupboard in the kitchen, a large old solid thick metal box, in

a matter of minutes its door was open, showing trays of expensive jewellery: necklaces, bracelets, rings, rolls of banknotes, and a large velvet-covered flat square box – all disappeared into Lucy's bag, ignoring watches, leather wallets, tie pins, and earrings. She closed the door, locked it, and slid the ledger deep into the bag. Looking around, checking that nothing had been left, with everything that it was as she had entered the room, she moved into the hall, switched off the door alarms, unlocked the numerous bolts and locks, slipped out into the darkness, leaving the door slightly ajar, and made her way safely home.

The second job was Detective Inspector Armstrong's home; this time she had entered during the day through the back garden, which was a jungle and junkyard full of rubbish. She had watched him on a number of evenings, noting that he had no wife or partner living with him. On Friday nights, he did not return home until early in the morning, inebriated and staggering. Once inside, he would fall asleep in one of his armchairs. Her first entry was simple: she unlocked the back door and then conducted a quick survey of the house, which was an untidy mess, ending in the kitchen where she lifted the lid of the sugar jar. Taking a paper bag from her pocket, she ladled three large spoonfuls of Epsom salts into the sugar, stirring the mixture until it all looked normal again. She replaced the lid and pushed it back into its normal position, but then she had a second thought. Lifting the lid again, she added another extra-large spoonful, quickly stirred up its contents, and replaced it, saying to herself, 'That's from you, Dad.'

A few days later, she revisited his house; no lights – it just looked empty. Upon entering through the side door, the smell hit her nostrils with a foul, strong aroma. Holding a handkerchief to her nose, she searched both floors. The foul smell was coming from the toilet, bedroom, and bathroom; dirty, soiled clothes and bed sheets had been dumped in the bath, and soiled newspapers covered the carpet.

Everywhere it was chaos. Smiling to herself, she left, closing the kitchen door, locking it, and walking quickly away.

The following afternoon, she was back, knocking on Armstrong's neighbour's front door, introducing herself as his niece and asking if they knew how she could find him. She was informed that he had been taken to hospital with a bad case of vomiting and diarrhoea. Walking away, she pumped her arms and shouted, 'Yes!' She looked up into the sky, saying, 'Nice one, what do you think of that, Dad?'

She decided to keep a close eye on Armstrong by visiting his home weekly to check on his activities. On her first visit, she found it locked up and in darkness. Checking through the premises, she discovered that it was in the same foul state; nothing had been done to clean up all the rooms. Thinking he still might be in hospital, she locked up and went home. For the next four weeks, every visit she made to Armstrong's home revealed that it was still empty and very smelly. There were no newspapers or mail on the carpet at the front door. Confused, she revisited the neighbours next door, asking for information on his whereabouts, and was told he had been medically discharged from the police force and was now living in a police care home in Bognor Regis.

Lucy's special mixture of Epsom salts added to Armstrong's sugar jar had worked on his digestive system. With his lifetime of heavy drinking and poor eating habits, his health had broken down completely. Certain foods were now attacking his digestive system, causing long periods of stomach pain and diarrhoea, leaving him in a weaker condition. A four-stone weight loss was affecting his body strength; he was now using two sticks to help himself walk.

A smiling, elated Lucy left the neighbours' home, dancing down their front path, out through the gate, onto the pavement. Bumping into a large policeman, she said, 'Sorry,' and gave him a kiss on the cheek, leaving him gaping after her as he watched Lucy dance down the rest of the

long pavement.

Now she had another big problem: her hiding place was crammed full, so she had to hold off on future plans until it was moved on. With no knowledge of how to move the loot, she was stuck. She couldn't go back to their original fence, as he would recognise that it came from his safe. Then she had a thought: Aunty Han was a Londoner and a cockney to boot; she might be able to help. But it would mean her revealing that she was now a criminal. However, Han was from the London dockland area; she might understand and help.

Then a stroke of luck happened: a letter was put through their letterbox addressed to her father, requesting him to do a climbing job for a London contact. Photos were supplied with details on where, what company, and what was required, plus a contact phone number to be phoned at six pm when the job was done. Then everything was to be sent off by post to a local post office marked for Mr. D Edwards; the collection would be made by someone using her father's name, and their payment would be sent on by post.

She completed this job within a week of receiving the letter, posted off the information required, and made the arranged phone call. When someone answered, she said "job done" in a deep gruff voice and put down the phone, receiving the payment in a registered envelope a few days later. On opening it, there was a thick wad of banknotes in white fivers, a value of £200.00. Lucy now had to tell Han how she came about the £200.00, who had sat still, not saying a word while listening to Lucy's story. Then she hugged her close, saying, "I knew that you were up to something, you little rascal, but nothing as dangerous as this. Your father always said that you would be the best climber he had ever witnessed and set out to teach you, passing on everything he knew. As long as you keep up with your schooling, I'm on your side and will help you as much as I can."

Hugging each other, they made plans to use some of the money to make additions to the inside of their house, plus a new school uniform for Lucy, hiding the rest of the cash in the chimney's secret section. In three days, another envelope arrived through their box from the same London contact, asking her father to return to that company's office for further information, offering more money to complete this job. One of her father's first rules was never to return to the scene of the crime, as it was a dangerous and foolish thing to do; many things could go wrong, and someone might see her, leading to a description being given to the police.

Lucy and Han discussed whether she should attempt to revisit the building; Lucy had an idea that she would go in during lunchtime dressed as a young schoolgirl, do the job, then change into different clothing before leaving the building. On the day of the planned crime, she went in through the building's front door dressed as a young schoolgirl with a small briefcase and was out again in 30 minutes: job done. She was now dressed in a two-piece grey suit, wearing high-heeled shoes and tinted glasses, with the briefcase tucked under her arm. The information was posted on that day, and a few days later, she received a bulky letter which contained £300 in white fivers.

RAVENS WOOD SCHOOL

At her Junior Church School, Lucy was an outstanding pupil, excelling in English, maths, and geography, which were her favourite subjects, scoring top marks and being recognised by the school elders as a very bright and talented child. The school governor was an influential businessman who had many contacts in the county, one of whom was a headmistress, Miss Endicott, of a very old private school. He discussed Lucy with her, saying that it would be a crime for such a talent in this young girl, at the age of fourteen, to be lost when she left school and entered the industrial world. An agreement was arranged between them that Lucy would sit the school's entrance exam to see if she had the ability to achieve a pass; if she did, she would be offered a position as a day pupil, provided he and the elders paid her fees.

So, at the age of 12, fitted out in a new school uniform, Lucy stood inside the private school's arched entrance and outside the porter's office, waiting for a senior girl to collect her and take her to the headmistress's office. Upon arriving, the girl spoke sharply to the porter, "Where is the brat Grant?" even though she could see Lucy standing there. "Come on, brat, and mind your P's and Q's." Setting off at a fast pace across the quadrant, through arched gateways and tramping up wide stairways, they ended up alongside a large door, which had a brass 'HEAD MISTRESS' plate fixed high on its wooden front. Rapping loudly, she spun around and marched quickly away.

"Come in," said a deep voice. Lucy turned the handle, pushed open the door, and moved into a large room where two oriel windows allowed the sunshine to flood the room. "Come here, girl," said a tall, bulky woman who was sitting behind an oak desk, watching her move across the floor