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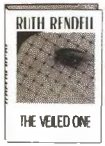

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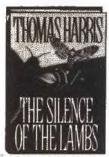

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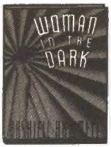

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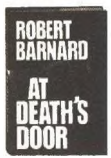

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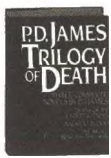

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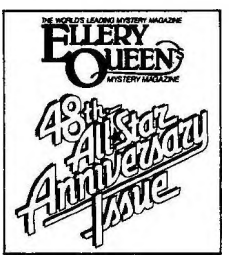
Contents

THE WORLD'S LEADING MYSTERY MAGAZINE

ELLERY QUEEN®

The Man with the Jesus Look	Peter Turnbull	**4**
Weeds	Ruth Rendell	**22**
The Snood of Night	James Powell	**29**
The Extra Mile	Patricia Moyes	**42**
Placebo	Andrew Vachss	**50**
Not Much of a Life	Robert Barnard	**54**
The Killer Everyone Knew	Edward D. Hoch	**62**
The Jury Box	Jon L. Breen	**79**
The Hitman's Daughter	William Rankier	**82**
The Last Man	Isaac Asimov	**92**
Napoleon Crazy	Takashi Atoda	**98**
Light Coming	H.R.F. Keating	**114**
Go to the Devil	George Baxt	**118**
Urban Legend	Reginald Hill	**127**
File #12: Do Not Go Gentle	Joe Gores	**133**



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a *NEW* Inspector Donoghue story by

PETER TURNBULL

When the young constable saw the woman, his face drained of color.

"Not your first dead body, is it, laddie?" Donoghue asked.

"Sir? Oh, no, sir—my first murder victim, though."

Donoghue grunted. "Have you anything for me?"

"Information from Detective Constable King, sir. Came on the radio. The lady—"

"The deceased."

"The deceased, sir."

"That's better, laddie—then we all know who we're talking about . . ."

THE MAN WITH THE JESUS LOOK

by PETER TURNBULL

Donoghue flicked his gold-plated cigarette lighter and played the flame over the bowl of Dutch-based tobacco he smoked in his pipe. It was his preferred tobacco and it was his preferred pipe, if not his favorite, a briar with a slightly curved stem. He pocketed the lighter and pulled and puffed as he pondered the woman.

He thought that she had style.

Style. He pondered the word. The word as is used, he thought, means more than being distinguished. Anybody can be distinguished—a well dressed man in spats or a bow tie and a greased moustache can be distinguished, as can those poor men in rags who sift through garbage cans. A woman who models evening wear on a catwalk is distinguished—so is her sister who lies shivering in a

back courtyard, stifling her screams as she gives birth to a child before strangling it. She has distinguished herself in her own way. And appearances mean nothing: the girl on the catwalk is probably no happier than her sister in the back court struggling with the afterbirth as the cats look on.

Donoghue took his pipe from his mouth and smiled gently at the woman. It was a smile comfortably and confidently encapsulated within their relationship: totally, wholly professional. It was a smile that said, "We can relax, you and I, we can be ourselves. This is a predicament neither of us can run away from." The woman smiled back, acknowledging the rules in her own way, in her own circumstances. The woman could be considered distinguished, but that was too easy—distinguished just meant separate. Style was something else, harder to define, harder to achieve, harder to uphold. Style, thought Donoghue, means I am three-dimensional but I am also harmonious, I blend yet have an image that is noticed. Snow on a mountain has style.

This woman, he thought, had style. He could tell by her posture and by her clothing that she had had style. Her clothing was smart and neat—not shabby, but not ostentatious, either. It was of high quality, and it suited her age. Not too young, not clinging to a long-gone youth, nor was it lunging prematurely toward an old age when a woman doesn't have to care any more. Her age, Donoghue, with a professional eye and after making allowances for discreetly applied makeup, put at the mid-fifties.

She had a slim figure and in her youth was probably considered a beauty. Age had expanded her, but not overly so. At the age of approximately fifty-five she had a figure that said, "I have not indulged myself in sweet things and alcohol, but if as the years have advanced my figure has grown outward, who am I to stem the hand of fate?" She had a finely balanced face, a good mane of hair, pleasant hands—a bracelet round one wrist—and two shapely long legs.

Her home was a solid four-bedroom stone-built house in a prestigious terrace in Broomhill, that part of the city of Glasgow where the gardens are neatly tended, where BMWs are second cars, where there is a residents' committee and a neighborhood-watch program, householders patrolling the area in pairs, on the alert for vandalism and burglary. It was the sort of house in the sort of area where people spend a lifetime paying off the mortgage, see their children up and away, settle back to a happy retirement and say, "Well, it was worth it, after all—life's not too bad, really."

Inside this house the decoration was tasteful. The original dark wood paneling had been lovingly and regularly polished, the carpet was a dark pastel shade which set off the paneling excellently, the shelves were lined with books. The major items of furniture were two large antique bookcases filled, not surprisingly, with old books. A veritable goldmine for a bibliophile, Donoghue reflected. Framed photographs on the mantelpiece of the old, original fireplace told of the woman's past life, of a husband, of children.

"Inspector Donoghue?" a voice called from the hallway—a gentle inquiry that shook Donoghue from his ruminations.

"In here," Donoghue replied equally softly.

The door of the room opened and a young constable entered. When he saw the woman, his face drained of color.

"Not your first dead body, is it, laddie?" Donoghue asked.

"Sir? Oh, no, sir—my first murder victim, though."

Donoghue grunted. "Have you anything for me?"

"Information from Detective Constable King, sir. The lady—"

"The deceased."

"The deceased, sir."

"That's better, laddie—then we all know who we're talking about."

"Detective-Constable King informs that the deceased is one Marian Mathieson, sir."

"Good Scots name, if nothing else," said Donoghue.

"Yes, sir," said the constable nervously.

Donoghue liked the constable. He noticed a keenness and an enthusiasm in the young man, barely in his twenties, and he wasn't going to featherbed him by speaking gently with him about murdered women and the shock of his first sight thereof. Donoghue thought this particular young officer would grow by being pushed and stretched. He didn't need coaxing, nervousness or no nervousness.

"The lady—"

"The deceased."

"The deceased was a teacher, sir. At the University. Her proper title was Doctor—she has a Ph.D." The constable consulted his notebook. "She never used the title for day-to-day purposes. Outside the University she was just Mrs. Mathieson from Number Seventy-two." The constable looked up at Donoghue. "Most of this information has been gleaned from neighbors, sir. She is a widowed deceased."

"She was a widowed lady," said Donoghue testily. "The deceased was a widowed lady. Get it right, laddie."

"Sir. Her husband died some ten years ago. She carried on alone with three children. The youngest is closest to hand—stays in the south side, an address in Newton Mearns. We're still trying to contact him to request a formal identification of the deceased."

"Very good."

"The deceased lived alone. She had no lodgers or anything. Her children—now adults, of course—called frequently and brought their children with them. Neighbors say that the first Sunday in each month was a real family affair, three sets of grandchildren for lunch. She taught history."

"What?"

"History, sir. She was a historian."

"Is that significant?"

"I don't know, sir. It might be."

That was the right answer. Donoghue asked, "What does the char say?"

"She's in the kitchen, sir."

"I know where she is, laddie."

"What does she say? Well, nothing, sir, not a lot. I mean, she found Mrs. Mathieson and called the police. She's still in shock."

"Have you been able to ascertain the frequency of her visits?"

"Daily, sir—that is, weekdays only. She didn't attend on Saturdays or Sundays or public holidays and things."

"And things," Donoghue echoed. "Today is Tuesday."

"Yes, sir."

"So we may safely presume that the deceased was alive yesterday."

"Yes, sir." The constable waited, then went on.

"The char stayed all morning, sir, whether Mrs. Mathieson was in or not. The University is closed for teaching purposes at the moment. Full term doesn't commence for a few weeks yet—that'll be the Christmas term."

"Christmas term," Donoghue repeated. He glanced out of the window at the street outside the house—a rich canopy of leaves on the trees, birds singing, a passerby ogling and being moved on by officers in summer uniforms. It seemed odd to be talking about Christmas on such a day. "So," he said, "the deceased wasn't teaching yesterday or today."

"Apparently not, sir."

"So she was alive yesterday."

"Yes, sir."

"The char lady arrives at about nine-thirty and leaves approximately at lunchtime."

"Yes, sir."

"So Mrs. Mathieson was alive yesterday lunchtime. It is now ten thirty-five in the forenoon of Tuesday. She was murdered sometime in the last twenty-one hours."

"Apparently so, sir."

"Good, we're making progress."

"We are, sir?"

"We are, sir. Have you been round the house?"

"Only as instructed, sir. I was upstairs with Detective-Constable King, sir. We left the upstairs when Mr. Bothwell, the forensic chemist, arrived to dust for prints."

"He won't find anything of interest."

"No, sir?"

"No. I've been standing in this room for twenty minutes. I entered the house by the front door. Why won't we find any fingerprints that would interest us upstairs?"

"Sir, I really have no idea."

"Haven't you? Have you noticed anything about the house?"

"No, sir." The young constable cleared his throat.

Donoghue was well aware that he was making the young man uncomfortable. Well, then—good. Positive learning experiences are often uncomfortable at the time. Further, it was an uncomfortable profession the young man had chosen to enter. One of the first lessons for any young cop was to notice things, small things, details. Not just see, but notice. Notice what was not present, as well as what was present. A keen eye will notice details. A keener eye will notice details in the omission. "Is that significant?" Donoghue asked the constable.

"Sir?"

"That you haven't noticed anything. What I mean is, if there had been an obvious sign of forced entry, then I sincerely hope that both you and I would have noticed it, and if the house had been ransacked for valuables, then I hope that you would have noticed that also."

"I'm sure I would, sir."

"Oh, I have every confidence that you would. But have you noticed that such expected details are missing? Entry was not forced, the house hasn't been turned. What, pray, do you deduce the significance of that to be?"

"That she probably knew her attacker?"

"Good. And?"

"Well, that her attacker came here to kill her."

"Why do you say that? She could have died as a consequence of a fight which got out of hand."

"The room is too neat, sir. Nothing is out of place."

"Good man. You see, this is what I mean by progress. We've been here less than an hour and in that time—"

The doorbell rang.

"And in that time we have ascertained that the deceased was murdered sometime after lunchtime yesterday."

"I think that we can pin it down a little closer than that, sir."

"Oh?"

"Well, I assume you've been told that when the char arrived this morning the first thing she did was to open the curtains of this room."

"I have not been so informed." Donoghue was not amused.

"She meant no harm, sir—she always opened the curtains first thing. Having opened them, she turned and found the deceased in the chair as she is now."

"Well, at least she had the good sense to leave the body as she found it. Carry on."

"Well, sir, if the curtains were drawn when the lady was about to put on the light or just after she put on the light, we can assume that she was alive at about ten P.M., which is when people start to switch on their house lights at this time of year. I think that if she was murdered during the daytime yesterday, we would have been informed. You can see clearly into this room from the street, and this is a fairly posh area—folk who live here call the police if the kids are making too much noise on their skateboards. They would notice a dead body—or curtains that were closed when the neighbor wasn't away, if the neighbor didn't respond to the phone."

Donoghue nodded. He had to concede that the young officer had a good point. In fact, not only that but that he had managed to score a point off Donoghue in that game superiors and subordinates play. Donoghue took his gold-plated hunter from his waistcoat pocket and glanced at the time. Ten-forty A.M.

"So," he said, "the deceased knew her attacker, who came with the sole intention of murdering her and did so sometime between ten last night and nine this morning. The deceased is still dressed in her daytime clothing, so we assume what? What do we safely assume?"

"That she was murdered sometime prior to her normal time of retiring for the night?"

"Good. Narrowing it down very well, are we not? I'd say that the deceased was not a night hawk. We can't be sure, but I believe it is not unreasonable for us to assume that she was killed between ten and midnight last night and that she knew her attacker—who called on her for no other purpose than to cut her throat, which he did most effectively."

A tall, silver-haired man entered the room. He carried a black bag. "Good morning, Inspector," said the pathologist.

"Good morning, Doctor Reynolds."

The young officer stepped to one side.

"So what have we here?" Reynolds looked at the late Marian Mathieson, her head lolling to one side, a black wound at the side of her neck.

"Well, as you see," said Donoghue, "our inquiries indicate that she may have been killed sometime between midday yesterday and nine this morning. We have reason to believe that we could narrow the time of death down to between ten P.M. and midnight, but that is supposition on our part and would have to be confirmed at the postmortem."

Reynolds shook his head. "I couldn't do that. I couldn't pin the time of death down to such a narrow time bracket. Much would depend on room temperature and the cause of death. The wound is obvious, but it need not necessarily be fatal. I've known people who have had their throats cut or who have attempted suicide in that manner who have continued to live for an hour or so before they expired. This death may be due to poisoning and the wound inflicted shortly after death to throw us off the scent. Anything is possible." He opened his bag and took out a thermometer, held it up for a few seconds until the mercury level settled, noted the reading, and, it seemed to Donoghue, committed the reading to memory. Then the pathologist glanced about him. "Those radiators," he asked the constable, "on or off?"

"Off, sir."

"Look," Reynolds said. "Be a good chap, will you, and find the central-heating control—probably in the kitchen—look at the setting, see if it was on last night—if at all, in this weather? This being summer, ours is switched off at the present."

"So is ours," said Donoghue.

Moments later, the constable returned. "It's shut down completely, sir," he said.

"Well." Reynolds replaced the thermometer in the holder and replaced the holder in his bag. "Nothing I can do here," he said. "If you're finished, taken all the photographs you have to take, I'll arrange to have the body moved to the mortuary. I'll phone you with my findings as soon as possible. Report to follow in due course."

Donoghue said, "Thank you, sir."

Glasgow in the summer. In the city, the streets are baking and airless.

Donoghue, in his office, had taken off his jacket but retained his waistcoat. He smoked his pipe slowly, filling his office with a blue haze despite an open window. He glanced up from the reports on his desk and looked out of the window. Buildings, concrete and glass, shimmered in the sun under a blue, near-cloudless sky. Outside his office, it was life and growth. Inside, on his desk, was death — documents in respect of.

Doctor Reynolds had phoned in with his findings very shortly after leaving the Mathieson house. He had conducted his post-mortem in the rapid time of just over sixty minutes and was able to confirm the first impression, that death was due to massive loss of blood which had occurred following the severing of the venous artery. In short, Mrs. Mathieson had had her throat cut. The doctor noted bruising to the palms of both hands and bruising to the upper right foot. This, he said, had no bearing on the death as such, but the bruising would have been caused about the time of death, so that it may be significant.

You never know, Donoghue had thought as he wrote down the nuts and bolts of Reynolds' findings. He then asked Reynolds about the time of death.

"From purely clinical observations, all I can say is within fifteen hours of when she was found," Reynolds replied. "It may be that your inquiries will be able to pin that down better than I can."

Donoghue laid the notes he had taken in telephone conversation with Reynolds to one side and picked up Elliot Bothwell's report. Elliot Bothwell, the bumbling, bespectacled forensic chemist who had once been a chemistry assistant in a secondary school and had given up mixing calm chemicals for students in order to take a job which often involved lifting fingerprints from deceased persons often in a state of decomposition, had concluded in his report that he could

find no fingerprints in the house other than those of the deceased and the cleaning lady. He had, though, noticed smudged finger marks and hand marks on the door, outside the door close to the handle, as though the door had been gripped by a person wearing gloves. The hand print indicated the person to be a male with a larger-than-average hand size. Bothwell hoped his information would be of use.

The man was older than Richard King had expected. He was also slower and much duller than he would have imagined the eldest son of the deceased to have been.

Given the lady's apparent age of fifty-five, he would have expected the son at the mortuary of the Glasgow Royal Infirmary to have been a man in his early twenties. In fact, he was paunchy about the stomach and balding. Some men, King had observed, can carry balding with considerable style, and this man could have managed to do so, especially if he paid prompt attention to his embryonic beer belly. In the event, it was the eyes that destroyed the image. If they were fuller, warmer, more confident, perhaps he could have cut a real dash, but his eyes had the haunted, hunted look of a man who has been beaten by life. King put his age at perhaps thirty-five, which he concluded, without a great deal of brainwork, must have meant that the deceased had given birth at about twenty years of age. Not abnormally young, by any means, but it was a young age to start a family if you're going on to get a good degree and build a career in higher education.

And the man was flatter of personality and duller of speech than King would have expected. The sheet was parted, the face exposed, and the man said, "Yes, that is mother." There wasn't the slightest hint of emotion.

King noted details in his notepad. The man was thirty-six, married, and gave his occupation as public servant. Richard King guessed that Mrs. Mathieson, University teacher of Broomhill, had been disappointed in her eldest son, Brian, public servant of Mount Florida.

Outside, but still under the shadow of the vast edifice of the Glasgow Royal Infirmary, the two men stood in light summer jackets, enjoying a warm wind under a near cloudless sky. "Our inquiries," said King, "reveal that your mother knew her attacker, or attackers."

"Oh?" Brian Mathieson raised his eyebrows.

"Well, there's no sign of entry having been forced, no sign of a disturbance in the house itself. We believe from that that somebody came to the house for the purpose of murdering her and for nothing else."

At this, Brian Mathieson showed a spark of reaction for the first time. He clasped his hand to his head and said, "Oh, my God, he did it! He said he'd do it and he's done it!"

"So that's it, sir," said King. "It's a likely explanation." He sat in front of Donoghue's desk. "I came back here, dug out the file, and, as you see, it's right enough. Poor woman."

"It ties in with the pathologist's report, too." Donoghue leafed through his notes. "You couldn't know, Richard, but Doctor Reynolds noted bruising on the palms of the hands of the deceased and also bruising to her right foot, as though she was trying to shut the door against somebody. And Elliot Bothwell has identified marks on the door, left by a gloved hand, probably male, in places suggestive of someone trying to force entry."

"So he rang the bell, she answered the door, recognized him and tried to shut the door again, but she hadn't the strength."

"That's about it, Richard. Poor woman, as you say. Raped three years ago in her own home, her attacker says, 'If you go to the police I'll kill you.' She does go to the police, he gets five years, comes out in three, and, it appears, carries out his threat within a few days of release. An animal—a pure animal." Donoghue glanced at the front sheet on the pile Richard King had signed out of Criminal Records and brought to him. "So we seem to be looking for one Nicholas McEwan, also known as Mad McEwan, aged now twenty-seven years. It's this last item that slays me. 'Of no fixed abode.' That's all we need. He's probably in Dundee right now."

"He'll have had to have a discharge address, sir. Even if it was only a hostel."

"Well, that will be the logical place to start." Donoghue checked his hunter. "Sixteen thirty-five. Who's on the back shift?"

"Ray Sussock and Montgomerie," said King. "Abernethy has drawn the graveyard shift this week."

"Good." Donoghue leaned forward. "I'll speak to Ray when he comes in. It's a back-shift number now. Got any plans for the evening?"

"Shelves," said King, a chubby, bearded detective-constable. "I've been promising Rosemary some shelves in the kitchen for some time

now. I've had the wood since November and I can't keep putting it off. Nice long white night ahead and it ought to be just a two- to three-hour job."

"Well, make hay while the sun shines, Richard. Unfulfilled promises like that have wrecked many a marriage. For myself, I'll hang on and hand over to Ray Sussock and then get home on time for once."

Ray Sussock drove his battered heap into the car park at the rear of P Division police station. He killed the motor and glanced at his watch. Sixteen fifty-eight hours. He'd made it with two minutes to spare. Just. He still had to get into the station, sign in, run upstairs to the C.I.D. corridor in two minutes flat in order to avoid the raised eyebrows and the obvious glancing at the gold-plated hunter by Detective-Inspector Donoghue, who was some fifteen years his junior.

It hadn't been a bad day, he thought as he crossed the car park, not bad by any means. A long lie in his bedsit, just a room in a big house, a room large enough to provide a bed, a wardrobe, an easy chair, and little else. It was his home until the divorce came through. Then he'd be able to force an action for Division and Sale, sell off the erstwhile marital home, the shrew could fend for herself, and he'd be able to buy a flat of his own. A place in which to enjoy a long retirement. At ten A.M., he'd traveled to the south side of the water, to Langside, to the home of Elka Willems. There he had stayed, lovingly, until four-thirty, when he had reluctantly pulled on his shirt and trousers and driven to Charing Cross to P Division to start the back shift. At five o'clock, he was sitting in front of Donoghue's desk.

"McEwan's the suspect," said Donoghue, handing Sussock the file on McEwan. "We dug the file out this afternoon. It had been gathering dust for the last three years. You'll see that there's a mug shot, full face, three-quarter, and profile, and I think the apt description of 'has the Jesus look.' "

Ray Sussock looked at the photographs. They were black-and-white, but they said enough. Long hair center-parted, beard and moustache, thin face. The boldly typed details said the rest: eyes blue, facial and scalp hair blond. "He looks angelic," said Sussock.

"He's an angel who raped a middle-aged woman and told her, no doubt as he was readjusting his tie and combing his hair, that if she reported him he would come back and kill her. She did in fact report

him, he duly served three years—quite a light sentence really—and it appears sometime between ten P.M. and midnight last night, he duly paid a return call and fulfilled his promise. Jesus look or no Jesus look, Ray, he's a very dangerous man."

"Any previous, sir?"

"Yes, as you see, all for violence. He seems to have graduated from breach of the peace to resisting arrest to serious assault and he rounded it off with a rape. Now he seems to have topped it off with murder."

"He got remission, so he didn't kick up when he was inside."

"No, a model prisoner by all accounts—just observed the rules and kept his head down."

"Background?" Sussock didn't take his eyes off the file.

"It's all there, Ray." Donoghue took his pipe from his mouth and examined the contents of the bowl. "But to paraphrase, he's the one and only son of a petty thief, who seemed to spend most of what he made on drink."

"Some start in life," said Sussock.

"Well, I think you'll see for yourself, Ray." Donoghue stood and reached for his coat, a light summer raincoat. "His father's address is given as his discharge address. I daresay that will be your first port of call."

"I daresay it will, sir." Sussock also stood.

"You won't find him there." Donoghue reached for his hat. "But it's as good a place as any to start looking."

The St. George's development is three blue and grey concrete highrises shooting up out of the decay and lockups and gap sites and corner bars, just a hop and a skip from the bottom end of Sauchiehall Street and the conspicuous consumption of the New Glasgow. Nicholas "Mad" McEwan's discharge address was on the tenth floor of the middle block. Ray Sussock went there with Malcolm Montgomerie. They took the lift with the usual torn linoleum floor, the dented aluminium doors, and the smell of stale urine inside. Inside also was sectarian graffiti—*I.R.A. Forever, Fennian Drummie, No Popery, William of Orange 1690.* The lift rose joltingly, slowly. Fast, smooth-running lifts in city-center office buildings didn't bother Sussock, but he loathed the ponderous, laborious lifts in the highrise schemes. When he rode in them, all he could think of was the ever-deepening chasm beneath his feet—cables, counterweights, and blackness.

The lift stopped at the tenth floor. The doors remained shut for a few seconds, as if determined to open in their own time and on their own terms. Eventually they rumbled open.

The floor directory was fastened to the wall opposite the lift shaft. The McEwans lived in flat forty-five, to the right. The two cops went right, down a corridor sticky with dirt and grease, past closed doors—nameplates above bellpushes and two or three strong mortise locks. There wasn't a great deal of personal, or defensible, space in St. George's—it wasn't a high-amenity scheme. It was often filled with homeless families on a basis of "Well, it's St. George's or the street, take it or leave it." Sussock and Montgomerie stopped outside the door of flat forty-five.

A door can say a great deal about the flat behind it. The men looked at the door. They saw splinters and knife scars in the old paint. They saw the name *McEwan* written in pencil on the plaster at the side of the door. They saw the metal letterbox wrenched halfway off the door. They could smell the inside of the flat from the corridor. It was a smell of heavy mustiness, of barely breathable air. Not an unusual smell in the experience of either Montgomerie or Sussock, but never a smell that one could get used to, speaking as it did of life at the bottom of the pile, of unwashed bodies in unwashed clothing, both often lying beneath unwashed bed linen. It spoke of bags of domestic refuse stacked up in the kitchen, having accumulated for weeks. It spoke of unwashed dishes and of carpets that stuck to the soles of your shoes. Sussock rapped the door.

Silence. Save for the echo of his knock down the empty corridor.

He rapped again.

"Who is it!" It was a harsh voice and was shouted from deep within the flat.

Sussock bent down and shouted through the letterbox. "Police. Open the door, please."

Eventually it was opened—but only eventually. It was opened by a man in a wheelchair. He had long, matted black hair, a deeply lined, flabby face, and he leered at the cops from his chromium-plated pram. He wore an old winter jacket, thick winter trousers, odd socks on shoeless feet. He smelled keenly of stale sweat and his breath smelled of alcohol. "Aye," he said, "what is it?"

"Police." Sussock flashed his identification.

"You said that already." The man's breath was hot.

"We're making inquiries about Nicholas McEwan. Is he here?"

"No," said the man. "Search the place if you want."

Montgomerie glanced over the man's head. The flat was dark and oppressive. "We will if we think it's necessary. You the father, aye?"

"Aye."

"Where did your son's blond hair come from?" asked Montgomerie.

"His mother. If that's anything to you." McEwan glanced up at Montgomerie, a tall young man with a down-turned moustache and chiseled features.

"So Nicholas isn't here." Sussock pulled the conversation back to relevancy.

"I told him to go."

"Why?"

"Because." It was a juvenile response.

"Come on!" Sussock allowed an edge to creep into his voice.

"No, I mean it," said McEwan the elder, looking up at the two cops from his wheelchair, not at all intimidated. "He does what I tell him to do. Always."

"Always?"

"Always. I brought him up like that. I wasn't always in this push chair." He slapped the armrests. "Once I had a good body."

"What happened?"

"Motor accident. I've learned to live with it. The other guy was killed outright."

"So, what about Nicholas?"

"Like I said, I told him to go."

"Why?"

"He told me what he did to that woman."

The cops were momentarily stunned and then they relaxed, and felt each other relax. So it *was* Nicholas McEwan that had murdered Mrs. Mathieson.

"You could have told him to give himself up."

"Aye, I could have done."

"So where is he?"

"Murphy's Vaults. It's on Maryhill Road."

"I know it," said Montgomerie.

"Well, he's there. He'll be there until you feel his collar."

"How long has he been gone?"

"Most of the afternoon. Time to fill himself with bevvy. I suppose it will be the last beer he'll be getting for some time. I mean it's murder, isn't it?"

"Worse," said Sussock. "It's premeditated murder. He'll need his

fill, all right. He won't be getting much where he's going. Christ, he only got out a few days ago."

"Aye. He had a promise to keep. He's a good lad, he does what he's told."

"You taught him to keep his promises?" Sussock asked coldly. "Did you tell him to keep this promise?"

"Aye," said the man in the wheelchair. "Some years ago right enough, but I told him to keep it. Probably wasn't a sensible thing to do—I mean, the lady's dead, so he says, and there's my only son looking at ten to fifteen in the slammer."

"I'd say it was a damn stupid thing," said Sussock. "I suppose you also told him to go out and rape the poor wretched woman in the first place?"

But the man just smiled.

Murphy's Vaults was a very old pub tarted up with very new decor. Plastic seats, velvet curtains, a jukebox, and space-invader machines that beeped every few seconds. At seven P.M., the bar wasn't very full. Sussock and Montgomerie looked around, clocking the punters in the dim artificial light, some sitting alone, others in pairs. But not one was Nicholas McEwan with the Jesus look. They approached the gantry. The barman in a white shirt forced a smile.

"Police," said Sussock.

"Do tell," said the barman with undisguised sarcasm.

"We're looking for Nicholas McEwan."

"Who?"

"Spitting double of Jesus Christ," said Montgomerie.

"Och, aye, him." The barman nodded toward a young man sitting next to the jukebox. "He was with that guy until about fifteen minutes ago. He'd taken a good bucket. I reckon he could walk home if home was a hundred yards away, but that's all. Off to get his head down, I would think."

The cops walked across the tartan-patterned carpet to where the boy sat beside the jukebox. They stood in front of him and waited until he became aware of their presence. He eyed them with bleary eyes.

"Police," said Sussock.

"You'll be wanting Nicholas, aye," said the young man.

"Aye," said Montgomerie. "Mind if we sit down?" The boy shook his head. The cops sat. There were about twelve empty pint glasses on the table.

"Nicholas drank most of that," said the boy. "I told him to get drunk."

"You did."

"Aye."

"Seems like people have been telling Nicholas McEwan to do a lot of things."

"We have to."

Both cops suddenly realized that the boy was very upset. It showed in his eyes.

"Meaning?" Sussock asked him.

"Meaning I grew up with him. Nicholas. I know you'll not believe me, but he's a wee gem, a really smashing bloke."

"You know what he did?"

"Aye, I know. He raped a woman, then he went back and murdered her. I know that, and I still say that he's a smashing bloke. See, I grew up with him—I know him. I know him fine well and I tell you he's a great bloke, you couldn't wish to meet a nicer guy. The trouble is that he hasn't an original thought in his head. Talk about being easily led—man, it's more than automatic obedience, it's automatic obedience with wheels on. —Been to his home?"

"Aye. Just after leaving it," said Montgomerie.

"Been inside?"

"Yes. We had to check he wasn't there."

"Some place, eh?"

"We've seen worse. Not much worse, I grant you, but we've seen worse."

"Well, he grew up in that garbage can, just him and his old man. His dad wasn't always in that wheelchair. Before his accident, while Nicholas was growing up, his old man used to knock him about something awful—to the point of knocking him unconscious, regularly. By the time Nicholas was sixteen, he was conditioned into unquestioning obedience. I mean, if you told him to jump off Kingston Bridge he'd probably go do it. And that's not an exaggeration."

"Are you telling us he was told to go and rape this woman?"

"Yes," said the boy, "by his old man. Nicholas just couldn't pull women. He was that shy. His old man told him to hang around over at the University, spot a woman who attracted him, track her home, ring her bell, slip in when she opened the door, and take her. Nicholas told me after he'd done it. The old man told him to threaten the woman, tell her not to squeal or he'd have to come back and kill her—and to mind that that was a promise he had to keep."

"So he kept it."

The boy nodded. "Nicholas was just one of the guys. If there was a rammy in the street, Nicholas would run with the pack. The others were streetwise enough to keep one eye cocked for the law, and as soon as they saw the blue flashing light they'd just melt and leave poor daft stupid Nicholas standing holding the offensive weapon someone had given him.

"But Nicholas, if he ever showed a bit of spark, he was just the milk of human kindness. I suppose that's what makes me angry. I mean, if you can see the situation from my point of view, you'd see that it was that animal in the wheelchair that raped and murdered that woman. But it's going to be a nice wee guy that wouldn't say boo to a goose who's going to go down for life for it. You'll find him outside, close by—up the street, down the street, I don't know. I said to him, 'Nicholas, you can't run any more—just go and stand somewhere and wait for them. And when they get you this time, they're going to crucify you.' " The boy was crying now. "So he went. Like I told him."

Sussock and Montgomerie went outside. It was a pleasant, warm evening. Swallows flew around the tenements. The policemen noticed a small crowd gathered at the side of an expanse of waste ground and strode toward it. As they approached, a woman saw them and detached herself from the mob and hurried toward them.

"You police?" she panted.

"Aye," said Sussock.

"Well, you'll need to come and see this and do something. There's a boy standing over there on the gap site, just standing there, not talking. See if he doesn't look like Jesus Christ."

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a *NEW* short story by

RUTH RENDELL

It was during the two-mile-long trudge to the Hithes' garden that George Wragley related how one of the Meynell children, with appropriate symbolism, had presented the opium-addicted Francis Thompson with a poppy in a Suffolk field, bidding him, "Keep this forever!" The eight-year-old Penelope Wragley had promptly tugged up a scarlet poppy by its roots from the grass verge and given it to Jeremy for his buttonhole, which her parents thought a very sweet gesture, though he was neither a poet nor an opium addict.

Ruth Rendell's latest novel, The Veiled One, *was pronounced "a spellbinder" by* Publishers Weekly, *who said of her collection* The New Girl Friend and Other Stories*: "Each entry is an example of Rendell's incomparable story-telling gifts." As is this new story, first published several months ago in England in* The Observer Magazine . . .

WEEDS

by RUTH RENDELL

"I'm not at all sure," said Jeremy Flintwine, "that I'd know a weed from whatever the opposite of a weed is."

The girl looked at him warily. "A plant."

"But surely weeds are plants."

Emily Hithe wasn't prepared to enter into an argument. "Let me try and explain the game to you again," she said. "You have to see if you can find a weed. In the herbaceous borders, in the rosebeds—anywhere. If you find one, all you have to do is show it to my father and he'll give you a pound for it. Do you understand now?"

"I thought this was in aid of cancer research. There's not much money to be made that way."

She smiled rather unpleasantly. "You won't find any weeds."

