

新英语故事丛书 5

呵 护 天 使

Guardian Angels

付 瑛 何红梅 吉 荣 编

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内 容 简 介

爱找事儿又不敢动手的混人，在加勒比岛国旅游的担惊受怕，轻轻松松和明星交朋友的饼店小老板，贩牛开矿抢银行的罪犯，中学生干坏事的小手腕儿，在洗衣房里争“雌”的女人，好事做不到底的姐姐，聪明反被聪明误的女孩摆脱了刑事纠葛的轻松劲儿，失去记忆的新娘，炸掉老师信箱的捣蛋学生……33个闻所未闻的新奇故事，吸引您忘掉学英语的苦恼，而陶醉在使用英语的快乐之中。

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急眼儿的家伙

The Angry Bail Bondsman

不和混人较劲，这也是一种智慧。街上碰到个二百五，你和他说得清吗？《读书》登过王蒙讲的一个故事，大意是说两个人抬杠，甲说二七一十四，乙说二七一十五。闹到县官那儿去，县官二话没说，喝令打甲五十大板。甲大喊冤枉。县官说：“你冤枉什么？乙说二七一十五，明摆着是个糊涂蛋，你和他较真儿，不和你打谁？”

From 1989 until 1994, I had this really nice '89 Honda Prelude. It was the most reliable, well-built car I ever owned, which is saying a lot, because I have owned four Lexii. However, there were two problems with the car. One, it was slow. It had the biggest engine you could put in a Honda, but the automatic tranny made it a snail-mobile. Two, I couldn't take it out of my garage without someone getting mad and flipping me off. I guess it was the appearance of the car — it was fire-engine red, with aftermarket wings, fins and gills, tinted windows, custom wheels & tires, \$3000 worth of stereo, and a license plate which bore my actual first name.

Change lanes? Get flipped off. Merge into traffic? Get flipped off. Run a yellow light? Get flipped off. It was tiresome.

Anyway, one day in 1991, I was driving to work. I was patiently waiting for my turn to use the on-ramp when some type-A jerk in a Mercedes sedan decides HE'S not going to wait, he needs on that ramp NOW, and furthermore, I'm the guy who's going to let him in line in front of me. Sorry, Charlie, no such luck. The guy behind me lets him cut in though, so now the guy is PISSED and he's behind me. Once on the freeway, I change to the left lane, and Mr. Dickhead in the Merc has already changed lanes and is RIGHT BEHIND ME and now he's really pissed because of course I pulled into the left lane right in front of him, winning our little race in a cheesy Honda although he's got Teutonic iron that I am supposed to respect and even be intimidated by.

So this moron FOLLOWS ME ALL THE WAY TO WORK. Once I park, he pops out of his Merc. The guy is big, and in his forties. He stands over top of my car as I climb out, briefcase in hand. I figure the guy is going to take a swing at meUbut nog He decides to joust with me verbally. Heh. As you might expect, everything he says gets shoved right back in his face with an offensively flippant remark as I walk to the little shop where I still work to this day. Finally realizing that I am not intimidated, he heads back for his car, but before climbing inU he makes some derogatory schoolyard remark about my nose (!) that I haven't heard since the 10th grade I remember this guy is in his FORTIES). As I open the door to the shop and step insideUI say /Wahg Sore loser. ”

NOW the guy is REALLY PISSED. He walks into the shopU asks if I'm the ownert Not He wants to talk to the

owner^t By now^UFred ^Ithe boss^s is already coming out of his office. Mr. Dickhead tries to convince Fred that I am a reckless driver, but Fred responds by telling the guy to get the fuck out of here. The guy calls Fred a few choice names and leaves, madder than ever. Fred and I have a good laugh over it^Urecalling that the guy ^Ifor whatever reasons^s told Fred that he is “in the bail bonds business” during the course of their argument. So we look up “bail bonds” in the phone book and sure enough^Uthe guy’s name (Jim French) and picture are all over the yellow pages^g Turns out he owns the biggest bail bonds business in Vancouver^UWA ^Ithe town I live in), and has about ^Nor ^Bsolid pages of ads in the phone book^g We laugh our asses off at this.

Then^Utoday^Uin the local paper^J

James Robert French, 47, of 8708 **a t r t** Lakecrest Ave. , is to appear for arraignment this morning for SEVEN COUNTS OF CHILD MOLESTATION“CHILD RAPE and is wanted in California for another two charges of sexual assault. The alleged victims in both Washington and California are close relatives. French, who owns Clark County Bail Bonds, allegedly assaulted the victim over a five-year period.

I sure hope he can find some bail bonds.

ADDENDUM:

The following article appeared in the Portland, Oregon Oregonian on November 17, 1995:

VANCOUVER, Wash. - A fugitive warrant has been issued for James R. French, who was convicted Tuesday in Clark County Superior Court of sexually abusing his stepdaughter. He was found guilty of two counts of first-degree rape of a child and three counts of second-degree rape of

a child. The abuse began when the girl was 8. She now is 16. French, 47, had been free on bail pending sentencing, which had been scheduled for Thursday. He owns Clark County Bail Bonds and similar businesses in six other states.

Rod Frederiksen, Vancouver police chief, said sources told authorities that French was headed to Mexico or Arizona. He reportedly was traveling alone. French is described as 6 feet 6 inches, 250 pounds, with blue eyes and brown hair. He may be driving a white Land Rover, a gold Mercedes or a 1995 Mitsubishi Quest minivan.

This is Jim French. If you see him, call the police.

Notes

Honda 本田汽车

tinted 染色

custom 定做的

ramp 坡道

Mercedes 梅赛德斯汽车

sedan 私家轿车

freeway 高速公路

cheesy 俊俏的

intimidated 恐吓

moron 笨人

joust 争斗

offensively 不愉快

flippant 没礼貌的

derogatory 贬损的

arraignment 传问

molestation 骚扰

alleged 所谓的

Oregon 俄勒冈州

fugitive 逃亡的

Arizona 亚利桑那州

Mitsubishi 三菱

饼店明星

Bagel Boy to the Stars

By Mitch Lemus

1997年的一大新闻，是摄影记者“狗仔队”追得戴安娜王妃香消玉陨，魂散法兰西。为了钱，人有时候会身不由己，苦挣巴力地干出些缺德事儿来。要是出于业余爱好，就犯不着那样了。你看，开百吉饼店的 Michael，没费什么事儿，就在饼店的墙上挂满了明星的照片，许多还是他和明星的合影。

It's 5:30 a. m. on a frosty February morning. While most New Yorkers are catching their last winks before sunrise, Michael Klein, 32, is meticulously straightening out the celebrity photos on the walls of his store, 3rd Avenue Bagels.

There's Michael pictured with Brooke Shields. And there he is chumming it up with Spike Lee, and yet another one of him cavorting with ex-heavyweight champ, Joe Frazier.

In fact, nearly every inch of the store's walls are covered with autographed photos of celebrities, most of them posing with Michael. One would expect to see such pictures in the office of some high-powered Hollywood agent. But in a bagel

store?

Michael's schmear story began back in 1991 while vacationing with his wife at the Beverly Hilton. The couple was simply looking to relax and had no inkling of the birthday bash Merv Griffin was throwing for Sophia Loren the night they checked in.

As limo after limo rolled up, a virtual Who's Who of Hollywood paraded before the star-struck couple. Camera in hand, Michael finally got the nerve to ask a celebrity for a picture. It was Vanna White, all "tan, tall, and beautiful", he recalls. "It would be my pleasure," said Vanna, snuggling up to Michael while his wife took the shot.

Surprised by the ease of his feat that night, Michael then proceeded to get his picture taken with Sophia Lauren, Sylvester Stallone, Audrey Meadows and Pat Sajak.

Back in New York, he blew the shots up to 8 x 10, framed them, and hung them up in his bagel store. The pictures attracted so much customer attention, that from then on, Michael decided to actively seek photo ops. And a hobby was born.

The wall of fame is definitely good for business, says Michael, who's been in the family business since graduating from the University of Florida in 1986. Last October, he became sole owner of the store on 3rd Avenue and 82nd Street, buying it from his father.

When not answering customer questions like "Who's new on the wall?" and "What do the celebrities eat?", Michael commands the counter like a general, directing employees, fielding phone-in orders, and waiting on customers in impossibly scant time. Regulars needn't even say a word. As

soon as he sees one enter the store, he's making their bagel and pouring their coffee just the way they like it.

An avid sports fan, Michael is also a Knick's season-ticket holder. One night while trolling for celebrity pictures at Madison Square Garden, he met his greatest childhood idol, former Knick Walt Frazier. "Hey, I know your store," Clyde told Michael, who was wearing his 3rd Avenue Bagels jacket. "I live near there." Thrilled that his idol of all idols lived in the neighborhood, Michael sent free appetizers to Frazier's apartment every day for a week.

At first, Frazier didn't respond, as he was on the road announcing Knicks games. But a few days later, he dropped by for lunch, and the two bonded immediately. "I admire Michael as a family man and talented entrepreneur," says Frazier, who comes in nearly every day, fond of Michael's apple muffins, whole wheat bagels and turkey breast. On occasion, Clyde even works the store's counter to the delight of neighborhood customers. "He's the coolest, most down-to-earth celebrity I know," says Michael.

The two have become so friendly, in fact, that after most Knick games they go out to dinner together. "We'll be eating in a place like Canastel's, Mulholland Drive Cafe, or Martell's, and five or six people will be hovering around us," says Michael. "It feels good sitting with him, although sometimes it's annoying because I just want to enjoy my meal. But can you imagine what it's like for Frazier? For him, it's like this every single day of his life. Would I trade places with him? You bet. In a minute!" "Mike is a huge sports fan. So much so, that he feeds me sports news I don't even know about," concedes Frazier. The budding paparazzi credits

Frazier for opening doors for him. But Frazier disagrees. “The guy is very effervescent”, says Clyde. “He’d be getting his pictures with or without me.”

Within a short time, Michael became known as “The Bagel Man” to Garden staff, players and fans. “You’ve got to know who you can and can’t take a picture with,” says Michael, who arrives at the Garden an hour or so before gametime, looking to schmooze and take pictures with stars seated in “Hollywood Row” on court level.

“A guy like Woody Allen won’t even look at you. Whoopi Goldberg you can’t get near. Alec Baldwin and Kim Bassinger are a tough picture. John McEnroe is a nice guy, but I wouldn’t ask for his picture because I know his temperament. But others are really cool. Like Bill Murray, who grabbed my camera and started taking pictures of himself.”

But not all of Michael’s celebrity photos are taken at the Garden. A fair amount walk into his store straight off the street by chance. CBS sportscaster Pat O’Brien, came in one recent Sunday morning, took a look at Michael’s wall of fame and said, “Hey Michael. If I send you my picture, where’s it going to go on the wall?”

“Well, you’re top notch. I’ll give you good placing,” Michael assured him. Sure enough, within days, O’Brien’s autographed mug was delivered via Federal Express to the bagel store where it now hangs with nearly a hundred other famous personalities. Other walk-ins include Sigorney Weaver, Sharon Stone, Madaline Kahn and Hugh Grant. But Michael won’t pounce on a star the moment he or she walks in. “If I or one of my workers recognize a celebrity here for the first time, I won’t say anything. The second time I usually won’t say

anything, either. The third time I'll say, Aren't you so-and-so? and develop a rapport." For opportunities like these, Michael keeps a camera handy in the back room.

On his wish list: "I'd love to take a picture with David Letterman, Cindy Crawford, Madonna, Donald Trump, Elizabeth Hurley, Jennifer Aniston, and Tiffany Amber Thiessen from Beverly Hills 90210. She's, like beautiful, totally awesome. But my ultimate picture would be President Clinton."

While shooting celebrity photos may be glamorous, running a successful bagel store requires hard work and long hours. Michael, who lives 8 miles away in Ft. Lee, New Jersey, leaves his wife and two small daughters every morning at a quarter after five. 15 minutes later he's behind the counter, his car, embellished with a "BAYGEL" license plate, parked right in front of the store. At 3:30 he heads home, where he begins on paperwork.

"We bake 17,000 bagels a week. All hand rolled, made with high-gluten flour, and baked in stone-shelved ovens. Primarily, it's the New York water that makes a good bagel. But knowing how to get the bagels soft on the inside and crispy on the outside separates our bagels from the rest. And of course, the personality behind the bagel."

So, what's next for New York's paparazzi bagel boy? Bagel sandwiches named after the stars? I can see it now ... /Give me a Clyde on whole wheatU Michaelt Hold the onions."

Notes

Bagel 百吉饼，先蒸后烤的发面圈

meticulously 小心地

celebrity 名人

chumming 结为密友

Brooke Shields 美国演艺界明星

Spike Lee 美国电影制作人，最近的作品是“赛马计时员3 (1995)和“女孩六号”(1996)

Joe Frazier 美国职业拳击手，1964年奥运会最重量级冠军，1970~1973年世界职业拳击赛最重量级冠军

cavorting 腾跃

autographed 亲笔签名

schmear 汇总的

inkling 细微的迹象

bash (美俚)盛会

Sophia Loren 索菲娅 罗兰，好莱坞电影明星

Limo 豪华轿车

snuggling 偎依

Sylvester Stallone 美国电影演员，制片人

Audrey Meadows 美国演艺界明星(1924~1996)

Pat Sajak 美国演艺界明星

avid 干劲十足的

trolling 钓

appetizers 开胃食品

entrepreneur 企业家

muffins 松饼

down-to-earth 实在的

concedes 承认

budding 开始发迹的

paparazzi 自由职业的摄影师，他们锲而不舍地跟踪名人，拍下名人的照片，卖给报纸杂志。有人译为“狗仔队”，“小狗队”

schmooze 闲谈

Woody Allen 美国喜剧演员，作家，电影制片人

Whoopi Goldberg 美国喜剧演员

Alec Baldwin 美国电影演员，1995年出演“密西西比河上的幽灵”

John McEnroe 美国网球运动员

sportscaster 担任比赛实况转播或说明的广播员

walk-ins 未经预约而来的

Sharon Stone, Madaline Kahn, Hugh Grant 三人均为美国电影演员

Rapport 和谐，亲善

David Letterman 美国电视节目主持人

Cindy Crawford 著名模特

Madonna 麦当娜，歌星

Donald Trump 美国不动产开发商

Elizabeth Hurley 美国演艺界明星

Jennifer Aniston 美国电影演员

Tiffany Amber Thiessen 美国演艺界明星

下冰雹的时候

The Day It Hailed

By Melissa B.



盐呀，水呀这些东西，要是控制在一个人手里，事情就有点儿大大的不妙了。

Long Ago in Kenya a young miner discovered salt. He thought, “If I could get all of the salt out of this mine everyone would have to buy it from me.” So at the end of the day the young miner left the mine with all of the salt in his possession. Jomo, the head of all gods, saw this happening and was scared that the young miner would become too powerful and may hurt someone. So he sent his wife Candy down to Earth as a fish eagle to retrieve all the stolen salt. When Candy got down there, Maurice, the strongest mortal, loaded all the salt onto Candy’s back. Meanwhile in the heavens, Jomo asked his wise daughter, Wanjiku, how he should give the salt back to mother Earth. Wanjiku said to Jomo “When ever a bad storm comes and it’s raining, drop a part of the salt to the earth so when the rain hits it will dissolve back into the earth.” Jomo was quite pleased at the thought and when Candy came back to the heavens Jomo appointed her to the job of dropping the salt

back to the earth. The next time it hails, look up and see if you can see Candy dropping the salt down with the rain.

Notes

Hailed 下冰雹

在牙买加岛度假

My Jamaican Vacation

By Mitch Lemus



美丽的加勒比海，阳光明媚，风光旖旎。到牙买加度假，肯定可以大开眼界。至于其他方面，什么路呀，车呀，吃啦，住啦，就将就将就吧。

“Psssssst … psssssst,” hissed a young Jamaican man wearing but a filthy pair of brown tattered pants hanging precariously from his protuberant buttocks.

/Yah monUcome here for a secondUI want to talk t’youg You guys need any-thing? … You jus’ got here? … Where you from? … New York? … Yah mon. Where you stayin’? … How long you goin’ t’be ’ere? … My name is Farmer Billy. You need some ganja? No? Den how ’bout ganja bread? What ’bout some mushroom tea, make you see colors, yah mon. ”

“No thanks, we already see in color. ”

“Ha, ha, ha, ha. You a funny guy,” he laughed, revealing a mouth of missing teeth. “How ’bout some nice bracelet or necklace for the lady?”

“No thank you, we didn’t bring any money with us …

we were just taking a walk along the beach,” said my girlfriend, Nina.

“Hey mon, where you guys runnin’? You want to rent scooter? Go for tour in de mountains? Well, if you need any-ting, look for me, Farmer Billy, OK mon? I see you around.” He took my hand, shaking it Jamaican style — fists meet over, under, then head-on. “Hey mon, you got cig’rette for mi? OK mon, every-ting be irie.”

Welcome to Negril, Jamaica, where you hang a shingle outside your roadside shanty and you have a hotel. If your house has a kitchen, you also have a restaurant. And if you happen to have a car, you’re a taxi driver, too.

Beautiful beaches, warm turquoise waters and dramatic sunsets confirm Negril’s status as a Caribbean paradise. But Negril is more than a vacation destination. It’s an education in sales, marketing and economics at its most base level. An impoverished country, dollar signs dance in the eyes of the poor at the sight of tourists. For many visitors, the constant haranguing by hard-sell hucksters can be irritating, if not downright frightening. Yet, Nina and I found their persistence, resourcefulness, and entrepreneurial tactics a bemusing, culturally enlightening experience.

If haggling with the locals is not your idea of fun, you’d be better off within the confines of one of Negril’s luxurious all-inclusive resorts. But if adventure and divergent cultures turn you on, then the small independent properties along Negril’s cliffs and 7-mile beach are for you!

Those who visit the bohemian enclave of Negril seem to give themselves permission to go a little wildo to indulge in vices and do things they would normally not v like go naked

on a quiet stretch of beach — eat deep-fried foods — or engage in a romantic interracial fling. The destination attracts a large contingent of French, Italians, Germans and Canadians in addition to Americans. Unfortunately, the week we were there in March, the place was overrun with Spring Breakers. They're the loud rude ones with backwards baseball caps emblazoned with university insignias.

Upon landing in Montego Bay, Nina and I boarded an old rickety bus en route to our hotel. For the next hour and a half we bounced along narrow meandering roads, dodging goats, chickens, cattle, and school children in uniform.

Over the 52 mile journey, we passed one ramshackle shelter after another. Houses of cards, seemingly on the brink of collapse, patched together with weathered wood, rusty sheet metal and assorted scraps like Pepsi billboards.

Ubiquitous roadside shacks that dot the landscape are the 7-11s of Jamaica, from which rural peasants stock a meager inventory of beer, soda, cigarettes, and fruit. But mostly, they're hangouts for locals to pass idle time.

More than a decade after his death, Bob Marley, the legendary reggae icon, is still revered like a god. Possessing the marketing power of a Michael Jordan, his likeness appears everywhere from giant wall murals to T-shirts to wood carvings. Music is an integral part of Jamaican life and the people are forever singing to themselves. Much of the country's music has political undertones urging Jamaicans to stand up for their rights and rise up against oppression. Reggae music is everywhere, evoking a pleasantly hypnotic ambience. But at times I found the music an irritating cacophony, like when sitting in reggae purgatory — the area between two

songs blasting from opposite directions.

Every night bands can be found performing at the area's many nightspots. The first place we hit, an open-air venue on the cliffs called MX-3, turned out to be as much a fleabag flea market as it was a performance space. Inside, a few dim bulbs dangled crudely casting eerie shadows, while the band seemed merely to serve as background muzak to the commerce. A \$10 cover charge gets you inside, only to be relentlessly hit upon by a corps of craft vendors who perceived looking tantamount to buying. My pale white skin seemed to attract them like a neon light blinking "TOURI \$ T, TOURI \$ T, NAIVE TOURI \$ T, FRESH OFF THE PLANE!" Each vendor peddled virtually identical merchandise: rope bracelets, beaded necklaces, shell earrings, T-shirts, hand-carved pot pipes and other Jamaican tsatskes. And each proclaimed that his was "de best."

The best way to weasel out of their high-pressure tactics, I discovered, was to tell them I couldn't buy anything without asking "my lady," — who'd be slinking away in embarrassment. "Why must you dicker over two bucks?" Nina would chide me. "Just give the guy the five dollars — he'll be able to feed his family for a week."

