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SURFING THE WAVES OF POPULAR CULTURE
BY MICHAEL GILTZ & FRIENDS

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Happy Detective Day!

Have you ever helped to launch a holiday? Now's your chance! In reading a mystery novel, I stumbled across this information: the Detective Branch of London's Metropolitan Police was established on August 15, 1842. It was a plainclothes branch of detectives based at Scotland Yard, of course. The first head was Inspector Nicholas Pearce with Inspector John Haynes as his deputy. A handful of men served under them (roughly six) and it was for a while the only such branch in the UK (and presumably the world) dedicated to detectives. So, I think today is the 164th Annual Detective Day! Think of the possibilities: in the future, TV stations will broadcast marathons of "Columbo" and "The Rockford Files" and old mystery films, movie studios will release noirs like the upcoming *The Black Dahlia* pegged to this date, theatrical companies will revive Agatha Christie's *Mousetrap* or *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* or *Deathtrap*, bookstores will have readings and events celebrating classic and new mystery books. And I'll get to wear my deerstalker cape and smoke a pipe and shout out "The game is afoot!" while striding down the street with my Watson. So make sure to wish your friends and family a Happy Detective Day! Here's a rundown of the recent books and TV shows I've been watching that would be ideal for anyone looking to celebrate further.

*** *"The Moonstone"* by Wilkie Collins is a classic mystery tale, often considered the first mystery story of all. Edgar Allan Poe wrote some short stories before it, but the mystery as we know it (with a detective hero filled with faults and eccentricities, details the reader can parse out on their own and so on) is all here. It's quite modern, even if the mystery itself is rather tame and easy to solve. What Collins does offer is a gallery of great characters. There's Sergeant Cuff, a sly detective who loves roses and gets in arguments with the gardener while investigating the disappearance of the Moonstone. And there's the comic house steward Gabriel Betteridge, who reads "Robinson Crusoe" as if it were a Bible, constantly finding comfort and meaningful signs in

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