It cost two pounds each to visit the garden. Jeremy, a publisher who lived in Islington, had been brought by the Wragleys, with whom he was staying. They had walked here from their house in the village, a very long walk for a Sunday afternoon in summer after a heavy lunch. Nothing had been said about fund-raising or playing games. Jeremy was already wondering how he was going to get back. He very much hoped to catch the twelve minutes' past seven train from Diss to London.

The Wragleys and their daughter Penelope, aged eight, had disappeared down one of the paths that led through a shrubbery. People stood about on the lawn, drinking tea and eating digestive biscuits which they had had to pay for. Jeremy always found country life amazing. The way everyone knew everyone else, for instance. The extreme eccentricity of almost everybody, so that you suspected people, wrongly, of putting it on. The clothes. Garments he had supposed obsolete, cotton frocks and sports jackets, were everywhere in evidence. He had thought himself suitably dressed, but now he wondered. Jeans were not apparently correct wear except on the undertwelves, and he was wearing jeans—an old, very clean pair, selected after long deliberation—with an open-necked shirt and an elegantly shabby Italian silk cardigan. He was also wearing, in the top buttonhole of the cardigan, a scarlet poppy tugged up by its roots from the grass verge by Penelope Wragley.

The gift of this flower had been occasioned by one of George Wragley's literary anecdotes. George, who wrote biographies of poets, was not one of Jeremy's authors, but his wife Louise, who produced bestsellers for children and adored her husband, was. Therefore, Jeremy found it expedient to listen more or less politely to George going on and on about Francis Thompson and the Meynells. It was during the two-mile-long trudge to the Hithes' garden that George related how one of the Meynell children, with appropriate symbolism, had presented the opium-addicted Thompson with a poppy in a Suffolk field, bidding him, "Keep this forever!" Penelope had promptly given Jeremy his buttonhole, which her parents thought a very sweet gesture, though he was neither a poet nor an opium addict.

They had arrived at the gates and paid their entry fee. A lot of people were on the terrace and the lawns. The neatness of the gar-

dens was almost oppressive, some of the flowers looking as if they had been washed and ironed and others as if made of wax. The grass was the green of a billiard table and nearly as smooth. Jeremy asked an elderly woman, one of the tea drinkers, if Rodney Hithe did it all himself.

"He has a man, of course," she said.

The coolness of her tone was not encouraging, but Jeremy tried. "It must be a lot of work."

"Oh, old Rod's got that under control," said the girl with her, a granddaughter perhaps. "He knows how to crack the whip."

This Jeremy found easy to believe. Rodney Hithe was a loud man. His voice was loud and he wore a jacket of loud blue-and-red-checked tweed. Though seeming affable enough, calling the women "darling" and the men "old boy," Jeremy suspected he was the kind of person it would be troublesome to get on the wrong side of. His raucous voice could be heard from end to end of the garden, and his braying unamused laugh.

"I wouldn't want to find a weed," said the granddaughter, voicing Jeremy's own feelings. "Not for a pound. Not at the risk of confronting Rod with it."

Following the path the Wragleys had taken earlier, Jeremy saw people on their hands and knees, here lifting a blossoming frond, there an umbelliferous stalk, in the forlorn hope of finding treasure underneath. The Wragleys were nowhere to be seen. In a far corner of the garden, where geometric rosebeds were bounded on two sides by flint walls, stood a stone seat. Jeremy thought he would sit down on this seat and have a cigarette. Surely no one could object to his smoking in this remote and secluded spot. There was in any case no one to see him.

He was taking his lighter from his jeans pocket when he heard a sound from the other side of the wall. He listened. It came again—an indrawing of breath and a heavy sigh. Jeremy wondered afterward why he hadn't immediately understood what kind of activity would prompt the utterance of these sighs and half sobs, why he had at first supposed it was pain and not pleasure that gave rise to them. In any case, he was rather an inquisitive man. Not hesitating for long, he hoisted himself up so that he could look over the wall. His experience of the countryside hadn't prepared him for this. Behind the wall was a smallish enclosed area or farmyard, bounded by buildings of the sty and byre type. Within an aperture in one of these buildings, on a heap of hay, a naked girl could be seen lying

in the arms of a man who was not himself naked but dressed in a shirt and a pair of trainers.

"Lying in the arms of" did not accurately express what the girl was doing, but it was a euphemism Jeremy much preferred to "sleeping with" or anything franker. He dropped down off the wall, but not before he had noticed that the man was very deeply tanned and had a black beard and that the girl's resemblance to Emily Hithe made it likely this was her sister.

This was noplace for a quiet smoke. He walked back through the shrubbery, lighting a cigarette as he went. Weed-hunting was still in progress under the bushes and among the alpines in the rock garden—this latter necessarily being carried out with extreme care, using the fingertips to avoid bruising a petal. He noticed none of the women wore high heels.

Rodney Hithe was telling a woman who had brought a Pekingese that the dog must be carried. The Wragleys were on the lawn with a middle-aged couple who both wore straw hats and George Wragley was telling them an anecdote about an old lady who had sat next to P. G. Wodehouse at a dinner party and enthused about his work throughout the meal under the impression he was Edgar Wallace. There was some polite laughter. Jeremy asked Louise what time she thought of leaving.

"Don't you worry, we shan't be late. We'll get you to the station all right. There's always the last train, you know, the eight forty-four." She went on confidingly, "I wouldn't want to upset poor old Rod by leaving the minute we arrive. Just between you and me, his marriage hasn't been all it should be of late and I'd hate to add to his troubles."

This sample of Louise's arrogance rather took Jeremy's breath away. No doubt the woman meant that the presence of anyone as famous as herself in his garden conferred an honor on Rodney Hithe which was ample compensation for his disintegrating home life.

He was reflecting on vanity and authors and self-delusion when the subject of Louise's remark came up to them and told Jeremy to put his cigarette out. He spoke in the tone of a prison officer addressing a habitual offender in the area of violent crime. Jeremy, who was not without spirit, decided not to let Hithe cow him.

"It's harmless enough out here surely."

"I'd rather you smoked your filthy fags in my wife's drawing room than in my garden."

Grinding the cigarette into the lawn would be an obvious solecism.

"Here," Jeremy said, "you can put it out yourself," and he did his best to meet Hithe's eyes with an equally steady stare. Louise gave a nervous giggle. Holding the cigarette end at arm's length, Hithe went off to find some more suitable extinguishing ground, disappeared in the direction of the house, and came back with a gun.

Jeremy was terribly shocked. He was horrified. He retreated a step or two. Although he quickly understood that Hithe had not returned to wreak vengeance but only to show off his new twelve-bore to the man in the straw hat, he still felt shaken. The ceremony of breaking the gun, he thought it was called, was gone through. The straw-hatted man squinted down the barrel. Jeremy tried to remember if he had ever actually seen a real gun before. This was an aspect of country life he found he disliked rather more than all the other things.

Tea was still being served from a trestle table outside the French windows. Jeremy bought himself a cup of tea and several of the more nourishing biscuits. It seemed unlikely that any train passing through North Suffolk on a Sunday evening would have a restaurant or even a buffet car. The time was coming up to six. It was at this point that he noticed the girl he had last seen lying in the arms of the bearded man. She was no longer naked but wearing a T-shirt and a pair of shorts. In spite of these clothes, or perhaps because of them, she looked rather older than when he had previously seen her. Jeremy heard her say to the woman holding the dog, "He ought to be called a Beijingese, you know," and give a peal of laughter.

He asked the dog's owner, a woman with a practical air, how far it was to Diss.

"Not far," she said. "Two or three miles. Would you say two miles, Deborah, or nearer three?"

Deborah Hithe's opinion on this distance Jeremy was never to learn, for as she opened her mouth to speak a bellow from Rodney silenced all conversation.

"You didn't find that in this garden!"

He stood in the middle of the lawn, the gun no longer in his hands but passed on for the scrutiny of a girl in riding breeches. Facing him was the young man with the tan and the beard, whom Jeremy knew beyond a doubt to be Deborah's lover. He was holding up, in teasing fashion, for the provocation of Hithe, a small plant with a red flower. For a moment the only sound was Louise's giggle, a noise that prior to this weekend Jeremy would never have suspected her of so frequently making. A crowd had assembled quite suddenly

—surely the whole population of the village, it seemed to Jeremy, which Louise had told him was something over three hundred.

The man with the beard said, "Certainly I did. You want me to show you where?"

"He should never have pulled it out, of course," Emily whispered. "I'm afraid we forgot to put that in the rules, that you're not supposed to pull them out."

"He's your sister's boy friend, isn't he?" Jeremy hazarded.

The look he received was one of indignant rage. "My sister? I haven't got a sister."

Deborah was watching the pair on the lawn. He saw a single tremor shake her. The man who had found the weed made a beckoning gesture to Hithe to follow him along the shrubbery path. George Wragley lifted his shoulders in an exaggerated shrug and began telling the girl in riding breeches a long, pointless story about Virginia Woolf.

Suddenly Jeremy noticed it had got much colder. It had been a cool, pale-grey, still day, a usual English summer day, and now it was growing chilly. He didn't know what made him remember the gun, notice its absence. Penelope Wragley, having ingratiated herself with the woman dispensing tea, was eating up the last of the biscuits. She seemed the best person to ask who Deborah was, the least likely to take immediate inexplicable offense, though he had noticed her looking at him and particularly at his cardigan in a very affronted way. He decided to risk it.

Still staring, she said as if he ought to know, "Deborah is Mrs. Hithe, of course."

The implications of this would have been enough to occupy Jeremy's thoughts for the duration of his stay in the garden and beyond, if there had not come at this moment a loud report. It was, in his ears, a shattering explosion and it came from the far side of the shrubbery. People began running in the direction of the noise before its reverberations had died away. The lawn emptied. Jeremy was aware that he had begun to shake. He said to the child, who took no notice, "Don't go!" and then set off himself in pursuit of her.

The man with the beard lay on his back in the rose garden and there was blood on the grass. Deborah knelt beside him, making a loud keening, wailing noise, and Hithe stood between two of the geometric rosebeds, holding the gun in his hands. The gun wasn't exactly smoking, but there was a strong smell of gunpowder. A

tremendous hubbub arose from the party of weed-hunters, the whole scene observed with a kind of gloating, horrified fascination by Penelope Wragley, who had reverted to infantilism and watched with her thumb in her mouth. The weed was nowhere to be seen.

Someone said superfluously, or perhaps not superfluously, "Of course, it was a particularly tragic kind of accident."

"In the circumstances."

The whisper might have come from Louise. Jeremy decided not to stay to confirm this. There was nothing he could do. All he wanted was to get out of this dreadful place as quickly as possible and make his way to Diss and catch a train, any train, possibly the last train. The Wragleys could send his things on.

He retreated the way he had come, surprised to find himself tiptoeing, which was surely unnecessary. Emily went past him, running toward the house and the phone. The Pekingese or Beijingese dog had set up a wild yapping. Jeremy walked quietly around the house, past the drawing-room windows, through the open gates, and into the lane.

The sound of that shot still rang horribly in his ears, the sight of red blood on green grass was still before his eyes. The unaccustomed walk might be therapeutic. It was a comfort, since a thin rain had begun to fall, to come upon a signpost which told him he was going in the right direction for Diss and it was only a mile and a half away.

There was no doubt the country seemed to show people, as well as nature, in the raw. What a nightmare the whole afternoon had been, culminating in outrageous violence! How horrible, after all, the Wragleys and Penelope were and in a way he had never before suspected! Why were one's authors so awful? Why did they have such appalling spouses and ill-behaved children? Penelope had stared at him when he asked her about Deborah Hithe as disgustedly as if, like that poor man, he had been covered in blood.

And then Jeremy put his hand to his cardigan and felt the front of it, patted it with both hands like a man feeling for his wallet, looked down, and saw that the scarlet poppy she had given him was gone. Her indignation was explained. The poppy must have fallen out when he hoisted himself up and looked over the wall.

It was a moment or two before he understood the cause of his sudden, fearful dismay.

a *NEW* Scheherazadian tale by

JAMES POWELL

It occurred to the Caliph that a clever old owl such as the father of this would-be hawk should have no trouble confounding a simple jinn. But he also knew that the owls had paid dearly for the gift of wisdom. For now that they could see the consequences of things and actions, they found themselves in bondage to the Old Hag of Fear. Owls preferred to avoid physical danger and exploits along the high-adventure line. But what if the owl in question really believed his son to be a hawk?

James Powell's imagination and wisdom soar and surprise in all of his fictions, but never more so than in his Arabian Nights adventures of creatures gigantic and small, kindly and evil, majestic and lowborn, brilliant and dark . . .

THE SNOOD OF NIGHT

by JAMES POWELL

My masters, there was once an owl who believed his son to be a hawk and raised him in hawkish ways. One day as he watched with round, proud eyes while his offspring marched about wearing an old notched sword in a wooden scabbard, the father decided the time had come to beg Heron al Raschid, Caliph of the Bird Faithful, to give the son a commission in his army of the air.

Each dawn and each dusk, those disputed borderlands of day and night, the Caliph's bright legions met in battle with the flying hordes of the darkness, great, black-napped vampires armed with wicked fangs, afreets with flaming eyes and terrible eyebrows who sat in cross-legged ease in the loomed cockpits of flying carpets, all walled and turreted for war, mighty Marids, those giant lubberlipped hobgoblins who wish nothing well, demon dervishes of the spinning

persuasion who hover at tree level to strike at the Caliph's army from below, and flying he-ghouls and she-ghouls who would afterward picnic among the dead. Into that sky carnage, the young owl wished to go, and there the father believed his son belonged.

The two owls found Heron al Raschid wading in a pool in the palace garden, relaxing from wartime cares by working at his hobby, improving the breed of the tribe of small fishes that lived there, using his long beak to pick out and swallow those fish with tarnished silver or green gold. But when he heard the owl's request, the Caliph gave the matter his full attention, raking the water with his feet as a thoughtful man might run his fingers through his hair. For what he did for one owl father he knew he might soon have to do for all.

Now, the last thing the Caliph wanted was a regiment of staring, blinking owls. Even the most ignorant of his enemies knew that owls were so inquisitive by nature that they had to follow anyone who walked behind them with their eyes, and for that purpose could swivel their heads in a full circle. If a force of nightmare cavalry were to ride in a counterclockwise circle around and around a regiment of owls, the birds' heads would finally unscrew completely and fall to the ground—the youngest perishing first, for owls added a full swivel annually much as a tree adds rings.

Heron al Raschid looked the young owl up and down. As the owl father watched proudly, his son puffed out his feathers to make himself look more formidable and, laying a wing on the hilt of his sword, he struck a fierce pose. The Caliph raked the water with a thoughtful foot.

The day before in that same pool, Heron al Raschid had learned something that might well pluck victory from his grasp in his war against the Dark. Since the last weeks of winter, the Caliph's army had been advancing steadily into the territory of the Night on both fronts of dawn and dusk. In addition, he was about to forge a treaty of mutual aid with Caesar Waxwings, the ruler of the birds of heathen Frangistan. As he waded about the previous day, with his mind more on the war than on bettering the line of the finny folk, he absently plucked out a small eyeless fish with silver skin and swallowed it down. Perhaps, Heron al Raschid remembered thinking, I will gain a total victory over my enemies by Midsummer's Day.

But the little fish he swallowed did not agree with him. "You are wrong, O Commander of the Bird Faithful," said the fish. "Your

enduring kindness to my tribe has prompted my traveling up here from my home in the Well of Dreams beneath the Midnight Mountain. I bring you this warning: you win in battle now because the Forces of the Night have diverted a part of their strength to a dark purpose."

Here the Caliph swallowed apprehensively, and when the little silver fish spoke again its voice was much fainter. "Deep in the bowels of the earth, where the gloom stands so thick it can be cut with a knife, whole regiments of the Night have labored long and hard slicing off long thin strips from the darkness which others are weaving into a great net of incredible strength and fineness. I overheard their black design. Early one morning when the Sun has barely wakened and his hair still floats heavy and red upon the waves of the sea, the mighty many-armed Kraken who has joined forces with them, uniting dark sky and dark water as one, will rise up from the ocean floor and cast this net of darkness, this Snood of Night, over the Sun and drag him back down into an eternal dungeon in the deep." Here the horrified Caliph swallowed again.

Now the little silver fish's voice came from far, far away. " 'Who needs the Sun?' say the forces of the Night. 'It shines during the day when there is a surfeit of light—unlike our mistress, the Moon, who shines at night to light our way.' As they finished their weaving, I heard them say they would take this Snood of Night back to their headquarters under the Midnight Mountain. There a mighty jinn will place it under a rock so large that only he can move it. The jinn will then stand guard over the Snood of Night until the Kraken's minions come for it." The silver fish was barely audible now. "Act quickly, Caliph. Steal the Snood of Night or destroy it. Otherwise your cause is lost!" So said the fish and then was heard no more.

Now jinn were mighty creatures, possessors of great magical powers and well able to withstand any force the Caliph might send against them. But jinn are not particularly smart. Suliman the Wise, whom the inhabitants of Jinnistan feared above all others, was able to maintain his rule of law long after he died by the simple trick of ordering that his corpse be propped in a corner, chin resting on the pommel of his staff. So he ruled the jinn even from beyond the grave until time turned his staff to dust, tumbling his rag-clad bones to the floor.

Now, it occurred to the Caliph that a clever owl such as the father of this would-be hawk standing before him should have no trouble confounding a simple jinn. But he also knew that the owls had paid

dearly for the gift of wisdom. For now that they could see the consequences of things and actions, they found themselves in bondage to the Old Hag of Fear. Fools rushed in where owls feared to tread. Owls preferred to avoid physical danger and exploits along the high-adventure line. This the Caliph knew. But what if the owl in question really believed his son to be a hawk? It was worth a try.

The Caliph looked at the young owl, who scowled back hawkishly. "Last evening, the Night Wind's mouth organ sang me a hateful, triumphant song," said Heron al Raschid. "It told me that in the heart of the Midnight Mountain a mighty jinn sits on a great rock atop a web of darkness called the Snood of Night. To prove yourself worthy of a commission in my army, you must somehow steal or destroy this terrible weapon so it cannot be used against us." The Caliph looked up at the sky and sniffed the air. "Make haste. You must accomplish this task by the darkest hour of the night or all is lost."

Overjoyed, the young owl clicked his heels and with one proud look at his father he flew off somewhat in the direction of the Midnight Mountain, dragging his sword and scabbard after him. The owl father, left standing on the ground, watched him fly away with a worried look.

The Caliph said, "Your son is quick to the task. You may accompany him in an advisory capacity if you wish."

"To the Midnight Mountain, sire?" replied the horrified bird, shaking his head. "Oh, no. He is a hawk, you see, while I am just another cowardly owl." The father hopped from one foot to the other as he stared after his departing son.

Then he said, "Well, perhaps I could go with him part of the way to show him the road."

Owl father and son together flew long and hard over hills and rivers and green fields. It was early evening before they reached the Desert of Stones, where nothing but shadows grew. The sky in the west throbbed red now, for a fierce battle was raging between the forces of Day and Night. And in the midst of the red sky stood the dark stone spire they sought. "You should turn back now, Father," said the son. "Surely this is the hunting ground of the Old Hag of Fear you tell me of."

"You're clever for a hawk," said the father. "But I'll stay a little way longer. I have a plan to get you into the mountain." Then he

pointed at a shelf of clouds across the fading sky. "Rain comes," he said. "That's why our Caliph sniffed the air and said time was short."

"But why should rain matter?" asked his son.

"The Kraken will send flying fishes to collect the Snood of Night. They cannot fly far inland except in a heavy rainstorm."

As they continued on their way, the son asked in an offhand way, "Is she terrible, this Old Hag of Fear? And do you meet her often?"

"Quite terrible, my son. I avoid her usual haunts, like high places on windy days and low neighborhoods after dusk, but she can always find me when she wants. In the wee hours she loves to mount my sleeping chest as if it were her donkey and wake me with her bony heels. Then she grins and nods until I must tell and retell the beads of all my worries, real and imaginary, each growing greater at each repeating. By the time she departs I fear the dawn more than the darkness."

The two owls had reached their destination now. Rain was falling and lightning flashed. Thunder echoed off the slick, dark cliffs. They took up an observation post in a dead tree near the cavernous entrance in the mountain base—four round eyes in a large round hole. Below them, behind a portcullis grille, marched a one-eyed sentry of the minor afreet class carrying a jagged-headed halbert.

Suddenly the portcullis clanked upward, signaling the arrival of the broken squadrons of the army of the Night. The battle wounded trooped in in hobbled or assisted flight. It did the father and son good to see the price these creatures paid for their dark insolence. As they watched, a flying carpet with its port fringe slashed away came staggering and bucking through the air, the afreet sitting crosslegged atop it cocking his eyebrows this way and that to regain control. He almost made it into the mouth of the cavern, but then the carpet spun off crazily and crashed in a fireball against the mountainside.

Both owls ducked down. When their eyes rose up into the hole in the tree again, the rain had become a downpour. "It's time for you to go now, my son," said the old owl with a mixture of pride and pain. "Limp in there with the wounded and save the world of Light from the forces of Darkness. Just slay the jinn. He alone can lift the great rock from the Snood of Night."

The proud father could see the young owl was trembling with the excitement of going into battle for the first time. Oh, how I wish I was a hawk, too, and could go with you, he said to himself as he watched the young owl clamber out of the tree.

But no sooner had the son gone than he reappeared at the hole. "Father," he said, "if I leave you alone out here, surely the Old Hag of Fear will slip in and take my place. Wouldn't you feel safer coming inside the mountain with me?"

Realizing his brave son spoke the truth, the father started out of the tree himself. But suddenly the portcullis came crashing down. The last of the wounded had passed inside. They had missed the chance.

Both owls returned to the dry shelter of the hollow tree. As much as he would have liked to stay right there, the father peered out thoughtfully into the rain. His son's honor demanded another way be found into the mountain. In a moment, with muffled cadence, a formation of giant Moths of the Perverse, creatures drawn to darkness rather than flame, fluttered out of the downpour. The portcullis rose again to receive them. Clearly, the forces of the Night were gathering in their far-flung allies for tomorrow's dark battle. "Come, before the portcullis closes!" cried the father, leading the young owl down out of the tree. Nodding his head in the direction of the afreet he whispered, "Walk a bit ahead of me. Give that sentry your haughtiest look. But let me do the talking."

The afreet sentry watched their approach with the careful scrutiny of a one-eyed creature. The father had seen afreets who carried off their evil ways with a kind of terrible majesty. This was not one of them. That one eye had a crafty but lowborn glint to it. The coarse mouth wore a wolfish grin.

As they reached the portcullis, the father whispered another instruction. "When I poke you in the ribs, laugh."

"Who the hell are you two?" demanded the sentry, blocking their way with halbert steel.

"My master here is Admiral-General of the Feathered Batmen of Tabriz," announced the owl father imperiously.

"Who?" demanded the afreet.

"The Feathered Batmen of Tabriz," repeated the father, knowing full well the sentry suspected they were owls and hoped to trick them into answering in owl language. He added, "My master has come to add his legions to your cause. I am his gentleman's gentleman."

"The batman's batman, you mean," chortled the afreet, seizing the cheap pun the father had dangled in front of him. When both father and son laughed, the afreet, smirking at his own cleverness, forgot his suspicions and waved them through the gate . . .

The darkness inside the cavern was not at all like the cuttable commodity found deep in the bowels of the earth or like the one next to it, a darkness thick enough to snuff out a torch. Here the gloom was of the fractured-lump-of-coal sort, a kind of dim, reflected light as befits worshipers of the Moon.

The cavern was crowded with dark martial shapes moving with an air of great purpose. From crannies along the walls, sword-sharpeners' grindstones showered sparks everywhere. Soon the owls came to a divided passageway and a fingerpost whose three signs written in snail slime read UP, STRAIGHT ON, and DEEP DOWN. The Old Hag of Fear must have slipped into the mountain behind them, for as soon as the father read this last direction she touched his heart with her icy fingers. " 'Deep Down' it is," he told his son.

When they had followed the sloping corridor downward for a considerable distance, they began to hear a changing, not untuneful sound which grew louder as they went. Then they turned a corner in the passage and abruptly found themselves teetering on a narrow ledge with a great black pit yawning at their feet. An icy wind roared up out of the pit and disappeared into the darkness above them. The only way across the torrent of wind was a narrow bridge all curiously wrought of bones. The father felt the Old Hag of Fear leap onto his back and wrap her scrawny arms around his throat. He swallowed hard. Then he saw his fear mirrored in his son's immense eyes. Could the boy be worried about how afraid his father was? Might this concern deflect him from the Caliph's task? Ashamed, the trembling father grabbed the handrails tightly in his pinions and, laboring under his burden of fear, led the way out onto the bridge.

The wind howled and tried to snatch them up. But then its song changed, for the level surface of the bridge was made of the ends of hollow bones of all sizes and lengths. At each step their talons closed off some of the bones, changing the melody the roaring wind played on the bridge.

Halfway across, the father gave a sudden cry and turned back to his son, casting off the Old Hag of Fear in the exaltation of discovery. "My son," he shouted, "this wind must be the Night Wind, this bridge the Night Wind's mouth organ which told the Caliph the Snood of Night was woven and with the jinn! If so, this pit is the deep Well of Dreams where the North Wind sleeps!"

This said, the father gave all his attention to the dangerous crossing. They reached the other side chilled to the heart, their feathers

standing upright. In a cranny out of the howling wind, they rested for a moment to preen themselves and catch their breath. Then they followed another passageway to the entrance of a great cavern.

Cautiously, the two owls looked inside. Four flaming braziers threw wild light and shadow on the rough walls and on the immense figure of the jinn. The giant creature had a matted beard and a thatch of steel-grey hair with a large flat nose in between. His small red eyes were grained with recent slumber. The jinn sat crosslegged on a sleeping rug atop a rock half his size, polishing the green from his brass teeth—using half a lemon, which he dipped now and then in a pile of sand from a stoppered flask. As bachelor jinn are wont to do, he stopped frequently to inspect and admire his work, smiling hideously at a bronze mirror balanced on his knee.

The old owl shook his head in wonder. By the Seven Lakes of Hell, who would have thought he could have fathered a hawk who would slay so mighty a jinn? He looked proudly and expectantly at his son. The young owl drew his sword, squared what shoulders he had, and marched several steps into the cavern. Then he turned around and came back.

"Father," he said, "with no disrespect for your plan, I'd rather make my debut among the hawks by bringing back this jinn alive—and the Snood of Night, too."

Before the delighted father could ask his son how he intended to accomplish such a wonderful feat, the jinn's great head snapped around. "I smell owl," boomed the giant's voice.

Signaling his father to follow after him, the young owl stepped out into the light. "Not owls, mighty sir," he said. "We are Feathered Batmen of Tabriz."

The jinn cocked a thoughtful eyebrow. Then he returned to his mirror. "Is this Tabriz of yours far?" he asked, using a long black fingernail to scratch at a green speck on a pointed tooth.

"Far enough that marvels such as your honor seldom travel there," came the reply. "How could we miss this chance to look upon the famous Guardian of the Snood of Night?"

These words caused the jinn to strike a pose.

"What wild jinn stories our people tell," said the young owl with a dismissive laugh. "Some even say your tribe can make yourselves as big as a mountain."

"Oh, we can," insisted the jinn. "Indeed we can. To become great in size, I merely sketch certain sacred characters in the air with my left hand. Take it from one who knows, when a jinn feels unlovable

or unloved nothing gets him out of the dumps faster than making himself as big as a mountain and stomping around on the locals for a bit."

"But surely you can't make yourself small as a flea—small enough to creep into that stoppered bottle there?" asked the young owl.

The jinn picked up the bottle of sand, pulled out the stopper, and looked inside. "No problem. But it doesn't sound like much of a show to me. Still, you've traveled far. If that's what you want—"

The jinn raised his right hand to sketch smallness in the air when he noticed a soiled bit of string tied in a bow on the index finger. He stopped and harrowed his hairy forehead. The exertions of someone tussling with memory played across his face. "Ah ha!" he cried at last. "Now I remember! We jinn have been warned never to make ourselves small. My own Uncle Kemal, may he rest in peace, once obliged a guest by changing him into a cat. Then Uncle Kemal granted the cat's request and changed himself into a teeny tiny mouse. Can you imagine what that ungrateful cat did?" Both owls shook their heads. In a voice thick with indignation the jinn roared, "That cat ate Uncle Kemal!"

It took a moment for the giant to recover himself. Then he said, "That's why we don't make ourselves small or creep into stoppered bottles where people might imprison us until we ransom ourselves by granting three wishes." The jinn looked hard-done-by. "Every time a jinn grants a wish, he dies a little, did you know that?" His little red eyes became a sudden umlaut of suspicion. "I smell owl," he boomed again.

"Oh-oh, Father," said the young owl under his breath.

Oh-oh indeed, thought the old owl. This is what comes when hawks try to think. But he whispered back, "My boy, let's go back to Plan One. Kill the jinn and leave the Snood of Night beneath the rock forever."

But before the son could obey, the jinn stretched out his long arms, grabbed each owl by the top of the head in each great hand, and lifted both up off their feet. He held them at arm's length, shaking the young owl violently until he dropped the sword he had started to draw. Then the jinn drew the dangling birds closer.

"We jinn know a trick we do with clever owl." He smiled and pursed his lips. Keeping a firm grip on their heads, the giant blew until the bodies of his struggling captives made slow counterclockwise turns in the breeze.

In his mind's eye, the father saw his son's young body becoming

unscrewed from his young head and falling to the ground. He blurted out, "Kill us, O Jinn, for we deserve to die. Had we not dallied on the way, had we reached here yesterday, your happiness would have been assured."

The jinn's eyebrow took on an incredulous shape. "And how is that?" he paused to ask, but then resumed his blowing.

"Because of our fabled wisdom, the sultan of Tabriz sent the owls of his kingdom to seek out a husband for his daughter," explained the dangling owl. "She has scorned her many suitors, describing them as milk-fed, city-bred weaklings unworthy to rule her people or her bed. When a suitor presents himself, she orders that his first night at the castle a dried pea be placed under his mattress. If he complains of a bad night's sleep, she has him driven from the city with whips. Those who survive the dried pea must next endure lemons, oranges, and grapefruit without murmur or be whipped out of the city. No suitor has ever gotten past the grapefruit. Our princess is an only child. The sultan wants her married so that he can pass onto his son-in-law the burden of royal authority. That is why he sent us to search the world for someone who can sleep on a grapefruit or better. Imagine our disappointment to arrive here and find you fully rested after sleeping on a giant rock."

The jinn stopped blowing. "How come the disappointment?" he asked.

"Because yesterday on the road we met another team of owls who had found the son of an emeer who sleeps with a casaba melon under his mattress."

The jinn smote his rock and roared, "But how can a casaba melon compare to this?"

"It's too late, I'm afraid," the old owl informed him. "They rode fast horses. They should reach Tabriz within the hour."

"Tell me about this sultan's daughter," demanded the jinn.

"She is the marrow of the spine of perfection," said the owl. "Moon face, stag eyes, cypress waist."

The jinn dropped the owls. "Come then," he said. "My flying carpet awaits us in the hangar by the cavern entrance. It will transport us to Tabriz in a twinkling. The Snood of Night will be safe here. Who but I can move the rock? After your princess and I are married, I will return here in another twinkling and resume my guardianship until the flying fishes arrive. Afterward, I'll rush back to consummate the wedding night."

"Ah, I'm afraid you'll have to bring your rock," said the old owl. "As proof. The emeer's son is bringing his casaba melon."

The jinn looked sad. He wrestled with the mental dilemma, but in the end it threw him. His giant shrug shook the cavern. "Then your emeer's son and his damnable casaba melon have won the princess," he said. "For I have pledged a terrible oath. The rock must remain atop the Snood of Night until the Kraken's messengers come."

The old owl stroked his chin with a clutch of feathers. "Try this on for size. Suppose you brought them both along, the one atop the other. You'd be keeping your word without ever letting the web of darkness out of your hands."

The jinn screwed up his forehead in thought. "Tell me about your princess again," he demanded.

"Marrow of beauty, moon face, stag eyes, cypress waist," recited the owl.

The jinn shaped the figure of his imagination in the air with right hand and left. Then he slipped to the ground. Squatting down, he gripped the rock in his mighty arms and with a loud grunt he hoisted it a fraction of an inch. Wedging this burden tightly between his knees, he slid his fingers under the Snood of Night and pressed it up against the rock. His small red eyes bulging, he heaved rock and Snood upward, catching them both in the cradle of his elbows and trapping the top of the rock under his immense chin. With a jerk of his head to indicate that they were to follow after him, the jinn staggered flat-footedly out to the Bridge of Bones. The owls flew up onto his straining shoulders, digging in their talons and flapping their wings as if helping him to carry his load.

How the bones moaned beneath the jinn's feet. The Night Wind's new song was a labored one which grew more tremulous and uncertain with each step the giant took. By the middle of the bridge, the jinn was struggling to keep on an even keel.

"You need a better grip," suggested the father.

"We'll help all we can," said the son.