Even MX-3's squalid bathrooms did not dampen the sales spirit. While doing my business at a stall, a young man produced a large bag of ganja and began his spiel. "Can we discuss this later?" I asked, "I'm busy now." Was there not anything nor any place sacred in this land? Exiting the club that night, Nina and I were besieged by a tenacious gang of taxi drivers. "Come wid me, come wid me, mon!" each barked. Uclawing for our business? Apparently Udispatchers are

an unknown occupation in Negril.

Generally, Negril's taxis shuttle tourists between the beach and cliffs where most of the hotels and restaurants are located. Taxis are constantly on the prowl, beeping at any foreigner that moves. The cabbies all want to be your "contact" for anything you may need under the Jamaican sun. Legitimate cabs can be identified by their red license plates. However, most taxis are just some guy and his jalopy looking to gouge unsuspecting tourists. Always negotiate the fare before you get in, and when the driver quotes a price, immediately halve it.

"Oh c'mon, you can't be serious," we'd gripe. "100J for a ride to the cliffs! You've got to be kidding. The guy over there said he'd take us for 50," we'd bluff in unison.

"No way, mon. Nobody take you for dat little amount," the driver would argue. "Can't make no livin' for money like dat." As we'd turn to walk away, he'd concede. "OKUOKU 509. Get in mon," grabbing us before we strolled too far.

One of the wrecks we rode in was stripped bare of its interior vinyl and upholstery, revealing the mechanical parts within the doors. To keep the wind from blowing in Nina's face, the driver reached back over the seat, turning the broken window knob with a wrench *v* all while driving. In another taxi, the rear seats were nothing more than springs covered with carpeting. Ironically, despite their decrepit condition, nearly every taxi boasted a high-end sound system cranking reggae tunes at ear-shattering decibels.

With no traffic lights or road signs, drivers frantically honk their horns when approaching blind curves to warn oncoming vehicles. In some places, the road is too narrow for

cars to pass in opposite directions, forcing one car to either back up or pull over to the side.

Even by New York standards, Negril's taxi driver's are certified maniacs. At times, you're certain that a smashup is imminent. And driving on the left side as they do in Jamaica does nothing to allay those fears. One cabbie making small talk, volunteered that a driver had flipped his van three times the previous day. Thanks for putting us at ease, mister.

Another night our driver seemed to go out of his way to drive with extreme caution. We complimented his diligence until we noticed his glazed eyes and bizarre grin. The only reason he was driving so slow we learned, was because he was tripping on mushrooms, and was having trouble negotiating the curves. Of course, you don't have to take cabs. You can just as easily lose your life in Negril in a rented car, motorcycle or scooter.

Notes

Jamaican 牙买加的

Psssst 为引起人的注意时所发的声音

hissed 嘘声

precariously 不确定地

protuberant 凸出的

buttocks 臀部

ganja 大麻

shingle 小招牌

shanty 棚屋

turquoise 青绿色的

Caribbean 加勒比海的

haranguing 夸张的话

hucksters 叫卖的小贩

bemusing 使人发呆

properties 道具

bohemian 波希米亚人的

contingent 代表团

Spring Breakers 度春假的人

insignias 徽章

en 在……中

meandering 曲折的

Ubiquitous 到处存在的

meager 劣等的

reggae 西印度

Bob Marley (1945~1981), 牙买加歌星, 吉他演奏家, 歌词作者, 他倡导了牙买加的西印度音乐 reggae music

Michael Jordan 美国职业篮球明星

hypnotic 易于催眠的

purgatory 暂时受苦的地方

fleabag 睡袋

flea market 跳蚤市场

relentlessly 无情地

tsatskes 色彩艳丽的廉价小装饰品

weasel 躲避

chide 责骂

dampen 丧气

prowl 巡游

cabbies 出租车司机

jalopy 破旧的汽车, 老爷车

gouge 欺骗

halve 减半

bluff 欺骗

concede 让步

upholstery 车内装潢

Ironically 讽刺地

high-end 尖端的

decibels 分贝

smashup 翻车

van 篷车

glazed 像玻璃的

热狗怎么来的

How the Hot Dog Came to Be

By Sean C.

童话的感觉总是不错，一是轻松，二是有趣。猫欺负老鼠，结果让老鼠折腾得狼狈不堪。仗着猫多势众，在遥远的尼日利亚，一群猫又要和一只狗玩一玩了。

“This is a story about how the hot dog came to be. If it doesn't seem to be real factual about Nigeria it's not an insulto it's just an imaginary tale.”

In a small town called Catsville which was located in Nigeria. There lived thousands of cats and only one dog. However, this dog was very smart and even more important, he was resourceful.

As you can imagine, this dog went through some very hard times. Being the only dog, he was constantly terrorized by the cats. The only way to appease them was to feed them. for they were constantly hungry and always cut their food into shapes of dogs because they hated dogs. Cats would use a ball of yarn for their soccer ball and would often use clearings between shops to play their matches in. Dogs were their

enemyo that's how it was and that's how it is now.

The cats would eat mangoes and guavas. They would climb the guava trees and use sticks to get mangoes, the average temperature was eighty-five degrees. These cats were getting tired of eating vegetables and fruits all day — they wanted something newU something meatyU something delicious! If they didn't eat new food soon they might eat the dog!

So the dog went to workg He searched everywhere for ideas. Then one day while it was raining, he picked a drop out of the skyt It was deliciousg After about threeUhe was fullg This could be the new food that the cats were looking for. Why didn't he think of it before, the drops were so big? They had mustard and ketchup and were in a bun. It was the perfect food. The only problem was they would taste better hot and it only rained so often because there were two seasons: dry and rainy. He would have to find some kind of duplicator and some kind of device that would heat this thing up. There was only one place that he knew of, that might carry those things, and this town was called Ibadan. So off he went.

Ibadan was a very overcrowded place. The dog had never ever seen so much humans, the hustle and bustle was amazing. This place was supposed to be off-limits unless an emergency came up. The dog considered this an emergency so he was not scared. When he made it to Ibadan, the things there looked stranget They walked standing up and they had two feetg He tried to communicate but it didn't work, so he was on his own. The conditions in most parts of the city were poor. He was lucky enough to stumble upon an upperpclassmen's houset He eventually found what we call a microwave and put the hot

dog into it. When the hot dog came out, it tasted even better. Next, he looked for a duplicator. He didn't find one but he did find a refrigerator. Then, he brought these two things back with him. He showed his new food to the cats. The next time it rained, he put the hot dogs into the microwave and the leftovers into the refrigerator. That is how the hot dog came to be.

Notes

Hot Dog 热狗, 夹着香肠的面包

Nigeria 尼日利亚

resourceful 机智的

yarn 毛线

mangoes 芒果

guavas 番石榴

mustard 芥末

ketchup 蕃茄酱

bun 小面包

hustle and bustle 熙熙攘攘

马特·华纳的故事

In-law to Outlaw: The Story of Matt Warner

By Coldwell Banker McCarty Realty

无论小说还是电影，罪犯的故事都很好看。不过，打个不恰当的比方，就像周敦颐的莲花，这些事情也是“可远观而不可亵玩”的。有一个横行不法的家伙，周围的老百姓就别想安宁。所以，生活中绝对需要除暴安良。再者说了，人可能得意一时，但很难顺风一世。多行不义必自毙，老干坏事的人，早晚要倒霉。

In 1876, Tom, Bill, and George McCarty moved with their family to central Utah, near the small towns of Ephraim and Levan. Tom met and married Tennie Christiansen, the daughter of a local merchant. Within a year or two, Bill and George were also married. The lure of good range near the La Sal Mountains in south-eastern Utah was strong and several other families joined the McCartys in a move to an area south of Monticello. The married McCarty brothers and their father, Dr. McCarty, soon established a successful ranch.

As the McCartys were settling into their new homes, Teenie's younger brother U Willard Erastus Christiansen was

enamored of Alice Sabey of Levan. After several run-ins over the girl with a local bully named Andrew Hendrickson, thirteen-year-old Willard settled the matter by picking up what was at hand and leaving the older boy unconscious on the ground. Believing he had killed the boy, Willard returned home for his outfit and his gun and left town in a hurry.

He worked as a ranchhand on his way north and eventually came to Diamond Mountain, which got its name from a diamond salting scam years earlier. The area, known as Brown's Hole was on the Green River, south of Rock Springs, Wyoming and had long been a heaven for outlaws. A no-man's Land where Wyoming, Colorado, and Utah joined borders, Brown's Hole at that time was seldom molested by lawmen from anywhere. As a schooling ground for a budding outlaw, Willard could not have found a better campus.

He went to work for a local rancher named Jim Warren. Jim Warren, as Willard soon discovered, was pretty fast with a brand. Within a few months, Willard soon had enough of a herd to start his own ranch. After a gunfight with a Mexican named Polito, Willard began to consider himself a real badman and outlaw, although he rode 20 miles to get a doctor who saved the lung-shot man's life. While he would not know it for some time, the boy he had injured had also recovered. Regardless, the die was cast and another young outlaw was born. Somewhere along the trail, he began to call himself by the name he would make famous—or infamous, depending on your point of view—Matt Warner.

During the early 1880's, Matt built his ranch at Diamond Mountain and supplemented his income by various criminal activities. After joining in a large rustling raid with Cherokee

Bangs, about whom little is known, Matt decided the Diamond Mountain ranch was a little too hot. He and Joe Brooks, one of his hands, picked up a wagon train somewhere headed for Arizona.

Upon arrival, Matt and Joe held up a combination store and bank in St. Johns, Arizona, netting the princely sum of \$ 897. An unexpected chase by a local posse ran the pair all the way back to Robber's Roost in southeastern Utah, where they held up for a couple of months. Leaving Robber's Roost, Joe headed back to Diamond Mountain and Matt went in search of his brother-in-law, Tom McCarty.

Matt found Tom and another man (U Josh Swett or Sweat), in Fort Wingate, Arizona. The three men formed a partnership and embarked on a cattle raid into Mexico. With 200 cattle, they returned safely to New Mexico where they sold the herd for \$ 3. 50 per head. Matt reportedly met William Bonney, better known as Billy the Kid, during this time. If true, the incident occurred before July of 1881 when Bonney was killed by Pat Garrett.

Another attempted raid into Mexico went well until they encountered Federal Officers after crossing the border. During the ensuing battle, the three men made their escape with Josh badly wounded. Thus began a 600-mile chase, which somehow Josh survived until he could be left in Kanab, Utah with friends. Matt and Tom continued to Frisco, a mining camp west of Milford, Utah.

Discovering the booming Frisco was a ready market for beef, Matt and Tom bought a small herd of cattle and drove them to Frisco. Billy Sackett, the town marshal, had heard of their escapades in New Mexico and arrested them for rustling

A trial was held shortly in Milford and the pair was acquitted. Angry over their release and apparently believing Matt and Tom guilty of local crimes, Sackett made them walk the fifteen miles to Frisco.

Upon reaching Frisco Matt and Tom rode out to Tom Black Jacks Ketchum's "ranch" some forty miles west of Milford. This ranch was known as a refuge for outlaws. Matt and Tom took a break safe from the eyes of the law so they thought

A few days later, two men claiming to be prospectors arrived at the ranch. Tom, however, was suspicious and examined their belongings with gun in hand. Handcuffs gave the men away and soon Tom sent them on their way in their own irons. Facing a long walk across the desert, the future looked bleak for the two officers. A short while later, Tom rode up to the frightened men.

Instead of killing them as the officers had feared, Tom had relented and freed them. Giving them canteens and bidding them goodbye, Tom rode off again.

Tom McCarty and Matt Warner soon separated, with Tom eventually wandering into Cortez, Colorado, and Matt heading again to Diamond Mountain. He discovered the law was still interested in him for earlier rustling activities in Wyoming and he moved his herd of horses into the White River country near Meeker, Colorado.

Matt sold a hundred horses to a man in Meeker who paid him off in hundred-dollar bills. A fellow named Cap Davis who ran a local boarding house where Matt stayed became very interested in Matt's bankroll. Being of a somewhat suspicious nature, Matt kept his eyes open and when he saw two riders

approaching the next day, he was ready. Recognizing the men as two with whom Davis had been talking, Matt drew his gun and held them up instead of the other way around. Incidents such as this probably kept more attention on Matt than he needed. Prudently, he moved on again, this time to the La Sal Mountains near where the McCarty's had ranched.

Dr. McCarty and his son George had long since moved to Haines, Oregon. Tom and Bill had sold out a few years later and when the money was gambled away, had hit the outlaw trail for good. Matt established himself and began training horses to race.

It was during a race at Telluride, Colorado in about 1885 he met a young ore hauler who called himself Roy Cassidy. Cassidy, soon to be known everywhere as Butch, was about nineteen and Matt was the ripe old age of twenty-one. Matt and Roy hit it off so well, despite Cassidy losing everything to Matt, they became partners in the racing business.

Using a horse called either Betty or Babe, depending on who is telling the story, the pair beat every horse in southern Colorado and Utah. They still found time for a reunion of Tom McCarty and Matt in Cortez. So far as we know, this is the first time McCarty and Cassidy met. It would not be the last.

Matt and Butch were so successful and well known on the racing circuit, eventually they could only find Indians who would race them. After winning one Indian's pony and a load of blankets, an Indian objected and Tom beat the objecting party with a quirt. Matt threw down on the crowd and the men left in a hurry for Tom's cabin.

Sure enough, the next morning the Indians arrived demanding their horse back. When one of them pointed a rifle

at Tom, Tom shot the Indian off his horse, putting an end to further discussion.

Between 1885 and late 1887, these three desperadoes apparently were content to race and on occasion work as ranchhands. Then the Denver & Rio Grand train was stopped November 3, 1887 just outside Grand Junction Colorado.

Despite careful planning, including blocking the track, the bandits came up empty-handed. Investigating officers blamed Tom, Bill, George McCarty, and their gang. More likely the leaders were Tom McCarty, Matt Warner, and Butch Cassidy as Bill and George were reportedly in the Northwest at that time.

Matt's next escapade of note was March 30, 1889. A man carrying a bottle of liquid walked into the First National Bank of Denver and demanded to see the president. Proclaiming the liquid to be nitroglycerine, the man demanded \$ 21,000, which the president promptly got from the cashier. Walking out of the bank, the man handed the money to an accomplice and faded into the crowd. Although Tom denied the robbery in his memoirs and Matt never mentioned it, evidence at the time pointed strongly to Tom and Matt.

June 24, 1889, Matt, Tom McCarty, Butch Cassidy, and others, rode back to Telluride. This time they had come to make a sizable withdrawal and they intended to beat a posse on their fast horses. The robbery was well planned and went off without a hitch. The only problem arose later when Cassidy's younger brother and another man were arrested while transporting supplies to the outlaws. Cassidy's younger brother, Dan Parker was sent to Wyoming to answer to old charges there and the other man talked his way out of trouble.

Matt and Tom spent the winter of 1889-1890 in Star Valley, south of Jackson, Wyoming on the Idaho-Wyoming border, using the names Tom Smith and Matt Willard. Matt married a fourteen-year-old girl named Rosa Rumel. Tom's wife had died and he married Sarah Lemberg.

Hard times fell on Star Valley that winter and the only storekeeper in Afton, Wyoming refused to extend any credit. Matt and Tom held him at gunpoint while the settlers took what they needed, then paid the man half his price. Such antics to some extent probably apocryphal were not necessarily done from any Christian charity every outlaw knew he would need a place to lay up for a while and these acts of generosity with someone else's money bought a lot of friends.

As the valley became more accessible that Spring, so did Matt and Tom. Moving on again, the two outlaws and their wives went to Butte, Montana where they blew the rest of their proceeds from Telluride. When the money was nearly gone the wives were sent back to Star Valleyo Matt and Tom headed out to Haines, Oregon.

There they found brother Bill, Letty, and Fred, Bill's teenage son, broke and having a tough time. Butch had remained in Wyoming and it took little persuasion for Bill to take a hand in the game. The first little robbery netted only enough for Matt to send for Rosa—Sarah refused to come.

The bunch moved on as Haines became too hot for comfort. Using the name Ras Lewis, Matt and the rest bought the 7 U ranch near Cooley, Washington. Then they really went to workt

A string of robberies in Oregon and Washington filled the

coffers but kept them on the move. Rosa was constantly complaining about the hardships and begging Matt to quit the business and settle down. There were reports Matt abused her during this period which he hotly denied to his dying day. Rosa's sister, Sadie Morgan, had come to live with them and she eventually caused Matt a great deal of trouble over her fears for Rosa.

A few days before his daughter was born, Matt and the gang robbed the bank at Roslyn, Washington of \$20,000. When he returned after a hectic chase, he promised Rosa that in a few days he would dig up his stash and they would leave to make a new start. Unfortunately, the law had other plans.

Acting on a tip from Sadie, lawmen arrested Matt and soon had George McCarty in the same cell. A lawyer told Matt he could get off if he had enough money to put in the right places. Matt told the lawyer where he could find \$41,000 and drew a map to the exact location.

Despite an aborted escape attempt, the two men were soon freed and Matt asked the lawyer how much their freedom had cost. When the lawyer replied, "\$41,000," Matt was shocked. The lawyer, to prove what a decent fellow he was, gave Matt \$500 out of his own pocket. Matt was broke again and he found his ranch trashed by treasure hunters.

Trading the ranch for a horse and saddle, Matt rode toward Diamond Mountain, where he lived more or less quietly for two years. Despite her statements to the press and the efforts of her mother and sister, Rosa rejoined Matt at the Diamond Mountain ranch.

On September 7, 1893—less than two months after Matt and George were freed—Tom, Bill, and young Fred McCarty

held up the Farmers and Merchants Bank in Delta, Colorado. This was to be the last venture into banking for any of them. When the smoke cleared, Bill and Fred were dead, killed by a local sharpshooter named Simpson. Tom disappeared a few years later after sending his autobiography to Matt Warner's father who published the book in 1898.

Matt's wife, Rosa, developed bone cancer in her leg and Matt spent as much time as he could in Vernal, Utah where she went for treatment. A man named Coleman hired Matt and Bill Wall, a local gambler, to frighten off three men he believed were after his mining claim. The situation escalated into a sudden gun battle.

After all was said and done, two of the three were dead and the other a cripple for life. Matt and Wall were arrested and charged with murder, despite much evidence they had acted in self-defense. Matt was being tried for his part and, despite the best efforts of his friends—the Montpelier, Idaho bank robbery by Butch and company reportedly paid for defense counsel—went to prison on September 21, 1896.

While he was in prison (a son was born (given away and not to survive to adulthood), and Rosa died. January 21, 1900, Matt was freed to begin his life anew.

Until he died, December 21, 1938, Matt lived as a respected man in Price, Utah. He remarried, fathered three children, was elected as justice of the peace, and served in several positions in law enforcement.

He ran for sheriff of Carbon County (Utah) in 1912 and would surely have been elected had he run under the name of Matt Warner. As Willard Christiansen, he was soundly whipped because no one knew the name.

Notes

- enamored 倾心
 run-ins 吵架
 bully 欺凌弱小者
 salting 风趣的
 scam 故事
 molested 干扰
 budding 发育期的
 Cherokee 切洛基族人，是北美易洛魁人的一支
 embarked 着手
 ensuing 跟着发生的
 booming 急速发展的
 Frisco 旧金山；三藩市
 acquitted 宣告无罪
 prospectors 采矿者
 bleak 黯淡
 relented 动怜悯之心
 canteens 旅行用的水瓶
 bankroll 资金
 Prudently 谨慎地
 gambled away 赌光
 ore 矿石
 quirt 皮条编制的马鞭
 desperadoes 早期美国西部的亡命之徒
 bandits 强盗
 escapade 异常出轨的行为
 nitroglycerine 硝化甘油炸药
 president 行长

accomplice 同谋

hitch 故障

antics 滑稽的动作

apocryphal 伪造的

generosity 慷慨大方

coffers 保险箱

hectic 狂热的

aborted 流产的

sharpshooter 神枪手

escalated 逐步扩大

空中相遇

Aerial Encounters



和我想像的不一样，这篇故事中的鬼更像神通广大的超人，帮着人做这做那的。

The bank robber slit the officer's throat with a letter opener, then snatched the gun out of his limp hand. He grabbed a slender, dark haired woman in a business suit as a shield then ran through the night.

A mint green '62 Caddy pulled up with flashing lights and two officers poured out to chase the suspect on foot. At least one of them was on foot, that is. Immediately after exiting the car, the good-looking blond disappeared from his partners side and took to the air. The other officer a balding, dark-haired man turned to speak to him but found that his mysterious partner had once again pulled a disappearing act.

Schanke sighed in exasperation and wearily set off in independant pursuit of the suspect.

