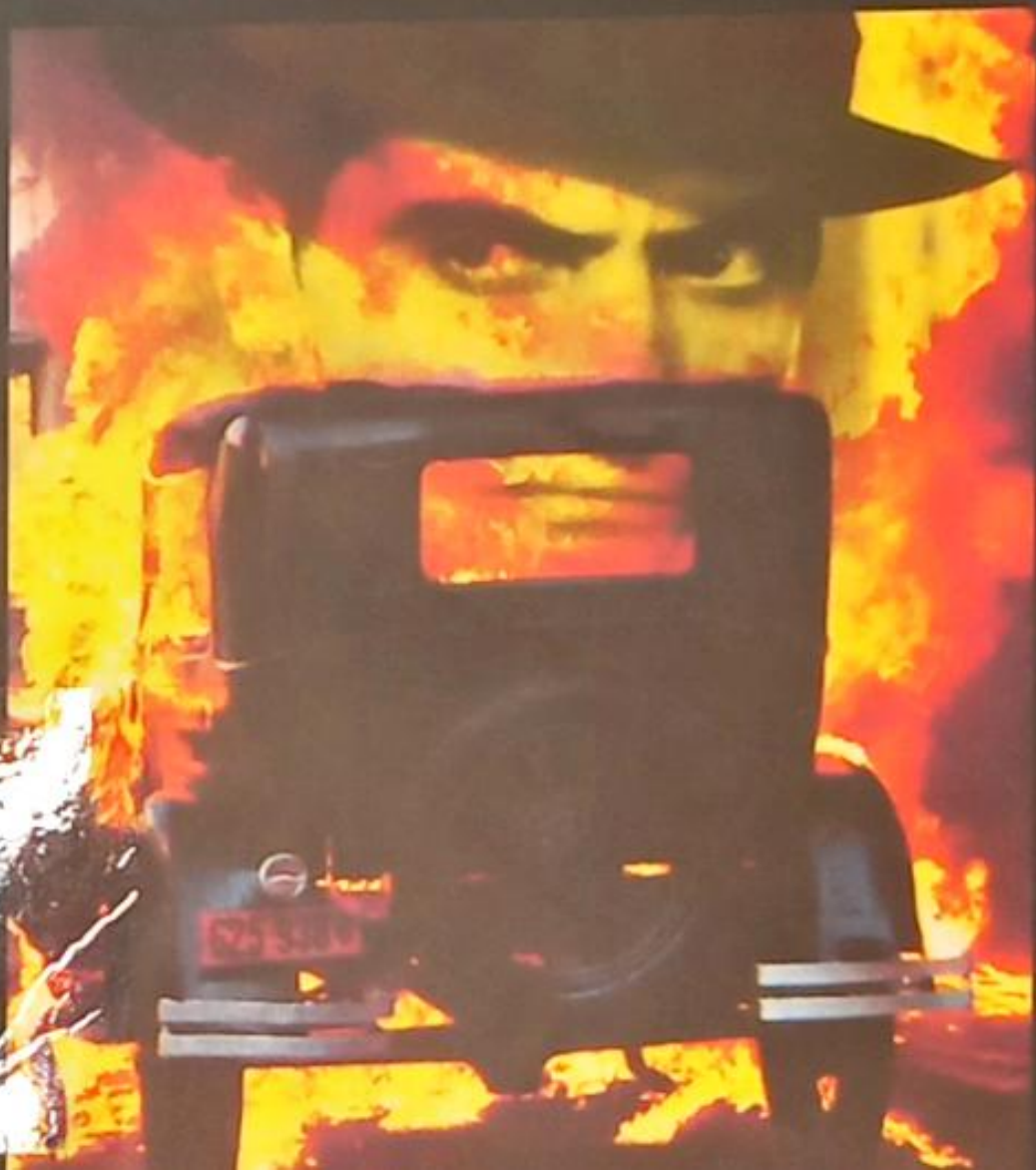


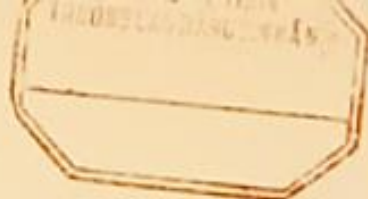
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AMERICAN CRIME STORIES

RETOLD BY JOHN ESCOTT



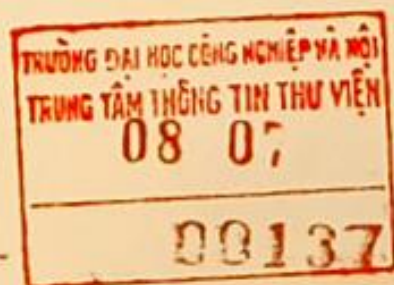
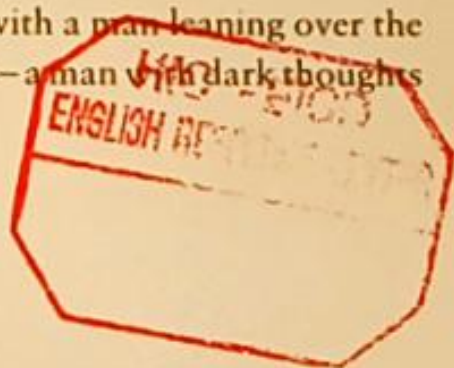


AMERICAN CRIME STORIES

Criminals in the United States of America are much the same as criminals in any other place. They lie, cheat, steal, carry guns, break into houses – and murder people. Sometimes they get caught, sometimes they don't. And some of them have bad dreams for the rest of their lives.

These seven stories by well-known American writers show us the many faces of crime. There are murders of passion, and of revenge; murders that look like suicides or accidents. There is robbery and mugging, fear and hate, love and laziness. There are the innocent and the guilty – but which are which? And there are the detectives: the amateur Louise, who won't accept that her cousin's death was suicide, and who goes looking for a lipstick; and the coolly professional private eye, who knows whose hand is behind the machine guns and hand grenades on a stormy night in Couffignal.

We begin with *Death Wish*, with a man leaning over the Morrissey Bridge late at night – a man with dark thoughts of suicide in his mind . . .





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Illustrated by Stephen Player

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Death Wish

LAWRENCE BLOK

The cop saw the car stop on the bridge but didn't think too much about it. People often stopped their cars on the bridge late at night, when there was not much traffic. The bridge was over the deep river that cut the city neatly in two, and the center of the bridge provided the best view of the city.

Suicides liked the bridge, too. The cop didn't think of that until he saw the man get out of the car, walk slowly along the footpath at the edge, and put a hand on the rail. There was something about that lonely figure, something about the grayness of the night, the fog coming off the river. The cop looked at him and swore, and wondered if he could get to him in time.

He didn't want to shout or blow his whistle because he knew what shock or surprise could do to a probable suicide. Then the man lit a cigarette, and the cop knew he had time. They always smoked all of that last cigarette before they went over the edge.

When the cop was within ten yards of him, the man turned, gave a slight jump, then nodded as if accepting that the moment had passed. He appeared to be in his middle thirties, tall with a long narrow face and thick black eyebrows.

'Looking at the city?' said the cop. 'I saw you here, and thought I'd come and have a talk with you. It can get lonely at this hour of the night.' He patted his pockets, pretending to look for his cigarettes and not finding them. 'Got a spare cigarette on you?' he asked.