The jinn stopped. The wind roared up past him from the icy reaches of the Well of Dreams and tore at his beard and hair. Legs spread, he tossed the rock an inch into the air, putting a bit of a repositioning spin on it. When he did, the owls, who had clambered down his arms as if to plump up the Snood to receive the rock, grabbed opposite ends of the net of darkness. Pulling the Snood of Night open, they

dragged it up over the descending stone, the jinn's head, and down his entire body, tying it shut around his ankles.

When the angry jinn dropped the rock and grabbed for the owls, he lost his balance and toppled through the handrail of bones. For an instant he hung in the air, held up by the torrent of wind from the icy depths, struggling like a Moth of the Perverse trying to escape from its cocoon. Then jinn, rock, and Snood of Night plummeted downward like a sack of evil kittens bound straight to hell.

It was a considerable time before the two owls heard the distant splash and knew their task was accomplished. Then they released their grip on the bridge and let the Night Wind whisk them up and out through the top of the Midnight Mountain and into the dark sky.

Heron al Raschid was in the wading pool in the palace garden attended by one of his hawk generals when the two owls were ushered into his presence. The Caliph of the Bird Faithful had already rejoiced at the news of their adventures in the Midnight Mountain. But what of his promise to give the young owl a commission in the army of the air? The Caliph sighed. Why, he wondered, could nothing be satisfied just to be what it was?

Suddenly he thought he saw a way out of his dilemma. After offering the two owls his congratulations, he said to the father, "Before your son left on the task I set for him, he looked like a hawk. Now, from your account of his exploits, I see that he talks and acts like a hawk as well. Only one question remains. Does he dream like a hawk?"

The father owl blinked at these strange words.

But his son said confidently, "I always dream I am a hawk."

"Ah," said the Caliph with regret. Then he turned to the hawk general and said, "General, who do you dream you are?"

That imposing warrior came to attention with much rattle of silver and steel, of mail and medals. "Sire, I always dream I am an owl," he said, adding sadly, "though the words of wisdom I speak I must always leave with the porter when I pass back through the Gate of Dreams."

Heron al Raschid looked at the two owls. "And is not that the way things are?" he asked. "Is it not said that a cat's dreams are all of mice? And hawks dream that they are owls? Father, take your son home for now and teach him the owlish ways. And, son, learn what

your father has to teach you. Come back to me for your commission when you dream you are a wise owl, as the hawks do."

The two owls bowed. But the Caliph could see how disappointed they were and how ill-rewarded they felt. So he took the hawk general's sword and scabbard and slung them over the young owl's shoulder. "But in the meantime," he added, "we will make this young gentleman an honorary hawk ensign on special assignment. Soon this war will be over and we will be able to turn from the strategies of the brave to those of the wise. Our new hawk ensign's proven courage and devotion to duty makes him the ideal bodyguard for his father, our new Counselor of State."

With these words, the Caliph dismissed the two owls and pretended to return to his hobby among the little fishes of the pond. But out of the corner of his eye he was watching as they walked away. For even in those marvelous days, my masters, when birds talked, waged war, and went on adventures, the sight of a pair of swaggering owls was something rare to behold.

DETECTIVERSE

LOVE THINE ENEMY

by B. J. DAVENPORT

Behold the fair sea anemone
Who always embraces its enemy—
Invites friend or foe
And never takes "no,"
For dinner's a natural remedy.

a *NEW* short story by

PATRICIA MOYES

It all started when Robert Fosdyke and Sidney White met entirely by accident in a pub not far from the K. W. Andrews Company head office. Each had chosen the bar expressly because it wasn't frequently used by his colleagues, for each was deeply depressed and in need of money . . .

THE EXTRA MILE

by PATRICIA MOYES

There were several reasons why Robert Fosdyke and Sidney White were so successful in defrauding the firm for which they worked. The first and most obvious was that the scheme required two employees—one the head of a department and the other a senior accountant. These positions were held by Fosdyke and White respectively in the K. W. Andrews Company—a large but not mammoth concern producing toiletries, cosmetics, soaps, and perfumes, with a factory in the Midlands and offices in London.

Concomitant to this was the fact that the two men, although acquaintances, had never been regarded as friends, let alone accomplices: they were such different people. Fosdyke was a commuterland sophisticate, with a smooth manner, a flashy car, and an enameled wife. White was an excitable eccentric, living in a shabby suburb, with a passion for mathematics, an old station wagon, and a nondescript family. They took care to preserve and even emphasize these differences.

Third, and most importantly, they were not greedy. This was no multi-million fraud. Just a few thousands a month, unremarkable and unremarked in the budget of the company, and accounted for impeccably on paper. There was no reason why it shouldn't have gone on forever.

It had all started when the two met entirely by accident in a London pub not far from the firm's head office. Each had chosen this bar expressly because it wasn't frequently used by his colleagues, for each was deeply depressed and in need of money. This much was established over the first two drinks.

Their reasons for wanting extra cash were as diverse as the two men themselves. Robert Fosdyke wanted to buy a new car. His beautiful and demanding wife had actually threatened to leave him for one of her wealthier admirers if he couldn't come up with the Mercedes of her choice—and on his salary he could not. Sidney White's position was quite different. His love of figures had translated itself into a conviction that he could beat the system by gambling on horses. Unfortunately, his mathematical expertise did little to compensate for his complete ignorance of racing form, and he was currently being pursued by a posse of angry bookmakers. His wife, though nondescript by Fosdyke standards, was nevertheless a formidable lady, and she had no idea of his precarious situation. Sidney didn't wish to think about what would happen if she found out.

Consequently, the two men found themselves at the bar, commiserating with each other on the miserly policies of the K. W. Andrews Company, which—in the form of Ralph Andrews, the managing director—had refused to raise their salaries or grant them loans.

"It's not as though the company would miss a few paltry thousand a month," said Robert Fosdyke, almost stamping his beautifully shod foot against the bar. "It's just the Old Man's meanness. Always lecturing us about going the extra mile for the firm, but he won't budge a few inches to help us. After all, we're both in senior positions. I mean, I'm in charge of Bath Toiletries, and you're—"

"Senior accountant in charge of Accounts Payable." White ran his fingers through his hair so that it stood up in spikes, and called for another drink. "When I think of the expenditures I okay every day on the firm's behalf. I believe you put one in just last week, didn't you? Office equipment for two thousand, six hundred quid or thereabouts?"

Robert was suddenly interested. "You mean you okay the expenditure requests for my department?"

"That's right. I have discretion up to four thousand pounds."

"*I* have discretion up to four thousand pounds," said Robert.

Within ten minutes, the scheme was born.

It was very simple. At discreet intervals, Fosdyke would submit a request for new office equipment, quoting a very reasonable price from a firm named F & W Office Supplies. This request would be okayed by Senior Accountant White and fed into the computer, which in due course would spew out a check for several thousand pounds to the credit of F & W. This would be signed by Sidney and countersigned—a rubber-stamp operation—by a more senior official. A receipt would be duly received from F & W Office Supplies and filed away.

Meanwhile, Fosdyke had opened a bank account in the name of F & W Office Supplies, giving an accommodation address. Incoming checks were endorsed by the company's stamp and paid into the account. Outgoing checks were authorized to be signed only by F & W's mythical managing director, Harold French—otherwise Robert Fosdyke. The outgoing checks went to many different payees—automobile dealers, bookmakers, restaurants, and so on. Of course, this system required that White should trust Fosdyke not to take more than his fair share from the account—but, as Fosdyke often remarked, the basis of good business is trust.

As for the K. W. Andrews Company, everything was in order—except for the trifling fact that no office supplies were ever delivered. Ralph Andrews, the great-grandson of the company's founder, was middle-aged and lazy, as well as hiding his meanness under an affable manner. He was certainly not going to take the elevator down to Bath Toiletries to check on whether the new typists' chairs had actually arrived. It was a sweet little setup.

And then one Sunday evening, an extraordinary thing happened. Robert Fosdyke's telephone rang, and was answered by his wife.

"Yes? He's here. Who wants him? What? Just a moment—" She put her hand over the mouthpiece and turned to Robert, who was sipping a scotch and trying to finish the *Sunday Times* crossword. "Darling, there's some sort of madman on the line. Says his name is White and that he must speak to you."

"White?" Fosdyke stood up. "I don't know anybody called White. Oh, there's a chap at the office— Can't think what he wants." He walked over and took the telephone. "Fosdyke," he said crisply.

"Fosdyke!" White, always excitable, sounded near to hysteria. "Fosdyke, the most wonderful thing has happened!"

"Let me guess," said Robert. "You finally backed a winner."

"No, no, something much more wonderful than that!"

"The football pools?"

"Oh, don't be ridiculous, Fosdyke. I've finished with all that sort of thing. I've seen the light! I'm saved!"

Fosdyke frowned. He didn't like the sound of it. "Saved from what?"

"From the devil! From the world! From my sins! I'm born again!"

"Good God," said Fosdyke.

"Yes! You're absolutely right! God is good!"

"How did this happen?" Fosdyke inquired.

"You've heard of Jimmy Grant?"

"The crazy American hot-gospeler?"

"The great preacher!" amended White sternly. "He's on a tour of Britain. He held a meeting here in the Borough Hall this afternoon and my wife wanted to go. I'm ashamed to say that I didn't. I went along reluctantly, little dreaming that—"

"You mean he fooled you?"

"He opened my eyes, Fosdyke! He opened my heart! He changed my life." There was a little pause. "What I really wanted to tell you is that I'm going to the Old Man tomorrow morning to confess all about F & W. I'm going to drop the burden of my sin—praise the Lord!"

Fosdyke was flabbergasted. "Have you gone completely out of your mind?"

"Just the opposite. I've come to my senses before it's too late!"

"Look here, we've got to have a serious talk about this." Fosdyke glanced nervously at his wife, who was showing signs of being intrigued by the conversation. "How soon can you get to Waterloo Station?"

"About half an hour, I suppose."

"I'll meet you in the buffet in an hour's time," said Fosdyke, and rang off.

"What on earth was all that about, Robert?" asked Mrs. Fosdyke, raising her exquisitely groomed eyebrows.

"Oh, this lunatic from the office has some sort of hare-brained scheme that would involve my department." Fosdyke tried to sound offhand. "I've got to go and talk him out of it before the meeting tomorrow. I'll be back for dinner."

The buffet at Waterloo Station is a good place for an unobtrusive meeting. Fosdyke and White chose a remote table. Fosdyke ordered

a double scotch and White a cup of coffee. "No more booze for me, old man."

"Now," said Fosdyke briskly, "what's all this nonsense?"

"I've told you. Tomorrow I'm going to tell Mr. Andrews—"

"And what d'you think will happen? At best you'll be sacked. At worst you'll go to jail."

"I shall offer up my sin to the Lord. He will deal with me as He decides."

"And what about my sin?" Fosdyke demanded angrily. "I don't intend to offer it up to anybody, least of all the Old Man. I suppose it hasn't occurred to you that you'll be rolling me in the dirt? It's all very well for you—you can always say you thought F & W was genuine. But the bank manager has seen me as Harold French."

White turned a shining face to his partner in crime. "If only you'd been at that meeting, Fosdyke, you'd understand. You'd come with me tomorrow, and we could purge our souls together!"

An idea began to form in Fosdyke's mind. He said, "Well, of course it's true that I've never heard Jimmy Grant preach. If I did, I suppose it's possible that I might be converted, too. Is there a meeting next Sunday?"

"Clapton Town Hall at three P.M.," breathed White reverently. "You mean you'll come along?"

"I'll come along. Then, if I feel the same way as you do afterward we'll go together and confess on Monday week."

"Praise the Lord!"

"But meantime," added Fosdyke sternly, "you're to promise to keep your mouth shut. Carry your burden for a little longer."

White looked doubtful, but finally he said, "If it's to save a soul—I suppose— Very well, I promise." He held out his hand.

Fosdyke shook it—with great distaste—and went to catch his train home. He had contrived a week's reprieve. Would that be long enough, he wondered, to carry out his plan?

Next day at the office, Fosdyke started the rumors. "Have you heard? White in Accounts Payable has got religion. Yes, I heard it from somebody in his office. Positively fanatical, they say."

As a matter of fact, Sidney White hadn't mentioned his conversion to anybody at work. But when taxed with it, he didn't attempt to deny it. Soon, the K. W. Andrews Company was buzzing with it.

In the afternoon, Fosdyke found an opportunity to speak to Old Man Andrews himself.

"You've heard about White in Accounts, sir?"

"Oh, I believe my secretary mentioned something. Become a hot-gospeler, has he?"

"That's right, sir. Quite fanatical, I'm told."

"Well, no harm done, so long as it doesn't affect his work." Andrews spoke with his usual vague amiability.

"Exactly, sir," agreed Fosdyke with a smile.

On Tuesday, Fosdyke took things a step further. He set some papers on Andrews' desk, glanced round as if to make sure the secretary wasn't listening, and said, "I suppose you know the latest about White, sir?"

Andrews looked up, blinking. "Latest? No, I haven't heard anything."

"Well." Fosdyke leaned forward and lowered his voice. "It seems he's now trying to convert other people, sir. Holding revival meetings in the canteen, and so on."

"Not on the firm's time, I hope." Andrews chuckled, to give the impression that this was a pleasantry, which it was not.

"I'm afraid so, sir. People are getting rather upset."

By Wednesday it was Andrews who brought up the subject. He had taken it for granted that Fosdyke would be his source of information as to White's goings-on.

"I hope these revival meetings have stopped, Fosdyke. Really can't have that sort of thing."

Fosdyke looked grave. "It's not so much the meetings, sir. Nobody goes to them, anyway. No, what we're worried about now is that White may not be altogether—that is, that he may be suffering from delusions."

"Delusions? What sort of delusions?"

"Guilt complex, sir. He keeps calling himself a miserable sinner, and trying to get people to listen to his confessions."

"Hm." Andrews scratched his chin. "Doesn't sound too good, Fosdyke. Maybe he needs a holiday."

By Friday Fosdyke was ready to put the finishing touches to his plan. He congratulated himself that he had thought of everything. Earlier in the week, he had dipped into his ill-gotten gains to buy two portable word-processors, which cost him quite a bit more than the amount shown on F & W's latest receipt. He arrived early at the office and stowed them away in a cupboard. Late in the afternoon, he requested an interview with Mr. Andrews.

"Well, Fosdyke, what can I do for you? It's nothing about poor White, I trust?"

"I'm afraid it is, sir. Things have taken a really serious turn."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, sir, he's threatening to come to you on Monday and confess to having defrauded the firm of thousands of pounds."

"And has he?" Andrews was pardonably interested.

Fosdyke laughed. "Of course not, sir. Or if he has, certainly not in the way he describes. He's apparently picked on a small firm of office suppliers with whom I've been dealing a certain amount lately. As far as I can make out, he's convinced himself that the firm is purely fictitious, that none of the goods ordered have ever been delivered, and that he's been pocketing the money paid out."

"You know this firm personally, do you, Fosdyke?" asked Andrews.

"Yes, sir, I do. F & W Office Supplies is its name. The Managing Director is a chap called Harold French. I was at school with him. Everything is perfectly in order. But White—"

"Oh, well," Andrews sighed, "best wait till Monday. Maybe he'll have forgotten about it by then. If not—thanks for warning me, Fosdyke."

On Sunday afternoon, Fosdyke and White went together to Clapton Hall to hear Jimmy Grant give one of his hypnotic, if hysterical, sermons. In the atmosphere of sweat and fervor, Robert Fosdyke found it quite easy to simulate the same enthusiasm that was sweeping Sidney White off his feet. When it was over, he pronounced himself convinced, converted, saved, and born again. He would certainly, he said, go with White to Andrews' office in the morning and confess all.

The two men burst into the Managing Director's office at ten o'clock, unannounced—sweeping aside the protesting secretary. White went first, followed by Fosdyke. Andrews looked up in alarm.

"Mr. Andrews," cried White, "we've come to confess! We've been cheating you for years! F & W doesn't exist! It's Fosdyke and myself! But now we've seen the light—praise the Lord!"

Apologetically, Fosdyke said, "I tried to stop him, sir. I did warn you this might happen. Of course, I never thought he was going to drag me into it—"

Andrews stood up. "Mr. White," he said, "I'm afraid you're not at all well. Now just sit down quietly and we'll make sure you're looked after. Miss Pratt, please telephone for an ambulance at once."

White was gazing at Fosdyke with bulging eyes. "Judas!" he yelled. "Beelzebub! Instrument of the devil!" He tried to get up from his chair, but Fosdyke and Andrews restrained him.

The ambulance arrived within minutes, and White—still shouting imprecations—was removed by a crew of burly paramedics.

Andrews mopped his brow. "My goodness, Fosdyke, it was even worse than I'd feared. Poor fellow. We'll see that he's well cared for, of course. The firm stands by its people."

It was then that Robert Fosdyke took the extra, unnecessary step. After all, those word processors had cost him a pretty penny. He said, "Just to satisfy yourself, sir, perhaps you'd like to come down to my department and check on the latest delivery from F & W. I've got all the paperwork as well as the goods for you to see."

"Well, no harm, I suppose." Andrews smiled. "Don't want to find there's something fishy after all."

"Quite so, sir."

Andrews inspected the word processors and pronounced them excellent. Then he examined the documentation, and gave a low whistle at the sight of the figure on the invoice. "Certainly a bargain, Fosdyke. I congratulate you. I admire a man who's as careful with the firm's money as with his own."

"Thank you, sir."

It was as he was leaving Fosdyke's office that Andrews remarked, "I think we should do more business with F & W, Fosdyke. The Managing Director—French, I think you said his name was? Get hold of him, will you, and arrange for me to lunch with him later in the week. And tell him that I'd like to visit his warehouse and have copies of his full catalogue. I daresay he'll cut you in on a commission, too. You won't regret, Fosdyke, going that extra mile."

a *NEW* short story by

ANDREW VACHSS

Our first short story from Andrew Vachss, whose novels, Flood, Strega, *and now* Blue Belle *(Knopf), have earned him impressive attention from readers and critics in only a few short years . . .*

PLACEBO

by ANDREW VACHSS

I know how to fix things. I know how they work. When they don't work like they're supposed to, I know how to make them right.

I don't always get it right the first time, but I keep working until I do.

I've been a lot of places. Some of them pretty bad—some of them where I didn't want to be.

I did a lot of things in my life in some of those places. In the bad places, I did some bad things.

I paid a lot for what I know, but I don't talk about it. Talking doesn't get things fixed.

People call me a lot of different things now. Janitor. Custodian. Repairman. Lots of names for the same thing.

I live in the basement. I take care of the whole building. Something gets broke, they call me. I'm always here.

I live by myself. A dog lives with me. A big Doberman. I heard a noise behind my building one night—it sounded like a kid crying. I found the Doberman. He was a puppy then. Some freak was carving him up for the fun of it. Blood all over the place. I took care of the freak, then I brought the puppy down to my basement and fixed him up. I know all about knife wounds.

The freak cut his throat pretty deep. When the stitches came out, he was okay, but he can't bark. He still works, though.

I don't mix much with the people. They pay me to fix things—I fix things. I don't try and fix things for the whole world. I don't care about the whole world. Just what's mine. I just care about doing my work.

People ask me to fix all kinds of things—not just the boiler or a stopped-up toilet. One of the gangs in the neighborhood used to hang out in front of my building, give the people a hard time, scare them, break into the mailboxes, petty stuff like that. I went upstairs and talked to the gang. I had the dog with me. The gang went away. I don't know where they went. It doesn't matter.

Mrs. Barnes lives in the building. She has a kid, Tommy. He's a sweet-natured boy, maybe ten years old. Tommy's a little slow in the head, goes to a special school and all. Other kids in the building used to bother him. I fixed that.

Maybe that's why Mrs. Barnes told me about the monsters. Tommy was waking up in the night screaming. He told his mother monsters lived in the room and they came after him when he went to sleep.

I told her she should talk to someone who knows how to fix what's wrong with the kid. She told me he had somebody. A therapist at his special school—an older guy. Dr. English. Mrs. Barnes couldn't say enough about this guy. He was like a father to the boy, she said. Took him places, bought him stuff. A real distinguished-looking man. She showed me a picture of him standing next to Tommy. He had his hand on the boy's shoulder.

The boy comes down to the basement himself. Mostly after school. The dog likes him. Tommy watches me do my work. Never says much, just pats the dog and hands me a tool once in a while. One day he told me about the monsters himself. Asked me to fix it. I thought about it. Finally I told him I could do it.

I went up to his room. Nice big room, painted a pretty blue color. Faces out the back of the building. Lots of light comes in his window. There's a fire escape right off the window. Tommy tells me he likes to sit out there on nice days and watch the other kids play down below. It's only on the second floor, so he can see them good.

I checked the room for monsters. He told me they only came at night. I told him I could fix it but it would take me a few days. The boy was real happy. You could see it.

I did some reading, and I thought I had it all figured out. The monsters were in his head. I made a machine in the basement—just a metal box with a row of lights on the top and a toggle switch. I

showed him how to turn it on. The lights flashed in a random sequence. The boy stared at it for a long time.

I told him this was a machine for monsters. As long as the machine was turned on, monsters couldn't come in his room. I never saw a kid smile like he did.

His mother tried to slip me a few bucks when I was leaving. I didn't take it. I never do. Fixing things is my job.

She winked at me, said she'd tell Dr. English about my machine. Maybe he'd use it for all his kids. I told her I only fixed things in my building.

I saw the boy every day after that. He stopped being scared. His mother told me she had a talk with Dr. English. He told her the machine I made was a placebo, and Tommy would always need therapy.

I go to the library a lot to learn more about how things work. I looked up "placebo" in the big dictionary they have there. It means a fake, but a fake that somebody believes in. Like giving a sugar pill to a guy in a lot of pain and telling him it's morphine. It doesn't really work by itself—it's all in your mind.

One night Tommy woke up screaming and he didn't stop. His mother rang my buzzer and I went up to the apartment. The kid was shaking all over, covered with sweat.

He saw me. He said my machine didn't work any more.

He wasn't mad at me, but he said he couldn't go back to sleep. Ever.

Some guys in white jackets came in an ambulance. They took the boy away. I saw him in the hospital the next day. They gave him something to sleep the night before and he looked dopey.

The day after that he said he wasn't afraid any more. The pills worked. No monsters came in the night. But he said he could never go home. He asked if I could build him a stronger machine.

I told him I'd work on it.

His mother said she called Dr. English at the special school, but they said he was out for a few days. Hurt himself on a ski trip or something. She couldn't wait to tell Dr. English about the special medicine they were giving the boy and ask if it was all right with him.

I called the school. Said I was with the State Disability Commission. The lady who answered told me Dr. English was at home, recuperating from a broken arm. I got her to tell me his full name, got her to talk. I know how things work.

She told me they were lucky to have Dr. English. He used to work at some school way up north—in Toronto, Canada—but he left because he hated the cold weather.

I thought about it a long time. Broken arm. Ski trip. Cold weather.

The librarian knows me. She says I'm her best customer because I never check books out. I always read them right there. I never write stuff down—I keep it in my head.

I asked the librarian some questions and she showed me how to use the newspaper index. I checked all the Toronto papers until I found it. A big scandal at a special school for slow kids. Some of the staff were indicted. Dr. English was one of the people they questioned, but he was never charged with anything. Four of the staff people went to prison. A few more were acquitted. Dr. English, he resigned.

Dr. English was listed in the phonebook. He lives in a real nice neighborhood.

I waited a couple of more days, working it all out in my head.

Mrs. Barnes told me Dr. English was coming back to the school next week. She was going to talk to him about Tommy, maybe get him to do some of his therapy in the hospital until the boy was ready to come home.

I told Tommy I knew how to stop the monsters for sure now. I told him I was building a new machine—I'd have it ready for him next week. I told him when he got home I wanted him to walk the dog for me. Out in the back where the other kids played. I told him I'd teach him how.

Tommy really liked that. He said he'd try and come home if I was sure the new machine would work. I gave him my word.

I'm working on the new machine in my basement now. I put a hard rubber ball into a vise and clamped it tight. I drilled a tiny hole right through the center. Then I threaded it with a strand of piano wire until about six inches poked through the end. I knotted it real carefully and pulled back against the knot with all my strength. It held. I did the same thing with another ball the same way. Now I have a three-foot piece of piano wire anchored with a little rubber ball at each end. The rubber balls fit perfectly, one in each hand.

I know how to fix things.

When it gets dark tonight, I'll show Dr. English a machine that works.

a *NEW* short story by

ROBERT BARNARD

Suppose you were a successful murder-mystery writer. Suppose you were successful enough to be writing your memoirs. Suppose one of the murders in your past had not been fiction. Could your memoirs then be the whole truth and nothing but the truth . . . ?

NOT MUCH OF A LIFE

by ROBERT BARNARD

Terence Fernshaw decided to count the women he had had in his life, but when he got to three he gave up. He was never going to rival Simenon. Even if he could remember details about that third—the drunken business with the middle-aged crime writer during the weekend conference at Leamington Spa—it was not going to be a very titillating episode. He himself, in fact, was unsure which of two middle-aged crime writers it had been. He often saw paperbacks by the two in bookshops and always wondered. Some other way would have to be found of adding interest to his memoirs.

That was the problem, of course. For the life of a writer, once he has begun to write regularly and for money, was largely a matter of sitting at his desk and producing a certain number of words. Especially was this the case with the producer of popular novels, imprisoned by his agent's fiction that his fans were clamoring for a new book a year. Terence Fernshaw had loyal fans, but he doubted that they clamored. One a year they had got, however, and life had been somehow shunted off to the sidelines.

Except that one episode he could never tell of.

He had intended at this point to talk about what many regarded as his masterpiece, *That Jurymen May Dine*, and give his readers (would he have any?) some account of how he had thought of that

ingenious business with the weighted pendulum and the smoked salmon. On second thoughts, it seemed less than a good idea. His art was nothing if not mechanical, and if you laid bare the mechanics, what was there left? Who, having read his account, would want to read the book again, or, for that matter, read it for the first time? His art, he had to face it, was better left undissected.

Which was why he had thought of the women he had had.

And which was why, now, he thought back to his father, and remembered with startling aural clarity the tones and inflections of his mother as she said:

"Your father will kill you when he sees you like that."

And he remembered the almost physical effort with which he had bitten back the reply:

"If the sight of *it* doesn't kill *him*."

The cause of the exchange was trivial enough. He had come down to Redgehill, his father's modest manor house, with his hair perhaps half an inch longer than normal, clustering round his ears and brushed forward fashionably around his forehead. Small matter, you might say. But young Terence Fernshaw knew it was not, and Mrs. Fernshaw knew it was not.

"Long-haired pansy!" his father bellowed. "You're going down to Collins in the morning to have that off! I never thought to see my son looking like a Teddy-boy!"

The phrase Teddy-boy was out of date in 1963, but then so was Lieutenant-Colonel Fernshaw. His reactions belonged to a museum of non-thought. When a British statesman went to call on Chancellor Adenauer or Herr Erhardt, Fernshaw would bellow: "Traitor! Having dealings with the Kraut!" Other nations and all members of the Commonwealth were judged by how totally they put the interests of Britain before their own. Inevitably they were found wanting. He would shake his head at the inoffensive Norwegians. "They were neutral in the First War," he would say. "Sniveling cowards." At the mention of the Dutch, he would finger his moustache agitatedly: "A nation of collaborators." Modern art was inevitably "filth—and incompetently drawn filth at that." Music from Wagner onward seemed to him some kind of monstrous confidence trick. "They wouldn't know a *tune* if they heard one."

That being so, the Fifties had been a trial, and the world of coffee-bars, stove-pipe trousers, and duck's-arse haircuts had roused in him a bemused yet savage indignation. The permissive Sixties seemed likely to drive him to a dangerous level of frenzy.

Dangerous, in particular, because he had a dicky heart.

It was that thought, coming to him in a flash (as inspirations, or their crime-writing equivalents, had sometimes come to him later in life), that prevented him saying that the sight of the haircut might kill his father.

When his father had ordered him down to Collins, the village hairdresser (or -cutter, to be more accurate), Terence had merely shrugged and said, "Tomorrow's Easter Saturday. He probably won't be open. Anyway, this is on the orders of my boss. The bank is cultivating a more contemporary image."

"My God! I'd never have believed it of Barclay's. I've a good mind to shift my account!"

It hadn't been true, of course. Merely the sort of convenient lie young men tell their fathers. The hair had been grown long because a girl with whom he had had a tepid night out had later told one of his London mates that he was "a bit stick-in-the-mud." Hence the extra half inch, and the clustering of curls around the ears. In point of fact, his boss at the bank had looked at him over the last few days with an expression of decided disapproval. They didn't move with the times at Barclay's, not in 1963.

The bank—that, of course, was the rub. A branch of Barclay's in a dreary London suburb, serving housewives and small-businessmen, whose wants Terence ministered to at the counter. His father might see a great career in finance springing from such a beginning, but Terence saw only years and years behind the counter, followed perhaps, if he were lucky, by promotion to Trusts, or the Foreign Department. Most likely, though, his father had no illusions about his future; saw the bank merely as a punishment for Terence's dismal failure at Oxford. No doubt his father saw Terence's future as fulfilling the functions of the squire of Redgehill.

And so, with a different slant, did Terence.

Redgehill was not really a squire's manor, but it was undoubtedly a substantial, gentlemanly residence. The front it presented to the world was solid and regular, but behind it resolved itself into a maze of corridors and offices—chaotic, crumbling, but entrancing. If Lieutenant-Colonel Fernshaw's fantasy that he was the squire, with a son and heir to succeed him, was tinged with the ludicrous, Terence's was not. He saw the house as a writer's residence: the sort of place that would be suitable for a writer of, say, detective stories.

Himself, for example.

Already he had had the idea about the sealed letter and the drip-

less candles that was to form the central deception in *To the Manor Borne*. His notebook had several other ideas that he was later to use, though in vestigial, unexpanded form. For meanwhile there was the bank, and a day-by-day existence of crushing monotony, of exacted respect, of columns of figures, and steak-and-kidney pudding with two veg for 2/3d at lunchtime in the Waverley Cafe. Wage-slavery!

Even at night, in his little bedsit, his brain could only sluggishly tear itself from rows of pounds and shillings and piles of one- and five-pound notes to play with immensely more intriguing matters, such as the skin on the hot chocolate when the maid brought her bedtime drink to Mrs. Eversley-Wittersham.

To be a writer, to get started on the career that he knew was rightfully, naturally his, he had to leave the bank. Better still, if he were to leave the bank with Redgehill his own, and the money—not a fortune, but a tidy sum—to maintain it and produce a small regular income. His father, he knew, had left his money and his estate entirely to him—a beneficial result of his squire complex. His mother was treated to affectionate words in the will, and assured that she was only ignored because she had an income of her own (enough to buy her in her widowhood a small cottage in an inexpensive area).

Terence kept his hair curling experimentally round his ears the whole of that Easter weekend. The four days passed in a series of tiny rebellions—experimental ones, cold, their effects observed.

"I think the country's ripe for a Labour government," Terence would say casually when his mother was not in the room, watching the pure flush rise to his father's face.

"Those damned bolshies! Nearly ruined the country after 'forty-five!"

"Do you think Mr. Profumo's lying about his relationship with this Keeler woman?"

"Lying? Of course he's not lying! You think a Defense Minister would go with a tart like that? The man's a gentleman!"

"Really? That doesn't seem likely with a name like Profumo."

But essentially Terence was watching, watching. Surely his father was due for another minor heart attack. Or worse. That terrible flush, the choking sounds, the twinges of pain. Surely a heart attack could not be far away—if he played his cards right.

He was due down for another filial visit in a fortnight's time. He had already determined he would not go.

"Something's come up at the bank," he told his mother on the telephone. "I'll be working all weekend. It's quite an honor really. Shows they trust me."

"I'm sure they do, dear. But it *is* a disappointment."

"Never mind. I'll get two extra days when I come down in a month's time."

"But I'll be at your Aunt Flora's in a month's time."

Naturally you will, Mother. Do you think I'd forgotten that?

"Oh, blow. Well, never mind. Dad and I will get on famously. I promise not to mention Mr. Profumo."

For Mr. Profumo had just resigned, and the Macmillan government seemed to be crumbling in a welter of scandal and innuendo.

"Oh, no, Terence, *don't.*"

"I promise I won't, Mother. I didn't like the look of Dad when I was down last."

"Well, that's *it*, darling. I'm awfully worried. He gets so het up about everything, and telling him not to does no good at all. I have thought about putting off this visit to Flora's—"

"No, no. You go. I'll be there the whole time. You won't get a better chance to take a break away."

"Well, that's true—"

Terence timed his arrival at Redgehill meticulously. His father tended to go to the pub in the village for a "snorter" in the early evening, returning for dinner punctually at eight. This was a comparatively recent departure from routine. Previously, the Lieutenant-Colonel had liked a drink with the boys late on. His wife put the change down to failing health: she thought he didn't like returning up the dark village lanes so late at night. Terence put the change down to television. Officially, television was a "vile invention," and "utter trash" to boot. In fact, Terence suspected his father of having developed a secret fondness for *Come Dancing, Hancock's Half Hour*, and a blonde songstress called Kathy Kirby. He had looked at his father's mouth when this last appeared, and there was certainly saliva dribbling from the corners.