Nick soared into the air after the perp. He was so busy scanning the streets with his nightvision that he failed to notice a fellow flyer in the night sky. To be fair neither expected to

encounter anyone else flying and so it came as a great surprise when vampire homicide cop Nick Knight and Clark Kent aka Superman crashed in midair over downtown Toronto while both tried to apprehend the suspect who had robbed the Toronto bank and kidnapped Lois Lane.

It felt like Nick had suddenly hit a brick wall. He lost control of his powers of flight and began plummeting to the ground.

Superman was also startled and began falling as well. Nick got tangled in superman's cape and vamped out, ripping the specially formulated material to shreds. Clark saw the glowing eyes and fangs of the vampire detective assumed he was an adversary and flamed him with his heat vision.

Since Nick was all but on top of Superman, both of them caught fire, lighting up the sky. The two pseudo-humans hit the ground making a large dent in the pavement directly in front of the perp, who shot at the apparitions of doom then ran screaming in terror at the sight of our flaming heroes.

Schanke ran into the alley, after which he looked between the human sized hole in the pavement, the man in the blue and red leotard, his vampire partner, and his shoes and promptly fainted.

Nick growled at Clark and Clark glared at Nick. They sized each other up then Nick cuffed the perp to a metal post and pulled out his badge, regarding the strange being who was not a vampire before him.

Lois ran to Clark and hugged him.

“I take it you know him” Nick said dryly to Lois.

Just then Nat ran into the ally and saw the large hole in the groundU Superman's clothingU Nick's vampire state and

Schanke unconsciously on the ground.

“Are you okay Nick” She asked regarding Clark warily.

“I take it you know her” Clark echoed.

Nick and Clark continued giving each other the evil eye.

Nat looked from one to the other sized up the situation and promptly introduced herself to Lois Lane.

Finally Lois managed to get Clark’s attention and Nat was able to talk sense into Nick. All four of them decided to start over with introductions.

Schanke came back to awareness in time to see the guy in the weird suit kissing the kidnapping victim and Nick and Nat involved in a less than chaste exchange of their own.

Then still kissing, the two couples rose into the air and flew into the starry night sky.

Schanke decided he had to be dreaming.

Schanke sat up in bed and wiped the sweat from his forehead “I had the weirdest dream Myra”

“What is it hon?”

“I dreamed that we were chasing this perp and Nick and this guy in a really strange outfit collided over Toronto. Nick was flying and had these weird glowing eyes and long teeth like a vampire or something”

“Why don’t you go back to sleep, hon. It was just a dream.”

Schanke couldn’t go back to sleep and turned on the news.

“This just in a ball of fire was reported over down town Toronto last night … ” Schanke switched off the television and decided he had to still be dreaming.

Notes

snatched 抢夺

limp 软弱的

shield 防卫物

mint 未使用过的

Caddy 小盒子

exasperation 恼怒

perp 罪犯

akab also known as

apprehend 逮捕

kidnapped 绑架

vamped 勾引

shreads 碎布条

adversary 敌手

pseudo 冒充的

apparitions 幻影

leotard 紧身衣

cuffed 铐上手铐

weird 不可思议的

hon 爱人

蘑菇萌生

Wildlife Sprouts from my Bathroom Ceiling

By Mitch Lemus

家里浴室的天花板上长出一串怪模怪样的蘑菇，看着是让人不舒服。不过，其中蕴涵的大道理倒很耐人寻味：Life will find a way to exist and thrive anywhere.

“Don’t just stand there, kill it!” my date Deidra shrieked, as she ran out of my bathroom with a nauseated look on her face. “Get that thing out of there, or I’m leaving and not coming back!”

I had gone to great lengths to finally rid my apartment of mice, roaches and other multi-legged creatures. So I was quite annoyed recently when confronted by a completely new foe — a misguided mushroom, sprouting its bulbous head from a crack in the bathroom ceiling. There it hung, on a corkscrew stem, staring at me in this most private of rooms.

The offending fungus had apparently taken root one hot summer weekend while we were out of town. The bathroom door had been closed, creating a steamy climate not unlike that of a tropical rain forest.

I've been having this humidity problem in my bathroom for weeks. It all started when the excessive-compulsive woman who lives above me began washing her hands at a prolific rate. Apparently, the constantly running faucet prompted a leak, causing water to trickle down to my bathroom every so often.

Plink. Plink. Plink. Plink. Plunk ... At times for hours on end — and throughout the night.

At first, the excessive moisture caused pockets of paint to bubble on the ceiling. Before long, an upside-down cone emerged. Like a nasty whitehead, every so often it discharges, forcing me to dodge rusty droplets while peeing. All this for only \$985 per month on the luxurious Upper East Side.

My super, of course, does not see this as a problem. Perhaps because the leak is in my apartment — and not his. Besides, he has more important things to do — like separate the recyclable trash.

“What type of mushroom is that anyway?” Deidra asked.

“Umm, I think it belongs to the genus of *Grossisiscus Disgustilactis*. If we eat it, we can go on an hallucinogenic trip together,” I joked

She was not amused. “That thing is soooo gross! Get rid of it now, or I'm going home,” Deidra threatened. I had spent too much time and money wooing this girl, and I wasn't about to let an oversized spore of mold sabotage my sex life. So I grabbed a wad of toilet paper and was about to defoliate the premises when suddenly I stopped myself: Why am I doing this and not the super? Perhaps if he saw the mushroom, he'd realize the severity of the problem and finally get off his fat lazy ass and fix it.

I rang the super's bell and was greeted by his wife. As

usual, she was in the midst of stinking up the hallway, frying some smelly fare like liver, only worse.

The super wasn't home, so I led his wife to my bathroom to witness the protruding intruder for herself, but she seemed unfazed. "Yes, pipes many bad. My husband much in buildings making good again the pipes. You must wait. Yours not only broken apartment," she declared.

It's been two weeks since that rogue mushroom invaded my home. It since wilted and died. The ceiling, however, still continues to leak, as the super hasn't yet found time to fix it. Deidra has agreed to visit my apartment only if I promise to take her to expensive restaurants so she can use their bathrooms.

Whenever I enter my bathroom now, I can't help but stare deeply into that mangled web of plaster. I have no idea what petri dish of diseases may be lurking within, but I do know this: Life will find a way to exist and thrive anywhere. Even in the urban jungle.

Notes

Sprouts 发芽

shrieked 尖叫

nauseated 厌恶

roaches 蟑螂

bulbous 球根的

corkscrew 螺旋形的

faucet 龙头

leak, 泄漏

moisture 水分

woeing 令马停住的声音

sabotage 妨害

defoliate 使落下

unfazed 不担忧

petri dish 做细菌和其他微生物培养用的圆形的带盖的盘子

耳环的故事

How Earrings Came to Be

By Jenni F.



传说中，不幸的人们总能得到上苍的怜悯。

“Good Things come to those who wait”

There once was a woman named Silvia who lived in Cairo, Egypt in Africa. She lived in a very poor area in a random housing system made out of very cheap building material called mud bricks. Silvia worked inside the telephone office as a telephone operator at the Cairo Main Railway Station. She had a daughter named Goldylocks, (named after her favorite story book). Goldylocks had lots of free time on her hands because she had no father and they were very poor. The only money that her mother earned was from her job as an operator, which was not enough to send Goldylocks to school, or to afford many toys such as Nintendo. Therefore, Goldylocks had no friends and she was very lonely. Sometimes she would sit by her window and watch other children play in the streets. They would play games such as soccer or hide and go seek. She

would always think about what it would be like to play with others like that. During the day while Silvia was at work, Goldylocks would collect beautiful rocks as a hobby. With them Goldylocks would polish and create different things. One day when Silvia arrived home, Goldylocks had polished two very cool rocks. Goldylocks wore the jewels on her ears so that when Silvia came home she wouldn't miss them. When Silvia saw them she said "dear those are beautiful, where did you ever get them"? Goldylocks explained to her mother that she had made them herself. The next morning Goldylocks surprised Silvia with a pair of jewels of her own. Silvia decided to wear the jewels on her ears as well so everyone that worked at the station could see them. Silvia received many compliments, but she also noticed that her hearing was much better. It was amazing because all her life she has had a ringing in her ears because of all the noise she heard working as an operator. She had been working there since she was ten years old. To Silvia's surprise the ringing had almost stopped that day. Silvia was convinced that it was the jewels that helped her hearing so she called them her magic jewels.

As the years passed Silvia's hearing continued to improve and she still wore the jewels on her ears. One day a man offered them a deal which formed a company that made these hearing devices. The product was named earrings because the jewels helped get the ringing out of Silvia's ears. People bought them to improve their hearing but also for fashion. Earrings soon became the number one accessory for wealthy and poor women all over the world. Many large unusual earrings were worn by wealthy women (sometimes called suspension earrings). They are very long and worn mainly to

impress others. They even started wearing them on other parts of their bodies such as the stomach, nose, eyebrow and tongues. Many believed that the more earrings they wore, the better their hearing would be. To this day people are still buying earrings. As for Silvia and Goldylocks, let's just say they are fully educated and they do not need to work as an operator anymore.

Notes

Cairo, Egypt 埃及首都开罗

Nintendo 任天堂，一种游戏机的牌子

compliments 称赞

谢莉的快餐车

Shelley's Pizza Wagon

焉人有焉怪，放个暗箭，任你英雄盖世，也照样得撂翻。所以，人不能太逞强了，恃强凌弱，总没有好果子吃。

Right after graduating from high school, I fell in with a group of people I had admired for years. They were, in my view, brainy yet cool. Their Dominant Male, Mike, was a long-haired Honor Roll student who listened to cool (obscure music I like I did and do), smoked dope (ditto), and his mom would buy beer for all his friends, and they would have a party nearly every Friday and Saturday night at his house. Best of all, he lived only about a quarter-mile away.

The Dominant Female of the group was Shelley. She was cute, with long blond hair and big tits. Only problem was, she was nothing but a spoiled, ever-petulant little BITCH. She HATED not getting her way, and could effectively manipulate the other women in the clique, forcing them to boycott a party because of some perceived slight or another, and just generally bend them to her childish will.

Also, she was the only chick with a car. And a stylish one it was, too, a plain, white '67 Chevy Impala station wagon which apparently was a hand-me-down from her parents. She would pick up all her girl friends and bring them to the party. The regulars would include:

MEGHAN, the dumb one. You could say ANYthing to her in public without being slapped because she simply didn't know what it meant. Great fun at parties.

JULIE, the short, squeaky one with the endearing buck teeth. Always cheerful, like a cartoon squirrel or something.

JEANNIE, the fat, jolly one. A genuinely nice person who now works at the Safeway on the same little island I work on.

CRYSTAL, who would readily hop into bed with any male sporting cocaine or heroin (!). Eventually attempted suicide with a daisy razor, which is an amazing display of emotional instability AND stupidity AT THE SAME TIME. She survived the tiny, doubled wounds.

Though we partied at Mike's often, we also frequently went to other, larger parties. If the larger party turned out to suck, we would all usually end up at Mike's house.

Anyway, we were at one of these larger parties one night when Shelley threw a fit. I had undermined her plan to drag off everyone to an out-of-town party the following weekend by having one myself. Now it would be just her and the girls going, and she had just gotten the news. She walked up to me in her petulant Shelley way, and uttered a single word: "fuck." Or maybe it was "fucked." It was hard to tell. I was on acid at the time. At any rate, this was not something that a snotty, uppity little shit like Shelley said very often. So she

was pretty much pegging the petulance-meter.

My good friend Kerry was on acid this evening too. We hung together a bit in those days, Kerry being a member of the clique and all. Also, he lived near Mike and me. Later, Kerry and I would become roommates and mortal enemies. On this particular evening, however, we had both dropped some of the cheap “Red Barrel” that was going around. The party was a drag, though, and Shelley was hanging with some of the older low-lives, 25-year old guys with scraggly beards and arrest records, who gave her their utmost attention.

As was often the case, Kerry and I decided to bag the party and go to get a pizza. We drove to Pietro’s and ordered some damn thing that was covered with tomato slices. I thought Kerry liked tomatoes on pizza. He thought I liked tomatoes on pizza. Neither one of us did. So, when the pizza arrived, we both dumped the tomatoes off our current slice and onto the remaining pizza. When we were done, we still had a third of a large pizza, with an entire pizza’s worth of tomatoes piled on top. We got some foil from the nice folks there and wrapped it up to go. We were planning on going back to the party.

There was no conspiracy up until now. We had simply eaten a pizza and were headed back to see if the party had changed and, hopefully, gotten better. But somewhere along the line — and I swear I do not remember whose idea this was, Kerry’s or mine — it was decided that the hell with the party, but since we were headed that way, we would hit the exterior of Shelley’s car with a single piece of pizza. Since I was driving UKerry would be the /hit man”. ObviouslyU we were both still pretty fried on the acid and looking for a memorable

laugh.

As we pulled up towards Shelley's car at about 10 mph, Kerry grabbed a piece of pizza from the foil and pushed his entire upper half out the window as he aimed for Shelley's back window. We both began to laugh like hell. I noted that we were basically invisible from inside the party house. Kerry threw the pizza and its sloppy side hit the rear window of the Chevy wagon perfectly flush with a SPLATg We were screaming with laughter now. Since no one in the house could see us, I had an idea. I stopped next to Shelley's car. "See if the door's unlocked", I instructed Kerry. He tried it. It opened. Instinctively, Kerry knew what to do. He pulled out the rest of the pizza, tomatoes and all, and proceeded to hurriedly cover the entire inside of Shelley's wagon with nearly a half a Hula Loola, with extra tomatoes. There was gooey pizza everywhere — the dashboard, the seat — the steering wheel even sported its own piece which was slowly oozing toward the floor. We howled like monkeys in heat and got the hell out of there.

It was the next afternoon before we found out what happened when Shelley discovered the mess in her car. Julie reported about how incredibly angry Shelley was. All wonderful news to us. Except one thing. Mike had left the party right after us and she decided that that damn Mike had done thisg So deeply pissed was Shelley that she conjured up her greatest powers of manipulation and convinced one of the low-lives at the party to kick Mike's ass. Perhaps the low-life's boner had worn off a bit or something, but by the time Shelley and the crud got to Mike's house, they randomly decided to throw a flower pot through the front window instead. It

bounced off and broke. They left.

Later, Shelley admitted her part in the flower-pot throwing, and begrudgingly apologized to Mike's mom.

Kerry and I never admitted to anything, although we told Mike about it the morning after the pizza attack. Mike made us promise him that if we ever did anything like that again, not to tell him about it.

As for me, I have a daughter now, and my number one goal is to make sure she does NOT grow up to be like Shelley.

Notes

Honor Roll 中小学的优秀学生名单

obscure 晦涩的

smoked dope 吸毒

tits 女人的奶头

petulant 难以取悦的

boycott 联合抵制

Chevy 追逐

Impala 黑斑羚

squeaky 叽叽喳喳

hop 跳上

cocaine 可卡因

heroin 海洛因

razor 剃刀

undermined 暗地里破坏

snotty 下贱的

pegging 坚持不懈地工作

scraggly 蓬乱的

conspiracy 阴谋

mph 每小时行驶英里数

SPLAT 拍击的声音

Hula Loola

Gooney 粘乎乎的

Dashboard 汽车的仪表板

steering wheel 方向盘

howled 狂喊着说

conjured up 用魔法召唤

crud 脏家伙

begrudgingly 小气地

街上的怪人

Nutty Folks Downtown



怪人就像臭豆腐，碰上一个，让你头疼半天，随后可是回味无穷，过了多少年，都还津津乐道的。

Back in the early '80s (I remember those?), I used to work for a chain of print shops in Oregon & Washington called "PrintRight" (now known as LaserQuick). PrintRight had about 29 shops back then, and a skilled "Offset Operator" like myself could work in just about any location he chose.

After a particularly bad experience working for an incredibly incompetent manager at a PrintRight at a mall, something possessed me to transfer to one of many locations in downtown Portland. Actually, what happened at the mall was I had this irresponsible idiot chick manager and I ended up running the shop myself. One day, after I had just chewed her out again, she walked into the back of the shop and just fainted dead away. Had to go to the hospital and everything. She lost the shop about two days later, two execs walked in and took it away from her. Practically another Unspeakably

Stupid Story on its own. Anyway ...

Downtown Portland can be a little scary. There are lots of homeless panhandlers and people talking to themselves walking around. Also, Portland is well-known for its near-total lack of competent law enforcement. I had to park five blocks away, so I got panhandled on a daily basis as well as the occasional confrontation with the shopping-cart and bag ladies.

Not surprisingly, some of this human effluvia, and those prone to its influence, entered our shop regularly. We had a couple of very interesting customers who came in regularly to make copies. One was a large, filthy woman who wore a huge, heavy coat in all weather. Fine with me, except ... THE COAT SMELLED JUST LIKE CAT URINE. Ours was a very small shop, and the place would fill with the odor of cat piss seconds after her arrival. Eventually, my boss, Mike, got around to ask her why she was making so many copies. She told him she was trying to win the Nobel Prize for medicine.

But nothing tops the bad-customer story of a strange little man we will call El Hombre. El Hombre stood about 5'6", appeared to be of Central or South American descent, had greasy black hair parted on the side, appeared to be about 40, and always wore these thick leather gloves, which he would sometimes gesture with, while putting them on, after he was finished making copies.

El Hombre could NOT be taught how to use the copiers no matter HOW many times my boss, Mike, would show him. He also tore up copy after copy after copy, sometimes standing there and shredding 90 out of 100 copies he'd made. But El Hombre's usual quirk was snapping at the other copier

users. We only had two copiers, and sometimes someone who needed just one copy would ask to cut in on a person who had a whole stack. Well, El Hombre always had a stack. When any one would ask to cut in Uhe'd snarl loudly, "NOg And stop trying to read my copies!"

Well, the first time Mike and I heard that, you can bet we were running for the trash can the second El Hombre was out the door. We got out the ol' Scotch tape and put together some very interesting nonsense, including a letter addressed to then-Presidential candidate John Anderson, in which he expressed being so concerned with the state of the country that he was going to go off in the woods of Montana and blow his own head off with a shotgun^t There were also incomprehensible ramblings about drugs and Central America (El Salvador was a big issue at the time).

Anyway, the guy was just agitated all the time. He came in about a dozen times, until Mike finally came down on him about being rude to the other customers. El Hombre blew up and started yelling and we nearly had to physically throw him out the door. He vowed never to return, and we were thankful.

Then, about two weeks later, he showed up again. Looking very calm. He apologized to Mike, and explained that he was now back on his medication and everything would be fine from now on. And would Mike please, just one last time, show El Hombre how to use the copier? Mike showed him, and El Hombre thanked him politely. A female customer came in, and El Hombre, spotting the single document in the woman's hand Uoffered to let her cut in to make her copyg She did this as Mike and I looked at each other in utter amazement^t

He tore up nothing. Upolitely paid. Uthanked us and leftg

Another week passes, and El Hombre shows up again. This time, he is not too polite as he asks Mike to show him how to run the copier, but after Mike shows him, El Hombre thanks him as his copies begin to come out. “Oh, and by the way,” he asks Mike, “could you call me an ambulance? I’ve been stabbed”. Mike walks back to where I’m printing. “This guy wants me to call him an ambulance, he says he’s been stabbed.” I roll my eyes, visions of finally having to physically throw him out onto the street filling my head. Mike walks back up front, where El Hombre eventually convinces him to call an ambulance. Mike dials 911, and of course the dispatcher wants to know if there’s an assailant still around, did he see anything, etc. El Hombre rips the phone from Mike’s hand and yells /He doesn’t have to answer that! You just send the I expletives ambulance, (expletive expletive)!”

So then El Hombre steps outside, and begins pacing back and forth on the sidewalk in front of the shop, waiting for the ambulance. The first thing to arrive is a news crew from the local ABC affiliate. They go to work trying to interview him. Then two cop cars show up. Then two ambulances and three more cop cars. A crowd forms. Finally, one of the ambulance guys takes off El Hombre’s shirt. U revealing a fourpunch stab wound in his abdomeng. The news crew is interviewing Mike and I’m in the shop watching all this. In the middle of this, nobody notices El Hombre slip away. He comes back into the shop. Ushreds his copies. Uleaves and gets in the ambulanceg

We never saw him again.

