

“The Case of the Kidnapped Confirmand” Episode IV of *Marty Luther, P.I.*

Pastor Geoff Scott

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Christ Lutheran Church

Menomonie, Wisconsin

Well, it happened again. I went out to my car the other night and there, underneath the driver’s side windshield wiper was a plain brown envelope. Inside was a fading mimeographed script for an old time radio show. It was originally broadcast on Reformation Sunday, October 28, 1937 at 7:30 p.m. on the stations (all six of them) of the short-lived Lutheran Radio Network.

Marty Luther, P.I. follows the adventures of a hard-boiled late-medieval detective who walks the mean streets of Wittenburg, Germany -- a place where theological arguments often turn nasty and deadly disputations and heretical doctrines lurk around every corner.

Announcer: The Beste Wurst Company, makers of a full line of the best wurst you’ll ever eat -- [low tone] bratwurst, [middle tone] liverwurst, [**knock, knock, knock; high tone**] knockwurst! -- is proud to bring you this week’s thrilling new adventure of . . . Marty Luther, P.I., [pause] Episode Four: “The Case of the Kidnapped Confirmand”.

ML: My name is Luther, Marty Luther. I’m a P.I -- Protestant Instigator. It was an overcast afternoon in late October. I was in my sumptuous office at the back of a seedy livery stable (second stall from the left) on the wrong side of town. I was watching a couple of cockroaches on my desktop fighting over what was left of my lunch. My money was on the little guy. When [knock, knock, knock]

ML: “It’s Open!” [**narrate**] The stall door creaked open, and a head peeked in.

Oswald: Hi Uncle Marty, Mom said I should come talk to you. She says it’s an emergency. Jeepers! This place is a dump!!

ML: Everyone’s a critic, kid. Pull up a slop bucket and sit down, Ozzie. You look like you’ve been dragged through the moat and hung out to dry on the drawbridge.

MLnarrate: Oswald was the only son of my sister-in-law, Prunella von Bora. The name described her to a tee -- body and soul -- from a wart on her nose the size of Mount Etna to her shriveled personality and a voice that would sedate a hyperactive rhino.

OvB: “Mom gave me this note. It’s explains everything. And she says you’re s’posed to call me Oswald, not Ozzie.”

ML: Well, Ozzie I tend to forget most things your Mom says. **[narrate]** He handed me the note and I gave it the quick 20-20. Hmmm. This was trouble with a capital T and that rhymes with P and that means Prunella.

ML: Kid, it says here, you haven’t been in church since you got confirmed two years ago. What gives?

OvB: Gee, Uncle Marty, it’s not like I don’t believe in God. It’s just that I’m real busy at school. And there’s my contrabassoon lessons, and sports and this girl I like and my job at the schnitzel shop, and I like to have some fun too. I mean, I got through confirmation OK. I’m -

ML: Ozzie, you’re going to have to speak up. There’s this annoying whine in the room; and it seems to be coming from your face.

KvB: But there’s nothing for me to do at church anyway. It’s boring.

ML: “All right. Can the excuses and seal the lid. Keep it up and there’s gonna be a shortage of reasons-why-not in this town. Look, all I’ve heard from you so far is Excuses. I don’t like ‘em. And God’s not too fond of ‘em either. What’s more, you’re not the first I’ve heard them from. Excuses are for chumps.

OvB: But I only . . .

ML: Ozzie, I know what’s going on with you, and it’s serious. So I’m gonna have to tell you about one of the most dangerous cases I ever took on. It was a case very much like yours, and it’s still so confidential you can’t tell a soul -- especially your Mom (if she has a one.)”

OvB: “I won’t tell. Promise.”

ML: OK. I call this “The Case of the Kidnapped Confirmand”. It all began with a call from Pastor X in the nearby city of Augsburg. He and his congregation had noticed an alarming trend in their congregation -- the young people were vanishing. And it seemed to be happening within a few months or years of when they affirmed their baptism. As a test, Pastor X confirmed all the bats infesting that church -- and sure enough, the bats disappeared, too.