So early evening was the time to arrive. Terence walked the back road from the station with his bag and let himself in the front door, calling a greeting through to Molly in the kitchen. As he passed the sitting room, he took from his bag a long-playing record and put it on the turntable of the record player—bought in the early days of LP to play his mother's records of Kathleen Ferrier and his father's

collection of Vera Lynne and Anne Shelton. Then he went upstairs—to change, as he put it to himself, for dinner.

Timing was always to be his forte. In *The Eternal Watchmaker*, he was later to provide—and break—one of the most ingenious false alibis in modern crime fiction. The timing that evening was to require nothing in the nature of weighted pendulums or butter artfully prevented from melting. It was simplicity itself.

From the sitting room he heard his father come in the front door, heard him in the hall hanging up his hat and umbrella, heard him call to Molly: "Is Master Terence home?"—*Master* Terence, for crying out loud! Then, as his father started toward the sitting-room door, he pressed the start button of the record player. With the agonizing slowness of the machines of those days, the turntable started, the pick-up raised itself and then sedately took itself over and put itself down on the record. Already the surface noise was loud, for the volume was turned up high, but it was as the door was opened that the full blast was unleashed:

"Well, shake it up baby now,
Twist and shout—"

The Lieutenant-Colonel stepped back as the blast hit him. But the sound was as nothing to the sight. There was his son, his hair dangling greasily about his neck, dressed in a red jacket that made him look like a hotel bellboy (the Colonel was never to learn that these were called Beatle jackets), his lower parts clad in trousers that hugged his bum and clung to his spindly calves. Worse, he was clicking his fingers in time to the din, moving his shoulders up and down, wriggling his rear in a manner the Colonel associated with catamites in Port Said, and shouting along with the music. If he had known more about these things, the Colonel would have realized that his son could neither twist nor shout with any expertise, but he had no time for aesthetic judgments.

He sank heavily to the floor with a cry, clutching his chest. Terence turned the sound down and watched interestedly. His father seemed to be in the most terrible and intense pain. After a minute or so, though, the pain seemed to be lessening. Terence shut the door, to prevent the sound penetrating to the kitchen, then he turned up the sound again to as high as it would go and resumed his inexpert twist close to his father's head. It was not a pleasant experience (Terence Fernshaw seldom danced in later life), but before long his father was undoubtedly dead. Then Terence turned off the record player,

rapidly changed his clothes, shoved the jacket and trousers into the holdall, and ran to the kitchen to summon help.

It had all gone like a dream. Really it had been too easy, too little of a challenge (unlike the books, which sometimes took weeks or months of working out).

And of course he could never say anything about it to give spice to his memoirs. In a way, his father's death was of great interest, for he was one of the earliest victims of the permissive revolution, but none of the details could be given. Not just for the obvious reasons (for he did not see that any charge could have been laid against him at the time, let alone a quarter of a century later), but because it would strike a blow at the heart of his "art"—or craft, or trade, or knack, or whatever it ought to be called.

For the essence of a successful murder in real life is simplicity. It is a case of finding a weakness and working on it. Maybe he was lucky that his father had what today would be called a heart condition, but in fact a large proportion of the male population had just that. And if he hadn't had it, Terence would have found something else. Simplicity. Iago had understood that when he murdered Desdemona.

And his books—his literary Faberge eggs—depended entirely on artifice, on elaboration, on ingenuity of near-lunatic proportions. Only by cleverness piled upon cleverness could he spin out his slightly dated concoctions to the length demanded by his publishers. The murder he had committed, if told of, would expose the bogusness of the murders he had invented. It made them look almost—silly.

He wrenched his mind back to the women he had had. That girl from Peckham, on the night he left the bank. His ex-wife—well, he couldn't say much about her, the laws of libel being what they were. The middle-aged crime writer. Wasn't there another? A woman he had met in a pub in Nottingham, where he was doing ground research for *The Byron Memoirs?* A woman whom he'd taken out to the forest and—

Had they, or hadn't they? He scratched his head with his pen and laid it down. Really, it hadn't been much of a life.

"Q"

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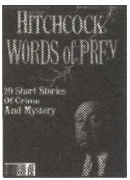

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Leopold was anxious to get to the point. "You regressed Ralph Simmons while he was under hypnosis?"

"I did," the psychiatrist said. "In his mind he returned to the night four years ago when Laurie Mae Nelson was strangled."

"And?"

"Captain, the man is innocent. He was nowhere near the scene of the crime that night. The story he told was true."

Leopold shook his head. "With all due respect to your professional skill, Doctor, Ralph Simmons was positively identified by four witnesses in a court of law . . ."

THE KILLER EVERYONE KNEW

by EDWARD D. HOCH

It should have been one of the least mysterious cases of Captain Leopold's career. Nearly everyone in the Harborview Cafe that night four years ago had known Ralph Simmons, and they'd all identified him as the young man who'd taken Laurie Mae Nelson out to her car in the parking lot and strangled her. He was arrested the following afternoon, hiding beneath the porch at his sister's home. A grand jury had indicted him, and he was tried and convicted within six months, still protesting his innocence.

That should have been the end of it, but it wasn't.

A criminal psychologist, Dr. Arthur Frees, came to know Ralph Simmons following his sentence of twenty years to life in State Prison. He came to Leopold one bright day in early June with his opinion that Ralph Simmons was innocent.

It was a relatively busy day for the Violent Crimes Squad, following the first really warm night of the year, and Leopold was im-

mediately sorry that he'd agreed several days earlier to the meeting with Frees.

The psychologist was a short bearded man with a ready smile and a twinkle to his eyes. "It's a pleasure to meet you, Captain," he said, giving Leopold a warm handshake. "I've followed your career in the press for some time."

"I didn't think anyone did that except my wife." Leopold smiled. "What can I do for you today, Dr. Frees? You said it was about a convicted killer named Ralph Simmons."

"That's correct. I've been working with inmates at the State Prison for the past year, especially with convicted murderers. With their permission, I've been regressing them through hypnosis to the actual moment of their crimes, recording their words as they describe the murders. I've gotten some fascinating, really breakthrough material."

"It's too bad hypnosis and polygraphs aren't admitted in a court of law," Leopold commented drily.

"It's true that they're not, but polygraph results still carry a great deal of weight in certain circumstances. My hope is that someday authentic sessions of hypnosis will be even more useful."

Leopold was anxious to get to the point. "You regressed Ralph Simmons while he was under hypnosis?"

"I did. In his mind he returned to the night four years ago when Laurie Mae Nelson was strangled."

"And?"

"Captain, the man is innocent. He was nowhere near the scene of the crime that night. The story he told is true."

Leopold shook his head. "With all due respect to your professional skill, Doctor, Ralph Simmons was positively identified by four witnesses in a court of law. He was in a bar where he was well known, he picked up a girl and took her out to her car, as he'd been known to do with young women before. This one resisted a bit too strongly and he strangled her. The case was really quite routine."

"Except that you got the wrong man. A jury convicted the wrong man. A judge sentenced the wrong man."

Leopold had pulled the file on the Simmons case in anticipation of Frees' visit. He opened it now to refresh his memory. "Four witnesses testified at the trial. All were positive in their identification."

"But none of them actually carried on a conversation with Simmons. They said hello when this man came in and that was all. It could have been someone who looked a great deal like him."

"I know. That was the defense argument. I'll admit such mistakes are made occasionally. The criminal justice system isn't perfect. But no one has ever produced this so-called double. If such a man exists, what happened to him?"

"I understand there was a water festival taking place at the time, with tall ships and various special events. A great many tourists and other strangers were in the area."

Leopold closed the file. He studied the bearded man across the desk, looking for the familiar signs of a do-gooder more interested in promoting some favorite cause than in actually freeing an innocent man. Certainly an article in a prestigious medical journal about a convicted murderer freed through the use of regression by hypnotism would give a boost to Frees' career. But there was something more here. The psychologist seemed sincere and open in his belief in the man's innocence.

"Exactly what did Simmons say under hypnosis?" Leopold asked him.

"I brought the tape and a transcript with me."

"I don't have time to listen now, but if you'd be willing to leave them—"

"Certainly," Frees said. "I have copies. Here's my office number at the University. I spend a good deal of time at the prison, but this is the best way to reach me. My secretary will take messages."

Leopold saw him to the door, not convinced he'd be giving the material on his desk any more than cursory attention.

He played the tape at home a couple of nights later. His wife Molly, now in corporate law after an earlier career as a public defender, listened with interest as a voice identified as that of Ralph Simmons narrated in trancelike tones the routine events of the summer night four years ago. He hadn't been anywhere near the Harborview Cafe that night, he said, but in the morning he heard the police were searching for him. He went to his sister Ruth's house and hid under her front porch.

When the tape ended, Leopold asked, "What do you think, Molly? Is he on the level?"

"I wouldn't believe him for a minute on the basis of that tape alone. There's a reason why testimony under hypnosis isn't admitted in a court of law. It's too easy to fake. We have no way of knowing if Simmons was really hypnotized or not."

She was right, of course. No matter how dedicated and convincing

Dr. Frees was, his tape and transcript carried no weight whatsoever. No judge would consider it grounds for a new trial, and no district attorney would give a moment's thought to reopening the case.

Still, the next day when Leopold reached Dr. Frees on the telephone, he said, "It's interesting, though certainly inconclusive. I'll take another look at the evidence."

"May I tell Ralph that?" Frees asked, making no effort to disguise his pleasure.

"I wouldn't get his hopes up. I only said I'd review the evidence. If it convinced a jury, it's probably still strong enough to convince me."

"If you're willing to pursue it, Captain, might I offer a suggestion? You asked what happened to the real killer if he was a double for Simmons. Remember the water festival with the tall ships? I was just reading in the paper that there's another festival down at the harbor next week and some of those same ships are returning. What if the real killer was a crewman on one of those ships?"

"That's pretty much of a long shot, Doctor. I'll keep it in mind, though."

"Thank you, Captain."

Leopold knew about the water festival on Long Island Sound. It always attracted crowds and there was usually a great deal of drinking. Laurie Mae Nelson hadn't been the only victim to die during one of the festivals. Just last year a young kid home from college had been knifed to death in a fight with another youth. Leopold had assigned Lieutenant Fletcher to ride herd on the crowds this year, working with the uniformed forces to move in at the first sign of trouble. It might not be a bad idea if he spent some time down there, too.

The harbor area was already crowded on Tuesday evening, the first night of the festival, though it was nothing compared to what Leopold knew the weekend would bring. He parked his car about a block from the Harborview Cafe and strolled casually among the groups of young people. Some carried beers, drinking as they walked, but they were generally well behaved. Off in the distance, at pierside, he could see the masts of three tall sailing ships outlined against the evening sky. He decided to walk down there before checking out the cafe.

All the ships were open for public tours, with a box or can near the gangplank to accept donations. Leopold quickly established that

only one of them had actually visited the harbor four years ago. The crew member at the gangplank wore a pirate's costume, with a bandana covering his hair and a black patch over his right eye. "Step right aboard," he urged Leopold. Only thirty more minutes tonight to tour the good ship *Bountiful*. It's free and it's fascinating."

Leopold went aboard and wandered around, inspecting the deck area and the cramped crew quarters below. There were perhaps a half dozen crew members, all young and muscular. They seemed anxious to end the tours and mingle with the festival crowd on shore. One older man wearing a peaked cap had an attitude of being in charge. "Are you the captain of the *Bountiful?*" Leopold asked him.

"That's me, Cap'n Bright. What can I do for you?"

"I seem to remember the *Bountiful* was in port four years ago."

"That's right. We've been sailing all up and down the east coast since then. We wintered in Puerto Rico this year."

"Got the same crew along this time?"

"Hell, no. These young guys like to move around. They're with me a year or two at most, then they get a regular job or meet a girl or something. Barry over there, the pirate at the gangplank, has been with me five years. He'd have been along last time, but no one else."

Leopold carried a photograph of the convicted man, but because of the bandana and eye patch, it was impossible to tell if Barry bore any resemblance to him. Leopold chatted with Captain Bright for a few more minutes and then departed.

There was little more to be learned at the Harborview Cafe. It had passed to new owners in the intervening years and the place had been completely remodeled. There was an attractive young woman behind the bar, mixing drinks while she carried on a running conversation with a couple of college kids. Leopold took a stool and waited until she'd finished. "Does Max Rhineman still work here?" he asked her.

She shook her head. "Max died of a heart attack last year, before I came to work here. I never knew him."

"Sorry to hear that."

"What'll you have?" she asked, wiping off the polished wood in front of him. Her long black hair glistened.

"Draft beer. What's your name?"

"Sally. I'll bet you're a cop."

"Does Ruth Simmons still live around here?" he asked with a grin.

"Say, you know all the old names, don't you? She's the one whose brother got sent away for killing the girl out in back of here." She

drew a tall draft beer, wiped off the excess foam, and set it in front of Leopold. "Yeah, Ruth's still at the same place. She comes in after work sometimes. Her husband dumped her years ago and she's still pretty lonely, I think."

"I can imagine," Leopold murmured. He hung around a while longer, sipping his beer, then left without finishing it.

It was Thursday afternoon before Leopold had an opportunity to visit the harbor area again. The evenings there had been remarkably calm thus far. That morning, he had told Fletcher about Arthur Frees and his work at the State Prison. Fletcher was not impressed.

"You're actually spending time on this, Captain? He's got nothing that's admissible in court. Ralph Simmons was guilty as sin. Four or five witnesses swore to it."

"Four. I've been refreshing my memory on the case. The bartender, a married couple, and a young woman all swore it was Simmons who took the girl outside."

"Sure, everyone knew him. Who else could it have been? He had no real alibi, just claimed he was wandering around at the carnival."

"That's what he said under hypnosis, too."

"Captain—"

"I know, I know. I just told Dr. Frees I'd look into it and that's all I'm doing. I'll drive down there this afternoon and talk to Simmons' sister."

As he'd been told, Ruth Simmons still lived in the same house, down a side street that led to a marina about a half mile up the river from the main harbor area. There were the usual bait shops and boating-supply places at the end of the street, and the Simmons house reflected the gradual deterioration of the entire neighborhood. It was a two-story frame dwelling with faded yellow paint that was beginning to peel.

Ruth Simmons was sitting on the front porch drinking a beer when Leopold got out of his car. She eyed him curiously, remembering him no better than he remembered her from four years earlier. "I'm Captain Leopold," he told her, climbing the steps to the porch. "I believe we met during the police investigation of the Nelson case."

She sat up straight in her chair, as if preparing to fend off an attack. "You're the one who pulled Ralph out from under the porch?"

"No, that was one of the arresting officers. Mind if I sit down?"

"Go ahead." She was around thirty, dressed in blue shorts and one

of the Water Festival T-shirts being sold all over the area. Her yellow hair was faded like the paint, in need of touching up at the very least. She wore it clipped very short.

"Have you been to see your brother lately?"

"I was up to the prison last month. I try to get there every month, but it's a fair drive from here. The round trip plus the visit takes half the day."

He told her about the psychologist's experiments. "It doesn't mean a thing, of course. It won't win a new trial. But judges have been known to give some weight to lie-detector tests, if only off the record, provided there's other new evidence as well."

"Why this renewed interest in my brother's case?"

"Dr. Frees makes a very good impression. He strikes me as a man who knows what he's talking about. That doesn't mean he can't be fooled, however. Your brother might be fooling him."

"It's funny Ralph didn't mention any of this when I visited him."

"He may have had his reasons."

She drank more beer. "Want one?" she asked him, holding up the bottle.

"Thanks, but I'm on duty. What can you tell me about the night Laurie Mae Nelson was killed?"

"Nothing I didn't tell in court. I've been living here alone ever since my husband took off five years ago. Sometimes Ralph used to spend the night here, especially if he'd had too many beers and didn't trust himself to drive back downtown to his apartment. He'd been here a lot that week because of the festival and all."

"Did he have a girl at the time?"

"Not really. He knew a few who hung out at the bars."

"Did he ever bring any of them back here?"

"No," she snapped, then amended: "Well, maybe once or twice."

"Did he ever bring Laurie Mae Nelson here?"

"No. I never even knew the girl—she wasn't from around here."

Ruth Simmons was correct in that. The dead girl had been from a town in the next county. She'd driven over because of the festival. None of the witnesses from the cafe remembered having seen her there before. "Did Ralph come here the night of the murder?"

"I found him sleeping here on the porch the next morning. The door was locked and he didn't want to wake me. He sometimes did that when he came by late. Then we heard on the radio that the police were looking for him in connection with the killing. When he

saw a police car heading down this way, he went and hid under the porch."

"Where were you the night Laurie Mae was strangled?"

"Same place I am most nights, same place I'll be tonight. I work the five-to-midnight shift at Golftown." Golftown was a miniature-golf-and-driving range across from the public beach area on the Sound.

"So you didn't see your brother at any time during the evening?"

"No, but if he says he was just walking around I believe him. Those witnesses just described somebody who looked like him, wearing jeans and a T-shirt like all the guys wear in the summer."

"They all knew Ralph," Leopold pointed out.

"And they'd all had a few beers. They didn't really talk to him. They could have been mistaken."

Leopold got to his feet. "Thanks for your time, Miss Simmons."

"I still go by my married name. Ruth Cutler."

"Pardon me—Mrs. Cutler." He paused on the top step. "Are Ellie and George Wainwright still living down here?"

She shook her head. "They were both killed last year in a crash on the expressway."

Leopold grunted. "How about Lucy Aarons?"

"Oh, sure, she's around. Works at the custard stand down by the public pier."

"Thanks."

It was almost evening and he walked down to watch the crowds on the carnival rides. Kids and young people, mostly. Screaming girls, boys pretending to be brave. The lights were beginning to come on, though darkness was still some time away.

"Captain Leopold!" a voice called out.

Leopold turned and saw coming toward him Dr. Frees wearing a plaid sportshirt and smoking a pipe, looking for all the world like a college professor on his summer vacation. "I hoped I might find you here," Frees explained. "And I wanted to check out the scene myself. —Did you know that three of the four witnesses against Ralph Simmons have died since the trial?"

"I just found that out," Leopold admitted.

"Doesn't that seem strange to you?"

"Two were killed in an auto accident. I'm checking on Max Rhineman, the bartender. He was in his late sixties and it seems to have

been a heart attack. Probably the deaths are just coincidence. What would anyone gain by killing them so long after the trial?"

"What if they'd been paid to lie about Ralph?"

"All four of them?"

"Stranger things have happened, Captain."

"Well, Lucy Aarons is still alive. I'm on my way to talk with her now."

"May I come along?"

"I suppose so."

They walked past the merry-go-round and the bandstand where a rock group was setting up its amplifying equipment for the entertainment to follow the fireworks at ten o'clock. Leopold recognized Captain Bright strolling through the crowd with his pirate crewman.

"See the fellow dressed as a pirate?" Leopold asked the psychologist.

"Yes."

"Does he look anything like Ralph Simmons?"

"It's difficult to tell with the eye patch, but I'd say no."

The custard stand by the public pier was a busy place as darkness descended. The pier itself was the best viewing area for the fireworks, to be launched from an offshore barge, and a long line had formed to buy custards before the start of the action. Leopold avoided the line and leaned over the counter to speak to a young woman with an empty cone in her hand.

"Pardon me, you're Lucy Aarons, aren't you?"

"That's me." She filled the cone from a shiny chrome custard dispenser.

"Captain Leopold from the Violent Crimes Squad. I'd like a word with you. It's about your testimony in the Simmons case."

"See that line? I can't talk now. Catch me between ten and ten-thirty. All the concessions close down during the fireworks."

"All right," he agreed. It was only an hour's wait.

He and Frees walked out to the end of the crowded pier. "This is a dangerous place at night," the psychologist remarked, "even with the lights on. They should have a railing along here."

"Write a letter to the public-safety commissioner," Leopold suggested.

"Will that get action?"

"No. Nothing will get action until someone falls off and drowns." He paused. "I have to tell you, Doctor—the odds are strongly against reopening the Simmons case."

"I'm trying to change those odds."

They started back toward the custard stand when Leopold saw the pirate from the *Bountiful* without his eye patch. "There!" he told Frees. "Do you see any resemblance now?"

"The pirate? I didn't notice his face. I'll go after him. I'll catch up with you later."

He disappeared into the crowd and Leopold continued on. He saw a patrol car parked at the edge of the crowd and walked over to find Fletcher speaking with the officer inside. "Pretty calm so far, Captain," Fletcher said. "We busted up a fight in a parking lot, but there's been nothing like the trouble in previous years. There are some undercover narcs working the crowd—that's probably putting a damper on the drug action."

Leopold was satisfied. "I have to speak to someone at ten, then I'll be heading home."

The first skyrocket shot up from the barge as he reached the custard stand. It was already closed and he caught a glimpse of Lucy Aarons walking onto the pier with another young woman. Although her long hair was pinned up off her neck, Leopold recognized her as Sally, the bartender from the Harborview Cafe. He hurried after them.

There was a multiple burst of fireworks overhead, plumes of color lighting the night sky. Leopold glanced up for an instant, and when he looked back the two young women were lost in the crowd ahead. The pier was filled with people now, moving in both directions. He hurried on, edging past the spectators as best he could. A brilliant series of multicolored mushroom shapes seemed to march across the sky, accompanied by crackling bursts of sound. The watching crowd gasped at the beauty of the display, and for a moment all movement on the long pier seemed to cease.

Then a woman screamed and there was a splash.

A wave of panic swept across the pier. Someone else screamed and two young men immediately dove into the water after the fallen spectator. While the fireworks streaked across the night sky, Leopold pushed his way back along the pier for help. Finally he saw Fletcher hurrying toward him, attracted by the screams.

"Someone's in the water," Leopold called to him. "Get an ambulance and the scuba squad!"

"They're standing by, Captain."

By the time he returned to the other end of the pier, the young men had located the victim and were attempting to lift her from the

water. Once she was on the pier, they started administering artificial respiration in relays. Leopold identified himself and bent to get a better look at the girl.

It was Lucy Aarons, and it was clear to him that she was beyond revival.

It was a long night for Leopold, but he was back in his office by ten A.M. Fletcher came in with two cups of coffee and settled into his favorite chair across the desk. "You look as if you could have used a few more hours' sleep, Captain."

"Couldn't we all? What did you find out?"

"Well, you were right. The Aarons woman drowning last night means that all four of the eyewitnesses against Ralph Simmons have died since his trial. But it's got to be a coincidence. The bartender, Max Rhineman, was a heavy drinker and a smoker and he had a heart attack one night. It happens all the time. The young married couple—well, that was a sad story. Their little sportscar was hit head-on by a truck that had wandered onto the wrong side of the road. The driver admitted he'd smoked a couple of marijuana cigarettes and he's in prison now for a few years."

"Lucy Aarons could have been pushed from that pier," Leopold suggested.

"Sure, but there were plenty of people around, Captain. The odds were against her drowning before they pulled her out."

"Is the autopsy in?"

"Not yet." Fletcher finished his coffee. "I've got that bartender, Sally Olcott, outside. You want to see her now?"

"Send her in."

The attractive barmaid entered and took a seat. "I can't add anything to last night's statement," she told him. "Lucy and I got separated in the crowd."

"I just have a few questions, Miss Olcott. You weren't working at the Harborview four years ago when Laurie Mae Nelson was killed?"

She shook her head. "I was living in California at the time. They didn't hire me until Max Rhineman had his heart attack."

"How did you happen to know Lucy Aarons?"

"She was a regular at the Harborview, and we struck up a friendship. We were both unmarried, about the same age—"

"Did she ever mention the Nelson killing?"

"Oh, sure. I'd gone to school with Ralph Simmons—I even visited him a few times in prison. No one else ever went except his sister,

and I know he was grateful for the friendship. Naturally Lucy and I talked about the case."

"Did she have any doubts that he was the killer?"

"None. She said it was Ralph in the bar, and that he picked up Laurie Mae and they went out to the parking lot. There was no doubt about it—everyone knew it was him."

"What about last night? Did you go to the custard stand to meet her?"

Sally nodded. "I was off, and she closed up during the fireworks, so I went down to meet her. We strolled out on the pier for a better view, but there was such a crowd we got separated. Then I heard a scream and a splash."

"Wasn't she afraid to go out there? It's not a very safe place without a railing, especially at night."

"Oh, Lucy was a good swimmer. In fact, I can't understand—"

"She was a good swimmer?" He knew good swimmers drowned sometimes, but it was unusual.

"Sure. Sometimes when we were both off, we'd go swimming in the Sound together. Both of us were sort of between boy friends and we didn't like to swim alone."

"You've been very helpful," Leopold said. "We may call on you again."

She turned at the door and gave him a grin. "I knew you were a cop."

Leopold chuckled and phoned the medical examiner.

There was very little water in Lucy Aarons' lungs. She hadn't drowned. She'd died from a thin, almost unnoticed chest wound that had penetrated the heart. The medical examiner speculated that it might have been made by a long hatpin or something similar.

Arthur Frees arrived at Leopold's office just before noon. "With all the excitement last night I never got back to you. I followed that pirate back to one of the tall ships. He looks a *little* like Simmons, but no one could honestly mistake one for the other. His name is Barry Kinski, by the way. He's the captain's nephew."

But Leopold was barely listening. His mind was on Lucy Aarons and how she'd died. "You heard who fell off the pier last night?"

Frees nodded. "Lucy Aarons. What do you make of it?"

"I don't know. Vengeance for her testimony, perhaps. But if that's the case, why wait nearly four years?"

"You mean you think someone killed her?" The psychologist seemed surprised. "I thought it was an accident."

"No accident. She was murdered." Leopold came to a quick decision. "I'd like to visit Ralph Simmons at the State Prison."

"When?"

"Tomorrow. Can you help arrange it?"

"Absolutely."

Late in the day, Leopold drove down to the harbor area once more. There was always the possibility that the Aarons killing was unconnected to the Simmons case, but he'd never been a great believer in coincidences like that. He parked his car in the bathhouse lot and walked across the street to Golftown. It was just after five o'clock and Simmons' sister Ruth was working behind the counter, passing out buckets of balls for the driving range and well-worn putters for the miniature-golf course.

"You heard about last night?" Leopold asked.

"I heard," she said with a nod. "I can't say I'm shedding any tears. She's one of them that testified against Ralph."

"And now they're all dead."

"Yes." She filled another bucket of scuffed golf balls. "It's as if someone was taking revenge for their testimony against my brother."

"You'd be the most likely one for that," he pointed out.

"I wouldn't have waited four years to kill her. Besides, I was working here last night—I couldn't have killed her. You need to look for someone who had a reason to wait four years."

"Who could that be?"

She shrugged. "Maybe someone who's been away for four years."

Leopold started to leave, then turned to ask, "How did you know Lucy Aarons had been murdered?"

"It's in the afternoon paper," she answered blandly.

Later, before he headed home, Leopold spoke to Lieutenant Fletcher. "There are more fireworks tonight, aren't there?"

"That's right, Captain. Ten o'clock."

"I want you to stroll over to Golftown during the fireworks and see if they close down like the other concessions."

"What's up?"

"Just an idea I have."

Leopold arrived at the State Prison by late morning the following day and found Dr. Frees waiting for him by the main gate. "I have

a regular session with Simmons today," he explained, "and I received permission to have you sit in on it."

"Fine. That's just what I wanted."

The meeting took place in a prison office that Frees used for his work. When Ralph Simmons was brought in by a guard, he seemed pleased at Leopold's presence. He was a handsome young man with black wavy hair and a deep voice. His handshake was firm, and Leopold was reminded that those hands might have strangled the life from Laurie Mae Nelson. Simmons remembered him better than he remembered Simmons. "Pleased to see you again, Captain. Does this mean I've been granted a new trial?"

"No," Leopold said carefully. "I just wanted to speak with you and Dr. Frees."

Frees himself seemed embarrassed. "Talk of a new trial is still premature, Ralph. I'm doing everything I can, but there are legal problems."

"You hypnotized me. You took me back to the night of the murder. You know I didn't do it."

Leopold decided to take a firm hand. "Ralph, did Dr. Frees tell you that would be enough to get you a new trial?"

"Sure!"

"I said it could be a *factor* in winning a new trial," the psychologist corrected him. "I never promised—"

The blood had drained from Simmons' face. "Then what are you here for?" he asked Leopold.

"Lucy Aarons was murdered Thursday night down at the harbor. You remember Lucy, don't you?"

"She testified against me at the trial."

"Do you still hold a grudge against her?"

"Not really, but she was too drunk that night to know who was there and who wasn't."

"How does your sister feel about it?"

"Ruth? She never gave a damn about me. I could rot in here for all she cares."

Dr. Frees offered to try hypnotic regression again, to convince Leopold of Ralph's innocence, but Leopold had heard enough. "I have to be heading back to the city. I still have an unsolved murder case on my hands."

"Let me walk out to the gate with you."

"If you like."

As they walked to Leopold's car, Frees said, "I know you're upset

with me, and perhaps I did go too far in holding out the hope for a new trial, but it was the only way I could get him to agree to the sessions with me. At first he didn't want to be hypnotized at all."

"I'll bet he didn't. He was afraid you could really do it."

"Look here," Frees said, "if you're suggesting he wasn't really hypnotized—" He caught himself and changed his tone. "My own theory is that someone else was the killer."

"Who?"

"Well, maybe it *was* that ship crewman who dressed as a pirate—Kinski. He's back here after four years and maybe the Aarons woman showed signs of recognizing him and doubting her testimony."

Leopold shook his head. "Your man is guilty, Dr. Frees. You might as well face the fact. There was a certain authority in his voice when he told me just now that Lucy Aarons was too drunk that night to know who was at the bar. If he wasn't there himself and didn't see her all night, how could he speak with such assurance?"

"Well," the psychologist answered uncertainly, "someone might have told him."

Leopold shook his head. "It won't wash, Doctor. The man's guilty. When he realized he wasn't susceptible to hypnotism, he pretended he was, anyway. He faked that whole regression for your benefit."

"If that's true, then what about Lucy Aarons? Who killed her, and why?"

It was some seconds before Leopold answered. "In a manner of speaking, Doctor, I believe you were partly responsible for her death."

That afternoon Leopold drove to Ruth Cutler's house down by the marina. She wasn't on the porch and the house was locked. On a hunch, he decided to try the Harborview Cafe. There he found her sitting at the bar with a drink in front of her, chatting with Sally, who was on duty.

"Just who I'm looking for," Leopold said, taking the stool next to her. "I drove up to the State Prison to see your brother this morning."

"What for? Do you think he slipped out of prison long enough to kill Lucy Aarons, too?"

"No, that matter is close to being cleared up."

"Would you like a drink?" Sally asked.

"Just a Coke."

"Cleared up?" Ruth repeated. "Does that mean you know who killed Lucy Aarons?"

Leopold nodded. "More important, I know why she was killed. It wasn't because she testified at your brother's first trial. It was to keep her from testifying at his second trial."

"What second trial?"

"Dr. Frees, the criminal psychologist working with Ralph, did a highly unethical thing. In order to gain your brother's cooperation in an experiment in hypnotic regression, he led Ralph to believe there was a good chance of uncovering evidence for a new trial. That wasn't true. The courts would never admit statements made by the accused under hypnosis—they can be too easily faked. But Ralph believed a new trial was imminent, and that led to the killing of Lucy Aarons."

"I don't understand what you're getting at," Ruth said.

"There was no material evidence against your brother at the first trial, only the eyewitness testimony of four people. Coincidentally, one died of a heart attack and two died in an auto accident, so that Lucy was the only witness left alive. If a judge ordered a new trial, the entire case would rest on Lucy's testimony. If she died, too, the district attorney wouldn't even be able to retry the case. Ralph would walk out of prison a free man. So what did Ralph do? He persuaded someone to kill Lucy Aarons."

Ruth took a deep breath. "You think I killed her. But I told you I was working at Golftown when it happened."

"The concessions close during the fireworks. It occurred to me that you could have walked over to the pier and killed Lucy in that crowd without ever being noticed."

"I didn't—"

He held up his hand in a calming gesture. "I know. Fletcher checked out Golftown last night. You don't close during the fireworks."

"Then how could I have killed her?"

"You didn't." Leopold reached across the bar and took a firm hold of Sally's wrist. "Miss Olcott, I'm taking you downtown for further questioning, after which you may be charged with the murder of Lucy Aarons. You have the right to remain silent. You have the right to an attorney—"

"You look tired," Molly said when Leopold returned home late that evening. "And you must be starving."

"It's been a long day, but thank heaven I wrapped up the Aarons killing. Just fix me a sandwich. That's all I need."

"Who did it?" she asked, going into the kitchen.

"Sally Olcott, a barmaid at the Harborview Cafe. She's made a full statement in the presence of her attorney. It seems she went to school with Ralph Simmons and started visiting him in prison. She fell in love with the guy and he talked her into killing Lucy Aarons, to remove the last living witness against him. Dr. Frees had convinced him the courts would probably order a new trial and he decided that without any witnesses the case would be forfeited in his favor."

"I thought you were suspicious of the sister," Molly said, bringing him a turkey sandwich and a beer.