Notes

Nutty 狂热的

Offset Operator 胶印工

Chewed 责备

fainted 昏厥

scary 提心吊胆

effluvia 臭气

URINE 尿

quirk 怪癖

ol'b old

El Salvador 中美洲一地名

Stabbed 刺伤

assailant 攻击者

expletive 咒骂语

ABC 美国广播公司

affiliate 分公司

西雅图丢脸

Throwing Up In Seattle



酒容易出事，许多地方都实行专卖。把握不住自己的人，最好，离酒远点儿。

Shortly after I graduated from high school, I had a couple of friends who attended the University of Washington in Seattle. Mike was one of them. His mom's house was about a quarter-mile away, and he came back to Vancouver nearly every weekend just to have a party there. Professor Bob's parents lived between us. Professor Bob was a year older than us and had already been attending the U of W for over a year already. Tall and scholarly with a full beard and glasses, Professor Bob was indeed bright but prone to getting overly-excited about one hobby or another. Once, I remember him not being able to shut up about all the different barbituates he was taking. At another time, he was unable to shut up about how much fun square dancing was(!).

Professor Bob and Mike were roommates at the University of Washington, and what a room it was. "Lee & Lee Apartments" was located right on busy Aurora Avenue near

the north end of the Aurora Bridge. It was probably the shittiest little apartment I ever set foot in. It consisted of one large, uncarpeted, smelly room in which the kitchen and pretty much everything else was located, a small bedroom, and a tiny bathroom which featured a sink and bathtub with huge brown holes worn into the porcelain where unrepaired leaky faucets had been dripping for years.

One day, my neighbor and local pig-farmer John Warthog and I decided to go to spend a weekend in lovely Seattle with Mike and Professor Bob. We threw our sleeping bags in John's green Mustang and away we went.

Perhaps the best thing about having a friend like Professor Bob was the fact that he looked 21 and could buy beer at the local Safeway in Seattle. Shortly after our arrival in Seattle, it was time for the four of us to go on a belated beer run. Professor Bob had discovered this new beverage that “gets you drunk a lot faster than regular beer”. He was excited about buying it and couldn't shut up all the way to Safeway. By the time we got there, I was convinced. That is how Professor Bob and I wound up pooling our money for a short case of Olde English 800.

We went back to Mike & Bob's squalid abode and began drinking. After about two Olde English 800's, I noticed that my drinking had suddenly slowed, and so had Professor Bob's. A short time later, my stomach started to turn sour. Soon, I was trying to keep from puking. I finally gave up and headed for the bathroom. I locked the door and put my head in the toilet. But I couldn't hurl. As bad as my stomach felt by now, I really wanted to get it over with, but no such luck. I sat on the edge of the bathtub for a minute. Then passed out

while perched on the tub.

I woke up to a loud banging on the bathroom door. It was Professor Bob. “Open the door!”, I could hear him yelling, then coughing up some vomit. “Open the door!” I got up and opened the door. Professor Bob’s very large beard was full of puke, and he dived for the toilet. I quickly stepped over the accumulated puddle of throwup in front of the bathroom door (I apparently it took him a while to wake me up), and went back into the main room, hoping to pass out in a big, dilapidated chair.

Unfortunately, Mike and John had decided it would be a good idea to cook up some Top Ramen about then. The smell of it filled the room, and I could take no more. I raced to the bathroom, where Professor Bob was still praying to the porcelain altar. “Move over U Bob!” I yelled. And so it was that Professor Bob and I had an intimate conversation over the toilet: “Don’t you feel awful?” (barrrrrff!) “I sure do!” (ralllllph!) “They’re cooking Top Ramen out there!” (hurrrrr!) “Oh god!” (puuuuke) …

I never drank Olde English 800 again. I don’t know where Professor Bob is these days, but I’ll bet he never touched the stuff again either.

Notes

Seattle 西雅图

the U of Wb the University of Washington

prone 倾向于

barbituates 巴比妥酸盐

pooling 共享

squalid 肮脏的

sour 酸的

puking 呕吐

vomit 呕吐物

无疾而终

Untitled

By Dan L.

人生一世，最后能躺在自家的床上无疾而终，是很幸福的。至于灵魂转世到什么地方，就听之任之吧。

One morning an old man woke up with the sun shining into his eyes. He knew that he was too old to live any longer. From the day he was born to the day of death, the time has now come. So he sat down and he thought to himself what a wonderful life it was. How good it felt to live on the beautiful planet Earth. For some reason the old man assumed that he was going to pass away before twelve midnight. He did not seem to be sad, so he sat there and stared at the clock on the wall watching every second passing by at the continuous slow pace. For the old man had never in his life sat down and stared at a clock. he never realized how precious time was. The sun set and the moon rose. The moonlight shined upon his face as if it were a star. Then, at 11:59 p. m. , he squinted his eyes tight and waited for an angel to take his soul. He waited, and waited, and waited, but nothing happened. He opened his

eyes to see that the time was twelve midnight. Just when he thought he was going to die, a miracle happened. His body fell to the floor one minute after the time he expected to pass away. His spirit slowly began to lift from his body, and started to float towards the nightly sky. Soon he passed by Mother Earth's moon. Then he passed all the moons of Saturn. Then he passed Pluto. Then he flew out of the solar system. Then he realized that he was out of the Milky Way. There his spirit was flying through the big blackness of space, passing all of the stars that he saw when he was on earth. Furthermore, he realized that he was not alone. Others like him were also flying through space. He had no idea where he was going until he noticed that he was approaching a planet. All of a sudden, he entered into this foreign planet's atmosphere. He flew over the vast lands of this new world that he had never seen before. Then his spirit was hovering over a new born baby. Definitely, it was not a species that he had ever seen before. The child had just been born. It was not even breathing yet. So his spirit rapidly sunk into the alien child's mind, and the baby started to breathe. The only thing was that the spirit that came from the old man no longer existed. As soon as he fell into the child's mind, the spirit totally forgot about the last life it lived. Now it was the spirit of the alien child.

Notes

Squinted 眯着眼

Saturn 土星

Pluto 冥王星

the Milky Way 银河

hovering 盘旋

斯蒂夫的焊接课

Steve's Welding Class

幼时的回忆总是很美好，随便一件什么事情都显得那么浪漫，温馨。

As a senior in high school, my best friend was Steve McLeod. He was everything a dedicated high-school slacker like myself could want in a best friend: He had a car, a decent-paying after-school job, and he lived just a half-mile from the school. His dad worked all day and his mom was dead, so we would have the place all to ourselves while skipping out of school. Which we did a lot. We were both taking the minimum number of classes, plus I had wisely talked my mom into writing me a note that gave me permission to leave campus at any time. Steve had already turned 18, so he could write his own notes ("I have a hangover and won't be able to attend my first three classes this morning. Signed, Steve").

Not only did Steve have all this going for him, but he looked old enough to buy beer at certain convenience stores around town. And he had a ping-pong table in his garage. Though completely lacking in academic ambition we became

world-class table-tennis champions that year.

The classes we did take weren't much. I needed four credits so I took second-year electronics class I which I generally slept through after all it was two periods and two credits), electronics assistant I in which I handed out test leads, or "roachclips" as we called them for some reason, to underclassmen), and the only mandatory class, "Contemporary World Problems" (I demanded to have the teacher who was the football coach and never gave out homework). Steve had a similar class-load, but the only one I can recall would be his Welding class. Now, although our school has an industrial-arts building, it never had a Welding lab. So the entire class I about B or t guys would be bussed over to another local high school three days a week.

To say that the Welding class was loosely run would be a major understatement. The main reason for this would be the teacher, whose name escapes me, but it hardly matters since nobody called him by his name anyway. He was a large, terminally unaware man with the emotions of a fish. He had a severe speech impediment and drooled heavily out both sides of his mouth as he talked. This made his daily mumbled instructions to the future boilermakers completely incomprehensible. It also earned him the nickname Jolly Olly Orange.

Some of you may not be familiar with the Goofy Grape line of juvenile beverage mixes, which were marketed mainly in the sixties. They were just like Kool-Aid, only each flavor was represented by a different character, such as "Rootin'-Tootin' Raspberry". The strangest of these characters was certainly Jolly Olly Orange, whose Crazy Guggenheim-like voice, bad

teeth and Jughead-type hat would certainly have rendered him a social outcast were it not for his popular and sunny flavor. So the welding teacher's nickname was well-placed.

Due to Jolly Olly's inattentiveness during lab time, young welders would often turn to grab their slag hammer from behind them, only to find it had been welded to their bench by a mischevious classmate. Such as Mark.

Mark lived not far from me and we attended school together since Kindergarten. The most remarkable thing about Mark was his incredible resemblance to the flying monkeys in *The Wizard Of Oz*. Actually, his features were even a little more Lucifer-like than the flying monkeys, but the similarity was such that everybody called him "flying monkey", even his closest friends.

Mark and Steve were both aboard the bus the day when Welding-class discipline became so lax that the anarchy actually spread to the bus driver. A young girl, she announced to the Welding-lab bound students that she had forgotten something at home, so she would be driving the bus to her house on the way to Welding. Once parked in her driveway, she invited the students to come on in for a second. Inside, they met her roommate, who offered bong-hits and liquor, which were well-received by the young future welding professionals. After getting back on the way to welding class, the driver said she would blame their tardiness on mechanical problems with the bus. I don't know what happened to the other Welding students beside Steve and Mark, but I suspect some of them found work in Detroit.

EPILOGUE:

You probably already know what happened to Steve

Mark joined the military and died while paratrooping off the coast of England.

Notes

welding 焊接

slacker 敷衍取巧者

hangover 宿醉

credits 学分

impediment 口吃

drooled 流口水

Raspberry (俚语)表示轻蔑, 嘲笑的匝舌声

Jughead (俚语)傻瓜, 笨蛋

Kindergarten 幼儿园

Wizard 奇才

Oz. 奇妙的地方

Lucifer 魔鬼; 撒旦

anarchy 混乱

bong 如大钟等发出之声音

paratrooping 伞兵部队

洗衣房

laundry

By Mitch Lemus

俗话说，横的怕愣的，愣的怕不要命的。霸道的家伙多一半儿是大家息事宁人惯出来的，动一回真格的，他就得傻眼。泼皮牛二，得让不信邪的杨志来收拾。

Looking up from a frayed copy of Popular Mechanics, I noticed the washing machine had stopped spinning. I emptied my two sopping loads of laundry into a wire basket and wheeled them to the last two available dryers. “Those two are mine!” barked a woman from across the room.

“Oh. OK,” I murmured, as I retreated to my plastic, orange seat where I leafed through my magazine and waited for another dryer to become available.

“Don’t let her do that,” whispered a heavysset woman folding clothes nearby. “She’s not allowed to reserve a dryer.”

It was 11 o’clock on a pleasant Sunday morning on the Upper East Side. Nursing a hangover from a wanton night of partying, it was amazing I found the ambition to get out of bed at all. But with my 3-week cache of Hanes 32 depleted, I had

little choice.

“That’s not right,” the fat lady went on under her breath. “Her stuff is still in the washer.” I shrugged, flipping through the pages of the magazine. I hadn’t the energy nor the inclination to make an issue of it.

Upon looking up from my magazine about ten minutes later, I noticed that the woman who had claimed the dryers was still hovering by the washers. I don’t claim to be an expert in laundromat etiquette, but this seemed wrong. “You know,” I said to the fat lady, “you’re right. Why should I have to wait? That woman has no right to claim dryers she’s not ready to use.”

I wheeled my basket over to the two empty dryers and began tossing my wet laundry in. Frantically, the woman raced towards me, laundry basket in tow.

“Oh no you don’t! These dryers are mine!” she asserted.

“Well, you weren’t using them. You just can’t reserve dryers and let them stand while other people are waiting,” I reasoned. She was a matronly looking woman in her mid-forties or so. She wore jeans that were way too short, and sockless loafers revealing nubby ankles.

“Look, mister, I cleaned those dryer’s lint screens, and I’ll be damned if you think you’re going to use them!” she threatened.

“Hey, there are two empty dryers. Why don’t you take one and I’ll take one, OK?”

“No sir, I’m sorry!”

“Well, I’m sorry, too.”

Negotiation did not seem to be on her agenda, and before

I knew it, the woman reached into my dryer and began tossing my wet laundry onto the floor.

“What do you think you’re doing!?” I asked in a hushed voice, not wanting to attract more attention than we already had. “Don’t you touch my stuff!”

“Then get it the hell out of my machine.”

“It’s not your machine.”

“Yes it is.”

“No it’s not.”

“Yes it is.”

We jostled and elbowed one other in my attempt to keep her from throwing my laundry to the floor. I had not been in a fist-fight since junior high, and would never think of lifting a hand to a woman. But suddenly, I found myself thrust into this ridiculous altercation. It was insane. We were acting like little children. But what was I to do? I wasn’t about to let her dump my laundry. I wasn’t going to hit her. Nor was I about to back down from her, either.

By this time, everyone in the laundromat had their eyes glued to us. And why not? This was eminently more entertaining than “Meet the Press” on channel 2. For sure they all knew I was in the right, right? Yet, no one would intervene, not even the fat lady who urged me to stand up for my laundromat rights in the first place. And where was the manager of the place? What if I had lost money in a broken machine?

I retrieved my socks and underwear from the floor and threw them back into the dryer. “Look I’m really serious about this,” the woman hollered. “There’s no way I am going to let you have these dryers.”

“If they’re your dryers, how come I have my stuff in them now?” I shot back, as the jostling escalated to new heights of intensity. I felt totally embarrassed to be a lead in this theater of the absurd. But what was I to do! What to do! What to do ... ?

Ah ha! With a flash of evil inspiration, I grabbed the underside of her laundry basket ... and in one swift motion, flipped it over. Now all of her wet panties and laundry were on the filthy floor mixed in with mine. Yes, I had sunk to new depths of juvenile behavior. “You are a real ASSHOLE, do you know that,” she said, infuriated. I stood there, waiting to see if and how she would retaliate. Just how bizarre could this fiasco become?

“You ARE an asshole, you know that, don’t you?” she repeated, as if I didn’t quite catch on the first time. “I can’t believe anyone could be such a fuckin’ asshole!” she snarled, flinging the dryer door into my shoulder.

I said nothing, and again picked my things up off the floor, placing them back into the dryer. She picked up her laundry and put it in the second empty dryer. Did this gesture indicate some type of truce?

I deposited 50 cents into my dryer, and stood there guarding it for a couple of minutes. Reasonably sure that she wasn’t going to go on another offensive, I returned to my orange plastic seat, and resumed leafing through “Popular Mechanics.” Perhaps there would be an article about how to install a washing machine in a studio apartment.

The fat lady, still folding her laundry approached me and whispered, “Hey, I’m sorry. I didn’t know she was going to act like that.”

“You didn’t know she was going to act like that! You almost got me killed! That woman is a lunatic.”

The woman deposited change into her dryer, flashed me a nasty smirk, and took a seat at the other end of the laundromat.

Within minutes, several dryers quickly became available.

Notes

- frayed 磨损
 sopping 浑身湿透的
 wanton 荒唐的
 depleted 耗尽
 laundromat 自助洗衣店
 frantically 疯狂似地
 matronly 像主妇的
 loafers 拖鞋
 agenda 应办事项
 jostled 推挤
 altercation 争吵
 hollered 大声叫喊
 filthy 污秽的
 ASSHOLE 肛门；屁眼
 retaliate 报复
 bizarre 奇异的
 fiasco 惨败
 truce 停战
 lunatic 疯子

母亲节的故事

The Story of Mother's Day



在林林总总，五花八门的节日中，母亲节是最值得祝颂的一个。

The earliest Mother's Day celebrations can be traced back to the spring celebrations of ancient Greece in honor of Rhea, the Mother of the Gods. During the 1600's, England celebrated a day called "Mothering Sunday". Celebrated on the 4th Sunday of Lent in the 40 day period leading up to Easter (the 3rd Sunday of Lent), "Mothering Sunday" honored the mothers of England.

During this time many of the England's poor worked as servants for the wealthy. As most jobs were located far from their homes, the servants would live at the houses of their employers. On Mothering Sunday the servants would have the day off and were encouraged to return home and spend the day with their mothers. A special cake, called the mothering cake, was often brought along to provide a festive touch.

As Christianity spread throughout Europe the celebration changed to honor the "Mother Church" - the spiritual power that gave them life and protected them from harm. Over time

the church festival blended with the Mothering Sunday celebration . People began honoring their mothers as well as the church

In the United States Mother's Day was first suggested in 1872 by Julia Ward Howe (who wrote the words to the Battle hymn of the Republics as a day dedicated to peace. Ms. Howe would hold organized Mother's Day meetings in Boston, Mass ever year.

In 1907 Ana Jarvis, from Philadelphia, began a campaign to establish a national Mother's Day. Ms. Jarvis persuaded her mother's church in Grafton, West Virginia to celebrate Mother's Day on the second anniversary of her mother's death, the 2nd Sunday of May. By the next year Mother's Day was also celebrated in Philadelphia.

Ms. Jarvis and her supporters began to write to ministers, businessmen, and politicians in their quest to establish a national Mother's Day. It was successful as by 1911 Mother's Day was celebrated in almost every state. President Woodrow Wilson, in 1914, made the official announcement, proclaiming Mother's Day as a national holiday that was to be held each year on the 2nd Sunday of May.

While many countries of the world celebrate their own Mother's Day at different time throughout the year, there are some countries such as Denmark, Finland, Italy, Turkey, Australia, and Belgium which also celebrate Mother's Day on the second Sunday of May.

Notes

hymn 赞美诗；圣歌

campaign 运动；活动

最早的圣诞故事

The Original Christmas Story



耶稣基督的诞生，给世代无数的人带来了幸福的希望。

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to the city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the House of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you, blessed are you among women!" But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son and you shall call His name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His Kingdom there will be no end."

Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I

do not know a man?”

And the angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore also the Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.”

Then Mary said, “Behold the maidservant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, Son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name, Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

So this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet, saying: “Behold a virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Emanuel, which is translated, God with us.”

Then Joseph being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And called His name, Jesus.

And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirnius was governing

Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up out of Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and of the lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea on the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is He who had been born the King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.”

When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered together all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. So they said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the Prophet: /But you Bethlehem in the land of Judah are not the least among the rulers of Judah for out of shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.” Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found him, bring back word to me, then I may come and worship Him also.”

When they heard the king they departed and behold the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they

saw the star they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the manger, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshipped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Then being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

Now there were in the country, shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, the angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring great tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”

So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.” And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in the manger. Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told to them concerning the Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept these things and pondered them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had

heard and seen as it was told them.

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given,
And the government shall be upon His shoulders.

And His name will be called, Wonderful, Counselor,
Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of His government and peace, there will be
no end,

Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom,
to order it and establish it with judgment and justice,
from that time forward, even forever.”

Notes

Galilee 古罗马州名

Nazareth 拿撒勒，巴勒斯坦地区北部的古城

betrothed 订婚了的

sins 罪

Prophet 先知

census 人口普查

Bethlehem 伯利恒

lineage 血统

Herod 希律王

Jerusalem 耶路撒冷

frankincense 乳香

myrrh 没药

Savior 救世主

强硬起来

Rowena Gets Tough

By St kt Youngren.



好人难做。勉为其难，总有撑不下去的时候。亲兄弟，明算账；先小人，后君子，这都是过来人的经验之谈，也是处理人际关系时不能忘掉的金玉良言。

“My mom called the other day,” Rowena told Terese. “I told her about Maralynne staying with me and she said, ‘Oh, how nice!’”

“Your mother would,” said Terese. They were waiting for the waiter to bring luncho usually at this point Rowena would be talking about her half-completed work day.

“I told her we weren’t getting along very well and she told me that Maralynne was my very own only sister and I would have to learn to share.”

“What did you expect?” Terese asked.

“All I really wanted was for Maralynne to talk to her so I wouldn’t have to,” Rowena said. “But when I tried to call Maralynne to the phone she shut herself up in the bathroom.”

“Was she afraid she’d get scolded?”

“That’s possible, provided she hadn’t heard a word of the conversation. She’s in for it now, though, for Not Talking To Her Mother.”

“Hey. Your mom raised her.”

“So now she gets to drive me buggy? You should have heard the ingratitude lecture I had to listen to on her behalf.” Rowena picked up her glass and drank. “It’s bad enough I buy the wrong kind of soap,” she said.

“Look. You don’t have to put up with all this.”

“I actually tried to motivate her to leave by unplugging the TV,” Rowena said. “Would you believe she figured it out?”

Terese laughed. “There’s motivation, and then there’s motivation. Did you get in trouble?”

“She thinks Linus did it. I had to rescue him from an impending spanking.”

“Poor little guy.”