The congregation was happy to see the bats go but they wanted the young people back. They just couldn't tell me where to begin. A few days later I got a note from Pastor X. It contained two words, a name -- Johnny Augsburg.

Ozzie, when I heard that name, my blood ran cold. Johnny A, the meanest, smartest operator in all of Bavaria. He practically owned Augsburg. Men who crossed his path rarely lived to tell the tale. He kept his name secret, but Pastor X, who had once been his pastor later told me Johnny Augsburg's real name: Siegfried Schnicklefritzen -- no wonder he used an alias!

I set a trap to get Augsburg alone, away from his hired goons. I executed it to the letter. And then it was just me and Johnny A, face to face.

JA: So, Luther, your little ruse seems to have worked. You know my men will find me very soon, now. What is it you hope to gain from this, besides a long and painful death. Your employer must be paying you very well.

ML: Johnny, I know I don't much time, so you're gonna tell me how you work this kidnapping operation. What's in it for you? Where are the confirmands. Tell me, or I'm going to have to slap you around -- theological-like.

JA: Why should I tell you? You are just a protestant instigator, a small man with big words. Do your worst, Luther.

ML: Ok, Johnny. Just remember, you asked for it. I've cracked tougher heretics than you like walnuts.

JA: I give you nothing.

ML: You are justified by Word alone. WHAP! Ugh

JA: I give you nothing!

ML: You are saved by faith alone. WHAP! Ugh.

ML: No wisecracks now, huh? Try this on for size. You are saved by grace alone. WHAP!

JA: All right, all right! No more, Luther. You have done what few men could do -- touched my heart as well as my jaw. I cannot by my own reason or understanding believe in Jesus Christ or come to him. There. I have given you now the Augsburg Confession.

ML: Sounds better than the Schnickelfritzen confession. I surprised you still remember the words of my explanation of the third article of the Apostles' Creed. There really is a saint in you, Johnny -- along with all that sinner, But just in case you feel like kidnapping more confirmands, think first of what the stooges in your gang would think when I tell them they're not really working for tough guy Johnny Augsburg, but for little Siggie Schnickelfritzen.

JA: No, Luther, anything but that. You win.

ML: So where's my kidnapped confirmand.

JA: Down at the bowling alley. You see I have a piece of the action on every place and everything in this town that would attract a high school kinder -- bowling alleys, amateur sports, music, amusement arcades, theaters, I make money on it all. I own this town.

ML: But you were confirmed. You believe in God? Why a life that tempts others to forget their God?

JA: Luther, all I can tell you is bad things happen when you ignore your faith. And there is always an excuse for doing it. I blamed my parents, my church, my family -- everybody except me. I forgot that when I affirmed my baptism, I said before God and my congregation, my family and friends, that I took responsibility for living among God's faithful people, for hearing his word and sharing his supper, for proclaiming the good news, for serving all people as Jesus did, and

striving for peace and justice. But I blew it off. And I've regretted ever since.

ML: Well, Ozzie, that's the case of the kidnapped confirmand. Johnny Augsburg teaching confirmation and leading a new and better life. Though it pains me to say it, your Mom did a good thing sending you here. She was taking her confirmation promises seriously when she did it. Your congregation wants and needs you, too; although sometimes they have funny ways of showing it. But God wants and needs you to include him in your life no matter what age. And church is the place he chose for us to do it. We are the body of Christ, the church, into which you were baptized into. It's a great place to live.

OvB: Thanks, Uncle Marty. I got the point: no more excuses. Maybe I'll see you in church sometime?

ML: Count on it. Here's worshipping with you, kid.

Tonight's episode featured Webb Woodley as Marty Luther, Manly Handsome as Johnny Augsburg, and Spanky Crabtree, Jr. as Oswald . Tune in again next week when Beste's Wurst, the best wurst you'll ever eat -- [low tone] bratwurst, [middle tone] liverwurst, [**knock, knock, knock; high tone**] knockwurst! -- brings you Marty Luther in his most baffling case ever -- "Dead Men Rising" on *Marty Luther, P.I.* This is the Lutheran Radio Network. Amen.