"Ruth Cutler, yes. She seemed likely, except that she really didn't like her brother that much. When Fletcher confirmed her alibi, I got to rethinking the entire case. The killing occurred after I started asking questions in the harbor area. Someone was convinced I was acting on the possibility of a new trial, so they had to kill Lucy quickly. But in my conversation with Ruth before the murder I made a point of the fact that the hypnosis testimony would never be admitted in court. She knew there would be no new trial.

"The only other person who'd had contact with Simmons in prison was Sally Olcott, who told me herself that she and Ruth were his only visitors. I didn't discuss the new trial with Sally, so she assumed there would be one. It turns out she'd gained Lucy's friendship, and gone swimming with her several times in the hope of staging an accident. But Lucy was too good a swimmer, so she used a hatpin Thursday night on the pier, hoping the autopsy would miss the wound.

"When I narrowed the suspects down to Simmons' two visitors in prison, that weapon was a clue for me. The safest place to carry one comfortably and unnoticed is in the hair. Ruth's hair is cut short like a man's, while Sally has long hair, which she wore pinned up that night."

"In a way Simmons was responsible for the murder."

Leopold sighed. "In a very big way. Of course Sally really was, but Dr. Frees started it all by misleading Simmons about a new trial and I compounded it by asking questions that spurred Sally into action. If Ralph Simmons was the killer everyone knew, Lucy Aarons was the victim everyone killed."

THE JURY BOX
by JON L. BREEN

From the very first issue in 1941 to the early 1970s, Cornell Woolrich was one of the most frequent contributors to this magazine, appearing over seventy times, usually as himself but occasionally under his most famous pseudonym, William Irish—usually in reprint, but a dozen times between 1958 and 1970 with original stories. As well as being one of the great writers of pure suspense, Woolrich is a natural (albeit difficult) subject for biography, a haunted, puzzling man who constantly confused the record with lies and distortions about himself. Yet until now, with all the shelves of books written about Hammett and Chandler and Christie and Sayers, there has been no book-length work about Woolrich.

Francis M. Nevins, Jr.'s 613-page *Cornell Woolrich: First You Dream, Then You die* (Mysterious Press, $19.95) is so meticulous and exhaustive a biographical and critical record, it may prove the definitive Woolrich reference for all time, comparable in ints thoroughness and incisiveness to Frank McShane's biography of Raymond Chandler, John McAleer's of Rex Stout, and Roy Hoopes' of James M. Cain. If you are an admirer of Woolrich, you will want to read this book—and if you've never encountered this master's work, Nevins' volume will make you want to discover it.

*** Frederick Nebel: *The Adventures of Cardigan*, Mysterious Press, $8.95. Another frequent *EQMM* contributor in the 1950s, Nebel created several series detectives in the pulp magazines of the Thirties. Here are gathered six very tough and effectively written cases for Cardigan, who operates for the nationwide Cosmos Agency in several different cities, including New York, St. Louis, and San Francisco. The plots are nothing special, but the evocative urban descriptions and classic tough-guy dialogue seem as fresh as ever a half century after they were written. (The publisher's *Dime Detective* series also includes collections of vintage pulp stories by Norbert Davis, Carroll John Daly, and Hank Searls.)

*** Sara Paretsky: *Blood Shot*, Delacorte, $17.95. At a reunion of her Illinois state-champion high-school basketball team, V. I. Warshawsky, who is surely the toughest and possibly the best of the current crop of female private eyes, is asked by a South Chicago friend to find out who her father was. The hunt leads Vic into a tangled web of murder and political/industrial intrigue. Paretsky has the ability to build plots that are both complex and believable and to create characters that have all the inconsistency and unpredictability found in real people. (One quibble: The five-foot-eight Warshawski, who hasn't played basketball since her college days, claims to dunk the

ball during an extemporaneous workout with her former teammates. I doubt any woman player of that height has dunked, let alone a rusty one.)

*** Caroline Llewellyn: *The Masks of Rome,* Scribners, $16.95. This first novel introduces a new romantic-suspense writer who may (as her publishers claim) come to rank with Phyllis A. Whitney and Barbara Michaels. Art restorer Kate Roy is an engaging heroine, and the account of her Rome adventure deserves high marks for action, romance, characterization, and, most notably, style. The Roman background is very effectively potrayed.

*** Charlotte MacLeod: *The Silver Ghost,* Mysterious Press, $15.95. Husband-and-wife sleuthing team, Sarah Kelling and Max Bittersohn, attend a Renaissance Revel while looking into the mysterious disappearance of one of the host's collection of vintage Rolls-Royces. In seemingly impossible circumstances, a second Rolls (the titular Ghost) vanishes during the festivities. So does Sarah's Aunt Bodicea (such a charming character, I was sorry to see her leave) and murder also intrudes. I've been slow to appreciate MacLeod's brand of whimsey, but this book struck me as a strong comic puzzle, much better than last year's surprising Edgar nominee, *The Corpse in Oozak's Pond.*

*** Anthony Lejeune: *Professor in Peril,* Doubleday/Crime Club, $12.95. James Glowrey, a stuffy, retiring, middle-aged Oxford classics professor, performs James Bondian heroics in the jungles of Brazil when the planned defection in Rio of a Soviet scholar goes awry. This readable adventure-fantasy also includes a sequence in Charleston, South Carolina, giving conservative columnist Lejeune the chance to go positively gooey in his enthusiasm for the Old South. Fans of British thriller writers like Dennis Wheatley and Val Gielgud should like this book.

*** The Edgar winner for best novel of 1987, Aaron Elkins' *Old Bones* (Mysterious Press, $3.95), his fourth about physical anthropolgist Gideon Oliver, is a hugely enjoyable classical puzzle, the kind of book I most value in the mystery field simply because it offers what is not available anywhere outside the genre (save possibly in some hard science fiction). Other recent reprints include three other 1987 standouts: one of the most powerful private-eye novels I've read in recent years, Michael Collins' Dan Fortune case, *Minnesota Strip* (Worldwide, $3.95); Julie Smith's *Huckleberry Fiend* (Mysterious Press, $3.95), which provides an enjoyable mystery for writer-detective Paul McDonald as well as a spur to rediscover Mark Twain; and Simon Brett's *A Nice Class of Corpse* (Dell, $3.50), marking the debut of Mrs. Parteger, a new sleuth from the creator of Charles Paris', in a smooth whodunit with much low-key charm. Golden Age celebrants will welcome the return of Josephine Bell's outstanding 1939 theatrical mystery, *Curtain Call for a Corpse* (Perennial/Harper and Row, $3.95), wherein murder strikes

a production of *Twelfth Night* and Dr. David Wintringham seeks the killer of Sir Toby Belch.

Outstanding new anthologies are in plentiful supply at the moment. Edward D. Hoch's *The Year's Best Mystery and Suspense Stories 1988* (Walker, $17.95) is the feast of top-drawer stories readers have come to expect from this series. Six of the fourteen were first published in *EQMM*, another pair in *AHMM*. Highlights include Harlan Ellison's extraordinarily powerful Edgar winner, "Soft Monkey," and Robert Barnard's *EQMM* Reader's Award winner, "The Woman in the Wardrobe," with its terrific last-line twist. Among the other major names represented are Isaac Asimov, Brian Garfield, Joyce Harrington, Reginald Hill, and John D. MacDonald.

Together or separately, Bill Pronzini and Martin H. Greenberg have turned out an astonishing number of first-rate short-story anthologies in several genres. *Homicidal Acts* (Ivy Books, $3.50) gathers fourteen tales by well known writers. Among the highlights are "Moving Spirit," a surprising comic courtroom story by Arthur C. Clarke; "The Killer," a haunting first-person accont of a convict by Norman Mailer; and Leslie Charteris' "The Arrow of God," a Saint story that has often been reprinted, but deservedly so. Other contributors include writers as varied as Donald E. Westlake, Jesse Hill Ford, John Jakes, and Margaret Millar. (Some of the stories don't really fit the book's title, but who's complaining?)

In *The Mammoth Book of Private Eye Stories* (Carroll and Graf, $8.95), the same editing team have quite likely produced the best anthology ever to cover the whole range of private-eye fiction. The 26 tales represent the expected giants (Raymond Chandler and Ross Macdonald, though Dashiell Hammett is among the absent), the quirky pulpsters (Carroll John daly, with a surprisingly readable post-World War II Race Williams story, and Robert Leslie Bellem, with a hilariously slangy entry about Hollywood op Dan Turner); the stars of the fifties (William Campbell Gault, with a fine and little-known Joe Puma story; Henry Kane, Richard S. Prather, and Howard Browne); and the major names of the recent P-I renaissance (Lawrence Block, Sue Grafton, Arthur Lyons, Marcia Muller, Loren D. Estleman, and several others). Though the book is mostly comprised of reprints, there is one outstanding original: "The Reason Why," a Jack Dwyer story by the mystery genre's Poet of the Midlife Crisis, Edward Gorman.

a *NEW* short story by

WILLIAM BANKIER

Cole had described the break-in to his old employer. "Is somebody coming after me, Charlie?" he asked.

"Nobody knows about you," Cassini reassured him. "You're just another retired real-estate agent."

"If you hear anything, you'll let me know?"

Cassini twisted his neck and frowned at the man behind the wheel. Tall, and with an upward tilt to his jaw, Max Cole looked like an aristocrat. Cassini told him once he belonged in the back seat of a limousine instead of driving one. "Tell me what's really bothering you . . ."

THE HITMAN'S DAUGHTER

by WILLIAM BANKIER

Half asleep, wondering how he was going to ask Carlotta for money, Max Cole heard a sound downstairs. As he put his feet on the floor, Mitzi whispered from the other bed.

"What is it?"

"Nothing. Go to sleep."

"I heard something."

"Stray cats on the shed roof." Cole slid open the bedside drawer and took out an automatic pistol. He held it pointing down as he walked down the stairs and, barefoot, moved silently to the main hallway. He could see a crack of light under the library door.

For almost a minute, he listened outside the door, his heart pounding. He hoped the intruder had helped himself and gone. At last, he eased the door open with the barrel of the gun.

The room was empty. The glass doors leading to the garden were ajar. By the light from the desk lamp, he noticed a few objects

missing from the desk. A silver cigarette box was gone. So was the tennis trophy he had won years ago playing doubles with Charlie Cassini.

Cole moved around the desk. The bottom drawer was jimmied open. He looked inside and confirmed that the revolver was not there. It was his favorite gun, blue steel with a taped grip and a long, sinister barrel.

What was going on? Cole sat in his chair and swiveled to face the dark garden. His reflection loomed reassuringly in the glass door. He tipped his head to focus on his baldness. Most men feared losing their hair, but Max Cole admired his tanned crown with the neat grey back and sides.

He was supposed to believe a thief had broken in, but it felt wrong. Your true burglar would have taken more. While he was still upstairs and half asleep, his first thought had been that an enemy was coming for him. But that was unlikely. Cole had assassinated twenty-nine people, but none of his victims left survivors with the faintest idea who had done the killing. Here in Montreal, Charlie Cassini knew what his friend Max Cole used to do. But if Charlie wanted Max's gun, all he had to do was ask.

The gun was what the break-in was about. Maybe the cops wanted evidence to link him to a certain murder. But he had never used this weapon on anybody. For each of the twenty-nine contracts, he had acquired an untraceable gun and had disposed of it afterward. Cops could be stupid. But surely not stupid enough to think he would stash a murder weapon in his desk.

Mitzi crept into the room holding a fistful of dressing gown under her chin. From the doorway she said, "It isn't safe anywhere. They break in and rob and slaughter."

"It's safe here."

She perched on the edge of a chair, looking to Cole like a pessimistic job applicant. "That Night Stalker cut old ladies' throats. One of them, he put out her eyes."

"Stop watching the news. Anyway, he was in California. And they've got him."

"He looks so smug in court. He loves being on television."

"Let's you and me go out for early breakfast."

"The streets are full of gangs. Mugging and raping."

"You'll be with me. It's wrong for you to stay cooped up in the house."

"Play me a hand of gin." She took a deck of cards from the pocket of her gown. She shuffled quickly and began to deal.

Max grinned at her. "Mitzi Kligman, you are a knockout."

"Shut up," she said. But color rose in her cheeks and she looked sadly pretty in the lamplight.

"How's your supply of Valium?"

"I'm running out," she said, flipping the cards like a Vegas dealer.

Cole drove slowly along Dorchester Boulevard in the right-hand lane. Charlie Cassini was waiting outside Place Ville Marie, separated conspicuously from a bus line. When the big car eased to a stop, he opened the door and slid onto the seat beside the driver.

"Good of you to come out, Charlie," Max said as he pulled out into traffic and cruised west.

"What else have I got to do?" Cassini Construction worked just fine without the presence of its founder. Still, he showed up every day, just as he had done when he drove a redi-mix truck with its slowly revolving load of concrete. He lifted a paper bag from the seat beside him, opened it, and took out a jar of pills.

"Mitzi's prescription," Cole said. "Without it, she'd be crazy. She has problems even with it."

"Last night must have spooked her."

That morning, Cole had described the break-in to his old employer over the telephone. Now he asked, "Is somebody coming after me, Charlie?"

"Nobody knows about you." A long time ago, Max Cole had done his first job to Cassini's order. A competitor was trying to run all over Cassini. Given a chance to listen to reason, to share the market, he had laughed in Cassini's face. One of Cassini's trucks was tampered with, the driver burned to death in its wreckage. Max took on the assignment. He killed the arrogant businessman on a Sunday afternoon as he approached his car in a golf-club parking lot. "You're just another retired real-estate agent," Cassini reassured the former hitman as he put Mitzi's pills back in the bag.

"If you hear anything, you'll let me know?"

Cassini twisted his neck and frowned at the man behind the wheel. Tall, and with an upward tilt to his jaw, Max Cole looked like an aristocrat. Cassini told him once he belonged in the back seat of a limousine instead of driving one. "Tell me what's really bothering you."

Cole turned right on Guy Street and drove almost as far as Ste.

Catherine, where he made a left into an alleyway and parked behind the Leader Billiards. "I haven't whipped your ass at snooker since last winter," he said. "It's like a hunger."

The old men looked good around the low green table with its shaded lights. Jackets hung, sleeves rolled, they took turns bending expertly over their cues, driving the shaft smoothly forward in a gentle stroke that sent the white ball gliding to kiss a color and knock it into a pocket. The man not shooting sipped his beer or shook peanuts into his mouth from a plastic bag. A kid at a far table watched and looked away and turned again to watch, forgetting his own game in the presence of all that power and money.

But Max Cole was cash-poor. He wished he could tell his friend what the situation was. To an outsider, he seemed to be sitting pretty. The house in Cote St. Luc was worth a quarter of a million. The big car had thirty grand written all over it. He took care of his clothes so he would always look good. But last month in Vegas, he had dropped $28,000 in ten days. The money raised from the second mortgage (of which Mitzi was not aware) was now nearly all spent. Charlie Cassini would write him a check for twice his gambling losses, but the torture had not been devised that would make Cole ask his old friend to bail him out.

Besides, didn't he have a daughter who was independently wealthy? And weren't family members supposed to help each other? He would do the same for Carlotta. More than once, he had staked her to a few thousand before she married the property developer and he died and left her in clover.

"Tell me how I can help you," Cassini prompted him.

"Leave me just one time with the cue-ball not on the rail."

"Something has you spooked. You won't tell me."

"I was shook by the break-in." Cole sank a red ball and left himself perfectly on the black. He took aim.

"How's Carlotta?"

Cole miscued. The mistake cost him seven points. "She's just back from London. I may drop by and see her after this."

First, he took Mitzi her prescription. She was under a blanket in front of the television, watching a documentary on serial-killers. "The woman with the long face," she said. "She lured school girls into the van so he could rape them and then kill them."

"How can you watch?"

"Are you going out again?"

"To see Carlotta, find out how she liked London. Why don't you come with me?" He knew she would never leave the house.

"Give her my love. Tell her to come and see her mother." As he went out the door, she called, "Max?"

"What?"

"Is the shotgun loaded?"

"Unless you unloaded it. Of course it's loaded."

"Show me."

He stood in the doorway for half a minute, exasperated. Then he sighed, went to the cherrywood credenza, slid open the door, and lifted the sawn-off shotgun from its cradle. He cracked it for her, showed her the ends of the cartridges. "Okay?"

"Okay. Put it back."

He returned the gun to its cradle, slid the door shut, and left the house.

Carlotta Cole Daniels was drinking gin and watching a program on cable television. Max was ordered to sit down and be quiet. There was an old guy on the screen in a fancy living room with a grand piano. He looked like he was on his last legs as he tottered to the piano bench and sat down. Then he began to play and Cole could see he had the arms and hands of a blacksmith. Carlotta said one word. "Horowitz."

The camera went in on the old man's face. Cole said, "That's a nasty-looking growth on the side of his head."

"Lucky growth," Carlotta murmured, "to be on Vladimir Horowitz's temple."

When the program ended, Carlotta squeezed a remote and the screen went blank. She picked up her glass and drained it. Her eyes were glassy. She poured in a couple of inches of gin and half a bottle of lemon. "From another world," she said. "The man is not of this planet."

"TV in the daytime gives me a headache," Cole confessed. He was wound up like an insomniac's clock. Asking his daughter for money was the next thing to impossible.

"How was Vegas?" she asked, zeroing in uncannily on the reason for his visit.

"Vegas is Vegas. I stayed at The Sands. Where else, they know me there. I won some and I lost some."

They not only knew Max Cole in the great desert casino, they loved him. Regularly, he flew in and gave them a lot of his money.

The dollar slots were Cole's addiction. He would place a stool between two machines, start feeding them three coins at a time to get the best odds, pull one handle and then the other, watch the cherries, the bells, the bars spin and stop. Then three more dollars, and three more. Crank the handle, watch the spin. Sometimes fifteen coins would clatter down into the metal receptacle. Occasionally forty. Once in a while sixty or eighty. One evening, the miraculous happened—three sevens slotted into place one after the other with the inevitability, it seemed to Cole, of fists. Then the funny music began to play and the dollars came clattering down, five hundred of them. One drag of the handle and he collected five hundred bucks.

Of course Cole knew the machines swallowed everything in the end. Unless a person took the jackpot and walked away. But what would be the point? He had not traveled across a continent to make five hundred dollars and go home. A sign announced that the slots returned 97%. Which meant they took 3%. And 3%. And three, and three, and three. While gradually your stake diminished until it was all gone.

"You lost everything, right?" Carlotta said.

"Twenty-eight grand."

She made a hissing noise, letting her eyes roll up. "It's your money."

Max picked up one of her bottles of lemon and uncapped it. He took a swig. "I didn't use to miss it when I was working."

"I think it's sensational that you don't work any more."

Cole waited and then said, "How was London?"

"The people are turning nasty. It's the political climate—greed is fashionable. I think I'll sell the house in Chelsea. When David was alive, we could go there and have some fun. Now—" She made a face. She was becoming as bitter as the lemon Cole was sipping.

Her crack about his not working was eating at him. "I'd work if they'd ask me to."

"Doesn't Mr. Cassini have any little assignments to throw your way? How about smothering babies? That's within the capabilities of a man your age."

"Why do you talk to me like that?"

"Have you forgotten?"

"I came here to see how you are."

"I think you came to ask me for money."

Cole was silenced.

"As long as you could work for Cassini and his friends, do their dirty work, you were fine."

He couldn't talk about the money problem. But here was a subject he could address. Through the years, he had gone over the argument in his mind, defending the indefensible. "I killed people, yes. You think everybody in this world should be allowed to live? Come on. Not one person I got rid of didn't deserve it. It's business. They even expect it, they see it coming. I watch them close down and take it. Because they lived that way themselves, did their own cheating and killing. And now it's their turn."

"You don't know how crazy you sound."

"You know who's crazy? The guy who raped the teenager and cut off her arms. He served six years and he's out."

"Want to talk about teenagers, Father? Once I was fifteen. And pregnant."

"I tried to help you."

"You took me to a butcher."

"You had to have an abortion." Cole heard himself pleading. "Those were different times. A fifteen-year-old girl could not have a baby. It would have ruined your life."

"Not mine, yours. Your cronies would have known your precious little girl was screwing around."

"I did the right thing. Look how it worked out. Your husband died, I'm sorry. But it was a fine marriage. He left you with all this."

"We wanted a baby. And I can never have one. Your disbarred quack wrecked me." Carlotta got to her feet. She moved unsteadily out of the room.

Cole's rage was blinding. The past rained down on him in shards. They hurt. He couldn't change anything. And the bad wasn't his fault. He had always wanted the best for Carlotta, and for Mitzi. He did what he could.

He heard her slamming a drawer in the bedroom. How could he ask her for money now? But the situation was crazy-making. His cash-flow was practically nil and she was sitting on a fortune.

Carlotta was standing in the entrance to the room. "There's something I've been wanting to do." She lifted the gun and showed it to him.

He could not accept the obvious. "Where did you get that?"

"From your desk."

"You broke in?"

"The last time we argued, you took away my front-door key. Re-

member?" Now the barrel was pointing in his direction. "Besides, I wanted it to look like a robbery."

"Never aim a gun at anybody unless you intend to use it."

"Bingo," she said.

The best thing to do was sit down. He placed himself in the big chair by the window. "What do you want?"

"My first idea was to kill myself. With your gun. I wonder if you would have got the message?"

"Your mother and I always loved you."

"I changed my mind. Just this minute, in the other room. Why me? Why should I die when you're the one who did all the killing."

"Put the gun down." He watched her come closer. She was going to do it. She changed her angle and raised the weapon in both hands. Cole had to make his move now. But he was frozen in place.

"And now I've changed my mind again." Carlotta lowered the gun. Her eyes cleared. She looked sober, in control. "I think you should do the shooting. It's your gun. You're the expert." She came to him and placed the revolver on his lap. It slipped down, felt heavy between his legs. "I suggest you use it to blow your brains out."

Carlotta left the apartment feeling better than she had felt since David died. Her friends had advised her against marrying an older man. His heart attack last winter had proved them right and here she was, alone in the world. Yet anybody can die at any time. You could marry a man your age and he might be gone next week, one of this year's fifty thousand casualties in the freeway carnage. Her father was correct about one thing. She had none of the money worries that turn so many lives sour.

She was halfway to Cote St. Luc before she realized she was heading home. It wasn't true she was alone. Mitzi was out of her head much of the time, but there was a nice mother-daughter relationship when she could focus. The old stories were a delight to hear. Carlotta loved the one about young Max in the courting days, before he was anybody. A professor of economics from McGill was pursuing Mitzi, parking his car in front of her house. Max confronted him one day, never laid a hand on him, merely spoke to him for a minute or so. The professor took off in his car like Mario Andretti and was never heard from again. "I saw how much Max wanted me," Mitzi concluded the story. "So I married him."

The house looked drab as a fortress. All the blinds were down, the curtains drawn. The lawn needed cutting and the shrubs were over-

grown. As she approached the front door, Carlotta fumbled in her purse for her key. Then she remembered—her key was in the kitchen drawer where her father had tossed it.

She pressed the bell. There was no sound—it was out of order like everything else. She knocked. Mitzi could be nodding, zonked on Valium. Carlotta clenched her fist and pounded on the door. She hated yelling in the street. She tried the window beside the door in case she could raise it and speak into the living room. She thumped against the glass.

This was absurd. Her mother had to be home. It would take four paramedics with restraints and a stretcher to get her through the doorway. Carlotta pounded again with both fists.

The shotgun went off, both barrels, from three feet inside the door. The twin loads of shot came through the panel and struck Carlotta in the chest, knocking her onto her back on the pavement. The silence now was profound. A woman hurried from behind the house across the street. She observed the shattered door and the body lying in front of it, and ran inside to call the police.

Max arrived home later that night, having been to a club in St. Lambert for a game of barbotte. He found a square of plywood nailed to his front door. Charlie Cassini was inside. A senior cop who knew Cassini and knew that Cole was connected with him in some way had placed a call to the construction boss.

"Mitzi fired through the door," Cassini said. "I don't know why she didn't realize it was your daughter."

"Where did they take my wife?"

"Royal Victoria."

Cole thanked his friend for coming around. Then he ran from the house and drove to the hospital. He located the psych wing. A nurse said Mrs. Cole was doing fine.

Mitzi was in bed, looking cared for. She took Max's hand and presented her cheek for a kiss. "I'm exhausted," she said. "All I want to do is sleep."

"Then you do that."

"I'm so glad Carlotta's in England. Don't tell her this awful thing happened."

Cole agreed not to say a word.

Carlotta's will left the entire estate to her father. Cole spent an

hour in a lawyer's office being told how many hundreds of thousands of dollars would be coming his way.

Charlie Cassini accompanied him to the funeral. Leaving the graveside, Cole told his friend, "My wife goes crazy and kills our child. And I end up getting paid."

"Don't put those things together."

"She left me everything, Charlie."

"Why not? Your daughter loved you."

Cassini located a secure nursing home for Mitzi and insisted on paying half of the cost. Cole argued about it, then gave in. A month later, he drove out to Mirabel and boarded a flight to Las Vegas. When he checked in at The Sands, they gave him the residential rate.

In the weeks that followed, the quiet man became a fixture in front of the dollar slots. One of the girls who gives change whispered to a bar waitress, "The wife is in an institution. She blew away their daughter by accident. He used to be somebody."

Max kept accepting the free drinks. He began to understand what was so reassuring about the slot machines. The confusion of the spinning symbols was quickly resolved. The result was usually bad, but you knew where you were at. Sometimes the plunging excitement of the machines became confused with the thunder inside his head. He thought he was falling. But he kept reaching out and grabbing the handle, knowing he still had the time it would take to feed Carlotta's fortune through.

"Q"

a *NEW* Griswold story by

ISAAC ASIMOV

Griswold puzzle number 53 (!) and one of the most interesting treatments of the tontine we've had the pleasure to read . . .

THE LAST MAN

by ISAAC ASIMOV

It was a raw, cloudy day with a hint of snow in the air and that might have been why Baranof's thoughts turned grisly as we sat in the warm mustiness of the Union Club's ancient library.

Baranof said, "There's an old chestnut to the effect that the shortest ghost story in the world is this: 'The last man on earth was sitting in a room. There was a knock at the door.' Naturally, you suppose it's a ghost knocking, but you'd be wrong."

"Why?" said Jennings.

"Because it's obvious that it was the last *woman* on earth who was knocking."

Jennings said, "Nothing compels it to be the last woman. It could be one of a remaining group of seven women, coming for her night of the week."

I laughed. "Poor last man," I said.

"You're showing your age," said Jennings loftily.

"Not at all," I replied rather heatedly. (I'm only a year older than Jennings and look distinctly younger.) "Even a young man needs a night off now and then."

Griswold stirred in his tall winged armchair, and for a horrified moment I thought he was going to tell us in detail of the manner in which he needed no time off when he was young. His mind was on other things, however.

He said, "I once dealt with the matter of the last man."

"The last man on earth?" said Jennings.

"I didn't say the last man on earth, I said the last man. It was a tontine arrangement."

I grew instantly indignant. "Don't tell us about one of those things," I said. "They represent the silliest financial arrangement ever invented by man and I can't believe anyone really enters into one without being an idiot."

Since you seem fascinated by the tontine arrangement [said Griswold], I'll tell you the story.

The tontine arrangement was invented in 1653 by an Italian-born French banker, Lorenzo Tonti. The idea was simplicity itself. A number of people contributed sums into a sort of kitty that was invested wisely. Out of that kitty, a small annuity was paid to each of the contributors and, as each one died, his annuity was divided among the others until the last survivor got it all. By that time, it was often a sizable sum.

The arrangement seems an odd one, especially when it's used as the basis of fiction. In the thrillers, the various participants keep rooting for all the others to die, and on occasion try to help out the old man with the sickle. Finally there are two left, both in their eighties, and their aged greed is usually pictured as a thing of comedy. When one of them, at an advanced age, finally inherits the money, it turns out that his only need is a new wheelchair and a steady supply of vitamin-fortified gruel.

What's the use of all that? In one word—heirs.

The last survivor, and inheritor, dies quickly enough and the money passes on to his heirs. That is what encourages people to enter a tontine, the chance that they may leave their family much richer than they could possibly be otherwise.

I encountered such a tontine arrangement when a young woman sought an interview with me and begged for help. Her name was Olivia Armstrong, and her grandfather, Joshua Armstrong, had been one of the two survivors of a tontine arrangement. The other survivor had been Philip Thornton.

The two had been friends in their youth and had continued to be friends through most of their lives, but as the number of the members of the tontine dwindled, their friendship naturally cooled. As for the heirs of each, hatred became inveterate. After all, each family stood to inherit three million dollars or nothing at all, depending on just which patriarch died first.

Miss Armstrong wept as she told the story. "It was just horrible, Mr. Griswold," she said. "Each family hovered about its old man, ready to do anything to keep him alive, and each kept spying on the other for fear the enemy old man would die and his family would obscure the fact and delay the death certificate. Each side even tried to get a court order to force the other family to put their old man on public view each day. It was simply frightful."

"Was there no thought of compromise?"

"*I* thought of it," said Miss Armstrong. "I suggested we split the sum equally between both families."

"What did the families say to that?"

"My family practically read me out of the fold. The Thorntons wouldn't hear of it. Both sides insisted on playing for all. —And then the two old men, Grandfather Joshua and Philip Thornton, both died."

"And which died first, Miss Armstrong?"

"That's the strange thing. They died on the same day, Mr. Griswold. The same *day*. And both died in their sleep, so there's no actual witness of the precise time of death. It's impossible to tell which was the last man. Neither family will believe the sworn statements of the other as to when the death was first discovered, when the death rattle was heard, and so on. The doctors can't pinpoint it, of course, and if they did they'd be disputed."

I considered the matter thoughtfully for a moment, then said, "But what is it you expect me to do about this, my dear?"

She said, "A friend of mine once consulted you and she said you were wonderful the way you could see to the heart of the matter and get at the truth. Couldn't you tell us which was the last man? It doesn't matter which side wins, really. Both families are well-to-do as it is. It's just a matter of greed and spite. They'll go to law and fight it out for years. The lawyers will get rich, and in the end the losers will be really impoverished and the winners probably less well off than they are now."

I said, "I'm not a miracle man, Miss Armstrong, but let's see— Are there any scientists in either family?"

"Scientists?" She stared at me in surprise. "No. We're merchant families. We buy and sell. We know business, not science."

"No one in either family has chemistry or nuclear physics as a hobby?"

"Heavens, no, Mr. Griswold. They can work out compound interest in their heads, but that's their limit."

"Then I'll have to explain something to them. Can you persuade some influential member of each family to see me—together, of course—if I promise to make clear a crucial point to them?"

She hesitated. "I don't know if any Thornton will agree to be in the same room with any Armstrong, without lawyers. Or vice versa, of course."

"No lawyers," I insisted. "But make it clear that if one family sees me without the other, the news I have will give the one who's here a clear advantage over the other."

"Really?" she said.

"Well, perhaps not, but that's what I want them to believe."

It took some doing, as you can imagine, but some three weeks later an Armstrong and a Thornton were in my apartment. Olivia Armstrong was there, too, and a younger Thornton woman was present also—as balance, I suppose.

Both Armstrong and Thornton were grim-faced men of about fifty, who ostentatiously refused to look at each other let alone address each other. Both looked at me only and spoke to me only, and that in an impatient and even hostile manner. Armstrong was rather large and Thornton rather small, but in nastiness of disposition there wasn't a nickel's worth of difference.

I said, "Gentlemen, the question is which of the two old men in your respective families was the final survivor. Personal testimony of members of either family is naturally suspect." A loud and simultaneous snort came at once from each man present. "Medical evidence is ambiguous. There is, however, a scientific way out.

"Every living thing contains a small quantity of radioactive carbon-14. Because it is radioactive, it's always breaking down, but more is continually being added to the body from the air we breathe and the food we eat, so an equilibrium is achieved. Once a person dies, however, the carbon-14 continues to break down but no new material is added—since, with death, there is no further breathing or eating.

"It follows that a dead human being has less carbon-14 than a live one. The longer he is dead, the lower the carbon-14 content. I suggest, therefore, that the two bodies be exhumed and the hair or a skin-scraping be analyzed for carbon-14. This can be done with great delicacy and precision. The one with the higher content has been dead a shorter interval and was the last man. Here, for your reference, are two copies of an authoritative essay on carbon-14 dating.

If either of you gentlemen refuses the test, any judge and jury will place an unfavorable construction on that decision."

That, of course, settled the matter within three days.

Rather to our surprise, Griswold stopped talking.

Baranof said, "But wait a minute. Which was the last man: Armstrong or Thornton?"

Griswold had no chance of answering immediately, for I let out what I can only describe as a shriek of triumph. "You old fraud," I said, almost choking with delight. "Have I caught you at last? Have you actually had the infernal gall to choose *my* area of expertise for one of your prevarications? Sure, carbon-14 is used for dating objects, but its half-life is 5,730 years and it's used to date objects that are millennia old. Do you think it's possible to determine the carbon-14 content of two corpses only a few weeks old, with one of them dead, at most, a few hours longer than the other—especially when the content of the two bodies may be slightly different to begin with, because of dietary or metabolic anomalies? It won't work, Griswold, and your whole story is a concoction from beginning to end."