“I can’t even have Sammy over because she goes berserk. He can’t even walk in the door. The whole time he’s there she tries to steal him from me, and after he’s gone she wails and carries on …”

“Doesn’t like to suffer alone, huh?” Terese patted her arm. “Listen, it could be worse. It could be Eloise.”

Rowena shuddered. “And here I was just thinking that my job never looked so good.”

“That’s the spirit. Work hard and maybe you’ll get a raise so you can move to a posh new place and get an unlisted phone number and not tell your family where you are.”

“God,” said Rowena. “You know, I’m tempted.”

Rowena became aware of a rapidly approaching commotion and looked up to see her sister charging breathlessly

towards her desk. “Rowena!” yelled Maralynne. “Rowena!”

Rowena put her pen down. “Maralynne, what—”

“Give me some money, quick!”

“Maralynne—”

“I gotta pay the taxi driver. Quick!”

“Taxi driver?” Rowena was already reaching for her purse.

/I gotta go get my car from the shop! And he’s insisting on money! And I lost my ATM card! So I told him he could take me here and get some money and then take me back to the garageg Hurry!”

Rowena extracted her wallet. “How much?”

“I forget. Just give me some money. Plenty.”

Rowena located a ten-dollar bill and several fives. “You should have thought of that before you left,” she said. “Or waited for me to take you after—”

“I need my car now,” Maralynne said. “And I thought he’d take—you know—other payment. Miserable old—”

“Maralynne, you’re out of your mind.” Maralynne snatched the bills out of Rowena’s hand and ran off. Rowena watched her go. “You’re welcome!” she called. She put her wallet away.

“Your sister?” asked Marjorie.

“Yup.”

“What’s this about ‘other payment?’ ”

“You don’t wanna know.”

“I know,” said Marjorie wisely. “But that doesn’t work in real life. She’s got to learn the difference between real life and make-believe.”

Rowena looked at her. “Marjorie—”

“Look at Abby Sue. Just last week—”

“Marjorie. I really don't want to hear about your soap operas just now. I'm—”

“Who was that?” asked Sara, approaching.

“My sister.”

“Really?”

“Really.”

“Whew.” Sara shook her head, then called out, “Hey, Lorraine, you just missed it.”

“Missed what?” Lorraine, a stack of papers in her hand, made a detour to Rowena's desk.

“Rowena's sister was here.”

“Really?” asked Lorraine. “How nice to have a close-knit family.”

“It's not all it's cracked up to be,” Rowena said.

“Come on,” said Lorraine. “I'll bet you—”

“What's up?” Berna asked.

“You missed Rowena's sister.”

“Really?”

“Excuse me,” said Rowena. She got up and went to the Ladies Room to hide. She had no intention of letting Berna rope her into a “my family is weirder than yours” argument. Even with fresh ammunition.

“Of all the days for you to work late,” Rowena told Sammy. She had so looked forward to seeing him.

/I know,” Sammy said. “But you'll be okay.”

Rowena looked at her watch an hour and a half left to her own work day, and then she would go not to Sammy but home to her sister. “Well—in the sense of not being dead.”

/Rowena—”

“Feeble joke. Sorry.” Rowena toyed with the phone cord. “Regards to your boss,” she said.

Sammy laughed. “Told you you’d be okay,” he said. “Happy Friday, sweetheart.”

“Happy Friday,” Rowena said. “Be productive.”

At least she’d been able to talk to him.

Alone on a Friday night, Rowena let herself into her apartment and greeted Linus at the door. Strewn around them were heaps of Maralynne’s clothing and sad little used tissues, but Maralynne herself was nowhere in—

Rowena heard a giggle from behind her bedroom door. A suspicious-sounding giggle. She stiffened. Then — a male voice, coming from her bedroom. Rowena took a breath and went purposefully to the door. She tapped on it, rather gently, she thought. “Maralynne,” she said sweetly.

“Go away!” said Maralynne. “Go to a movie.”

/MaralynneUI’m tiredt This—

She heard the man say somethingo a question, but she couldn’t quite catch it. “My sister,” Maralynne answered. “• told youo I’m letting her stay here until—”

“What?” yelled Rowena. She shoved the door open. Maralynne screamed. Rowena gave them time to scramble for cover before stepping in to glare at them. Her sister clutched Rowena’s sheet to her chinU but Maralynne’s date seemed unconcernedo he sat naked on Rowena’s bed and gave her an insolent appraising look that infuriated her. “Get out,” she told him.

“Rowena!”

“Go to a motel. Go to his place, if you must. Do it in your car. Do it anywhere, but not in my bed!”

Maralynne shifted under Rowena's covers. "I had no idea you could be so petty."

/In my bedg With me hereg With me not hereg Telling him this is your place and that that ungodly mess out there is mine!"

"What difference does it make whose—"

"Damn it, Maralynne, you don't go inviting strangers into other people's homes. It's an abuse of their hospitality."

/Some hospitalityt AnywayUhe's not a strangero he's a —"

"If you dare tell me his astrological sign I will call the manager and have him throw you both out," Rowena said. "Now. You get out of here right now," she told the stranger, "and you—you do whatever." She turned and grabbed the doorknob. She heard a slight sound of bedsprings, of shifting weight, as she stalked out.

"Hey," the stranger said. "You have a nice—"

Rowena slammed the door behind her, hard. This drowned out whatever the stranger had to say, but started a faint ringing sound—one of her possessions vibrating, or was the sound in her own ears? Either way, she needed a cup of tea. She went into her kitchen and got her teakettle, but her sink was so full of Maralynne's dirty dishes—Rowena's dishes v that there was no room to fill the kettle theret Rowena stared at the messo burnt something, unrecognizable something else—Maralynne's breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Maralynne, Rowena had learned, liked using large pots. Rowena took the kettle into the bathroom. She looked pointedly elsewhere as the door to her bedroom opened and two pairs of feet and a muttering noise went byt The front door

opened and closed. Rowena took her kettle to the stove and turned on the burner; Front Right. The door opened and one of the pairs of feet returned.

“I have never been so humiliated,” Maralynne said.

Rowena dropped an English Breakfast teabag into her cup. “What about that time in the cheesy bar?” she asked. “Or the—”

“He’s never coming back. I know it.”

“I don’t want him coming here,” Rowena said. “Anyway, what do you care? He’s just a chunk of meat, isn’t he?”

“I can’t believe how cynical you are,” Maralynne said.

“You think I’m cynical?” The water came to a boil and Rowena poured some over her teabag. “Compared to some people I—”

“You are cynical. Madame Zelda says—”

“Oh, God.” Rowena went into her bedroom, Maralynne tagging after, and began yanking the covers from her bed. /To meUfranklyUthis constant blind search of yours for what Terese so aptly calls MMr~~t~~ Right NowRinstead of for someone with whom an actual, loving relationship can grow in a natural —”

“What are you doing?” Maralynne demanded.

“Stripping the bed so I can put on clean sheets.”

“You—I—Oh!”

“If you’re going to treat the place like a motel—”

“Rowena!”

“Maralynne, this is my bed. Not a park bench. Not a hangout for—”

“Don’t lecture me.”

“I never could talk any sense into you,” Rowena said. “Nobody ever could. I should just figure we’re lucky if you use a condom. If.” She headed back for the kitchen.

“Why do you treat me like this?” Maralynne demanded. “It’s like I have germs or something.”

“Maralynne, I want to be able—”

“What you want is for me to be just like you!” Maralynne said. “Little Miss Prissy Perfect.”

“Maralynne, if you’ll just—”

“/You’re always lecturing me!” Maralynne said. “You’re always pushing me around! You never want me to have any fun! You’re always spoiling everything for me and saying it’s for my own good!” She was close to tears. “I never get any respectg Never!” She turned her back. “Never.” Her voice quavered.

Rowena stopped. “I’m sorry,” she said. “Maralynne Q come ono sit down a minute. Would you like a cup of tea?” She opened her tea cupboard. “How about cinnamon?”

Maralynne sat down, sniffing. Rowena started the tea. The water on to boil, the teabag in its cup, she stood wondering what to say.

“Maralynne … I’ve been a little tactless, and … I shouldn’t have barged in on you like that. I’m sorry I embarrassed you. I really … I don’t want you to be lonely.” The water came to a boil and she lifted the kettle. Maralynne said nothing.

“And it must be pretty galling for you to get lectured all the timet But do you know why I keep on—” Maralynne rolled her eyes. “Sorryo I didn’t mean that. I meant to say, unlike you I just don’t keep looking at the bright side of everythingt I’m

certain that if — if I acted as if nothing could go wrong, all kinds of horrible things would happen to me. And I don't want horrible things to happen to you." She set the tea down in front of Maralynne and pulled out another chair. Her own cup was still nice and hot. "I know you're old enough to decide how to live, but I still keep imagining all these awful things and ... and it's upsetting."

She lifted her tea with both hands, planted both her elbows, and drank. Out of the corner of her eye she could see Maralynne turning to stare at her. "Really?" Maralynne asked.

Rowena set down her second cup of tea. "And I know I've been kind of bugging you about finding a new apartment. That's partly because I kind of assumed you'd rather have your own place than ... go on like this." Rowena lifted her cup. "And maybe I've been mistaken. I mean, I thought that at a time like this you'd want to prove yourself, prove you can make it on your own, that you don't need Brian or ..." She took a sip. "But maybe you'd rather have someone looking after you. I don't know. And it's wrong for me to assume I do." She wondered how long she could stand living with her sister. "What do you want?"

She waited. "I don't need Brian," Maralynne said.

"I know." They drank their tea.

"Are ... are you really sorry you threw that guy out?"

"I don't know," said Rowena. "I shouldn't have been so rude. But if I'd ended up getting crabs or something ..."

Maralynne looked at the table. "I, ummm ... I guess I should have taken him someplace else," she said. "I just ... you think you're so perfect."

She still sounded more aggrieved than belligerent. And she had apologized, sort of. “I’m sorry if I come off that way,” Rowena said. “I don’t mean to.”

“You still want me to be like you. Everybody wants me to be like you.”

“No, they don’t.”

“Mom does. I know it.”

Rowena laughed. “Mom? Mom doesn’t even want me to be like me. Come on, now.” Maralynne looked at her and smiled weakly. Rowena touched her sister’s wrist. “Can we try for a little mutual respect? Just — you know — give each other a little room?”

“Yeah,” said Maralynne, “we can try.”

Rowena leaned over and gave her a hug. “Thanks.”

“But you being a Leo … ”

Rowena took a breath. “I’ll try to control myself,” she said. “Remember, though, I have a life too. I mean, we both have lives.” Rowena played with her teabag string. “Even a Pisces likes to have her own way. Remember when you moved out of Mom and Dad’s place? Remember how excited you were?”

Maralynne laughed. “Who wouldn’t be?”

“You were finally going to live the way you wanted to.”

Maralynne looked at her.

“Will you help me find a place?” she asked. “And move?”

“Of course,” Rowena said. “Of course I’ll help.”

The first landlord backed out when he found that the apartment would be for Maralynne only, without Rowena. “This is a nice quiet building,” he said

The second place was out because the bathroom vanity

was too small and would not hold all of Maralynne's makeup, perfumes and assorted bottles so let alone her curling iron and her hot-oil treatment and—

The third place was out because it had a landlady. On this occasion Rowena didn't argue, though, because this particular landlady let them know that she knew what they were up to.

"I hate women landlords," said Maralynne again.

"I hate crazy ones," Rowena said. They stopped for lunch then, at Rowena's insistence, trudged out to the fourth place.

There they went again on the little tour. The kitchen tile needed replacing. Rowena noted there was nothing special about the rest of the place. The landlord showed them the laundry room. "All new machines," he said. "And plenty of them. They're almost never all in use."

"Wonderful," Maralynne said. "I'll take it." Rowena stared at her. She hadn't known Maralynne was so interested in laundry. She certainly hadn't shown much interest in Rowena's laundry room. And that kitchen tile ... They went to the landlord's office and Maralynne signed the papers.

Then back to Rowena's for phone calls, a bottle of wine—and preparations.

"I heard from my sister," Rowena told Terese. "She's all settled in."

"Bet you're relieved."

"I am, but Maralynne's disappointed. I told you it turned out she took the place because she saw a couple of Real Cute Guys in the laundry room?"

"Yeah?"

"Well, they moved out two days later. Right while

Maralynne was moving in. And no one will tell her where they've gone.”

“Sounds like they lucked out.”

Rowena's doorbell rang. “Sammy's here,” she said. “I gotta go.”

“Okay well, tell him hi for me.”

“Will do,” said Rowena. “Bye, now.”

“Bye.”

Rowena crossed the living room, her nice clean quiet Maralynne-less living room, opened the door, and let Sammy in.

Notes

buggy 神经病的

berserk 狂暴的

posh 豪华的；漂亮的；优雅的；极好的

ammunition 军火；弹药

Strewn 散播；撒满

insolent 粗野的；无礼的；侮慢的

infuriated 激怒

motel 汽车旅馆

stalked 高视阔步

vibrating 振动

teakettle 茶壶；烧水壶

chunk 大块；矮胖的人或物

cynical 愤世嫉俗的；讽刺的；冷嘲的

aptly 适当地；适宜地

hangout (流氓等的)住处；巢窟

barged in 闯入

galling 使烦恼的；使焦躁的；难堪的

crabs 发脾气

aggrieved 受虐待的；抱不平的；权利受到不法侵害的

belligerent 好战的；交战的

backed out 收回，停止不干

教一招儿

Rowena Gives A Lesson

By St k . Youngren

看来，中国也好，美国也好，时髦女郎的风采都相去不远。用“鞋跟儿比智商高”这句话作她们的商标，恐怕是再合适也不过了。

Rowena looked around her sister's kitchen. Cooking Lesson Number One was supposedly minutes away, with a human guinea pig and everything, but Maralynne's kitchen seemed determined to put up a fight. "I thought you said you were going to clean up," she said bravely.

Maralynne rolled her eyes. "I did clean up," she said. "I washed a whole sinkful of dishes and took out the garbage."

"Well, that's very commendable, I'm sure, but—"

"It took me three and a half trips. The garbage."

"Three and a—"

"Don't laugh. If you laugh at me I'll—"

"I wasn't laughing. I just never heard of anyone making half a trip before. Listen, don't you think we should clean up a little extra? For Sammy, who is after all not your sister?"

/UmUactuallyUI thought it would be easierv I thought

maybe if I got all dressed up he might not notice—”

Rowena closed her eyes. “Maralynne,” she said, “haven’t you realized by now that that only works with jerks? You know, like Brian? The one you’re trying to replace with someone better?”

Maralynne rolled her eyes again. “If I’m going out with a guy, he has to be interested.”

“If he’s going out with you he can’t be too repelled. Maralynne, listen. Clothes do not make the woman. A relationship based on sex appeal is—”

“You feel threatened, don’t you? Admit it. You feel threatened.”

“Mostly,” said Rowena, “I feel you’re threatening to bring me your boy troubles for the rest of my life.

“Now at least let’s clear a little counter space so we can work,” she continued, before Maralynne could object. “You know? Cook? What I supposedly came here to help you with?”

Maralynne sighed. “Shee-yit. If you’re going to be like that—”

“One of us has to be. Maralynne, there isn’t a square inch here. Or on the table. Either we do this—”

“All right, all right. As long as you help. Let me find my washrag.”

Rowena called Sammy and moved the dinner back an hour. “That bad?” Sammy asked. Rowena looked over at Maralynne, banging dishes around in the sink and pretending not to listen. “I gotta go,” Rowena said. “See you later.”

Rowena located a clean dishcloth and began drying dishes. “So he’s your boyfriend,” Maralynne muttered. “Doesn’t make him blind, necessarily.” Rowena pretended she hadn’t

heard.

“I’ve been preparing,” said Maralynne proudly. “Look.” She held a videotape in her hand. Rowena eyed it dubiously.

“What is it?”

“It’s a tape I’ve been making of Chow Hall. I’ve been taping the shows and studying them at night. Or I was taping them until they shut off my cable a couple of days ago.”

“Chow Hall?”

“You don’t know Chow Hall? It’s a cooking show. It’s really great. See, these two guys, Harry and Joe, they run a cooking school. Or maybe it’s just part of a school anyway, it’s called Chow Hall. They even have this segment where they explain about some kind of guy food, only it turned out to be stuff like peanut butter sandwiches, so I don’t pay so much attention to that part usually.”

“Peanut butter—”

“But the rest of it is great. I’m learning so much about vinegar. For instance, I never knew how versatile vinegar is.”

“Vinegar?”

“Vinegar and pepper. Joe and Harry call it ‘getting back to basics.’ They say that all these fancy new spices are—”

“Tell me about it later,” Rowena said. “We have to get started.”

Maralynne held up the tape. “Just a few minutes. I want you to see this.”

“All right, then,” said Rowena. “A few minutes.” She went to the couch, newly cleared of laundry, and sat down. Chow Hall. She felt very dutiful.

The show began with, naturally, a view of a collegiate-looking building with a sign over the door that said /Chow

Hall.” Then they were inside.

“See, that’s Joe,” said Maralynne helpfully, “and that’s Harry.”

“Mmmm,” said Rowena.

Maralynne settled herself comfortably. “Cute, aren’t they?”

“Mmmm.” Joe and Harry introduced themselves and the show, and began cavorting around. One of them sliced a bit of butter from a convenient stick and flicked it at the other. Rowena heard Maralynne giggle. She closed her eyes, letting it all wash over her. She must have dozed, for suddenly she was startled into wakefulness by a loud explosion. “Uhh Harryo looks like you forgot to punch holes in your hot dog before you put it in the microwave!” The camera zoomed in for a closer look. Maralynne giggled. Rowena shut her eyes again. Eventually she heard, “Well, so much for hot dogs,” and dared to peek. Joe and Harry, their aprons splattered with butter and miscellany, looked attentively at the camera. “Now,” said one—Rowena found she couldn’t tell them apart any more—“today’s Pickle Pointer.”

“Pickle Pointer?” asked Rowena.

“Sssh,” said Maralynne. The camera swept across a row of pickle jars, each containing some kind of cucumber, egg, or vegetable that Joe and Harry had put up in a previous show. “Today we’re going for variety, aren’t we, Joe?”

“That we are, Harry. Today we’re pickling a potpourri, if you will: Pickled Plums, Prunes, Pears & Peaches.”

Rowena stared at the screen. A shudder ran through her entire body. “Maralynne,” she said nervously.

“Wait a minute, Joe. First we have to sample our

previous Pickled Parsnips with Parsley.”

“Maralynne?”

“Ssssh.”

Rowena closed her eyes. “Mmmmmmm,” said Harry and Joe. After a moment she heard one of them say, “Well, on to the Pickled Plums, Prunes, Pears & Peaches. As you recall, when we pickle cherries or watermelon, we add a little sugar. Well, to pickle plums, prunes, pears & peaches perfectly ...”

Rowena struggled up from the couch and snuck off to the safety of the bathroom. She stayed there until she heard what she took to be the closing theme, and then she snuck back to find Maralynne still staring at the screen, oblivious to all else.

“Next week’s Guy Food will be a grilled cheese sandwich,” said Joe or Harry, “after which we’ll make Pickled Persimmons. I can’t wait.”

“And the Piece of Resistance — Vinegar Pie,” put in Harry or Joe. “So until next week, this is Joe—”

“And Harry—”

“Reminding you to cook up and chow down. Goodbye!”

Rowena glanced at her watch and winced. She wondered how long she’d been asleep. “Okay, Maralynne,” she said, “Time to get to work.”

“The one about Vinegar Pie is next,” Maralynne said, “but they had some kind of technical difficulties and it got—”

“Maralynne, I think one episode is enough, for now, don’t you?”

“Just let me see—” But Rowena got up and turned off the set.

/Listen,” she said. “Sammy is due here any minutet

Let's get started.”

She was pleased to put off voicing an opinion on Chow Hall, but was less pleased to find that Maralynne did not have an apron. Rowena hesitated. She'd brought along her own apron, to wear herself, but—

“I sent away for the Chow Hall Apron & Oven Mitt Set,” said Maralynne, “but it hasn't arrived yet.” Rowena decided not to ask whether the aprons—presumably copies of the ones Joe and Harry had worn on the show—came pre-stained or not. “And the Chow Hall book and the Chow Hall trivet and the Chow Hall coffee mug you can always use an extra coffee mug. By the way, what's a trivet?”

Rowena took a deep breath and began explaining, but before she got very far the doorbell rang. Maralynne let out a squeal. “I'm not dressed!” she said, and dashed for the bedroom. Rowena stared after her a moment, then went to let Sammy in.

“If you recall,” Rowena told him in a low voice, “I asked you along because you're kind of obligated to forgive me—”

“Relax,” said Sammy.

