

How do you get rid of a bad guy?

I have been wrestling with this dilemma for some time. I have a particularly powerful antagonist in *Empty Luck*. He is fully capable of killing my other characters and if he doesn't do so right away, you can be sure he would relentlessly track them down eventually. So somehow he has to be neutralized.

I can think of five ways to eliminate the threat of such a man.

1. Kill him off
2. Send him to jail
3. Pay him off
4. Hold something over him
5. Fool him

And each of the above has multiple variations. Killing him off doesn't necessarily mean murdering him. He could die in an accident or by disease or even by his own hand. If he is dead, he can't hurt the others. His death is absolutely final. Of course there is always the possibility of a close comrade of his seeking revenge, but by and large, for the purposes of this novel, if he dies, the threat is gone.

A little less final is having him go to jail for a long time. This is certainly a believable outcome, but tricky to achieve because the "good" characters in the book are also involved in his crimes. And again, there is the chance the antagonist might have the resources and cohorts to exact revenge.

Then there is paying him off. This is an even less reliable solution, certainly. In my book, the bad guy would logically expect money, a lot of it, but who's to say he wouldn't come back looking for more. And having crossed him once, he would be a dangerous enemy, not likely to forgive and forget, whatever the payoff.

A somewhat more dependable resolution would be to have some sort of significant leverage over him, something critical that would come to light if my "good" characters are murdered or harmed in some way. Though still not as absolute as death, this approach might make his threat negligible. I think I like this solution is intriguing, but it is also probably the hardest to construct.

Lastly, there is fooling him, the classic grifter outcome of making the victim feel he has won, has been successful, when in fact he was taken for a ride. Charming though this option is, It is very difficult for me to imagine how it could plausibly take place. And might he not eventually see through the scam? Still, it would be wonderful if the bad guy could be conned in some way that leaves him smiling.

I'll be working on this problem for a while, I think.