Baranof and Jennings seemed astonished at my vehemence, but Griswold regarded me with utter calm. He said, "You don't know what you're talking about, my lad. I didn't say that I had determined which was the last man by the carbon-14 technique. I simply said that the matter was settled within three days, and so it was.

"You see, neither of the antagonists, Armstrong or Thornton, counted on winning by force of evidence, or by logic. Both were depending on clever and unscrupulous lawyers, on weary judges and befuddled jurymen. The maneuvering might last a long time and each was hoping to feed fat on spite. Each side was willing to risk the loss for the chance of gain, not so much of money, as of victory—even empty victory.

"But now I offered them what they thought was an infallible physical-chemical test that would settle the matter beyond dispute in a matter of days. They had no way of knowing it wouldn't work. The essay I gave them contained little real scientific knowledge—just enough to convince them they were going to lose their chance at clever legal maneuvering and of grinding the other in the dust a hundred times before the decision. That would spoil all the fun, and the two families decided within three days to split the tontine down the middle—the only sensible procedure."

DETECTIVERSE

ANOTHER GRAVE TONE

by JAMES HOLDING

Here lies a weekend chicken thief
Known to his friends as Giles O'Keefe.
There was scarcely a henhouse in twenty miles
That hadn't been visited by Giles—
A skillful, silent Saturday sinner,
Stealing a hen for his Sunday dinner.
Until one night in the early fall
He ventured forth on his henhouse crawl
With a nasty cold he had somehow caught
From a customer at his used-car lot.
Poor stuffed-up Giles was breathing hard
As, turning to leave a farmer's yard,
He was suddenly seized by an urgent need
To cough aloud—which he did, indeed.
The cough shook Giles from head to socks
And sounded a lot like a barking fox.
The farmer, wakeful, heard the bark
And, grabbing his rifle in the dark,
Assumed that the shadow in his yard
Was a chicken-stealing red Reynard.
He little guessed that the chicken thief
Wasn't Reynard the fox but was Giles O'Keefe,
So he opened his window and fired his gun,
Expecting the chicken thief to run,
But his shot caught Giles in the upper back
About where he carried his chicken sack,
And they later found that the random bullet
Had killed both Giles and his pilfered pullet.

"Q"

first publication in the U.S.

During the summer of 1973, toward the end of the University's holidays, the tutor had a visit from a strange man who thought he was the reincarnation of Napoleon.

"I also had a test for arsenic," he claimed in answer to the tutor's objections.

"Arsenic?"

"Yes, I had the science teacher at the local high school do it for me. You know, arsenic is terrible stuff. Even hundreds of years after a person has died of it, if there is so much as one hair of their body left it will contain some of the poison. It is true that Napoleon died of arsenic, isn't it?"

In 1979, Takashi Atoda won the Naoki Award in Japan for his anthology of short stories, Napoleon Crazy. *The collection, of course, included the following memorable chiller . . .*

NAPOLEON CRAZY

by TAKASHI ATODA

There is no clear line that divides madness from sanity. Of course, the majority of people are quite sane and there are a number of people who are quite obviously mad, but there is another group who fall on the borderline between the two. There are some people around us who look quite sane, but really have a strong tendency toward insanity while there are others who speak wildly and behave in a strange fashion when they are actually as sane as you or I.

I have come across two people in my life who may be thought to be a little strange, and by a coincidence they were both obsessed with Napoleon Bonaparte. One of them is Kimbei Minamizawa and the other's name was Murase.

I don't have any medical reason for saying Kimbei Minamizawa is mad. In most respects, he seems to be perfectly normal. In fact,

as an engineer he is more skilled than most. However, in the same way that we say that someone who prefers baseball to eating is "baseball crazy" or that a man who thinks of nothing but women is "woman crazy," Mr. Minamizawa could also be said to be crazy—although in his case, he would be called "Napoleon crazy."

As far as I know, Kimbei Minamizawa was born early in the century, the third son of a poor farmer's family in Fukui Prefecture in the center of Japan. As a child he was a keen scholar, and after graduating from school he worked in a variety of jobs, first as a civil servant at the village hall, then at a printer's, and later at a pharmaceutical wholesaler's. At sixteen, he happened to read Hosuke Nagase's *The Life of Napoleon* and it made a lasting impression on him. In his later years, he described the experience like this:

"After reading it, I was so excited that I couldn't sleep a wink. I felt that he was the greatest man ever born and I wondered how I could meet him. No, please don't laugh—I was totally serious, although I realized it was impossible. After all, he had died over a hundred years earlier. What I did decide, however, was to learn everything there was to know about the man."

That illustrates just how big an impression Napoleon made on Minamizawa. I don't intend to discuss whether Napoleon really was a great man or not, but I think that when he wrote the book Nagase must have gone out of his way to glorify the historical hero. One thing is certain: it started a hunger in the young Minamizawa that led to the beginnings of his Napoleon collection. It probably began with him buying one or two books on Napoleon and Western history at the small bookshop in the village where he lived, but as his collection grew so did his dreams and he never looked back.

While he was still serving an apprenticeship for the pharmaceutical company, Minamizawa had an idea to improve a wrapping machine which succeeded in being granted a patent. This was utilized and it gave him his first real opportunity to make some money. I have heard that he now holds more than ten patents connected with wrapping machines, that he also has several for confectionery machines, and that altogether they have earned him a considerable fortune over the years.

Mr. Minamizawa has no hobbies aside from his interest in Napoleon. He doesn't smoke, he doesn't drink except to be sociable at parties, and although he is married he never had any children. His two main interests in life are taking out patents on wrapping machines and seeing them put to use and his single-minded collection

of mementos of Napoleon's life. In fact, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that even his business life is only a means to an end, since all his earnings, except for the tiny fraction he and his wife use to support themselves, have been used to enlarge his collection.

The result of this obsessive dedication was a four-story castlelike building, known as the Napoleon Memorial Hall, in the Setagaya area of Tokyo. For tax reasons, it has been classed as a foundation, but there can be no doubt that it is really Mr. Minamizawa's personal collection. Aside from a small area on the fourth floor where he lives, the building is filled with the fruits of his lifelong fixation on Napoleon.

The average person will be granted a glimpse of the collection on request, but from the beginning it has been formed solely to satisfy the fanatical desire of one man. Mr. Minamizawa collected all the material for his own benefit and put it on display entirely for his own enjoyment. He employs a clerk to handle the paperwork and a cleaner to look after the building, but neither of them knows anything about the details of the collection. Mr. Minamizawa handles all the collecting and organizing himself. On average he spends over a million yen per month in acquiring items for the collection. As for its scope, Mr. Minamizawa has explained that for himself.

"I collect anything that has any connection with Napoleon. The triumphal arch at the entrance is an exact replica of the one erected by the French people to mark the one-hundredth anniversary of his death—of course, it has been scaled down to fit the building and is only one-thirtieth of the size of the original. I collect any artifacts that actually belonged to him, anything he made, and everything that has ever been written about him—goodness knows how many translations I have of Tolstoy's *War and Peace*.

"Recently, a theater group performed Bernard Shaw's *Man of Destiny* and I arranged to have copies made of all their publicity photographs. Anywhere Napoleon's name appears, I buy a copy and file it here."

"How about the brandy?"

"No, that has no direct connection with the Emperor. But say a magazine has a line about him—for instance, that he died of stomach cancer or that the bones in his tomb are not his—anything like that I will buy a copy of and store in my collection."

"That sounds like a tremendous task."

"Yes, it is, but I have become quite used to it over the years. I have asked the owners of several bookstores to keep their eyes open

for me and I've also contracted three companies that make clippings from newspapers and magazines. Whenever I have the time I make a point of going to the bookstores myself and looking through the books and magazines. You'd be surprised, but having done this for so many years I've developed a sixth sense and can often turn straight to a mention of Napoleon, generally managing to come up with something all the others have missed."

Minamizawa's collection became so highly regarded that it was awarded a medal by the French government.

I'm getting ahead of myself, though.

To get back to the beginning, I first met Mr. Minamizawa when my old professor from University asked if I would be willing to tutor him in French. In order to study Napoleon, a basic knowledge of French is essential, and although Mr. Minamizawa studied on his own as a young man and later at a famous language school he had been too busy with business to concentrate on it properly.

"I am over sixty now and I probably won't do very well, but they say it's never too late to learn," he said with a smile when we were introduced.

I chose Talleyrand's *Mémoires* as a text and tutored him about twice a week—whenever he had some free time. To be quite frank, his French was minimal, but nobody could fault him on his diligence. He would go through the text before I arrived and the white space on the pages would be filled with notes he had made from the dictionary. When we got to a passage that dealt with Napoleon, his eyes would flash with excitement and his breathing would become ragged.

Talleyrand had been Napoleon's foreign minister, but in the end he proved to be a traitor. He was a clever political tactician, keen on intrigue, and after Napoleon first contacted the Czar of Russia, his secret maneuvers had become even more treasonable. The result was that even before the Czar Alexander first held negotiations with Napoleon, he had received detailed information about the French forces. It was not surprising that Napoleon took a dim view of these diplomatic tricks—it was as if before the Japanese Prime Minister met the American President, the President had learned everything that the Prime Minister planned to do from the Japanese foreign minister.

Of course, Talleyrand had his own reasons for what he did. He was a shrewd politician who trusted no one, and he was concerned

by Napoleon's sudden rise to power. He had noticed Alexander's weak spot and was worried about what would happen to France after Napoleon.

Threads of his strategy and psychology woven throughout his *Mémoires* I found fascinating, and it afforded me intense satisfaction—but not Mr. Minamizawa, who was filled with a different emotion. When we reached the part of the text which deals with the betrayal, he looked very upset.

"If the Emperor had not put his trust in a man like this, he would never have had to march on Moscow and would not have experienced such a miserable defeat," he said. He was so moved I realized that were I to try to defend Talleyrand I would probably be shown straight to the door and never invited back again. He was so different from his normal quiet self that I began to see his respect for Napoleon bordered on madness.

I remained his tutor for two years and during this period I had several opportunities to see his collection. There were letters written by Napoleon himself, biographies of him in a multitude of languages, studies, related historical material, novels in which he appeared, and plays. Then there were items that he had owned, commemorative stamps and coins. There was a vast amount of material, and as I mentioned earlier anyone could view the collection if they had an introduction. But they would see only a small fraction of the total—in the display area on the ground floor. Like many collectors, Mr. Minamizawa begrudged showing his treasures to other people.

If the visitor showed himself to be knowledgeable about Napoleon, he might be taken up to the second floor and shown a little more of the collection. If it was someone Minamizawa knew well, he might open the third floor and let them have a look at his real treasures. But all through the palace, there were small locked rooms—even I have no idea how much of the collection I have been permitted to see during our acquaintance.

One day Mr. Minamizawa said to me, "Napoleon wrote several hundred letters to his wife Josephine, but she was a hard-hearted woman and virtually never wrote a reply."

"Yes, so I have heard."

"At present there are only two of her letters known to be in existence, but I have managed to acquire a third one. It is a very rare article."

So saying, he produced the letter in question and let me see it. I think that as he was prepared to show me something whose existence

was unknown even to the specialists, it must mean that I had seen a large portion of the collection. However, I knew it was likely that there were still things in the building that he would never show to anyone.

Anyway, let us leave Mr. Minamizawa now and talk about the other man who was, in my opinion, Napoleon Crazy.

In beginning, I know that this is a rather sudden change of subject, but I am very partial to sweet, dried blowfish. I grill the translucent, honey-colored slices until they become slightly crispy, then tear them into strips. They make a great snack with sake or whiskey. The problem is that the stuff they sell in the stores is no good at all. It is very thin, and no matter how long you chew it it is just like rubber. I suppose the problem must be that they use poor-quality fish to begin with and this is accentuated by the processing. The reason I bring this up is that I always connect dried blowfish with the second man in my story.

During the summer of 1973, toward the end of the University's holidays, I had a visit from a strange man. When I first saw him, I couldn't help but feel that his face was very Western-looking for a Japanese. His eyes were set rather close together and were deep in their sockets, his nose was thin and prominent, and it was obvious that he had more than a little foreign blood in him. He was only about average height for a Japanese and his shoulders were so broad that they gave an impression of imbalance. Looking at his broad forehead with its receding hairline bordered by small curls that seemed plastered to his skin, I had the feeling I'd seen him somewhere before.

"How do you do," he said. "My name is Murase." He spoke awkwardly, like a man from the country who has trouble speaking standard Japanese. The reason he had come to see me was that I had written a short piece for a popular magazine about my impressions when I visited Napoleon's birthplace, and as a result he thought I was an expert on the subject.

We exchanged pleasantries for a short while and then he said nervously, but in a solemn tone:

"Er—mm—I think I am the reincarnation of Napoleon."

"Pardon?" I couldn't grasp what he meant for a moment, and when it did finally sink in I could only assume it was some kind of a joke. "Why do you think so?" I asked mockingly.

"Don't you think I look a little different from the average Japa-

nese?" he said. "When I was a boy, the other kids used to taunt me and call me yankee. They said that my mother must have slept with a foreigner."

"I see."

"When I went to high school, a teacher told me I looked like Napoleon and that became my nickname."

I had thought that he looked familiar, of course, and the more he talked the more I listened. It was a great surprise to me that a Japanese could so closely resemble that hero born in Corsica.

"I'd never seen a picture of Napoleon, so I didn't really give the comparison much thought," Murase continued, "but later I saw a photo or drawing in a history book. That was when I got to thinking that maybe I was a reincarnation of him."

"Oh, really?"

Although it was a strange story, the logic was easy to understand. Murase had had a hard childhood, then one day he learned that he resembled a famous historical figure and got to thinking that maybe he was a reincarnation of him.

"I'm a countryman and I haven't read very much," he told me, "but once I realized that I might be a reincarnation of Napoleon, I remembered that when I was a kid I had a dream of a lonely island. I've never been anywhere like it in real life. There was a strange dark cloud hanging over the sea. —What was that place called?"

"Do you mean St. Helena? That was where Napoleon was finally exiled to."

"Yes, that's the one! I also remember seeing a rough building like a stable there. I don't remember anything about his wife Josephine no matter how many pictures I'm shown of her, but there's another woman I recognize—what was her name now?" He produced a dog-eared notebook and flicked through the pages. "Walew, Walews—Walewska, that's it. I remember having seen her in my dreams."

"Walewska was his Polish lover. She was married to a nobleman, but she loved Napoleon to the end."

As the saying goes, "great men are great lovers," and Napoleon was no exception. Aside from Josephine, who was to become his Empress, and Marie Louise, there was the opera singer Graziani, Georgina of National Theatre fame, and the beautiful actress, Mademoiselle Mars. Even after he was exiled to St. Helena, he had an affair with the wife of Count Montrone, who had accompanied him there, and it resulted in the birth of a daughter, Napoleone.

However, of all the passing affairs he had in his life, it must be said that the only woman who really loved Napoleon totally was Marie Walewska. She had originally been sent to him by the Polish government in an effort to win peace for their country, but once she loved him she remained true to the ill-fated hero to the end. If Napoleon were to look back over his life from his place in heaven, he would keep a special place in his heart for her as his one true love.

Murase continued his story.

"I have seen many other dreams, too. One time I saw a strange city in a foreign country, burning in the night."

"Do you mean Moscow?"

"I think so."

"Did somebody tell you about Napoleon's life when you were young?"

The man shook his head firmly. "No, I am from the country—nobody in our village knew anything about Napoleon."

"Then—well, you think you are a reincarnation of Napoleon."

"Yes. I did not take it seriously myself when I was younger, but now I am getting on in years I find myself wondering where I might come from and what will happen to me after I die."

"Excuse me for asking, but how old are you?"

"Fifty. Sir, I cannot help but feel that I was Napoleon in a former incarnation—but why would a great man like that come back as someone like me? It is a heavy responsibility and I feel that I am letting him down."

"Is there anything else apart from the fact that you resemble him and see a lot of dreams?"

"Yes. Do you know Professor Himeno from Fukuoka University?"

"No, I am afraid I don't."

"Really? He is in charge of the library there. He also acted as a go-between for my cousin's marriage."

"I see."

"I went and saw him and he told me that there are many people abroad who are studying reincarnation—he had a book about it."

"Oh?"

"Yes." He took out his notebook again and thumbed through it. "It is by an F. M. Willis. Is he famous?"

"I don't know."

"Well, according to his research, the longer it takes to be reborn the greater the person will become."

"Really."

"If you are reborn within fifty years of dying, you will turn out to be a drunk or unemployed. A hundred years and you will be a normal worker. Two hundred years, a skilled worker. Three hundred years, a landlord. A thousand years, and you will be a leader. Two thousand years, and you will become an artist."

"So it takes longest to become an artist, does it?"

Murase didn't seem to notice my laugh and remained sitting stiffly in his chair, his face serious.

"Napoleon died in 1821 and I was born in the year of the big earthquake, 1923. That means that I was born slightly over one hundred years after he died—which would make me a normal worker, and I have worked as a fisherman or in the fish-processing plant all my life."

"Excuse me for saying so, but there are hundreds of thousands of people in this country who do that kind of work."

"Yes, but there is another theory. It is known as the 'age and rebirth' theory. Do you know about it?"

"No, I'm afraid not."

"Well, it states that people are reborn in multiples of the age at which they die. If someone dies at sixty, say, they will be reborn after sixty, one hundred and twenty, or one hundred and eighty years, and so on. If they died at fifty, they would be reincarnated after fifty, one hundred, one hundred and fifty, or two hundred years."

"Is this another theory belonging to Mr. Willis?"

"Yes, that's right. Professor Himeno told me about it."

"He seems to have a lot of theories, doesn't he?"

"Yes. Napoleon died in 1821 when he was fifty-one and I was born in 1923. That was one hundred and two years after he died and twice the age he died at."

"But surely that's just a coincidence."

"I also had a test for arsenic."

"Arsenic?"

"Yes, I had the science teacher at the local high school do it for me. You know, arsenic is terrible stuff. Even hundreds of years after a person has died of it, if there is so much as one hair of their body left it will contain some of the poison."

"Yes, I've heard that."

"It is true that Napoleon died of arsenic, isn't it?"

"So it is rumored."

"If I really am the reincarnation of Napoleon, don't you think it likely that I may have traces of arsenic in my hair?"

"What was the result of your test?"

"They found a little arsenic."

"I don't know if that's really proof, though." I thought it likely that Murase had managed to get some insecticide or something that contained arsenic on his head at some time.

"You mean you don't believe that I'm really a reincarnation of Napoleon."

"Well—" I studied the man's face again in the dim light of the study.

I must admit that I'm not especially familiar with Napoleon Bonaparte's features, although I have seen numerous portraits of him. Napoleon died at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century and it was another forty years or so before photography became popular, so there are no photographs of him to refer to. However, although it's likely that portrait artists tended to flatter their subjects, they were basically accurate in what they painted—the fact that existent pictures of Napoleon all resemble each other is proof of this.

The man sitting in front of me was identical to the portraits I had seen of Napoleon—rather, I should say, he fitted exactly with the image I had arrived at after looking at a number of idealized portraits. Even his build was doubtlessly similar. Of course, the shapeless grey suit he was wearing was not the kind of thing we are used to thinking of Napoleon as wearing, but if Murase were to dress in a colorful military uniform and wear the familiar three-cornered hat, he would be the image of the French hero as he was in his later years.

This is not to say that I was prepared to believe in reincarnation. My guess was that it was just a coincidence. While I would not go so far as to say that Murase's mother must have had an illicit affair with a foreigner, I think it was fairly certain that there was foreign blood in his family somewhere. Perhaps one of his not-too-distant ancestors had had an affair with an Italian sailor and the genes had contrived to come together in this man. Mere chance had caused him to be born looking like Napoleon, and that had been sufficient to make him think he had seen St. Helena and the burning city of Moscow. Many of us dream of places we've never seen—it doesn't mean that we've been there in a previous age. I did not find Willis's theories on reincarnation convincing to begin with, so I was not particularly impressed that Murase's birthday coincided with them.

"What exactly do you want of me?" I asked him finally.

"Well, I thought that, being a specialist on Napoleon, you could tell me all kinds of things that happened to him so that I can find out if there is anything else I can remember from his life."

He seemed to hope that if I could tell him about Napoleon's life, he would be able to recall it for himself, like someone who has lost his memory and listens to things about his past in the hope that it will come back to him. The only problem was, however, that I am not a specialist on Napoleon. I only know what I have picked up from a casual reading of a few biographies on the man. I certainly did not know enough to provide Murase with what he wanted.

"I'm very sorry I cannot be of more help," I told him. "But I can give you the name of a man who may be able to help you."

Of course I was thinking of Mr. Minamizawa. If Murase wanted a sense of Napoleon's life, there wasn't a better place he could go in Japan. I did feel a bit hesitant about introducing an apparently neurotic person like this to Minamizawa, but although Murase had some rather strange ideas nobody could say that he was anything but sane. If one were to overlook his ideas concerning himself and Napoleon, he was no different from any number of other honest, country folk and I didn't think I would be imposing on Mr. Minamizawa too much.

As for Murase, what would he think when he was confronted with so many relics of Napoleon's life? I did not think they were likely to awaken any new memories in him. On the contrary, when he saw them he might realize that he was not in fact a reincarnation and be cured of his obsession. I felt it was the least I could do for him after he had come all the way from Kyushu to see me.

"Thank you very much," Murase said. Once I had explained about Mr. Minamizawa's collection, he could not hide his excitement.

I wrote a brief introduction for him on the back of one of my business cards. "He is a very busy man, so I would be grateful if you will call and make an appointment before you visit him."

"Yes, of course," he said seriously, bowing two or three times to my card before putting it away. He then proceeded to open the parcel he had brought with him.

"I hope you will accept this as a token of my gratitude. It is nothing, really—just something we make back home." And he handed me a simply wrapped package of dried fish.

"It's not sweet blowfish, is it?"

"Yes, that's right. Do you like it?"

"Yes, it's one of my favorites, but it is very difficult to find good blowfish in Tokyo."

"Really?" he said, his face wreathed in smiles. "In that case you must allow me to send you some every month. To tell the truth, it is very cheap when it leaves our factory."

"Oh, please don't bother. This is quite sufficient."

"No, you have been very kind to me—it is the least I can do."

He gave me a deep bow to express his gratitude, then, after apologizing for having taken up so much of my time, he left.

After he had gone, I weighed the honey-colored fish in my hand and reflected that life was full of surprises. It looked as if I could look forward to receiving some blowfish every month now. I wondered if I should have refused his gift and let him give it to Mr. Minamizawa instead, but then I guessed that he may have brought several other small gifts like this with him in case he needed them. I chuckled to myself as I tried to picture the meeting between the two men, one almost fanatic about his collection of Napoleon memorabilia and the other believing that he was in fact a reincarnation of the great man.

I didn't think about Murase for long, of course. That is not to say that I forgot about his visit, but there was nothing about it to make it stick out in my mind. And despite all his bows and his repeated promise to send me more hand-cured blowfish, I never heard any more from him. Although I didn't hold it against him, I felt it was a bit out of character. He had struck me as being a very sincere man who would go to great lengths to keep a promise like that and I could only assume that his interview with Mr. Minamizawa had not gone as well as he had hoped.

When I had written the introduction to Mr. Minamizawa, I had meant to phone him straight away, but what with one thing and another time passed and I forgot about it.

One day, however, I had to visit the Napoleon Memorial in order to research the way the newspapers of the time referred to Napoleon after he escaped from the island of Elba. On the day of his escape, they had called him "the Corsican Devil," but their attitude changed rapidly as he approached Paris, and when he was outside the city gates they announced that, "His Imperial Highness will return to loyal Paris tomorrow." I wanted to check on the changes in public opinion and I intended to ask Mr. Minamizawa if I could copy his documents on the subject.

"It has been such a long time since you came to visit us," his wife said as she showed me up to the reception room on the fourth floor. "We often talk about you."

The building is set in dense woodland like some ancient castle, and the autumn wind shook the windowpanes now and again. Mr. Minamizawa and his wife lived a lonely existence in this huge, deserted building, surrounded by the artifacts of a long-dead hero.

"How are you both keeping?" I asked her.

"Well, I have been having some trouble with neuralgia, but my husband is very well."

"I suppose he is as keen as ever on Napoleon, is he?"

"Yes, but I am resigned to it, I realize that he will never change now. Although he seems to be getting worse. He seems to think that someone is trying to steal his collection."

"Aren't you interested in it at all?"

"No. He used to show me the things he bought, but I could not show much enthusiasm for them and now he does not bother. He tucks himself away on his own and works away at it."

"Young women today would never stand for it."

"Yes, I know, but I am too old to change now. And if he has to be mad about something, it might as well be this as anything else. At least it does not harm anyone."

There was the creak of a door opening in the distance, and then a jingle of keys.

"He will be with us in a moment," his wife said.

"Does he keep things here on the fourth floor, too?"

"Yes, his most important ones. He is terrified that someone is going to steal them and does not even allow me to look into the room. Not that I want to see them, anyway." She shrugged as if to say that he was beyond hope.

The door opened and Mr. Minamizawa walked in. "Oh, so it's you," he said. He seemed to have changed since I last saw him. He looked like a man who had just been awakened from a deep sleep and was still half dazed.

"I'm sorry it has been such a long time," I said.

"Oh, not at all. I have been busy, too."

"Are you still working on your collection?"

"Of course. Yes."

He looked at me strangely and I realized that senility must be catching up on him. Like it or not, the majority of us are forced to adapt ourselves to fit in with society for the major part of our lives.

We are totally ruled by external pressures, and it isn't until we retire that we find ourselves free for the first time to devote ourselves to the things that really interest us. The Mr. Minamizawa that I had known was an exceedingly pleasant businessman, but tonight he seemed different.

I would appear to have interrupted him when he was involved in something and he seemed to resent my intrusion. This didn't last long, however, and soon he was back to his own self, enthusing about Napoleon as always.

"Did you know that Napoleon's hat was put on sale recently?" he asked me.

"Really?"

"Yes. A Belgian collector died and his widow put it up for sale."

"I imagine she was asking a lot for it."

Mr. Minamizawa smiled but would not answer. He was probably reluctant to as it would tend to emphasize the extent of his obsession.

"Let me guess. Three million?"

"A little more."

"Five million?"

He shook his head. "A bit more."

His wife said, "Once he sets his mind on something, there is no stopping him. He is like a little boy in a toy shop."

I stared at Minamizawa. "You mean you bought it?"

"Yes, I couldn't very well let anyone else buy it, could I? It is the genuine, certified hat that was worn by the Emperor himself. It is a tremendous item—it even smells of Napoleon. Would you care to see it?"

He stood up cheerfully with his keys in his hand and when he returned three or four minutes later, he was carrying the distinctive tricorne hat.

"When does it date from?"

"Around the time of the Russian expedition."

I could tell at a glance that it was a well-cared-for object, but here and there were small stains. Could each of those stains be relics of the dreadful retreat from Russia? It is said that his Army shrank from one hundred thousand to five thousand and when he crossed the River Berezina he had even been forced to burn his flags. What could the brain that had been under this hat have been thinking of at that time? I could almost see Mr. Minamizawa sitting in his gloomy room, surrounded by his collection of Napoleon's belongings, dreaming of the stories that must lie behind each stain.

"What do you think of it?"

"It really brings history home to you, doesn't it?"

"Yes, that's how I feel," he replied with a smile.

I felt an urge to put the hat on my head, but it was obvious from the way Mr. Minamizawa was watching me that he didn't want me to touch it, so I fought back the impulse.

I had already told him over the telephone why I was coming and he had the papers I wanted already laid out on the table. I sat and copied them and then I remembered to ask about Murase's visit.

"Yes, now you come to mention it, a man of that name did come to visit me," he said.

"He was a strange man. I hope he didn't put you to much trouble."

"Not at all. You'd be surprised to know how many people there are in the world who think they are reincarnations of Napoleon."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, collecting newspaper items as I do, I come across a large number of reports about such cases. I have a whole scrapbook of them."

"That many?"

"There was one man in Brazil called Rodrigues, who when he became delirious with a fever described the battle of Austerlitz. Everything he described was so accurate that he became very widely talked about at the time."

"Why do you think it is so common?"

"I don't know. But living as I do, surrounded by things that belonged to Napoleon, I sometimes find myself thinking that he might be lurking around in the building somewhere."

"How about that man, Murase—"

"I don't know," he replied disinterestedly. It would appear that the meeting between the two men had not been as dramatic as I had feared.

"But you must admit he certainly did resemble him."

"Yes, that is true." He looked at me intently. I had never seen an expression like that on his face before—he seemed to be trying to fathom why I was belaboring the subject.

It was getting late and it was obvious that Mr. Minamizawa wanted to get back to his collection, so I bid them both good night and left. It occurred to me as I walked away that Mr. Minamizawa had probably not been able to deny that Murase was the spitting image of Napoleon, and being such an ardent worshiper of the Emperor, he would not have been particularly pleased at the idea that

a man from the country could resemble his Emperor so closely. That may have been why he gave me such a strange look.

When I was some way from the building, however, I had a terrible thought—and it was not just the cold night air that caused a shudder to run down my spine.

Sometimes you can see a thing but not recognize its significance until later. There was something I had seen in the reception room which I did not think about at the time but which came to me clearly in the cold of the night. As usual, there was a mountain of books about Napoleon on Mr. Minamizawa's desk, but among them tonight was one that seemed quite irrelevant to the others. The title of the book came back to me now, together with an image of Mr. Murase and the slight smell of formaldehyde that seemed to waft up from the three-cornered hat: *Animal Taxidermy for Beginners.*

I looked back along the road I had just walked and could see the memorial hall standing like a huge black shadow in the night. In one corner of the fourth floor a light shone dimly in a window, a light of history coming down through the years.

I still have not received any dried blowfish since Mr. Murase left me, not once.

a *NEW* Ghote short-short by

H. R. F. KEATING

"Am I straining your patience too far with this story in which the crime is such a little one, and so long ago?" asked Harry Keating when he sent this story. On the contrary, his stories about Inspector Ghote and his stories about children faced with criminal dilemmas do anything but *strain the patience . . .*

LIGHT COMING

by H. R. F. KEATING

All the anger of youth blazed in young Ved's eyes.

"Oh, Dada," he shouted, neck stringy with rage, "did you never do any wrong? Were you always and always one good-good police inspector?"

"Ved," his mother exclaimed, bristling with shock, "how dare you? When you know you are in the wrong also. Taking that sweetmeat I was keeping and keeping for your father. He ought to beat you."

"Well," Inspector Ghote said, offering his wife a placatory smile, "let me perhaps instead tell a story."

And despite the sharp look he got back, tell his story he did.

It had happened, he said, when he was a boy himself, a little younger than Ved now was, in the days when his father had been the schoolmaster in a remote village. A village so remote that, when he himself had been born, it had not even had electricity.

"Up to the age of ten only, I had not seen any light that did not come from a flame. Still now when I am thinking of my boyhood, I see men moving through the night with burning flares, just only dispelling the darkness. Then you were feeling that this was what light was doing, sending back the dark. Now it is something you are feeling you have some definite right to have."

"Yes," Ved said, yet at the edge of sulkiness, "but what is the story?"

"Ah, it is what happened when at last electricity was coming. One day there arrived into the village a jeep with on it the words Ele Dept and inside a burra sahib with one sola topee on his head. Of course, we boys were not then knowing what all this was. But soon we learned. The sahib was there to take measurements for digging the ditch for the cable that was to bring us this marvel, electricity."

The excitement had kept the village buzzing for weeks. Debate had raged. Some had prophesied dire effects from breathing air mixed with mysterious electricity. Others had seen a glorious new world when everything at night would be seen as plainly as in the full sun. Fears and jokes. The great sport of the evening at the *chaikhana* was telling the proprietor he would no longer be able, in the all-revealing light, to make his tea with too little milk. And Ghote's father had given his pupils special lessons on electricity, the new wonder.

"But I am afraid the utmost result of those was that we boys thereafter went round the village the whole time shouting two English words, "Light coming! Light coming!"

"Well," said Ved, "when it was coming what was happening?"

"Oh, but you cannot imagine what the coming itself was meaning to us. It gave us entertainment all the day, from when we were let out of school till when we were driven by the darkness to go to bed."

"Yes, yes," Protima put in sharply. "In those days, no boys were allowed to stay up till late-late listening to radio and watching television."

"No. But nevertheless we had plenty to amuse us," Ghote said.

There had been the arrival of the truck bearing a huge drum of silvery cable. "And we boys went rushing to see it like one flock of sparrows only, elbowing and pushing to get a better view, though there was nothing to stop us seeing all we wanted by standing still. And then there was the engineer sahib, taking pleasure to push us back. And we boys—I was one of the most daring even—taking pleasure also to get as near to the truck as we could. And the orders shouted as the big-big drum was rolled to the ground, and the opposing orders shouted more loudly. Oh, it was one hundred percent tremendous."

Then there had been the weeks of the digging of the ditch and opportunities for jumping down into it. And there had been following round the engineer sahib as he superintended the work, treading

almost on his heels and imitating his stomach-outthrust walk. And there was the raising of the poles on which the new lamps were to be placed, with even the women enrolled to help heave on the ropes that hoisted them.