“I just—”

“Relax.” He kissed her, and Rowena almost did relax.

“I didn't ask my parents because—”

“Your dad wouldn't come anyway because Maralynne doesn't have cable right now and your mom would invite Ferd Frannon, who is so appalling even your sister hates him.”

“So I have to subject you of all people—”

“What do you mean, 'of all people?'” demanded Sammy. “Not only am I indeed eminently qualified to determine whether something is 'guy food,' or otherwise fit to be fed to a

boyfriend, but I have a sense of humor and I love you. What could be better?”

“Don’t say ‘guy food.’ Maralynne made me watch this imbecilic show that, when it wasn’t putting me to sleep or showing us how to have a food fight, seemed to consist mainly of demonstrations of ways to terrorize people with exploding hot dogs and weird pickles.”

“Were the hot dogs pickled?”

“I dunno I was asleep. You could ask Maralynne, but try to do it when I’m not around.”

Sammy smiled at her. “I’m more interested in things I can do when she’s not around,” he said, and kissed her again. She was feeling much better by the time Maralynne returned.

“Hi,” said Maralynne casually, posing in the doorway. A red silk top threatened to slide from her shoulders and down to her black vinyl micro-miniskirt. A couple of inches of bare flesh was visible between her hem and the tops of her fishnet stockings — a couple of inches of flesh and of red-and-black garter. Her shoes of course were standard-issue Maralynne shoes, of which Rowena’s friend Terese had once remarked, “Her heels are higher than her IQ.” Now Rowena looked at Maralynne and groaned inwardly. She didn’t say anything, though, until she got her sister into the kitchen.

“Maralynne, really.”

“Could I use your apron?” Maralynne asked. “I don’t want to ruin my outfit.”

Rowena was wearing a new dress, a nice one. She fought to keep her temper down. “Maralynne. If you’re not even prepared —” But Maralynne grabbed Rowena’s apron off the counter, popped it over her head, and began tying the strings

“Good idea,” Rowena said. “At least now your garter belt won’t show.” But this didn’t work either.

“Men like to see women’s underwear,” said Maralynne. “Don’t you know anything?”

“Maralynne—”

“You’re so possessive. Let the poor guy enjoy himself.”

“Funny,” said Rowena. “That’s not what you said when Kate—”

“That was different. She was—I don’t even want to discuss it.”

“No, I don’t suppose you do.” She looked up at the ceiling. “You got any old rags that are still wearable?”

“Rowena, you are not going to make me—”

“For me,” said Rowena. “Okay? For me.”

Later, as she supervised the potato-washing, she wondered why she’d been so upset when Maralynne stole her apron. They weren’t making anything that splattered all that much. Except maybe the steaks, she reminded herself. She’d picked the menu herself. The book they were using, *Cooking for Morons*, lay propped open, sticky notes marking the relevant pages. Rowena was making Maralynne consult the book at every turn, making sure she read the instructions aloud, and then either followed them herself, or, if she was too confused, watched Rowena do it. Maralynne managed to do as she was told while behaving as if she would have figured everything out on her own if she’d felt like it. After a while, Rowena found this more-than-usually annoying.

Potatoes first, then broccoli and water into a pot and onto the stove. Waiting to be turned on. Then it was time for the steak so the salad and table-setting would be taken care of while

the meat cooked. Rowena showed her sister where the broiler was and Maralynne went to ask Sammy suggestively, of course and whisking off Rowena's aprons how he wanted his steak. Rowena, who'd sent her out there mainly to get rid of her for a moment, leaned against the counter and took a deep breath. Roll so they were not to forget the rolls! She was glad she'd decided to give Maralynne and of course herself a break and simply buy the rolls.

“Apron,” she said when Maralynne returned. “Now let's see what the book says for Medium.”

Maralynne stared at her accusingly. “How did you know he wanted Medium?” she demanded. “You were spying!”

“This place isn't exactly soundproofed,” Rowena said. “Anyway, he's my boyfriend. I've seen him eat steaks before.”

“You—then why'd you—”

“I'm trying to show you what's involved here. The whole process. Now, look at the book.”

At last they brought the food to the table, and to Sammy. “Rowena only helped a little,” said Maralynne. Rowena bit her tongue. She'd let Maralynne follow one piece of remembered Chow Hall advice she'd brushed the steaks with vinegar and sprinkled them with pepper before putting them in to cook. Rowena wondered how her sister could remember something like that and know nothing whatever about slashing the fat. She wondered if Maralynne had slept through that part.

Sammy smiled and said something complimentary about the cooking smells. Rowena saw him look with amusement at her covering a giant sleepshirt emblazoned with the words

“Hot Enough For Ya?”—and decided to leave it on through dinner. She sat down, pleased to have survived the hard part.

The meal went well enough until Sammy’s glass ran empty. “I don’t have anything else,” said Maralynne, frowning at the empty bottle. Rowena mentally kicked herself.

“Never mind,” said Sammy, pleasantly, “I’ll just get some water.” And he pushed back his chair.

“I’ve got an idea!” Maralynne cried. “Wait, wait, wait!” She jumped up, grabbed Sammy’s glass, and disappeared with it. Sammy and Rowena looked at each other. “I can’t imagine,” Rowena said.

Maralynne returned eventually with a full glass and a not-full pitcher. “Here you go,” she said. The liquid looked like water. Sammy dutifully took a sip — and sat with an extraordinary expression on his face.

“Surprised?” asked Maralynne.

“I’m stunned,” said Sammy. “Um, what—”

“Homemade lemonade!” Maralynne announced. “Remember, Rowena, how Aunt Glad used to make us all lemonade? Well, I looked through the cookbook and I found the recipe and there it is!”

“It doesn’t look like lemonade,” said Rowena.

“Not really. See, I didn’t have any lemon juice, but I remembered that Joe and Harry were making sour milk one day and they said you could use either lemon juice or vinegar, that there’s lots of times you can—are you okay?” Sammy had turned a very odd color and was staring very seriously down at his food, his mouth in a tight line. He tried to say something, looked at Rowena—and burst out laughing.

Maralynne watched him. “For Pete’s sake,” she said, miffed. “Making fun of me.”

“/Harry and Joe.” Rowena tried not to giggle. “Or Joe and Harryo whichever.”

“Rowena—”

Rowena took Sammy’s glass, which smelled of vinegar, and had a sip. Sweet diluted vinegar. The taste was even funnier than the idea. She began to laugh.

“Give me that!” said Maralynne crossly. She took a sip. She frowned as if puzzled, looked at the glass, then at Rowena and Sammy, and took another sip.

“You know,” she said thoughtfully, “Harry said once that substitutions don’t always work out.”

Rowena almost slid under the table. “Good for Harry!” she managed to say. “Maybe we should drink to his health.”

Sammy and Rowena walked to their respective cars. “See?” said Sammy. “That wasn’t so bad.”

“Vinegarade,” said Rowena. “Wow.”

“We had fun,” Sammy told her. “And the food itself was fine.”

“The baked apples?”

“Almost the best part.” He kissed her. “Come visit?”

Rowena nodded. But she kept him standing there a while longer. “She needs more lessons,” she said.

“One mistake down, 999 to go,” said Sammy.

“You do look on the bright side, don’t you?” asked Rowena. She gave him what she thought would be a quick hug and was surprised at how long it lasted

Notes

- guinea pig 作为实验和研究对象的人
 washrag 毛巾；面巾
 dishcloth 抹布，尤其指洗碗布
 versatile 多才多艺的；万用的；万向的
 dozed 打瞌睡；假寐
 aprons 围裙；围腰布
 miscellany 混杂
 Pickle 腌菜；泡菜
 Plums 李子
 Prunes 干梅子；梅干
 Pears 梨
 Peaches 桃
 Parsley 欧芹
 rinds 外壳，皮儿
 snuck off 悄悄地溜走
 Persimmons 柿子
 episode 插曲；插话；有趣的事件；一段情节
 trivet 三脚铁架；三脚火炉架
 imbecilic 低能；愚钝；愚蠢的言行
 diluted 冲淡；稀释
 respective 各自的；各个的

拒绝命运

Rowena Defies Fate

By St k . Youngren

相信自己，不要听了别人的话就忘了自己还有脑子。有轻信和迷信的地方，不会有什么好事儿。“求神不如求自己”，说的就是这个意思。

Rowena pulled up to a red light. “Why are we going to Maralynne’s New Year’s party?” she asked. “Why do I do these things?” “You’re a dutiful sister,” said Sammy, “and Maralynne is lonely.” “Dutiful,” Rowena said. “If she had half the power over men that she has over her sister, she could at least have a boyfriend of her own and not have to go after mine, and visiting her with you would not be such an ordeal. Or if she had only twice as much power over me as she does have over them, we wouldn’t have to do this at all.” Sammy smiled. “If she had that much control over men, we’d still have to go because I’d be dragging you.” Rowena looked at him. “You’re a big help,” she said, trying to sound annoyed. Sammy grinned and reached to stroke her hair. “It’s just—I can think of so many places I’d rather go for New Year’s Eve t

Including nowhere.” “There’s nowhere you’d rather go?”

“That didn’t come out right,” she said. Sammy laughed. The light changed and Rowena started forward.

“Should I make a resolution?” she asked.

“There’s this book I want you to reado remind me to loan it to you,” Maralynne said. “As soon as I have a minute I’ll put it with your stuff. Now, let’s see.” She picked out a guest, apparently at random, and planted Rowena in front of her.

“This is Tammy,” Maralynne said. She usually introduced one friend and then left Rowena to fend for herself. “Tammy, this is my sister, Rowena.”

“Hi,” Rowena said. Tammy giggled.

“Tammy’s the Girl Next Door,” Maralynne told her.

“Next door?” Rowena asked. “Really?”

“She’s the Girl Next Door type,” Maralynne said, a little impatiently. “I’m the Siren and she’s the Girl Next Door.”

“Oh.”

“Tammy’s got an audition for a role as a Homecoming Queen,” Maralynne said. Tammy giggled again. Her giggle was high-pitched and, Rowena thought, irritating.

“Well. Good luck.”

“She means, ‘break a leg,’” Maralynne explained. “She doesn’t know anything.” Tammy nodded understandingly.

“Thank you.” Another giggle. Rowena thought for a moment that Tammy was going to say something else, but after staring at Rowena a while she managed only to giggle once more.

“And that’s Sammy.” Maralynne did not, Rowena noted, add the phrase, “my sister’s boyfriend.” But she

ignored this, and stood smiling politely until it seemed an acceptable time to move on.

“She’s not so ugly,” she heard Tammy say. “Or mean.”

She felt Sammy’s hand on her back. “Let’s see about some food,” he said.

They went to Maralynne’s table and eyed the offerings there. Raw vegetables, roughly cut, were slowly turning brown among bowls and bowls full of potato chips, corn chips, pretzels, onion crackers, wheat crackers, cheese crackers, and mixed nuts. Squeezed between these items were bottles of liquor and soda pop. Several kinds of dip. A pile of paper plates wedged up at an angle and plastic cups.

“You know,” said Rowena in an undertone, “I have a funny feeling there isn’t going to be any real food here.”

“Wouldn’t be surprised,” Sammy said.

“Why,” asked Rowena, “if she didn’t want to cook or anything—why did she have everybody bring chips and stuff?” Rowena, as requested, had brought soda.

“It’s party food,” suggested Sammy. “And no dishes to wash.”

“Bingo,” Rowena said. She tried not to remember the hours she’d spent helping Maralynne clean up for the party. Instead she smiled at a friend of her sister’s who stood by the table seizing chips one by one, dipping them with a jab, crunching them rapidly and staring a moment at the spread before pouncing at the next morsel. “Hi,” Rowena hazarded. “I’m Maralynne’s sister, Rowena.”

The woman nodded, accepting this. She swallowed. “Gwen,” she said. Her hand darted out and snatched up a corn chip. “You smoke?”

“Ah—no.”

Gwen scooped up some salsa and shoved the laden chip into her mouth. “I just quit.”

“Well—congratulations and good luck.”

“I started knitting,” Gwen said. She clasped her hands and regarded Rowena with darting eyes. “Maralynne said she’d hit me if I brought my knitting here.”

“Oh, I don’t think—”

Gwen unclasped her hands and grabbed a handful of nuts. “It’s her fault if I get fat,” she said.

/Gwen the heng How are ya?”

A woman in a bright red blouse barrelled into the room. “Mmph!” said Gwen as the newcomer hugged her. The hand holding Gwen’s pretzel stuck out awkwardly in the air. She was released abruptly and her friend stood grinning.

“So how’s the nicotine level, Carcinogen Gwen? Don’t eat the cauliflower v it’s covered with pesticides g And the orange dye in the cheese crackers—uh, uh.”

“Meet Maralynne’s sister?” asked Gwen hastily.

“No. What’s your name, Tina?”

“Rowena. And this is Sammy.”

/RowenaUrighto I knew it was something like that.” She turned to Sammy. “And you’re the guy they’re fighting over, right?”

“Pam, really.” Gwen turned to Rowena. “Don’t mind her. She’s a standup comic and she doesn’t know when she’s not working.”

“I’m Rowena’s boyfriend,” Sammy said civilly.

“See there, Gwen Again? Nobody’s offended.” Pam reached for a bottle of vodka as a very thin young woman

entered, eyed the table nervously, then turned and left.

“Maralynne!” Rowena heard her call. “You got any diet water?”

“Diet water?” Rowena asked, forgetting herself.

“Cathy,” said Gwen helpfully. Cathy’s voice floated back to them, high and fretful.

“That’s got that lemon flavoring in it. You know I’m on a diet.”

Rowena found herself looking at the bottles on the table. “It’s zero calorie,” she heard her sister say.

“They round it to zero.” Cathy was exasperated. “How can it be zero when there’s stuff in it?”

Rowena picked up a wheat cracker and scooped French Onion onto it. She wondered if all Maralynne’s friends were unwell one way or another. She wondered how she was going to survive her sister’s party herself.

There was a knock at the door, and a moment later Rowena, reaching for a cup, heard her sister exclaim, “Madame Zeldag Come in!”

“Oh, wow,” said Gwen, and left for the living room. Rowena looked to Sammy for help, but his face was blank with surprise. “Zel-duh,” said Pam, unconcerned. “Good old Zelduh.”

Rowena wondered how her sister had managed to keep this little surprise to herself. She stayed where she was and waited, certain that this time Maralynne would hunt her down wherever she went and see to it that she got an introduction.

She did not want to meet her sister’s psychic.

“It won’t be that bad,” Sammy said.

“But she’s not just an ordinary fake you know;

she's been encouraging Maralynne to do all kinds of stupid—I think she's even encouraged this obsession Maralynne has with you.”

“Very stupid, that,” Sammy observed.

“You know what I mean.” Rowena pulled her hair up onto her head, then let it go. “I'm sure she has. There was that time Maralynne wanted to know your middle name and I wouldn't tell her because I knew it was for Numerology and she—”

Rowena stopped. Coming towards her was Maralynne leading a woman who could only have been Madame Zelda.

“This is my sister, Rowena,” Maralynne said. “And that's Sammy, and that's Pam. This,” she continued importantly, “is Madame Zelda.”

“'Meetcha, Zelduh,” said Pam. Maralynne scowled at her.

“Ah,” Madame Zelda said. “You are ze funny one.”

“See? Isn't she great?”

“'Course I'm the funny one,” said Pam. But she looked impressed—impressed and pleased.

Madame Zelda turned to Rowena. She wore long, multicolored flowing robes, a long, flowing head scarf, and strange eye makeup. “And ze sister,” she said. She put her hand out. Rowena reluctantly shook it—and found herself captured. “H'mmm,” Madame Zelda said, holding her palm to the light and squinting at it. “I see a disappointment for you.”

“Really,” Rowena said, thinking that she was already having it. “Just one? In my whole life?” Madame Zelda looked at her.

“You will quarrel with the one who is closest to you. But you will find another who will comfort you and with whom you can be happy.”

Rowena looked at her squarely. “At the moment, you’re closest to me,” she said.

“That is not what I meant.”

“No? ’Cause it’s damn accurate that way.”

“You have a strong personality,” Madame Zelda said, without consulting the palm. “And you will live a long life.” She let go.

“Me next,” said Pam. But Madame Zelda had already taken hold of Sammy. Rowena moved just slightly to make sure Madame Zelda wouldn’t forget she was there.

Madame Zelda told Sammy that he would have a long happy life with a special woman and he said that he intended to. “Any kids?” asked Maralynne. Madame Zelda looked at Sammy, presumably for some kind of clue, and then looked back at his hand.

“I see — fatherhood,” she said. “I see the possibility of fatherhood.”

“Wow,” Rowena deadpanned. She knew she was being rude but she said it anyway. “A possibility. How ’bout that.”

“Now do me,” said Pam. Rowena and Sammy left them to it.

“Is she the entertainment?” Sammy asked.

“Maybe we’re supposed to be hers,” Rowena said. She dropped onto Maralynne’s couch. “Some party,” she said. “I don’t think I’ll play along.”

Sammy sat beside her. “She could just be here to drum up business,” he said. “Maybe she’s even here because she likes

the hostess.”

“Who seems to have invited her to tell you to leave me for her.” Rowena put her forehead into her palms. “Some sister,” she said.

“It’s not as if I’m going to do it,” Sammy said.

“It’s still a royal pain. To say the least.”

The doorbell rang. Maralynne, instead of leaving Madame Zelda and answering it herself, put her head into the room and called, “Rowena! Answer the door!”

Rowena looked at her. “You’re the one who knows everybody.”

Maralynne ran over, grabbed her arm and hauled. “But it might be The Guys.”

Rowena went reluctantly to it was either that or cause a scene and possibly lose a limb. “What guys?”

“The guys from upstairs. Eddie, he’s a Sagittarius, and what’s-his-name, James, the Aries.” She pushed Rowena at the door. “Either one would be perfect.”

“For what?” asked Rowena suspiciously.

“For you. Open the door.”

“Maralynne, I am not dumping Sammy in favor of what’s-his-name. I am sick and tired—”

“How rude!” Maralynne said, and opened the door herself.

“Hello, Maralynne,” said Chester shyly. He was holding a bouquet and a plastic shopping bag. “I’ve got the sour cream potato chips and the garlic crackers and the champagne you asked for.” He held out the flowers. “And these are for you.”

“Hi,” said Maralynne, defeated. She took the gifts, said, “Thanks,” and left. Rowena put on a smile.

“Hello, Chester,” she said, moving aside to let him enter. “Glad you could come.”

“Are you really?” he asked, stepping a bit nervously into the room. Rowena smiled, compared to the rest of Maralynne’s guests, Chester seemed mercifully normal.

“I really am,” she said.

Rowena and Sammy spent much of the evening talking to Chester, who kept gazing off to where Maralynne laughed with various of her other guests. If Chester tried to meander over in her direction, Maralynne meandered more quickly away. Rowena couldn’t help feeling sorry for him, especially since she found him to be more tolerable company than Maralynne’s other friends. She understood very little of his technical talk—and much of his talk was technical—but he was still more tolerable company than Maralynne’s other friends. At one point she left to refill her glass and—and to sidle up to her sister.

“Why don’t you pay Chester a little attention?” she asked.

“Chester?” Maralynne said. She shrugged. “I only asked him so’s he’d see me with all the other guys.”

Rowena looked around. “What other guys?”

“Oh, the Sagittarius and the Aries I told you about, and there was this Taurus who—”

“Maralynne. I don’t see them.”

“They’ll be here. Except for the Libra I askedo he said he might come over after everybody left so he could have me to himself.” Maralynne tossed her hair.

“Ah. You mean he’s not willing to meet your friends or talk to you; he only wants you for sex.”

“Rowenag What a thing to sayg I’ll have you know I’m fascinating. ”

“Maralynne, listen. Why don’t you just be nice to Chester, or polite at least, and—”

/Stop talking about himt And don’t tell anybody I invited himo I said you did. ”

“Maralynne—”

“Where are those guys?” Maralynne demanded.

“I told you, Maralynne. ” Pam appeared from nowhere, a glass of red wine in her hand. “No beer, no guys. ”

“But Madame Zelda said, no beer. ”

“How old are these guys?” Rowena wanted to know. Her sister looked at her blankly. Rowena picked up a pretzel, then Sammy’s drink, and left, taking with her the suspicion that Madame Zelda simply did not like young beer-drinkers.

Returning to Sammy she made a detour which allowed her to place herself, quite abruptly, directly in front of Madame Zelda, who had been managing to stay about as far away from Rowena as was possible in Maralynne’s apartment.

“Listen,” Rowena said. “I don’t know if Maralynne is paying you to be here, or if you’re just hoping to recruit more New Age zombies, or what, but—”

“You are impatient,” Madame Zelda said. “My advice to you is to learn patience. Also you must learn to open your mind. ”

“Really,” said Rowena. “Well, it seems to me—”

“For a full reading you must make an appointment,” Madame Zelda said. “Now, if you will excuse me … ”

“Wait!” Rowena said. But Madame Zelda sidestepped her deftly and swiftly glided to Maralynne’s side. Rowena, her

hands full. could only stand and watch. And then bring Sammy his drink.

She could think of many reasons for Madame Zelda to leave the party early. She could leave because Maralynne hadn't paid her that much, because she was hungry—Rowena herself was famished and had a headache—because the party wasn't very good, or because Rowena was too much of a threat. She kept hoping Madame Zelda would leave for some reason before midnight came. But a minute or so before 12 she was still there, gathered with everyone else around Maralynne's television set. Pam, drunk, was sitting on the floor with a not-quite-empty cup of whiskey and another of champagne. Gwen and Cathy did a little dance and Maralynne watched the screen with an alarming concentration. Chester explained that the New York show Maralynne had on was not live but had been taped for rebroadcast in other time zones, including their own, and Maralynne told him to shut up. With a few seconds left Pam began blowing her noisemaker and wouldn't stop. Rowena's head pounded harder, but at least she couldn't hear Tammy's giggling.

“I predict that a young child will make a significant scientific breakthrough in the coming year,” Madame Zelda suddenly said.

“Three,” yelled most everyone else. “Two. One. HAPPY NEW YEAR!” Pam, Tammy, Gwen and Cathy cheered. Madame Zelda applauded with dignity, apparently doing her best to give the impression she herself was somehow responsible for the world's continued existence. Rowena and Sammy kissed, and Maralynne yelped, “Hey!”

Rowena looked at Her sister was holding Chester at arm's

length, pushing him back. Chester started saying something but Maralynne ran off and shut herself in her bathroom.

Rowena sighed. Pam reached up and took hold of Madame Zelda's sleeve. "Hey," she said. "Whatsa matter with her?"

Madame Zelda drew herself more stiffly upright. "Professional confidentiality," she said.

"Go fix her," Pam ordered, and, letting go, she spread herself peacefully out on the floor.

"This is too weird," said Cathy.

"She needs time by herself," Madame Zelda said grandly. Rowena thought she was partially right, though mostly by chance. She considered going to her sister just briefly, tapping on the door just to say — she would tell Maralynne that when she did want to talk —

"Is she going to be sick?" Cathy was peering worriedly at Pam. Tammy giggled nervously. Rowena was reluctant to look at Pam, who rolled over and hid her face, but bent to ask her how she felt. She got no answer, got up again — and Pam threw up on the floor.

Rowena would have thought that Cathy and Gwen, at least — if not Tammy — were old enough not to squeal and make a fuss on such an occasion, or to leave her to fetch the paper towels. She piled the dirty towels on a paper plate and went back to the kitchen for a little water so Pam, who was insisting by now that she'd felt /fluish 3 all days could have a damp towel for her face.

"How is she?" asked Sammy, who was hiding discreetly in the kitchen.

"She thinks she has the flu," Rowena said. "I'm not so

sure about that, though I think we can rule out food poisoning, what with there being no food.” She took her towel to the sink. “Where’s Chester?” She’d heard Sammy ask Chester to go with him so Pam could recover in a female-only environment, but Rowena now saw no sign of him.

Sammy shrugged. “Went out the door,” he said. “He didn’t say where he was going.”

Rowena squeezed the towel out, gently. “Poor guy.” As she passed Sammy she stopped, and he kissed her, briefly.

“Ready to leave when you are,” he said. She nodded and left.

Back in the living room, Pam mopped herself off and Rowena helped her settle more or less on the couch. She heard a commotion of some kind in the kitchen and, thinking Chester had returned, was almost relieved. She went in herself with the used towel — to find Sammy with not Chester but Maralynne. Her head was drooping and he was holding her at arm’s length.

“Nooo,” Maralynne said. She shook her head, clutching at his arm. “You have to kiss me. It’s New Year’s. You have to.”

Gently but firmly Sammy said, “I am in love with your sister.”

/Somebodyv it’s New Year’sg Somebody has to—”

“Maralynne. It can’t be me. It just can’t.”

“I need somebody!” Maralynne wailed. “Just — just — somebody — just to like me!”

Sammy tipped his head back, turned it away for a moment, to the side — and saw Rowena.

They stared at each other. Sammy moved his head again.

beckoning this time, and Rowena came forward. She put the towels on the counter along the way. Sammy turned the sobbing Maralynne towards her and Maralynne dropped her hands from him and allowed him to transfer her into Rowena's arms. "I'm going to take a walk," he whispered, and left them. Rowena stood with her arms around her sister — her sister who had just tried to kiss her boyfriend — and had no idea what to do or say.

She patted Maralynne's back, and waited.

"You know," Rowena said, setting a cup of tea down in front of her sister, "I kind of hate to mention it, but Chester was perfectly —"

/Chester I want a real guy. "

"Maralynne, look —"

"At least in public. Geez. He could spoil my reputation. "

Rowena managed not to comment on this. "It seems like such a shame, though. "

"My reputation," Maralynne repeated.

"I don't know," Rowena said, "whether he'd hurt your reputation or not, but I don't see how making passes at your sister's boyfriend would help it." Maralynne stared at her. Rowena sat down a bit heavily in front of her own tea. Madame Zelda poked her head in the doorway, but Rowena glared at her and she retreated.

Maralynne's voice took on a reasoning-with-the-feeble-minded tone. "See, if I do anything that makes me look like I'm desperate or something, people might think I'm — not really much of a Siren. "

"But, Maralynne —"

"And Madame Zelda always says it's only a matter of time

anyway before you realize that a Scorpio is just not going to—”

“Maralynne, even if that’s true you’re completely out of line. You’re not only interfering with my relationship, which God knows is not what we call proper sisterly behavior, you’re basically foisting some sort of nutty religion on me, and I am really—”

A knock at the door—the front door—interrupted her, and, listening, she heard Sammy’s voice.

She hurried to let him in. He had Chester with him and each held a pizza box. “Chester remembered a pizza parlor near here,” Sammy said. With Maralynne in earshot, Rowena decided to save her questions for later.

“How nice,” she said. “Thank you, Chester.” She turned in her sister’s direction. “Isn’t this nice, Maralynne?”

“I’m hungry,” said Maralynne unexpectedly. She sniffed. “Smells good,” she said, and added, to Rowena’s surprise, “Thanks.”

Sammy and Chester cleared a space on Maralynne’s countertop and set the pizzas down. Tammy had left while Rowena was tending to Pam who Rowena went to peek was still resting comfortably.

“Is that pizza?” Cathy asked. She dashed off in search of her coat.

“Cathy!” Maralynne called. “There are no calories in smells!”

“You say,” Cathy retorted. “A smell is molecules, right?” She poked her head into the doorway, holding her nose with one hand and waving briefly with the other, and left.

“Nice to meet you.” Rowena called. The door opened and closed

Two pizza slices later, Rowena, feeling much better, noticed that Madame Zelda, in taking her own pizza to a relatively distant end table, had turned her back. She left her third slice to Sammy's care, wandered casually over and got the psychic cornered. "Now," said Rowena, "stop helping my sister make a fool of herself and get your so-called 'influence' the hell out of my life."

Madame Zelda drew herself up. "There are forces, my child, which you cannot—"

"You want force? I'll give you force. You find some way to tell her Sammy's not her Mr. Right or I'll phone up the Skeptics and have them send someone undercover to expose you."

"You cannot think—"

"Can't I? Did Maralynne tell you that Sammy works for a law firm and is almost as annoyed by this point as I am? Or that my company employs a publicist who happens to owe me a favor?" Rowena paused just a moment to let this sink in. "Lay off," she said.

Madame Zelda collected herself. "You do not understand the forces I—"

"Bullshit," Rowena said. "You are going to stop amusing yourself at my sister's expense, and you're going to stop now. As of this moment. NOW."

Madame Zelda managed, after a moment, to gather together a little dignity. "I forgive you your youth and ignorance," she said.

"Just let my sister and me live our own lives," Rowena said, "and I won't take any special pains to ruin yours."

Maralynne was walking towards them, and Rowena gave

her a smile. “I’m so glad to see you talking,” Maralynne said. She turned to her sister. “Are you learning anything?” she asked.

“I think our little chat has been very informative,” Rowena said. Maralynne smiled.

“Good,” she said.

“Where is she?” Rowena asked. It was New Year’s Day, edging into late afternoon. Her sister was supposed to have arrived almost an hour ago with the book she’d forgotten to make Rowena borrow the night before.

“If she’s late we’ll just go to the next showing,” Sammy said. He looked perfectly tidy and perfectly relaxed.

“It’s just —” but there was the knock at the door. Rowena went to let in her sister—and Chester.

She tried not to look surprised. “Hi. Come in.”

“Just for a minute,” Maralynne said. “We’re already a little late.” She gave Rowena the book. “Let me show you something,” she said. She took Rowena aside and opened the book. “This chapter here. See? All about finding your True Nature, and other people’s, too.”

Rowena decided to keep an open mind, or at least a closed mouth. “Very nice,” she said.

“Yeah,” said Maralynne. “You’d be surprised, sometimes. Take Chester, for instance.”

“Chester?”

“Madame Zelda says the minute she saw his aura she just knew he was the perfect man for me. Imagine that. And astrologically and everything … he’s great.”

“Glad to hear it,” Rowena said. “I mean I’m happy for you both.”

“It goes to show you^t I mean^U I was so wrong about Sammyo I mean, I wasn’t wrong, but apparently he was born just a little too late in the day and just can’t support my sensitive nature and—what time was he born?”

Rowena had no idea. “I must have forgotten.”

“Well, apparently Madame Zelda found out—and just in time, too. I could have made a terrible mistake.”

“Good thing you invited her, then.”

“Isn’t it? And I’m gonna help Chester stop being a nerd, too—my nurturing, helpful side.”

“Sounds great.”

Maralynne beamed at her^U then looked out across the room. “Chester^g Ready to go?”

“Ready,” Chester said. Rowena noticed he was wearing a polo shirt this time. He and Maralynne left for wherever they were going, and Rowena and Sammy gathered their coats and left also. Rowena didn’t speak until they were safely alone in Sammy’s car.

“It worked,” she said. “Madame Zelda finally backed off. I mean, I guess she’s still meddling, but at least she’s off our backs. She actually told Maralynne what a great guy Chester is.” She fastened her seatbelt with something like a flourish. “I should have threatened her ages ago — told Maralynne I wanted to consult her and got her number and just called her up and—”

“Chester says he did it,” Sammy said. He looked as if he was amused by something private.

/Chester^l No^{UI} did^t I told you about thiso I went and —”

“Chester thinks he did it. He offered her fifty bucks to

tell Maralynne to go out with him.”

Rowena stared. “He gave her money? He gave money to that—that meddling bitch?”

“Apparently.”

“That charlatan?”

“He figured it was worth it,” Sammy said. He patted Rowena on the thigh. “Maybe he’s too timid to threaten people,” he said. “Maybe he’s not as fierce as you are.”

Rowena laughed wryly. “He hasn’t been putting up with this nonsense for half his life,” she said. “He hasn’t had to humor her and rescue her and then have her try and—”

“With luck,” Sammy said, “maybe he will get to—for the rest of his life.”

Rowena looked at him and laughed. “You’re terrible,” she said. She leaned up against him, very gently and briefly so as not to interfere with his driving. “Terrible,” she continued. “Almost as bad as Madame Zelda said.” She kissed him on the shoulder, then turned to her window and smiled out at the world.

Notes

ordeal 严酷的考验；痛苦的经验

pretzels 一种脆饼干

crackers 饼干

Bingo 一种赌博游戏

pouncing 猛扑

morsel 一口；少量；一片

salsa 一种西红柿，洋葱，辣椒粉做成的调料，主要流行于美国西南部

- handful 一把；一握；少数；一小撮
nicotine 烟碱
Carcinogen 致癌物质
pesticides 杀虫剂
standup 勇敢的
civilly 谦恭地
fretful 烦燥的
calorie 卡路里
unwell 不舒服的；不爽快的；身体不好的
fake 假货；欺瞒
squinting 斜视
deadpanned 无表情地说
drum up 招徕，鼓吹
Sagittarius 射手座；人马宫
Taurus 金牛座；金牛宫
detour 绕路而行
deftly 灵巧地；熟练地；敏捷地
famished 饿死了
fuss 大惊小怪；小题大作；忙乱
commotion 骚动
wailed 悲叹；哀号；嚎啕
beckoning 招手；召唤
feebleminded 精神薄弱的；低能的；意志薄弱的
foisting 偷偷插入；使混入；硬卖给
aura 气味；气氛
nerd 书呆子
meddling 干涉；弄乱；参与；与……发生关系
charlatan 吹牛者

棋逢对手

Buffy Meets Her Match

人说话做事都得有分寸，过了头，就会有麻烦。再说，哪儿有不落的太阳？人都有走麦城的时候。本来，人活着就是土里刨食儿，不如意事常八九，遇到点儿挫折，也是世之常理。可要是闲得生烦，做些电话骚扰之类的无聊事儿，像 Buffy 这样，那就活该倒霉，倒霉活该了。

“... Now, my children, it is that time of night. You need to speak, confess all to me. Your unpardonable sins, your secret desires, everything. Because I am the Night crawler and I can grant you absolution from those sins that keep you up at night. Many so-called experts say that confessing to others can help us all. ”

“ And I can help so much more than your Dr. Quack ever could. ” LaCroix smiled slowly, savoring these moments. “ Without further ado I'd like to bring forth my first caller. Bonsoir, my dear, how may I help you? ”

There was nothing but silence on the phonet

LaCroix raised his glass to his lips. After a sip, he lowered the glass. He was about to hang up on the caller and move on when he heard an annoying voice say his name. He nearly choked when he heard the grating voice.

“LaCroix,” said the squeaky voice. “I know what you are.”

LaCroix couldn't help chortling. “Oh, do you?” he asked.

“You are a godless, hateful creep and I'm coming for you!”

By this time LaCroix was laughing so hard he had to wipe away a tear from his eye. He didn't even notice when the engineer had hung up on his caller.

Buffy stared angrily at the phone in her hand.

“Oh dear,” murmured LaCroix, after regaining his composure. “I suppose I should be rather worried.”

He moved on to his next caller

Later that evening

“Nick there's a call for you.” Schanke handed Nick the phone on his desk.

“Nick Knight,”

Nick heard nothing but silence. He was about to ask Schanke if he was kidding around when he heard.

“Nicholas de Brabant.”

“Who is this?” asked Nick. “What do you want?”

“I know who you really are, Nick. I have a stake with your name on it, Nick.”

Nick hung up the phone.

“So what was that about?” asked Schanke.

“Uh, nothing,” Nick scratched his chin nervously.

“Uhm I need to go run some errands, Schanke. Can you cover for me for about an hour or so?”

“Sure,” said Schanke. He watched Nick walk out the door and right past Nat.

“Schanke, what’s Nick’s problem? He barely said two words to me,” asked Natalie as she sat on the edge of his desk.

“Beats the hell out of me,” said Schanke. “He got some phone call, turned white and high-tailed it out of here.”

Nick wandered into the Raven, with a worried look on his face. He walked straight to the bar.

“Nicholas,” LaCroix looked up from his drink. “I take it you are here on some business for the police.”

“No, LaCroix, I’m here … ”

LaCroix noted the worried look in his son’s eyes, and unintentionally interrupted Nick. “You look as though you’ve seen a ghost.” He offered Nick a glass and Nick took it.

“Someone called me at the station.”

“I see,” said LaCroix. “I thought that happened quite a bit there.”

“No,” sighed Nick, angrily. “She called me, Nicholas de Brabant and said she had a stake with my name on it.”

“Oh, Nicholas,” chortled LaCroix. “I received a call like that a few hours ago. Some squeaky voiced little girl told me I was a hateful creep. You don’t see me worried about that now do … ”

I Meanwhile Uin Janette’s offices

Janette was picking up some papers and extra glassware from the office when the phone rang.

She sighed and picked up the phone.

/Allo?”

“Hello, Janette.”

“Oui,” said Janette, impatiently. Her customers were getting louder.

“I know what you are, Janette.”

“I see,” said Janette, unimpressed. “and that would be?”

“A vampire,” continued Buffy.

Janette sighed. “This conversation is getting old and tiresome,” she said.

“Hey, I’m NOT done yet,” screeched Buffy, angrily.

/I’ve seen your outfitsg All I can say is eeewg Didn’t you know all-black evening wear went out of style in the 1600’s, you old hagt And your hair! I’ve seen better looking beehives on a treeg Certainly with a lot less sting than that hair of yours, Janette. And I’ve heard better fake French accents in ‘Hogan’s Heroes’.

Janette was so stunned by this girl’s impertinence, she could do nothing but stammer. She was tongue-tied. Buffy continued, “Perhaps, dunking your hair in bleach could be an improvement. Then again, maybe not. By the way, I have a stake with your name on it, and it’s quite well done. Adieu.” Buffy hung up.

Janette was fuming. One of the bartenders walked by her to ask a question and she growled. He jumped away.

LaCroix was interrupted as Janette walked up to them grumbling.

“You two cannot imagine the phone call I just received!” she griped. “I’ve just been threatened by some annoying child!”

“We’ve both received similar phone calls,” commented Nick. “But LaCroix isn’t worried at all,” he said angrily.

“Nicholas, I thought you believed you deserved death,” LaCroix smiled coldly. Nick continued to appear worried.

“Don’t worry, Nicola,” replied Janette. “We can take care of this little problem.”

“Yes, we can,” added LaCroix as he put his hand on Janette’s shoulder.

Nick nodded his head. He felt a tinge of remorse for the foolish mortal who began this business. However, she should have known better. He was even more surprised that LaCroix did not insist he join them. The words seemed difficult to say but he made a stab at them anyway.

“Thank you,” he said. Nick picked up his coat and began walking toward the front door.

Janette stared at LaCroix, somewhat bewildered. “I thought you would insist on Nicola’s participation,” she stated.

“You know Nicholas,” said LaCroix. “It will be much easier to take care of this insignificant mortal without his help.”

LaCroix leaned in closer to his daughter and murmured in a conspiratorial tone, “So what do you suggest we do to this mortal? Kill her of course, but how?”

“Actually, LaCroix, I had another plan in mind. Killing this mortal would be too shamefully easy. Humiliation is sometimes the best form of revenge.”

LaCroix became silent for a moment. Janette said nothing, realizing that he was merely thinking over his options.

“There is another point to consider,” he said.

“What is that?”

“Her job is to protect humankind from all creatures of the night. By allowing her to survive, she could continue protecting our community from those other creatures that seek to harm us, especially those on the fringes of our community.”

“Yes,” said Janette. “He will allow her to survive because it will ultimately protect Nicola,” she thought to herself. She was still curious as to what creatures LaCroix was referring to, but decided not to pursue this line of questioning. Janette became silent once more, awaiting LaCroix’s decision.

LaCroix turned away from his drink to face her again. “All right, Janette,” he said. “However, I do wish to help in some way.”

Janette rubbed her hands together, thinking gleefully about what forms of revenge she could take out on that girl.

The phone rang again and Janette and LaCroix looked at each and raced for the phone.

“Allo?” said Janette as LaCroix moved in closer to the phone.

“I know what you are, Janette,” began the same annoying voice on the phone.

All Buffy could hear was a clunking noise as the telephone receiver hit the countertop. She shrugged thinking that Janette had hung up again. Buffy was just surprised that she did not hear Janette cursing anymore. She glanced at the phone book from her small hotel room. It was spring break and Buffy had decided to go shopping in Toronto. After all she had a tanning bed back home. Buffy decided she needed to be on her own for a bit. To prove to herself that she could do her job on her own. She found the phone number for Don Schanke and was about to dial it. The poor man had been working with a

vampire for years and now the truth could come out.

The world became black for Buffy

I Nearly three hours later

Buffy woke up and began rubbing her eyes. Things started to come into focus. She finally saw two figures at her bedside.

“Wha’ happened?” she asked, incoherently. The two figures were still fuzzy.

“Poor thing,” cooed Janette. “You don’t remember?”

Buffy closed her eyes again to try to remember what happened. Phone call—then darkness. That was all she could remember.

“Uh-uh,” she said shaking her head. “I don’t remember.”