And there had been more hours of keen-eyed, mystified watching while the wiring walla connected up the big main fusebox, placed in the safety of the *chavadi* where the village headman had his one-room office. And finally, there had come the ceremonious departure of the three unneeded old iron lampposts which each evening the village lamplighter had climbed up to with his ladder and his guarded flame. They had been carried away "with much of singing, like a funeral procession only."

"Yes, but—"

"No, no, I am coming to what I was wanting to tell," Ghote told them.

Eventually, all the work had been completed. In the schoolmaster's house and others of the better-off, light fittings had been installed, switches placed with care, bulbs fitted. "Then it was my delight to stand and switch. On, off. On, off. On, off. It must have been altogether very, very annoying to each and every person in the house. So in the end I was forbidden absolutely to touch any switch whatsoever. When it was the time in the evening for light, it was to be my father only who would click the switch."

"But you did once, Dada? You were beaten also?"

"Oh, that would not be too much of a story, if it was just only that."

No, the excitement of "Light coming" had not ended with the coming of the light itself. Something as important in the history of the village could not go by without proper and due recognition. "Our M.L.A. was to come to perform opening ceremony."

"Ved, you are knowing what is M.L.A.?" Protima asked.

"Oh, everybody is knowing that. Member, Legislative Assembly. Member, Legislative Assembly."

So at last the great day had come. Or rather, the great evening, because, although the village had had and used the electric light for five or six weeks, it could not truly be there without being switched on officially. And this, of course, could be done only when there was darkness to be, at the throw of a switch, triumphantly banished. ("May this light, symbol of progress, progress for this village, and progress also for our free and independent India—" the great man

had intoned, standing garlanded in front of the whole assembled village.)

"Or, if I am to be altogether accurate, the whole assembled village with one only exception. Myself. I do not know to this day what it was that had come over me. But I was not sitting crosslegged on the ground with the other children at the front of the rows of attentive listeners to the great sahib. Where I was? I was inside the *chavadi*, near that big fusebox. And no sooner had M.L.A. sahib thrown the switch that officially was bringing light to our benighted village than I myself and no other pulled out the fuse, as I had seen the wiring walla do when he was testing."

"And after, Dadaji?" Ved asked, awe in his voice.

"After? After, there was very much of confusion. More even than I had in my most wild dream expected."

"And after that? You were beaten-beaten?"

Ghote smiled.

"No, my son, I was not. For the one and simple reason that from that day to this, no one has ever known who played that abominable prank."

It was then that he saw in his son's eyes, as he had hoped to see, light coming.

a *NEW* short story by

GEORGE BAXT

"Fremont's narrowed the search down to four actors," Roger Andover told his client, "Lewis Krale, Clem Vaylor, Osric Montague—" He paused.

"That's only three," Barry Sagmore said. Then: "You mean I'm the fourth!"

"That's you, kiddo—Barry the Fourth."

"Roger! Do I really have a chance?"

"Why not?" Andover said. "Nobody ever heard of the other three, either . . ."

GO TO THE DEVIL

by GEORGE BAXT

About a year after Barry and Merle were married, mutual friends ran into each other and one asked how the marriage was doing. "I hear it's on twofers," was the unkind reply.

The marriage wasn't doing well at all. Merle had been warned never to marry an actor, but Barry was most persuasive. "Too bad he's not that persuasive an actor," Merle's sister Constance commented.

It wasn't that Barry wasn't good, he just wasn't good enough. When Merle and Barry were introduced eighteen months earlier—at a wake for Barry's uncle, a crooked Bronx politician who'd been found with nine stab wounds in his back—Barry had a small continuing role on a soap opera.

"I'm sorry about your uncle," Merle had said.

"Thank you. It's very tragic. The police say it was suicide."

Merle was a dress designer in the garment district and had been in New York less than three years. Barry was the first man to

interest her. She doted on soap operas. And soon she doted on Barry. Her sister Constance, who worked for a New York-based film producer, warned her, "Sleep with him, but don't marry him. I know actors." But Merle wasn't given to seeking advice *or* accepting it, so she married Barry. Two weeks later, he was written out of the soap opera and he hadn't worked since, save for two brief appearances on commercials. "Hi, there! I'm Soap-scum Sammy!" and "Let Zimmerman's cremations reduce you to ashes and not to tears!" That last one ran on a local channel for about a week, and it was another month before Barry had the courage to appear in public.

It was a Tuesday morning. Barry was supine on the couch, staring at the ceiling, contemplating divorce, murder, suicide, and a cold beer, in no particular order. The phone rang. It was his agent, Roger Andover. "This could be it, Barry." Roger's voice was trembling.

"What's wrong, Roger?"

"I'm excited, that's what. I'm excited for *you*."

Barry sat up, awaiting a heart attack. "What's up?"

"Morris Fremont's narrowed it down to four contenders."

Two weeks earlier, Barry had been sent by Roger to meet the eccentric young director, Morris Fremont, who had announced lavish plans for a fifty-million-dollar spectacular on the life of Judas Iscariot, for which he positively insisted he did not want Kevin Costner. "I want a fresh face, an unknown. A sympathetic face. I don't want any Hollywood hacks who demand six million up front. I want to create a new star!"

Fremont was four foot eight but looked shorter. His father-in-law owned ninety percent of the stock in a major Hollywood studio.

Roger Andover's voice continued to tremble. "Fremont's narrowed it down to Lewis Krale, Clem Vaylor, Osric Montague—" He paused.

"That's only three. You mean I'm the fourth!"

"That's you, kiddo—Barry the Fourth!"

"Roger! Do I really have a chance?"

"Why not? Nobody ever heard of the other three, either."

"When will Fremont make the final decision?"

"In a week. Next Tuesday. He's scheduling a news conference. There's been nothing this hot in casting since the search for Scarlett O'Hara."

"Roger, I've got to get that part."

"I'm on your side, Barry."

"Roger, a whole week. I won't sleep. I won't eat. I'll be a wreck."

"Don't be silly. Make believe I didn't tell you."

That evening Merle came home early. She found Barry slumped in an easy chair with traces of foam around his mouth. "Barry, what's wrong? Are you ill?" He told her Roger's news. "Well, that's great," she said with the enthusiasm of Mata Hari when she faced the firing squad.

"You don't sound very happy for me."

"Of course I'm happy for you." She might have just been told she was suffering with leprosy.

"You're not sincere."

Merle sat opposite him. "For almost a year I've been listening to your prospects for employment. And for that same almost a year I've had to hold your hand when not applying cold compresses to your forehead because you didn't get the job."

"I'm going to get this one!" He jumped to his feet. "I *am* Judas Iscariot! The part was meant for me and I've *got to get it!*"

Merle had never seen this look on his face before. Usually it was wan and sallow. But now it blazed with intensity and determination. His voice had a frightening power and she felt that if He were alive today, Barry *would* betray Him for thirty pieces of silver—albeit, knowing Barry, he'd probably settle for twenty-five.

"Calm yourself, Barry. The way you've got yourself worked up, you might be too ill to accept the role." Barry sat down and stared at her. "I've got a lovely treat for us tonight," she said.

"Not pizza again."

"My boss gave me his tickets for the opera. He couldn't use them because it conflicts with his wife's mah-jongg jubilee. And tonight's a gala occasion. It's the American debut of the great Japanese baritone, Tackameshuga."

Barry suppressed a groan. "What's the opera?"

"*Faust.* He's singing Mephistopheles. Look, if you don't want to go, I can call Constance. It's her favorite opera. Her motto is '*Faust* last and always.' "

"No, I'll go. I need to get out of the apartment. I stare at the walls and the ceiling and there they are, menacing me."

"Who?" Merle was beginning to suspect her husband was going mad.

"Lewis Krale, Clem Vaylor, and Osric Montague."

"Who are they?"

"My competitors. They're conspiring to rob me of the part."

"Barry, why don't you get dressed? We can grab a sandwich on the way."

Walking to the bedroom he yelled, "Oh, God, how I hate actors."

So do I, dear, she thought. So do I.

The opera house was charged with that special electricity reserved for a smashing debut. There hadn't been such a Japanese triumph since Pearl Harbor. Throughout the opera, Barry kept shifting restlessly in his seat, clasping and unclasping his hands, muttering "That's it, that's it." Merle cast sidelong glances at him, but since he didn't seem to be disturbing anyone else she said nothing. At the conclusion of the opera, the company took close to thirty curtain calls. There were cries of "Bravo!" and "Brava!" and one hysterical matron screamed, "Sayonara!" while still another shouted, "Banzai! Banzai!" Ushers ran down the aisles carrying baskets of flowers. Tackameshuga was extremely generous to his costars, refraining from jabbing them in the ribs or stomping on their toes, but he did indulge in a bit of pinching, especially when the soprano made the mistake of moving into his spotlight. She swiftly kicked backward and caught him on the shin.

Barry was oblivious to it all. His mind was fixed on a new obsession, one inspired by the opera.

"You're going to do *what*?" They were in a Cluck Cluck restaurant sharing a basket of fried chicken.

"I'm going to do exactly what Faust did. I'm going to make a pact with the Devil."

"Barry, I'm going to make an appointment for you with Doctor DeBree tomorrow morning—"

"I don't need a doctor, I just need a direct line to Satan. Old Nick. Beelzebub. The Prince of Darkness. He'll want me to play the part and I'll play it exactly the way he wants me to play it. What better coach for the part of Judas than Satan himself, eh? Eh, baby?"

Merle was very worried. She wanted to talk to Constance, who knew all about insanity, having sent three husbands around the bend. And in the ascending elevator in their apartment house, when he said he was continuing on to the roof, Merle grabbed his wrist. "What are you going to do on the roof?"

"I need to be alone for a while."

"Why don't you go for a walk?"

"And get mugged?"

"You could get mugged on the roof."

He pulled his hand free. When the elevator reached their floor, he practically shoved her out.

Merle hurried to the apartment, rummaging in her purse for the key. Thirty seconds later, she was dialing Constance.

Her sister was serving coffee and cookies to the seven guests she'd invited to her usual Tuesday-night orgy. "Oh, hi, darling," she purred, watching artificial respiration being applied to a senior citizen.

"Connie, Barry's insane!"

"Tell me something new, dear."

Barry remained on the roof for an hour. Merle sat watching the door, drinking cup after cup of black coffee. She didn't dare go up and see what he was up to. Certainly he hadn't jumped, because she'd heard no cry of despair. She went to the window and looked out. There was no body down on the pavement. Then she heard the key in the lock and Barry entered slowly.

"Are you all right?" Merle asked, her voice husky.

"I'm fine. Perfectly fine. The part is mine. It's in the bag."

Merle managed to say, "I'm so glad. Let me make you some hot milk with rum and cinnamon the way your poor mother used to make it for you."

"My mother's perfectly fine where she is. She doesn't mind the heat down there."

Merle fled to the bathroom. Barry stretched his hands over his head and crowed exultingly, "The part is mine!"

In the apartment of a tenement building on Tenth Avenue, Lewis Krale sat up in bed, startled awake by a noise from the living room. He'd been half dozing, in that nether world of asleep and not quite asleep. How could he sleep when his agent told him he was up for the lead in what promised to be the century's most talked about movie? He hadn't worked at acting in over half a year—not since Easter, when he'd played a lascivious rabbit in the Music Hall's annual extravaganza.

"Who's there?" He hoped there was a threat in his voice. "Who's there?" he asked again. He got out of bed, tightened the drawstring of his pajamas, and walked cautiously to the living room. A window

was open. It was one of the two windows that opened onto the fire escape. "I've got a gun!" he shouted.

"So do I!" shouted the intruder, and he plugged Lewis Krale five times, plus one for good measure.

Giggling maniacally, Clem Vaylor climbed out onto the fire escape, muttering to himself, "Now for the other two and the part is mine."

The six gunshots had awakened the neighborhood, a hotbed of crack transactions.

"Hey, you on the fire escape!" It was a policeman shouting. "Freeze!"

"The part is mine!" shrieked Vaylor. "It's mine!"

The hero cop emptied his service revolver into Clem Vaylor and the next day was acclaimed a national hero. (Two days later he was indicted for fraud and then ran for the House of Representatives.)

Roger Andover was beside himself with joy as he shouted into the phone to Barry, "Did you see the morning news?"

"Yes indeedy," replied Barry.

"Vaylor shoots Krale and a cop finishes Vaylor! Now there's only Osric Montague to worry about!"

"I'm not in the least bit worried," said Barry smugly in the same tone he'd used to Merle that morning as they'd watched the TV news and seen the bodies being carted away on stretchers.

Merle was dazed as the names appeared on the screen. "Lewis Krale and Clem Vaylor."

"Their final billing," said Barry kindly. Merle flashed him a look and rushed to the bathroom to throw up.

Osric Montague's wealthy benefactress stared across the eighty-six feet of her Park Avenue living room, past the indoor swimming pool, at her beautifully built lover as he strutted in his bathing shorts toward the wet bar.

"Osric."

He recognized the tone of voice. It was the one she reserved for suspicions of infidelities.

"Yes, Hypatia?"

"Who was that lady I saw you with last night?"

"That was no lady, that was my wife."

"Don't you lie to me." Her hands were sunk deep into the luxurious pockets of her chinchilla housecoat.

Osric was mixing himself a Bloody Mary with vodka brought straight from Russia by a specially designated defector. "It's one of the girls in my acting class. We're doing a scene together."

"Just as I suspected." She drew from the right pocket a pearl-handled revolver made especially for her in England by the Queen's own gunsmith. "I warned you the last time I'd shoot you through the heart if I ever caught you cheating again."

"Now, really, Hypatia, kindly leave the melodramatics to me."

"For crying out loud, will you please stand still?" she said. "My hand's not too steady."

"Hypatia! Think of the big break awaiting me in Morris Fremont's movie! Now that the other two have been eliminated, I know the part is mine! My only competition is Barry Sagmore and he's a featherweight!"

"So's this gun." She fired once. He stared at her in astonishment. He sipped the Bloody Mary. A red stain appeared on his chest. Hypatia wasn't sure if it was caused by the bullet or if he was dribbling. She fired again. The bullet shattered the glass he was holding. She fired again. Slowly Osric's knees buckled and he staggered to the swimming pool and fell in face forward. Hypatia's staff—three butlers, six maids, and two gorgeous footmen—entered on the double. Hypatia tossed the gun aside and cried, "I was defending my honor!" The remark made headlines across the world.

"You've got the part!" shouted Roger into the phone and Barry jumped for joy.

He was the media's darling for the six months of preparation before filming was to begin. He spent three months in a cloister preparing for his role under the tutelage of six of the world's great religious instructors while, outside, Merle met the man who was to be her second husband.

There was a nine-month shooting schedule, mostly in Israel with certain other sequences scheduled to be shot in Spain and in Rome's Cinecitta studios. An all-star cast of world-famous stars were paid astronomical fees to support a parvenu actor in his first major role. They had more then their astronomical fees in common. They loathed Barry Sagmore.

And Barry was deserving of their loathing. His performance was called satanic by the director, a closet transvestite whose aberration was later discovered on a sinking ship when he went dashing around the deck wearing a green-velvet dressing gown trimmed with mon-

key fur and shreiking, "Transvestites and children first!" A certain celebrated British knight who couldn't remember anything except certain telephone numbers described it as devilish and possessed. Watching the daily rushes, Morris Fremont predicted, "He'll get every award they've got to give! There isn't an actor who dares come up against Barry Sagmore." He turned to his secretary. "How many pictures do we have him for?"

"Three more."

"Send an announcement for his next two pictures. He's gonna play Benedict Arnold and then he's gonna play Quisling."

"Aren't you afraid of typecasting him?" she asked drily.

Merle flew to Rome to tell Barry she was divorcing him.

"Why now?" he shouted. "After this picture is released, you'll be married to the greatest star in the world."

Merle thought she felt the studio trembling. She said, "I'm going to marry the sweetest little shnook in the world."

"What are you talking about? What does he do for a living?"

"He cuts patterns."

Barry drew himself up to his full height and exploded, "A commoner."

"Oh, go to hell!" Merle told him.

She got her divorce and Barry got his awards. He swept Venice, Cannes, Deauville, and at the Academy Awards, when his name was announced for the best-actor award, the hissing was unanimous. His speech was the shortest and pithiest in the history of the Oscars: "I have but one person to thank, and he knows who he is."

"Ingrate," Morris Fremont muttered to his wife.

Barry left the stage, and several eyewitnesses recall seeing him leave the theater by the stage door as though propelled by a force he couldn't fight.

He was never seen again.

Barry's disappearance caused a furor, of course, and his mysterious disappearance would be written up in numerous articles and books and continue to daunt criminologists and film buffs for decades to come.

There was one little old lady who went to the police with a very strange story, but the police thought she was just another Hollywood nut case.

"But I tell you it's true!" she persisted. "I saw him walking along

Sunset Boulevard toward that big excavation near Fairfax—you know, that big hole that seems to go down to nowhere. And he was with this man who was all dressed up for a masquerade party. He wore a red hood with horns and a flowing red cape—there was a tail sticking out of his backside and he limped like, you know, like one leg was a hoof or something. I swear, I tell you—he had a tight grip on Barry Sagmore's wrist and poor Barry was screaming and yelling and crying and begging him to take all his money and just let him go so he could do his next movie. It was really very sad—and very, very frightening."

But the police just stared at her, one of them shaking his head sadly.

"I'm not crazy!" insisted the little old lady. "I saw him dragged into that hole screaming and yelling and begging for mercy. You mark my words, officer, you go down into that there hole and that's where you'll find Barry Sagmore!"

DETECTIVERSE

IT ONLY HURTS FOR A MINUTE

by PEGGY BOEHM

A Brooklyn-born bandit named Hoyt
Pulled a job on a bank in Beloit.
"I'm robbing this jernt,"
Said the lad from Green Pernt—
"Keep quiet and no one gets hoit."

a *NEW* short story by

REGINALD HILL

How Anne knew so much about these legends was she'd spent eighteen months doing research on them so she'd get an M.A. or something. At this old inn at Ludlow where she was staying to write it all up, a girl at the next table started telling a story and Anne's ears pricked up. She guessed from the way the girl started that it was going to be one of these urban legends . . .

URBAN LEGEND

by REGINALD HILL

This is Anne Hardcastle's story and it's a true story, not one of those urban-legend things which, according to her, never really happened to anybody. This really happened to Anne. Definitely. I'd stake my life on it. We were very close at the time.

How she knew so much about these legends was she'd spend eighteen months doing research on them so she'd get an M.A. or something. She had this notebook full of stories. A lot of them I heard before, like the one where this chap accidentally leaves his wife in a lay-by in her nightie, or the one where this chap's grannie dies on a touring holiday and the car gets stolen. Though I think my favorite's the one about the young married couple next door who like playing Spiderman.

Anyway, Anne had finished her research and come to stay at this old inn at Ludlow to write it up, and one lunchtime she was sitting in the bar when this girl at the next table started telling a story, and Anne's ears pricked because she guessed from the way the girl started that it was going to be one of these urban legends.

"It happened up near Church Stretton on Sunday," said the girl. "I heard it last night from my cousin Jenny, who works in the tourist

office in Shrewsbury—and her boy friend works in the same accountacy firm as Colin."

"Who's Colin?" asked someone.

"Shut up and I'll tell you. There was this christening party, see, and when they went to church someone had to stay behind to see to the smoked salmon and champers, and Avril, the youngest daughter, volunteered. She was a bit of a reb, evidently—worked in London and disapproved of christenings, so she didn't mind missing church. Now this Colin had always fancied her, only she couldn't stand him, so she wasn't too pleased when he said he'd stay, too. In fact, she told her sister that any funny stuff and she'd be off back to London like a shot.

"According to Colin, fifteen minutes after the christening party left, this chap appeared saying he was a cop and there'd been an accident and Avril's parents were on their way to hospital in Shrewsbury. Naturally Avril jumped straight in her car, but the cop made her move over, saying she was in such a state he'd better drive. And Colin got in, too, though he said the cop didn't seem too keen.

"Off they went. It's a maze of little roads round there, but suddenly Colin realized they weren't even on one of these but belting along a rutted cart-track. He asked where the hell they were and the cop said a shortcut, but next thing they ran into this stream across the track where there was a ford for cattle—only the car didn't make it, but stalled in the middle.

"They couldn't get it started and Avril was getting really upset, so the cop suggested Colin go for help while he dried the plugs. Downstream, they could just glimpse the parapet of a humpback bridge and Colin set off along the bank. It was hard going, all overgrown with brambles and willows, and after a while he paused and glanced back. The cop was under the bonnet and Avril was walking along the bank upstream. Colin could see a clearing there, and right at the water's edge was this old oak stump all overgrown with ivy—like an altar cloth, he said. On the stump someone had stood this sledgehammer with its long shiny shaft sticking straight up in the air—like Excalibur, he said. And as he watched, Avril sat down on the stump with her head between her hands.

"Finally Colin reached the bridge, only to find the road wasn't much better than the track. He scrambled onto the parapet to try to spot a house but couldn't see anything but woodland. Then suddenly this noise rang out, like a hammer driving a stake into the ground, echoing like thunder so he couldn't tell where it came from.

"Then he glanced down into the stream. And he saw that the water was running red.

"Without thinking, he jumped straight down and started scrambling back upstream like a mad thing. He'd hurt his ankle when he landed, and the willows seemed to be crowding even closer together, and long before he got there he realized the hammering had stopped and the water was running clear once more.

"When at last he reached the ford, the car was gone, *and* the policeman *and* Avril, and the sledgehammer had vanished from the stump.

"He doesn't know how he got back, but an hour later he came stumbling out of the coppice at the bottom of the garden. On the lawn the christening party were standing around with champagne glasses, but no one was drinking. They were all looking toward the patio, where two uniformed policemen were talking to Avril's parents. When Colin tried to join them, the other guests held him back and told him the police had come with dreadful news. Avril's car had run off the road this side of Worcester, flipped over down an embankment, and burned with her inside."

The girl paused for effect.

"My God!" said someone. "But what did they do when Colin told his story?"

"Advised him to see his doctor. Everyone reckoned he'd tried it on with Avril, so she'd just taken off like she'd threatened, and Colin felt so guilty he'd say anything to shift the blame. Also, one of the policemen reckoned he'd heard the story before. But Colin was still telling it yesterday when Jenny's boy friend rang to see why he'd stayed off work."

At the next table, Anne was so excited she could hardly breathe. Evidently the impossible thing with these urban legends is to track them back to where they started. But with this one, it was different. You see, she reckoned she'd actually invented the original version of this christening-party legend and had been telling it round the Midlands for eighteen months! The idea was that if ever she heard it from someone else, she'd be able to backtrack it to herself with all its variations and if she could pull it off it would really make her name.

So, first stop was Shrewsbury!

To start with, it was easy. She boxed clever with Jenny in the tourist office, letting on she was a big mate of the cousin in Ludlow,

and ten minutes later she was at the accountants where Jenny's boy friend George worked. This was where she expected the first hiccup, with George saying, "Actually, it was this friend in another office it happened to." But George took her by surprise. First he said he was rushed off his feet because he was having to do bloody Stark's work. Then he scribbled an address and handed it to her, saying, "If you can get the silly sod to snap out of it and get back here, I'd be most grateful."

"I don't follow," said Anne. "Whose address is this?"

"Stark's, of course. Colin Stark. 'Bye!"

Poor Anne was completely bewildered, but one thing she didn't lack was determination. The address was in Church Stretton. She got in her car and headed south.

It turned out to be a little cottage just outside the village, and as Anne approached she met an ambulance and a police car belting north. She could still hear their sirens fading as she knocked at Colin Stark's door.

And that was where we met for the first time. I came round the side of the cottage and stood watching her for quite a while before she spotted me. Then she jumped and said, all breathless, "Mr. Stark? Colin Stark?"

I said no, I wasn't, but why did she want to see Mr. Stark? And she said private business, and who was I, anyway?

That's when I introduced myself.

"Detective Constable Brice, Miss. Shropshire C.I.D. So you don't actually know Mr. Stark?"

"No. Why are you here?"

"There's been a bit of a tragedy, Miss," I said, watching her closely. "You see, young Mr. Stark's been found dead. Suicide, it looks like. He's hanged himself."

For a moment I thought she was going to faint and I grabbed her arm. "I'm sorry," I said. "I wouldn't have come out with it like that, only I thought as you didn't know him—"

"I'm all right," she said. "Oh, God, this is terrible. Do you know why he—"

"Some girl he knew got killed in an accident and I gather he took it hard."

That did it. It all came pouring out, all this stuff about urban legends and how she'd made this one up so it couldn't really have happened, and how she wasn't going to rest till she got to the bottom of it.

"Whoa!" I said finally. "Look, Miss, this all sounds so way-out, I think you ought to talk to my inspector direct."

"Fine," she said. "Let's go find him."

She headed back to her car. I offered to drive as she was a bit upset, but she wasn't having that, so I got in the passenger seat. Off we went, with me giving directions and Anne still talking away ten to the dozen. I reckon I got a potted version of most of her research in the next ten minutes, but I still must have looked dubious for she dug out her notebook and handed it over, saying, "It's at the back, under *The Christening Party*. It starts: It was a still, summer Sunday, somewhere in England. The champagne had just been put on ice when—"

She was right. There it was, and it certainly had the general outline.

"See what I mean?" she said triumphantly. "Either it's some crazy coincidence or some madman really did hammer a stake into that poor girl, then faked the car crash and fire."

"Turn left here," I interrupted.

She obeyed, still talking. "And in that case, you really ought to be searching for this ford, there must be some traces— Where are we going?"

At last she'd noticed we were off the road and bumping down a green and rutted track.

"To see my inspector," I reassured her. "We've found the ford already and he's down here now, conducting a search."

I don't think she was convinced, but you're ready to believe anything when the alternative's so unbelievable, aren't you? I think she knew when we reached the ford and I switched off the engine and the quiet came rushing in and there wasn't another soul in sight. But she didn't scream, not even when her head turned and she looked upstream into the clearing where the slanting sun fell like a spotlight on the old oak stump, all draped with ivy like an altar cloth, with the shaft of my sledgehammer rising from it like Excalibur.

I kept the notebook. I often thumb through it when I want a laugh. But I've never been convinced that Anne actually invented the christening-party legend. You see, I got the idea from this really genuine chap in Traffic who swears blind that it happened to this mate of his in Birmingham.

One thing I am sure of. Anne would have kept burrowing away till she got to the bottom of it.

Definitely.
I staked her life on it.
We were very close at the time.

DETECTIVERSE

WHERE'S HIS BEEF?

by PAMELA KLACAR

"Not enough salt! And why did you burn it?
Your cooking is terrible! Where did you learn it?"
"Too much salt! You should have put it to soak.
This steak is like leather—your cooking's a joke!"

"Tastes fine to me," she muttered, disgusted,
"You tell all these lies just to make me get flustered.
But I'll settle your hash, you wait and see."
And she put some rat poison in his next kedgeree.

Alas for the plans of killers and cooks,
Things work out as planned only in books.
Fish was a dish that he couldn't abide
And so, sad to relate, the family cat died.

a *NEW* Dan Kearny File story by

JOE GORES

Giselle turned and stepped lithely up into the wheelbarrow beside the old man. She linked arms with him. "You remind me of my grandpa," she said.

"You remind me that beauty has not yet quite deserted this wicked old planet." The old man reached out his free hand across his body to shake. "Phil."

"Giselle."

The man in the grey suit had been rendered so apoplectic that he stepped forward with his walking stick half raised.

"My editor-in-chief would love *you to do that," Giselle said.*

The latest story about Daniel Kearny Associates (head office San Francisco, branch offices in all major California cities) by Joe Gores, the only writer to have won the Mystery Writers of America Edgar in three categories: short story, (for "Goodbye, Pops," EQMM, 12/69), television drama, and novel . . .

FILE #12: DO NOT GO GENTLE

by JOE GORES

Giselle Marc cast a quick glance from sharp blue eyes at the man in the adjoining bucket seat. Giselle was a rangy blonde, thirty-two years old, with a beautiful face, wickedly long and shapely legs, and the kind of mind usually found in a corporate boardroom. The man was shorter than her five-eight, broad and heavy-armed, perpetually undershaved, with black curly hair sprouting from his open shirt collar. He had the face of a thug.

"Left at the next corner." His guttural voice was not making a suggestion.

Giselle turned left. She'd faced her share of tight situations during her years with Daniel Kearny Associates (head office in San Francisco, branch offices in all major California cities), even had her own private-investigator's license framed on the wall above her desk. But this was the scariest it had ever been.

"Park here," commanded the thug.

Giselle maneuvered the Tercel into the parallel-parking slot, cut the engine, put it into park, and set the hand-brake. Her burly tormentor, not satisfied, made an impatient gesture.

"Pull out again. Go down to the corner and turn left."

Giselle did, checking her rearview mirror and over her left shoulder, and making an arm signal before pulling out into the traffic of San Francisco's Oak Street. She made the left, then left again, then, as directed, turned into the driveway. Her heart was pounding. She wished she hadn't quit smoking.

"Stop here," the thug ordered. "Right here."

Giselle stopped beside the ugly grey building, squat as the man beside her. He stopped writing on his clipboard and raised his head to look at her from fine Italian eyes.

"Congratulations, Ms. Marc," he said, a suddenly beatific smile illuminating his suddenly beatific features. "You have just qualified for your California driver's license."

"You drive. You got the right," said Bart Heslip when Giselle came back out of the DMV clutching that wondrous Temporary Permit. A huge grin split his plum-black face as he held the car door for her. "You got the *duty*."

"I knew this was going to be a mistake," she said darkly.

But she got in under the wheel wanting to clench a fist and yell *"Yeah!"* Sixteen years after she started typing skip letters for DKA afternoons after high school, she had her driver's license. At last she could work field cases of her own.

No matter that since Kathy Onoda's death she had been DKA office manager and much more valuable behind a desk than she could ever be in the field. She was sick of managing a p.i. firm specializing in auto repos and being unable to drive. She needed to be, at least part of the time, out where the action was.

But as she threaded her way back to the office along city arteries bulging with rush-hour hypertension, Bart started cringing, gri-

macing, ducking, and, finally, sliding down under the dashboard at each intersection.

"You are *not* funny," she told him with great dignity.

"Man, your driving sure is," he said.

For a little while longer, DKA was in a narrow charcoal-suited Victorian which once had rung with the bawdy laughter of ladies of the evening and their wing-collar clients. Over the years Dan Kearny had fought mightily with the city to have it given landmark status because of its scarlet youth, but last month the state had had its way with the old lady.

Soon, 760 Golden Gate would be part of a parking lot for the civil servants at the State Unemployment Office. DKA would be moving south of Market into the old 11th Street laundry Kearny had bought, where the boys already were storing their repos.

Giselle paused at the head of the narrow interior stairway to DKA's second-floor clerical offices.

"Bart—thanks. I don't know how you put up with me." Heslip just grinned. He and Larry Ballard had spent countless hours patiently prepping Giselle for her test. Dan Kearny had tried it just once, after-hours in the parking lot of a supermarket. He had immediately changed places with her, driven back to the office, and gotten out swearing never to get into a car again with Giselle at the wheel.

Maybe getting her license was partly about that: making Kearny accept her on the same terms he accepted the field men.

She went up the hall into the front office where the clerical staff and skip-tracers worked, and stopped abruptly. The office was draped with twisted rolls of crepe paper. Jane Goldson's desk, where assignments were usually logged in and files set up, now bore a huge cake with pink and blue frosting and a single candle the size of a three-cell flashlight upright in the middle of it. Across bay windows looking down on Golden Gate through grimy glass hung a double banner of foil letters:

CONGRATULATIONS, GISELLE
TODAY YOU ARE A MAN

Flanking the cake was a beaming Dan Kearny. Despite flinty eyes and flattened nose and concrete jaw, he resembled a mongoose that had just discovered an unattended nest of snake eggs. On the other side was flame-topped O'Bannon, inevitable drink in hand and leathery freckled face wearing a funereal expression.

"You screwed up, sweetie. You passed. Now—"

"Now," said Kearny, as if creating a knight of the garter, "you have your first field assignment. Over in Oakland—right in your own back yard."

He handed her a DKA assignment sheet with the name and address of the subject, the type of car, the client's name, and the specific instructions typed in. Just as Giselle had done thousands of times herself. But now it was *her* assignment. Now it was *her* field responsibility.

Kearny added airily, "It's a Repo on Sight. You can knock it off tonight on your way home, toss it on a towbar and drag it over here to the office first thing in the ayem."

But Giselle was staring at the assignment sheet, appalled.

The subject, the registered owner from whom she was to take the old 1980 Ford Fairlane, was a Sister John the Divine. For her first field assignment, Dan Kearny had given her a repo order on a Catholic nun's car.

"Assigning a nun's car to me is just Dan's way of putting me down," said Giselle almost bitterly.

"It could have been worse," said Larry Ballard. He was Giselle's age and 180 pounds, just under six feet, muscular and blond, verging on male beauty except for a hawk nose and blue eyes that could turn to cold slate under slight provocation. "Like that airplane you assigned me to repossess last year."

"Or those tires you wanted me to grab off that mean mother's truck-trailer rig up around Arcata," said Heslip. "The one always left a pit bull with migraine in his cab-over."

Along with Patrick Michael O'Bannon, they were waiting out the rush hour in Harry's Bar on Van Ness, a bit of a stretch from Harry's Bar in Venice but equally successful. O'B was fifty, two years younger than Kearny, and grey was creeping into his russet hair. As usual, he was three knocks ahead of everyone else.

"Okay my expense account without Dan seeing it and I'll ride shotgun for you."

"For a *nun?*" Giselle spoke with a scorn she didn't feel. "What's she going to do if she catches me taking it—rap me on the knuckles with a ruler?"

"Listen, some of the nuns I had in grade school—"

Ballard interrupted. "What's the address on it?"

"On Fruitvale down in the flats, I'm not sure just—"

Heslip waved a hand as if in pain. "Whooee! In that neighborhood you need a gun to make it home from the Safeway."

"I'll get by." Giselle checked her watch and stood up. "The Bay Bridge ought to be unplugged by now."

So casual. But tension in the gut, too—her *first field assignment.* A Repo on Sight at that. But, hey, how tough could it be to talk a sixty-five-year-old Catholic nun out of her car keys?

Repossess on Sight meant no talking was necessary. Spot it, grab it. But the car wasn't there to spot or grab when Giselle finished doing the standard nine-block cruise of the area around the given address, a modest one-story convent—muthah-house, maybe, in that part of the East Oakland slums?

So—check the area in the morning again before making personal contact? Or knock on the door and ask Sister John the Divine for the keys? But the street was ill-lit, devoid of all pedestrians. It was scary out there.

The CB radio blared. She adjusted the squelch. Larry Ballard's voice came through, weak from reaching across the bay but still audible.

"SF-six to SF-ten, do you read? Over."

Giselle unclipped the mike and depressed the SEND button. "This is SF-ten, over."

"How you makin' it?" When she didn't quickly respond, he added, "Listen, I remember my first night's solo."

"Never better—now," said Giselle, suddenly feeling it was so. "SF-ten over and out." The radio fell silent.

But parking and locking the car and starting up the narrow shrubbery-shrouded walkway, Giselle felt warm and invulnerable. She wasn't alone in the night. What a difference between controlling a case from the office and working that same case in the field. In the field there were—

Uncurbed dogs. Ugh. She used a stick and some leaves, but still imagined that the nose poking out of the peephole in the convent's solid-core wood door was crinkled at the smell of doggy delight lingering on her shoe.

"May I help you?"

"I'm sorry to bother you after dark like this, but is Sister John the Divine here?"

The face was small, heart-shaped, concerned, the voice soft. "Oh, I'm sorry—Sister is in charge of Oakland's program of Christian

Visitors to the Aged and Shut-In. Her office is at Our Lady of Perpetual Sorrows, Thirty-fourth and Salisbury. By the junior high. She often spends the night there."

Driving the empty streets to 34th Ave., Giselle reflected that now the nun's automobile made sense. But if she needed a car, she also needed to learn to pay for it. Not that the delinquency was going to hurt the good sister very much tonight. Our Lady not only had Perpetual Sorrows, she had under-the-building parking. Locked.

When the electric-eye gate rattled up to let a car out of Our Lady's garage the next morning at eight-thirty, Giselle was there. She walked through, looking for the sister's car. No 1980 Ford Fairlane. Upstairs, an administrator with a clipboard and a face like those made by painting eyes on dried apples told her that Sister John the Divine was at "that awful Phil person's house" over on East 16th off Fruitvale.

Followed to given address, cruised the area for the subject unit took on a whole new meaning when you had to edge through feeding-frenzy commute traffic just to find the address. Especially when you had to think through each separate movement—shifting gears, depressing the clutch, applying the brakes—because you just got your license yesterday.

Scorched earth. At East 16th, the entire city block had been leveled. No houses, no trees, no grass. No prisoners. After all these years as the best damned skip-tracer around, had she, Giselle Marc, been conned by a woman with a clipboard and a face made out of a wizzled apple?

In the next block were houses still standing. Deserted, lawns dry and brown, boards across the windows, but still standing. Facing the one one still obviously occupied were three yellow bulldozers, their smokestack flutter-valves popping with discreet belches of fluorocarbon.

Giselle drove slowly by. Not her concern. No 1980 Ford Fairlane among the parked cars, two of which were black-and-whites with the uniformed blues leaning against the fenders, arms folded on their chests. A couple of dozen other people just standing about. Watching. Listening. Nobody who looked like a nun in the crowd—but in these days of relaxed dress code for the religious, what did a nun look like?

Still not her concern.

Strung on new metal fenceposts all the way around the shabby

old frame house was a very heavy chain with a huge padlock on it. Standing in a wheelbarrow so he could straddle the chain, arms wide, haranguing those facing him, was a short fierce old man with silky white hair. That Phil person?

He reminded Giselle of her grandpa. A snatch of discourse through her window as she passed even *sounded* like her grandpa's.

"What is our crime? We want to refurbish these old but sound houses, with the help of city money and charity—and the donation of time and material by skilled builders!"

If she had learned anything studying for her M.A. in history from S.F. State—going to be a teacher then—it was that history repeats itself. Phil and his solitary defiance of change were doomed to failure. And were not her concern, anyway.

She circled the block. A new top-of-the-line Caddy had pulled up and a big, imposing man wearing a grey-wool suit worth the day's combined wages of the three 'dozer jockeys was getting out, waving a gold-headed walking stick.

Absolutely not her business. So Giselle parked and got out. Her grandfather was long dead, sure—but mightn't Phil know where Sister John the Divine could be found?

Grey-suit was brandishing his walking stick at the feisty old man. He was so much taller that he was just about face-to-face with the banty rooster in the wheelbarrow. Who was ignoring him, speaking around him.

"Each home will house a group of from six to eight elderly people, married and unmarried, both sexes together, shared chores and shopping, shared community rooms and activities. These houses will be integrated into the community at large, so the mixing of generations will be preserved."

"Shut up!" thundered grey-suit in frustration. "Get out of the way and let these men do their work!"

"Don't you mean let them rape, pillage, and burn?"

The big man's florid face congested with rage. Bristling brows and red jowls and Teddy Roosevelt teeth without Teddy's good nature. Tiger eyes without the nobility. A face without pity, without goodness, without hope. "The Oakland Housing Authority gave me a permit to—"

"Those bureaucrats? Those cowards? Those corrupt weasels? Because they gave you a permit doesn't make it right!"

"Excuse me," said Giselle.

Grey-suit whirled. "Who the hell are you?"

"Could you tell me—" She had been going to ask about Sister John the Divine. She really had. Instead, to her dismay she heard herself saying, "What's this all about?"

"Dignity," said Phil.

"Progress," said grey-suit. Then, so overcome by rage that spittle flew from his lips when he spoke, he whirled to the waiting policemen and yelled, "*Officers—do your duty!* Wheel this demented old bastard out of the way!"

The two cops moved forward—so did two of the 'dozer operators. The third held back, shaking his head. Grey-suit's face lost its satisfied look when Giselle got in their way.

"Lady," said the lead cop, "we're just here to keep the peace."

Giselle, who stood as tall as he, said, "Moving him is breaking the peace."

"*They* all left." He gestured at the leveled adjacent block. "Everybody else in *this* block has left. The developer has a demolition order. He's got the right to—"

"He's got the *power* to. What about this old man's rights?"

"He's about exhausted them, lady."

Grey-suit butted in. "I've also got a contract to build highrise, low-income housing *for the elderly*. We're trying to help these people."

"By taking away their homes?"

"Better step aside, lady," said the cop.

For answer, Giselle turned and stepped lithely up into the wheelbarrow beside the old man. She linked arms with him.

"You remind me of my grandpa," she said.

"You remind me that beauty has not yet quite deserted this wicked old planet." The old man reached out his free hand across his body to shake. "Phil."

"Giselle."

Grey-suit had been rendered so apoplectic that he stepped forward with his walking stick half raised.

"My editor-in-chief would *love* you to do that," Giselle said.

"Press?" demanded the cop in a dismayed voice. "You're press?"

Looking over their heads, Giselle saw another cop car arriving, followed by two TV news vans bristling with antennas.

"And here come some more."

The cop car slid to a stop and the driver tumbled out. Well, not *exactly* a cop car. Black-and-white, all right, but no spotlight and no police-department decal on the door—just a faded spot where it used to be. And it was a 1980 Ford Fairlane.

And not exactly a cop driving it. As a matter of fact, a middle-aged nun in the knee-length habit and starched wimple of the Dominican. She bustled up to them and triumphantly slapped a sheaf of papers into grey-suit's hands. Her voice was cheery as a chickadee.

"There you are, Mr. Johnstone. A Temporary Restraining Order signed by good Judge Deiner himself. Nothing more is to be done until the Board of Supervisors' meeting next Monday." She looked up at Phil, limpid brown eyes dancing with delight. "You did it, Phil! You held them off until the cavalry got here!"

"With the help of my trusty scout," said Phil, intertwining blue-veined, knotty fingers with Giselle's.

Mr. *Johnstone?* Great. Just great. The guy she'd been mouthing off to was DKA's client.

The lead cop, leaning over Johnstone's shoulder to look at the legal papers, gave a shrug of resignation mixed with relief. In the background, the news anchor was positioned in front of the cameras to start her introductory spiel. Giselle clambered back down out of the wheelbarrow, unwittingly flashing a length of splendid thigh for the cameras as she did.

"Are you Sister John the Divine?" she asked as Johnstone moved away.

"Yes. And you're—?"

"Giselle Marc."

Sister beamed. "May I call you Giselle?"

"May I call you John?" Sister looked blank. Giselle added quickly, "I have a repossession order for your car."

"First, it's time for our elevenses," said Sister sensibly.

The three of them had tea on the porch of Phil's embattled house. Johnstone had driven off in his gleaming Caddy in search of new blocks to level, the crowd had finally dispersed, and even the TV van and black-and-whites had departed.

"Death houses," said Sister John the Divine.

The respite, she had pointed out, was only for four days. The chain was still up and two out of the three bulldozers were still waiting there—the third, manned by the shame-faced youth who had hung back from the fray, had departed on its flatbed.

"When I heard about Phil's plight I looked into it," she went on. "Unlike Our Lady of Perpetual Sorrows, Johnstone's place will be run as a business, for a profit, with nursing wings and residence halls and paid attendants."

"Is that so bad?" asked Giselle. "If it doesn't want to go belly up, private enterprise has to make a profit."

Sister chuckled. She had a round, good-natured Italian face full of unexpected shrewd intelligence.

"By repossessing cars, for instance?"

"Something like that."

"Could you see me in one of those places?" demanded Phil, abruptly fierce over the rim of his glass. Their tea was a bottle of Seagram's Seven, a bottle of seltzer water, and a plastic bowl of ice cubes. Sister's was lemonade. "My Ellie died in this house fifteen years ago. I intend to do the same, because as long as I'm here I keep my personal identity."

"Phil is eighty-seven this year," said Sister with complacent pride, as if she had created him herself.

"I'm a congenital survivor—ninety-five out of every hundred persons born the year I was are dead. I've been a merchant seaman, a club fighter, a bartender, a pulpwriter in the Thirties—" Phil slammed his fist into his stomach. "I still feel the power of a sumo wrestler in my gut."

Sister John the Divine was leaning forward intently. "If the residents can't get to the community dining hall for supper a certain number of nights in a row, they're automatically transferred to the nursing wing and their room is given to the person on top of the waiting list. Being condemned to the nursing wing is like being condemned to die—most of them lose the will to live pretty quickly there."

"So in the non-nursing wing, most of their energies are spent on plots to help each other get to the dining room," said Phil. "And these are the joints people are *paying* to get into."

"[redacted]mn it, your instructions were Repossess on Sight!"

[redacted] Kearny was in his cubbyhole office and Giselle was standing on the other side of his big blondewood desk like a school girl called up before the principal. They'd had their share of arguments, even fights, over the years, but it had always been as equals. Giselle, after all, was office manager.

Now things were different. Now she was operating as a field agent. A repo man. Now Kearny's eighth cigarette of the morning was smoldering in an ashtray beside a cup of coffee long gone cold on top of a folder marked DIVINE, SISTER JOHN THE.

"Right there, see it? Repo on Sight. Those are the instructions on this file and I expect you to—"

"But she's not really delinquent."

" 'Not really delinquent.' " Kearny had started out as a repo man while still in knee britches, riding to his first repossession on a bicycle. He knew every trick in the book, and approved of almost none of them—unless he was pulling them himself. He shook his massive greying head in astonishment. "After all these years, Giselle, you fall for a line like that?"

"She's a Catholic nun, she's not going to—"

"I turn on the eleven-o'clock news last night, what do I see? The car you're supposed to be repossessing standing at the curb with the keys in the ignition and the motor running. Are you jumping into it and driving away? No. You're—"

"The motor wasn't running," said Giselle.

"You're standing in a wheelbarrow with some old guy you have to move from place to place with a shovel and—"

"Phil Canuli has the heart and lungs of an athlete." Giselle snatched up his cigarette and ground it to shreds in the ashtray. "He doesn't touch these filthy things."

"This from a former two-packs-a-day woman."

"Phil says senility is a lack of will power." Unbidden, she sat down and shook a cigarette from his pack. "He says—"

"I thought you quit again."

"I'm starting up again." She stuck the cigarette between her lips. "He says that exercising the mind with thought is like exercising a muscle with weight. He says—"

"What else do I see? My field agent *telling off* my client. When he calls for a progress report, do I tell him that the lanky blonde with the long legs is the field agent assigned to *repossess that screwy nun's car for him?*"

"It's all phony, Dan!" she blazed. "Her car is an old police car she calls Kojak 'cause all the sisters used to watch him on reruns. The guy at the corner gas station gave it to her to drive." Kearny leaned forward to fire up her cigarette. "But then Johnstone—this is a class-A bastard, Dan—offered him a lot of money for the pink slip. Once Johnstone had title to the car, he turned around and assigned it to us for repossession."

"Exactly!" Kearny slammed the flat of his hand on the desk, making the file jump. "Damn it, Giselle, we're hired to find people or chattels and bring 'em back alive—or at least in operating condition.

You don't want to do that, you're in the wrong!" He slammed the desk again. "I can't believe I'm saying these things to you! To some green pea right off the pod, sure, okay, but to *you*?"

Giselle was on her feet, smearing out her cigarette.

"I *knew* I shouldn't let you out into the field. You're even starting to *sound* like Ballard."

Larry Ballard had a not entirely undeserved reputation for getting involved in the subjects' personal problems. Giselle had even reamed him out for it a few times herself. But this was different. She opened the sliding aluminum door with its one-way glass and started out into the garage proper.

"I need reports in this file," Kearny called threateningly after her. Then he yelled, *"And bring me down a cup of coffee!"*

Once she was gone, he stared moodily at DIVINE, SISTER JOHN THE. Sure, you could strike a match on his own conscience, but Giselle was different—she bled a lot. And now she'd gotten it into her head that the client was evil and the subject a saint.

Maybe the old guy and the nun *were* getting screwed—but that wasn't DKA's problem, right? With sudden decision, he tore the extra assignment sheet out of Sister John the Divine's file and punched a set of numbers on the intercom phone.

"Larry, get your butt in here. I've got a hot one for you."

About thirty of the attendees at the informational meeting in the rec room of Our Lady of Perpetual Sorrows were Sister's Visitors—those who went around to help aged shut-ins. The rest were a mixed bag of the elderly—some in wheelchairs, some with canes, some as spry as people half their age.

One handsome boulevardier of ninety-three, who kept kissing Giselle's hand and patting her bottom, sang "O Sole Mio" in the flawless Italian of his youth. Twin sisters in their seventies did a tap-dance routine. Sister played the piano while the punch and cookies were served. By this time over a hundred people crowded the modest hall.

Sister opened the meeting.

"You all know there is a Board of Supervisors' meeting on Monday, during which the question of Phil Canuli's home and the other houses in that block on East 16th will be discussed and a decision made as to whether they will be torn down or not. We hope that as many of you as possible will attend the meeting and give moral support to our cause."

She stepped down. Phil took the mike.

"Why do I want to hang onto my home in a world of homicidal maniacs, where the midnight gunbutt on the door is a threat to every citizen? Because when you quit fighting back you're already dead. They just haven't buried you yet."

Larry Ballard came in. He looked around, saw Giselle in the back of the room, and went over to sit beside her.

"Some turnout," he said, low-voiced. What was he doing here? she wondered uneasily. What was Dan Kearny—?

Phil was saying, "Builders build. Developers destroy. The developers are the enemies. Once we get a builder behind us—"

Suddenly she saw it all. Kearny had realized she wasn't going to take Sister's car away from her, so he had called in Larry Ballard to do it.

"Sister's car is stashed in Phil's garage. Locked in with a big padlock. Try and get it and—"

"Hey, what are you talking about?" demanded Larry, too hurt to be really hurt. "Did I ask about the car?"

"You didn't have to. I know the way Dan's mind works."

The door opened again and Johnstone came in, accompanied by a handsome, whitely smiling priest in his thirties. He had crisp shining black hair with glinting blue highlights, that wash-and-wear smile, and the aggressive physique of a man who spent more time on the racquetball court than on the parish building fund.

Johnstone detoured to tower over Giselle as the priest went up between the ranks of folding chairs toward the front of the room. Johnstone began, "Now, you dumb broad, you'll see how—"

"Uh uh." Larry Ballard was up and between them. He gave Johnstone's necktie a little jerk, almost yanking the big developer's chin into his chest. "Nice tie."

Nice. Good word. It *was* kind of nice, Giselle thought, to have Larry around for the heavy breathing. She'd had her fill of *mano a mano* malarkey the day before. Ballard released the tie. Johnstone, livid, made little putting movements with his walking stick. Ballard shook his head.

"You want to end up sitting on the point of that thing?"

Up in the front of the room the priest was saying, smiling, "I'm sorry, Mr. Canuli, but I didn't authorize the use of this facility for this meeting tonight. I've already spoken with the bishop and with Sister's mother superior—"

Phil, not understanding they had already lost that round, was

hanging onto the microphone. "How much did Johnstone promise the diocese for you to back him up?"

But Sister John the Divine had a stricken look on her face—she knew what Phil didn't. She said hurriedly, "If you would stay and hear what is being said, Father, I'm sure—"

The priest smiled. "I'm sorry, Sister, but you will be ordered not to testify at Monday's hearing."

From the mean triumph on Johnstone's face, Giselle realized this had all been planned. And from the absolute misery on Sister's, she knew it was working. Of course. Sister would have taken a vow of obedience. If her mother superior, with the bishop's concurrence, said she couldn't testify, she wouldn't.

But Phil had his jaw stuck out. "I'm a nobody who can say things a somebody wouldn't dare. You can't shut *me* up!"

The priest leaned down and twitched the microphone lead out of the wall socket. "I'm afraid I just did, Mr. Canuli." He turned to smile sadly at the people. "I'm sorry, folks, but we can't have Our Lady of Perpetual Sorrows facilities put to this sort of unChristian and disruptive use."

Phil raised his old voice to be heard without the mike.

"Everybody, come to the Supervisors' meeting on Monday—there they can't turn off the mike on me."

That was Friday night. On Saturday morning, Giselle drove Sister around on her visiting schedule—with Ballard in the field, Sister's car stayed safely locked in Phil's garage—and then went in to the office because she knew Kearny always worked Saturdays. She stormed into his cubbyhole and told him off about assigning the car to Larry, then stormed back out again without giving him a chance to speak.

Then, paradoxically, she spent the rest of the day at her desk, catching up on neglected paperwork. There was a lot of it.

On Sunday, without avail, she tried to talk Sister into ignoring her vows of obedience. God, said Sister, unaware of any irony, would provide. Phil, of course, was undaunted.

"Well, damn it, Sister, *I'll* speak up! I won't let them treat *me* like a leper who's just crawled out of a manure pile! And if that worm Johnstone tries to stop me, I'll perform an autopsy on the living!"

Sister gave a little laugh that was almost a girlish giggle. "Phil, I'd rather you just stress that within each house, the residents will have private rooms for which they will be individually responsible.

And that these houses of the elderly should, in turn, be integrated into the community at large."

Giselle asked, "Is the mixing of the generations so important, Sister?"

"Oh, very." She spoke with surprising heat. "Physical and mental deterioration quite often stems from old people being isolated from the stimulation of multi-generational contacts. They are rejected and cast off by their families—"

"And then they reject right back," said Phil. "Especially the young. Don't want 'em around. Scared of 'em. Too much life. So the old fools end up in deliberate self-isolation."

Sister looked at her watch. "My goodness, I have to get back to the convent for evening prayer!"

Phil was on his feet. "And I want to go down to the Eagle Inn for a buck-fifty braunschweiger sandwich and a draft."

"We'll drop you," said Giselle.

"I'd rather walk. Stir up the blood."

"Phil, in this neighborhood after dark—"

"Hell, woman, if I had a big nose I'd be Cyrano! 'I have ten hearts, I have a hundred arms, I feel too strong to war with mortals.' " He threw his arms wide and yelled at the top of his voice, *" 'Bring me giants!' "*

Only Giselle noticed that the hand he brought out of his old Navy peacoat pocket was wrapped around a roll of nickels.

"What can you do?" asked Kearny. "Two big guys just came up behind him and cold-cocked him right outside that skid-row honky-tonk where he had his sandwich and beer." He shook his head. "Damn! I didn't think he'd be in any—"

In any what? Giselle wondered. They were drinking coffee in her kitchen that overlooked Lake Merritt from West Grand Ave.

"But didn't anybody try to stop it?" she asked.

"A couple of months ago in L.A. fifty-three people saw a murder in a parking lot." Kearny's blunt features were disdainful. "Last week the case was dismissed for lack of evidence."

"That poor little old man."

"Vertebra in the neck looks collapsed, fracture over the left temporal bone, possible basal skull fracture."

"I don't know why, but that vermin Johnstone had it done."

"Yeah. You got any proof?"

"No, but—"

"Yeah." Kearny sighed and got to his feet.

She said thoughtfully, "If he *did* go after Phil, why didn't he go after me?"

"Ballard," said Kearny.

Then he was gone. For once she was speechless, feeling like every sort of rank creep for thinking that Larry Ballard was just there to repossess Sister's car. Phil had been beaten up because Kearny hadn't thought he was in any danger. Otherwise he would have put someone—probably Bart Heslip—on him the way he had put Ballard on her. That was why he had been disgusted with himself. That was why he had stopped by for coffee.

The Oakland City Hall was on Washington Street downtown, and the Supervisors' Chambers was more like a sideshow than a hearing room. All that was missing were a troop of performing dogs and a marching band. Giselle arrived half an hour early but still was able to fight her way into the hearing room itself only because she was tall and had a sheaf of legal-looking papers in her hand. Sister John the Divine had saved her a seat.

"Did you hear about poor Phil, God save him?"

"Yes, I did, Sister. Is he—"

"They're worried about cerebral hemorrhage, which could kill him. I've been praying ever since I heard."

"And you still aren't going to speak?"

Sister's silence, miserable with conflicting loyalties and beliefs, spoke for her.

Giselle sighed and looked around. "What *is* all this?"

As expected, lots of old people. But also well dressed matrons with beauty-parlor coifs, several priests, business types, contractor types—even the fresh-faced kid who had removed his bulldozer from the East 16th Street scene the previous week. And in the back of the room, the other two 'dozer jockeys.

"Interested parties."

When Sister added nothing further, Giselle waggled her fingers under the nun's quite memorable nose. "C'mon, give."

"Well, Father Frederick—he was at the meeting last—"

"Yes. The toothpaste ad."

Sister smiled, but acid tinged her voice. "Father Frederick pointed out to the conservative elements in the local hierarchy that unmarried old people of both sexes living together in the same house, as we envision our community idea, is shameless and immoral."

Giselle suddenly understood the blued-haired matrons. They would love Father Frederick—probably Father Freddie to that part of his flock. "And the business types?"

"If the houses should be saved, they want to turn them into commercially viable properties—boutiques, tea rooms, and the like."

"With Johnstone Construction doing the renovating, I bet," said Giselle. "He hasn't missed a trick, has he? The only thing he *won't* do is help old people live in their own homes."

The Speaker called the meeting to order. Johnstone appeared with an attorney whose head was skull-like and whose black tie was so narrow it looked like a line of ink running down the front of his shirt. The doors were left open to the hall so the overflow could hear the proceedings.

"We will first hear the Planning Commission report."

"Pursuant to the court's Temporary Restraining Order, we reexamined the legalities of the construction permit issued to Johnstone Construction for the razing of the existing structures at East 16th and Fruitvale, and for the subsequent construction of twin highrise structures for the housing of the elderly."

One of the two black women supervisors asked, "What is your *personal* opinion on the matter, Commissioner?"

The Planning Commission's man was in his thirties, slightly stooped. With his glasses and slicked-back hair, he would have looked the same at twenty and would look the same at fifty. He looked up at the members of the Board above him behind their long hardwood table and clutched the microphone more tightly. He swallowed visibly. He was about to give an Opinion. An Opinion was dangerous as a snake—no telling *where* it might turn up.

"The elderly are—um—*old*. They are—um—a problem for—um—Oakland. We—um—seek a final solution but—um—"

With an almost audible sigh of relief, he returned to his prepared text.

"But—um—the problem of the elderly has been handled in the past with the construction of professionally administered highrise buildings which do not cost the taxpayers any money. The Planning Commission can see no obstacle to demolition and construction as stated in Mr. Johnstone's permits."

Johnstone's attorney started to rise, but, surprisingly, the fresh-faced 'dozer driver was on his feet first and got recognized. He was in his mid-twenties, with the chunky, muscular body of many construction workers before junk food and beer take their toll. He

clutched the stand-up microphone nervously and wasn't a very good speaker, but his sincerity came through.

"I was out there last week. When they were gonna tear down that old man's house. It was pretty sad. So I was glad when this lady helped him. Then the Sister come—came—with the restraining order and I got thinking about all the builders that I done work for. So I went around and got three of 'em to promise they'd donate time and men and materials to see those houses got fixed up right so groups of old people could live in 'em."

The black supervisor used her mike again. "Do these builders know that the City of Oakland has condemned these structures, so they are now city property?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"And they're still willing to go ahead with renovation?"

"As long as it's actually old people who get put in the houses when they're fixed up again—yes, ma'am."

She looked around at the other supervisors. "I believe this plan has merit. I believe we should explore it."

Johnstone's attorney tried again, but this time Johnstone clapped a big hand on the lawyer's bony shoulder and jammed him back into the seat. Then Johnstone strode to the mike instead.

"Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the Board, concerned citizens."

He had an urgent, unpleasant voice that, however, carried plenty of punch. Giselle realized that she would be nowhere near as effective. If only Sister— Or if only Phil, with that fury in his gut that would melt steel—

"I object to this blatant favoritism of my competitors," said Johnstone. "My highrises are the only solution that makes sense. In today's violent society, the aged are helpless prey unless they are safely housed in high-security buildings."

Isolated, you mean, thought Giselle. As he proceeded, there was a slight commotion at the door, but she couldn't see what it was from where she was seated.

"Just last night, outside a brightly lit restaurant with dozens of people about, Mr. Phil Canuli, the fine, misguided old gentleman who has been opposing my building permit, was senselessly struck down by unknown assailants."

Giselle was on her feet. "You *bastard!*" she exclaimed under her breath. He had engineered the attack on Phil so he could use it to make his point *against* Phil!

Sister dragged her back down. "God will provide," she said almost tranquilly.

Giselle stared at her with amazement. The people were listening to Johnstone, mesmerized, but for her this was God's plan, this was the way the world worked. Or at least this was the way she was able to convince herself the world worked.

Johnstone said, "If we permit those houses to be renovated for habitation by groups of defenseless old people, this will continue to happen—"

"As long as *you're* around it'll keep happenin'!"

Giselle was on her feet. So was Sister. With interference being run by Bart Heslip and Larry Ballard, a wan and haggard Phil Canuli was there. They supported him across to the mike.

Johnstone said quickly, "Mr. Speaker, this man is obviously in no condition to—"

Heslip shouldered him aside and Phil grabbed the mike with both hands to keep himself upright. "Mr. Speaker—" his voice was surprisingly strong "—I demand to be recognized."

Giselle exclaimed loudly, "This is Phil Canuli, the man who was attacked last night!"

"Mr. Canuli, is this wise? You—"

"Not wise, but necessary, sonny," said Phil to the Speaker. He was deathly pale. He gestured at Johnstone. "This weasel is being so sweet about me you'd think we'd been sleepin' together."

Johnstone, face sheened with sweat, said, "I demand—"

"But he must be all colicky and fretful because here he thought I was out of the way so he could make out that the victim was the criminal, like his sort always do."

Giselle had grabbed Heslip's arm. "Bart, what in God's name possessed you to let him come here?"

"Let him? Dan put me on the hospital this ayem, just in case, and here comes old Phil staggerin' out the side door. Said he was going either here or to hell, so here is where we came."

Phil was saying, "He sent his mini-Mafia around to casually give me a touch of switchblade surgery, but they messed up."

Bart and Larry started working their way back to the door. Once there, they stood on either side of it with their backs against the wall.

"Are you charging, Mr. Canuli, that Mr. Johnstone was one of those who attacked you?" asked the Speaker.

"No." Phil clung fiercely to the podium. "I'm saying that he hired

it done." He let go with one hand, and even though reeling managed to stay erect as he pointed. "It was those two bozos did it—and they drive 'dozer for Johnstone!"

Except for Sister John the Divine's, all eyes followed his pointing finger. The two heavy-set workmen were on their feet, panicked, plunging for the door. Which was suddenly filled by Ballard and Heslip.

Bart Heslip had won thirty-nine out of forty pro fights before realizing he was never going to be middleweight champ of the world and turning to private detection for his on-the-edge kicks. His man went down with a broken jaw and a bruised abdominal aorta from a lovely hook-jab-uppercut combination.

Ballard's sport was scuba diving, but four years before he had started adding three nights a week at a karate dojo out in the Sunset District where he lived. As his opponent started his first—and last—punch, Ballard delivered a truly stunning kick to his groin. The man fell on the floor and threw up.

Sister, ignoring all this, was at Phil's side, trying to support him until Giselle arrived, but he went down, taking both women with him. Somehow he found a raspy chuckle and enough breath to gasp out, " 'An hour or so before dinner, Monsieur de Bergerac died, foully murdered.' "

Because he wasn't Catholic and had no cemetery plot, Phil was cremated. Because there wasn't much money, the service was held in his living room. Giselle brought over her Electrolux to get the place cleaned up for it—the Visitors from Sister's program furnished the food.

Several people gave eulogies and Sister did the reading—though not from Catholic liturgy. Instead, she chose that drunken Welsh poet whose thirst for booze had been exceeded only by his thirst for beauty. She read dry-eyed because of her total assurance that she would be seeing Phil Canuli again.

" 'And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.' "

Giselle turned away, blindly, to find Dan Kearny waiting for her just inside the front door.

"Oh, Dan'l," she wailed.

Kearny said, "Yeah, I know," and with an arm around her shoul-

ders shepherded her out and across the lawn toward his company car. The chain and padlock were gone. So were the bulldozers. In their place were stacks of two-by-fours and a pile of plaster board under a tarp. And a new sign that had been put up just that morning after the Supervisors' decision had been posted.

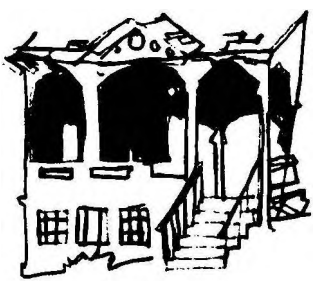
"PHIL'S PLACE"
A PILOT PROGRAM FOR THE AGED
UNDER THE DIRECTION OF
THE RIGHT REVEREND SISTER JOHN THE DIVINE

"It isn't worth the cost," said Giselle bitterly.

"Maybe not," said Kearny, then added with grim satisfaction, "but Johnstone's going down for it. Once his two pigeons started to sing, not even his high-priced attorney could do much for him."

They had arrived at Kearny's car. He paused for a moment, then tossed Giselle the keys.

"Here," he said. "You drive."



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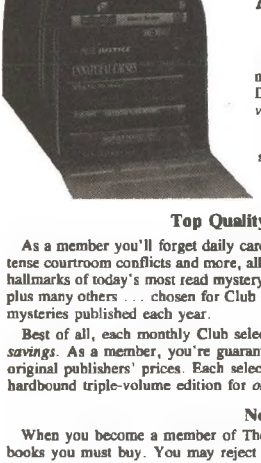

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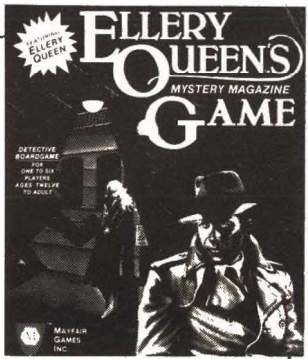

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