The taller of the two fuzzy figures leaned forward to whisper in Buffy’s ear. “You don’t remember calling me?”

Something in this man’s voice made Buffy shudder. She could remember something about hearing this voice before.

“Night ... ,” she began

“That’s right my dear,” continued LaCroix. “I am the Nightcrawler and you called my show. Don’t you even remember that?”

“No,” whispered Buffy, trying to focus her vision.

“You don’t remember discussing your loneliness?”

“No. ”

“The malaise?”

“No,” said Buffy shaking her head. The two figures became more clear. A tall man and a lovely dark-haired woman smiled down at her. The memories came back to Buffy. These were two of the vampires she was going to killt Buffy jumped

back away from them and they continued smiling. She couldn't get out of bed. She finally was able to escape and she ran to the door.

"Before you go, there are some things you should know," said LaCroix.

"Why would I want to hear anything you two had to say," answered Buffy.

Janette tossed her a small hand mirror.

Buffy looked at herself and screamed. "You horrible monsters what have you done to me?" she asked.

Buffy's long blonde hair had turned black. Her eyes were steel gray. Her skin was white, like she had become a ghost. She was even wearing one of those horrible, black dresses she had seen Janette wearing before when Buffy had been stalking the Raven. Buffy could see in the dark room with more clarity. What had happened to her?

"What did you do?" asked Buffy, again. She looked at LaCroix.

"Did you make me into a vampire?" she wailed.

LaCroix smiled. "No, I did not."

"I did," said Janette.

Buffy blacked out again.

"She took that well," LaCroix noted.

"Shhh, I think she's coming to," whispered Janette.

Buffy sat up again and tried to move away from Janette and LaCroix.

"Buffy, don't worry," said Janette. "We know this must be frightening for you, but you did say that you were tired of your life."

"I did?" asked Buffy.

“Yes, you did,” said LaCroix. “That is why we came for you,”

“I did,” said Buffy. She collapsed back onto the bed. It was now a statement of fact. In fact, protecting the human race had become a bit stale for Buffy.

She slipped her hand around her throat. LaCroix caught her hand. “Take my word for it … they’ve healed by now.”

Buffy nervously gulped. She still wasn’t sure what to make of all that had happened to her in the last few hours.

LaCroix rose from her bedside. “I’m going to go to sleep. Janette, I take it you will teach Buffy all she needs to know.”

“I certainly will,” replied Janette.

LaCroix walked out and closed the door behind him.

Janette took one of Buffy’s hand. “Well Buffy, there is much for you to learn,” she began

I That evenings

“Don’t worry, Nicholas. Our problem is solved,” said LaCroix.

“I know,” said Nick. “I was just wondering. Uhm, the body isn’t going to show up, is it?”

“What body,” asked LaCroix, innocently. A smile slowly worked its way around his face.

“You didn’t bring her across, did you?”

“Now, why would I do such a thing,” chortled LaCroix.

Nick walked into the Raven and noticed a young girl sitting beside LaCroix. She was wearing one of Janette’s dresses and sipping on a large glass of wine.

“Nicholas,” LaCroix waved Nick over to the bar. “I’d like you to meet BuffyU the newest member of our family.” LaCroix gave him a warning glare so Nick kissed her hand and

took the barstool next to her.

“I’m really sorry about those crank calls,” said Buffy.

Nick shrugged, “It’s okay,” he said. “I’m sure it won’t happen again.”

Buffy nodded her head and began drinking again.

“Excuse us, my dear, but Nicholas and I need to speak on an urgent matter.” LaCroix pulled Nick away from the bar.

“Okay,” said Buffy with a smile, “But you will finish telling me about living in Paris?”

“Of course, ma cherie,” LaCroix said as he and Nick began to walk to the other side of the bar, “LaCroix, what is going on?” asked Nick. “She’s mortal, but she thinks she’s one of us.”

“Janette’s idea of revenge,” said LaCroix with a rare smile. “We dyed her hair, put colored contacts in her eyes to improve her vision, and we’ve been mixing a special house wine for her with some added nutrients. Janette told her it will take about a week for her powers and fangs to develop. This may give her a taste of what life is like for us on the other side. Perhaps, she will leave our kind alone afterwards and concentrate on other creatures of the night.”

LaCroix nodded to Janette and Buffy as they watched over several of the young men, hungrily. The two women giggled and began talking together again.

“Besides, by the time Buffy’s vacation is over, Janette may decide to bring her across anyway. It will do her good to have a child of her own,” said LaCroix.

Nick nodded. It would just be a matter of time, but he had seen and heard of stranger things happening.

Notes

- confess 忏悔
unpardonable 不可原谅的
absolution 赦免
ado 费力
chortling 咯咯笑
stake 树桩
screeched 尖声喊叫
hag 女巫
beehives 蜂窝
Hogan 泥盖木屋
impertinence 无礼
dunking 浸泡
bleach 漂白剂
Adieu 再见
Fuming 气得冒烟
remorse 后悔
Humiliation 使受辱
gleefully 愉快地
clunking 沉闷的金属声
incoherently 无条理地
cooed 唧唧地讲情话
malaise 不舒服
stalking 悄悄靠近
barstool 酒吧高脚凳
crank 脾气暴躁的

舒服极了

Cold Comfort

By Sandra Gray

朋友当着他的面杀了他的教授。调查时，他有不在现场的充足的证据。这时候，来了一位能感知别人心理活动的女人。

忐忑不安之后，那种如释重负的感觉，舒服极了。

“Mr. Knight?”

Nicholas Knight turned his gaze away from the bleak desert plain outside the window. In the sky above, Mabara's two moons, both full, cast a cold, unwavering gaze upon his soul. It was happening again. Would he never be able to finally settle down?

He turned to look at his questioner—a dark complexioned Klingon. The man in the Starfleet uniform seemed dour and was physically imposing. “I am — sorry to have kept you waiting,” he said stiffly, in a deep baritone voice.

“That's all right,” said Nick. “Although I am a bit puzzled by Starfleet's interest in what goes on here, Mister —?”

“Lt. Worf. Starfleet would normally allow such an internal matter be investigated by the local authorities. But as we have other interests here, we have been asked by them to aid in the investigation of Dr. Howard’s death.”

Nick nodded and waited tensely. He wondered what “other interests” Starfleet had in Mabara. Dr. Howard’s “death” had caused the normal lines of gossip in the research colony to be stilled, as members of the archeological dig were isolated for questioning. And then Starfleet personnel had arrived (further complicating matters (but he supposed the regular civilian populace was rife with rumors)).

The Klingon sat and turned on a recorder. Nick remained standing. “You were an associate of Dr. Howard’s,” he said.

“I was a member of the dig,” said Nick.

“Other members of the archeological team that I have spoken to have said you were close to Dr. Howard.”

“Well, I spent a lot of time with him in my professional capacity as assistant archeologist. But our relationship was purely that—professional.”

“Where were you at nine p. m. last evening?”

“I was in the village pub.” Actually, he had flown to the pub shortly after Howard’s “death,” knowing it would give him an alibi since there were no transporters on Mabara and the dig itself was accessible only by an hours’ ride by transport.

“You have witnesses in the pub who can verify this?”

“Yes,” said Nick, naming some of the people in the pub who he knew had seen him. “There were probably others who saw me there as well,” he added.

(Other members of the dig have said you stayed behind

with Dr. Howard to discuss recent findings.”

“Well, yes I did for a short time. Then I came back to town.”

“And what time was that?”

“Eight o’clock,” lied Nick. He was glad the Klingon was not using a lie detector. He wasn’t sure if his skills at emotion control were that good or it had been so long since he’d had to lie in an official investigation.

“Are you aware of how Dr. Howard died?” the Klingon asked, watching Nick carefully.

Nick hesitated, putting on what he hoped was a concerned but neutral expression. “I heard his throat was slit.”

But the real memory of what went on in the stone cavern played in his head.

“LaCroix, no!”

Nick’s adversary looked up from “dining” on Dr. Howard. Giving Nick a cruel smile, he took a knife and slashed Howard’s throat, disguising in the process the fang marks he’d put there. Howard didn’t bleed, of course, being already dead. LaCroix let him fall.

Nick growled, ready to attack LaCroix. But then he remembered the artifact on the metal table, the item that he had stayed behind to talk to Dr. Howard about, the relic that might possibly be his cure.

But LaCroix got to the table before him and grabbed the ancient amulet. Nick stood still, his heart cold, as LaCroix examined the delicate gold piece set with jewels. “An interesting piece. So delicate,” said LaCroix, holding it up to the portable lamp light. “Did you think I would allow you to gain access to such an item?” Nick watched as LaCroix

tightened his hand into a fist and crushed the amulet to pieces. He let the pieces fall to the stone floor.

“That wasn’t necessary.”

“Perhaps not. But one can never be sure which items might contain … magic.”

Nick looked over at Dr. Howard. “You didn’t have to kill him, either.”

LaCroix shrugged. “I was hungry. And I really can’t abide that cold, synthetic crap you drink.” He wiped the blood from the corner of his mouth with a white handkerchief. “Besides, he knew about this amulet,” he said, kicking at the broken pieces of Nick’s hope with his foot. He looked back at Nick, his cold gaze serious. “Be glad no one else did.”

“I’m sorry. What did you say?” asked Nick, aware on some level that the Klingon had spoken.

“I said, I have no more questions for now. You may return to your living quarters and begin packing your belongings.”

Nick frowned, confused. “Packing my belongings?”

“Mabara is being evacuated.

/Evacuatedg Why?”

“The planet belongs to the Cardassians.”

/The Cardassiansg I thought Mabara was in the neutral zone.”

“There has been a renegotiation of the Cardassian treaty with the Federation. The neutral zone has been shifted and Mabara is now in Cardassian space.”

So **a** **thata** was why Starfleet was there—to evacuate the research colony. And with that evacuation would go Nick’s chance to look for another Mabaran amulet. But still he asked U

“But—what about the research being done here?”

“It will end,” the Klingon said simply. Then he nodded and left the room.

Captain Jean-Luc Picard had just ordered a cup of tea and Earl Grey Uhots from the food replicator in his quarters when his doorbell sounded. “Come,” he said. Commander Will Riker and Lt. Worf came into the room. Picard sat down on his couch and said, “How goes the evacuation, gentlemen?”

“Everything is proceeding on schedule, Captain,” said Riker, his number one officer.

“And the murder investigation?” he asked, looking at his Klingon head of security.

“I have done preliminary interrogation of everyone involved in the Mabara archeological dig. I have proceeded to confirming alibis. The site itself appears to have been ransacked and some of the important finds that had been catalogued are missing.”

“There’s no sign of the missing artifacts?”

“Not so far. I have begun a search of vacated housing, but I do not believe we will find any of the missing items.”

Picard sighed. “So is it your opinion, lieutenant, that the murder of Dr. Howard was a side effect of robbery?”

Lt. Worf exchanged looks with Commander Riker before saying, “No, I believe it was an attempt to disguise a deliberate murder. But I am putting out the idea, with the local authorities’ consent, that I do believe the crime is robbery related.”

Captain Picard set down his cup and frowned slightly. “Why do you think it was a deliberate murder?”

Commander Riker said, “Dr. Crusher examined the body

and reported that most of Dr. Howard's blood was ... removed. ”

“Wasn't his throat slit?”

“Yes, sir,” said Worf. “But there was little blood at the crime scene. ”

“And Beverly says the blood was removed before his throat was cut,” added Riker.

“I see,” said Picard, raising his brows. “Was she able to determine by what method Dr. Howard's blood was removed?”

“There were no wounds other than the cut in his throat,” said Riker.

Picard stood. “How much longer before all the colonists are transferred to the ship?”

“I estimate two more days,” said Riker.

Picard paced the room. “The evacuation of three hundred colonists is enough of a strain on the ship without the added stress of trying to solve a most unusual murder. ” He stopped and smiled. “But I know I can depend on the two of you. Utilize all the ship's resources you deem necessary to fulfill our mission. ” He put a hand on Worf's shoulder. “That goes for your murder investigation too, Lt. Worf. I know it's not strictly part of our orders, but do your best. ”

“Yes, sir. ”

“Is there anything else you wish to report?”

Riker and Worf exchanged glances again. Then Riker said, “No, sir. ”

Picard sat again and picked up his cup. “Then you're dismissed. Keep me apprised of our status. ”

“AyeU sir,” said Lt Worf. Then he and Riker left the

room.

Nick stared out the huge picture window in Ten Forward solemnly, a glass of wine untouched in his hand. It had been three days since the Enterprise had left Mabara with the research colonists. LaCroix was not among the evacuees — no doubt he'd had his own private shuttle with which to escape the planet. Then again, maybe the Cardassians had captured him (he hoped).

“Thinking about Mabara?” asked a female voice. Nick turned his head to see two large, very dark eyes attached to a very attractive brunette woman. He looked back out the window.

“Yes. We were doing some important research there.”

“Perhaps the Cardassians will continue the archeological investigation.” Nick looked at her and smiled wryly.

“I doubt that.”

The woman smiled back and said, “They're not total barbarians, even if that is the popular opinion of them.” She had a warm, inviting smile.

“I suppose you're right.”

The woman extended her hand and said, “I'm Deanna Troi, ship's counselor.”

Nick took her hand, which was very warm, briefly. “Nicholas Knight.” He caught almost a “glow” from the woman as he took her hand. It made him feel slightly warm. Her face became serious.

“One of the archeologists? I'm sorry if I intruded on some private contemplation of Dr. Howard.”

“You didn't. I was just remembering the dig.”

Deanna Troi frowned slightly at him. “Were you close to

Dr. Howard?”

“No, not really. I hardly knew him.” Which was true. They had only met for the first time six months ago.

“His death was very mysterious. Dr. Crusher said his body was missing almost all of its’ blood.” Nick looked away and back out the window.

“Yes, I know,” said Nick uneasily, remembering LaCroix. At least the witnesses to his presence in the village pub were able to confirm his alibi so that he was not under suspicion for Howard’s murder. But, unfortunately, there were no other suspects, either. It made him uncomfortable. He focused on Deanna Troi and said, “Can I buy you a drink?”

The woman was still frowning at him slightly. Then she brightened and said, “Yes, thank you.” Nick looked around for a vacant table and they sat down.

Deanna ordered some strange concoction . Nick had never heard of. After the waiter left to get it, she said, “You don’t look like an archeologist. ”

Nick smiled slightly at her. If only she knew all the “professions” he’d had over twelve centuries. “We’re not all gray haired old fogeys. ”

Deanna laughed. “What an archaic expression!” The waiter brought her order — a tall drink filled with a glowing concoction that looked like a sunset. Her dark eyes brimmed with warmth. He felt the vampire in himself responding to her and looked at his drink.

“I didn’t mean to offend,” she continued, a bit uncertainly. Nick looked at her, in control of himself again. But it would not do to become too friendly with this woman.

“You didn’t,” he saidt He looked at her thoughtfullyt

For some reason, she reminded him of—Natalie Lambert. He must have been staring, he realized, because Deanna Troi said,

“Is something the matter?”

Nick blinked. “No. It’s just—you remind me of someone I knew.”

Her expression became concerned. “Someone you loved.”

Nick frowned and looked at his drink. “Yes.”

Deanna reached out a hand and placed it over his. “She’s dead, isn’t she? I’m sorry.”

Nick looked at her, still frowning. “It was a long time ago.” An electric tingle passed through his hand where she held it. He drew his hand away from hers.

“I’m sorry. You must think me very odd to pry into your personal life. Maybe I should explain something. I’m half Betazoid.”

“You’re a telepath?” Nick asked, his heart turning cold.

“No. I’m only half Betazoid. My abilities are more empathic than telepathic.”

Still too risky for Nick’s taste. He now wished he hadn’t started conversing with her, despite her attractiveness. He stood and said, “If you’ll excuse me, I’m rather tired.” He ignored her concerned look as he left the room.

Once in his quarters, Nick breathed a sigh of relief. One of the disadvantages of his move into space was his encounters with alien beings who had natural abilities to discover his secret. The ship’s counselor was an attractive woman. But knowing of her Betazoid heritage made her dangerous to be around—not only for her empathic skills, but also because of the sensual attractiveness Betazoids had for many species. He’d

felt some of that tonight.

Nick took out a card from a small pack and put it in the food replicator. He watched as a glass filled with red liquid. At least the 24th century had some advantages. It was fairly simple to replicate his “diet,” even if the synthesized cow blood wasn’t quite as satisfying as the “real thing.” After his encounter with Deanna Troi, he felt in need of a drink.

Deanna was nursing a second Arcturian Simolaze when she saw Worf enter Ten Forward. He looked tired. “Worf!” she called. His dour expression brightened (although Deanna doubted whether anyone but her could see the changes) and he approached her table.

“Deanna,” he said.

Deanna smiled. “You look worn out. Why don’t you sit and relax?”

“Thank you,” said Worf. He sank into a chair across from her. “I did have a difficult day.”

“The murder investigation.”

“I have reviewed visual logs and testimony all day. But I fear I am no closer to discovering who murdered Dr. Howard.”

“So everyone has an alibi that checks out?”

“Yes. That is what is so frustrating.”

Deanna looked at her drink, then back at Worf. “Even Nicholas Knight?”

“Nicholas Knight,” said Worf blankly.

“Young, blond archeologist.”

Worf sighed. “Yes, he has one of the most ‘air tight’ alibis. Why do you ask?”

Deanna frowned. “I was speaking with him here earlier.”

When I mentioned Dr. Howard, I got the impression that he was hiding something.”

“He could not have committed the murder. He was seen by several people in the village pub at the time Dr. Howard was murdered.”

“Mmmm,” said Deanna. “Well, it may not have had anything to do with the murder.”

But she looked at her drink thoughtfully.

Nick was reading a recent issue of Archeological Digest on the computer when his doorbell chimed. He looked at the chronometer; it was late. Frowning, he said, “Come.” The door swooshed open to reveal Counselor Deanna Troi. Nick stood.

The Counselor smiled warmly at him. “Mr. Knight. May I come in?”

“Why?” Nick asked, keeping his tone of voice cool.

“I wanted to apologize for making you uncomfortable in Ten Forward.” Nick silently studied her for a minute, then said,

“Apology accepted.” He felt torn between a desire to keep her at a distance and a desire to have her come closer. He didn’t invite her in, hoping she would leave. Instead she just stood there expectantly.

After an awkward silence during which Nick debated with himself about how to discourage her and coming up with nothing, he heard himself say, “Please, come in.” But an alarm went off in his head.

Deanna Troi stepped into the room and the door swooshed shut behind her. Nick turned away from her, definitely sure that he had made a wrong decision. But perhaps a few minutes

of polite conversation with her would suffice and then she would leave him alone. He took his glass and walked over to the replicator. He ordered a glass of wine and said, “Would you like something?”

“Whatever you’re having is fine.”

Nick ordered a second wine from the replicator and turned. Deanna Troi’s face was slightly flushed and she looked a bit uncomfortable. He handed her her drink and said, “Please, sit down.” Deanna sat on the gray modular couch and he took a seat in the matching chair next to it.

Deanna Troi took a sip of her drink and said, “I know it may seem like I’m repeating myself, but I really am sorry if I disturbed you. When you’re ship’s counselor, it becomes natural to want to offer comfort and understanding.”

Comfort and understanding. It had been a long time since Nick had sought those things from anyone. “I accepted your apology already. Don’t be concerned about it any longer.”

Deanna smiled gratefully at him, a very warm smile that tugged at Nick’s heart. She settled back on the couch. “So what will you be doing now that the dig on Mabara has been cancelled?”

“Well, of course there will be another official investigation into Dr. Howard’s murder to go through on Starbase 112. After that, I’ll probably hook up with another dig someplace else.”

“Are you affiliated with any professional institutions?”

“No. I represent private interests.” ‘Very private ones,’ he thought. ‘My own.’

/Were there many items of value and significance on Mabara?”

“Some, yes.” The most important of which was destroyed.

“I know Worf is of the opinion that the site was robbed. Despite Dr. Howard’s strange physical condition.”

“Yes, I heard,” Nick said carefully. Another ruse of LaCroix to throw the dogs off the scent, no doubt. Despite his continued efforts to screw up or take over Nick’s life, LaCroix didn’t want Nick imprisoned or killed. He just wanted to keep Nick a vampire.

“I can’t understand how people can prefer money over the distribution of knowledge.”

Nick smiled slightly. “Neither can I,” he said, in perfect agreement with her.

Deanna took another sip of her wine. “I assume you helped to catalogue some of the missing items.”

“Yes.”

“Would the missing items bring much money on the black market?”

Nick shifted uncomfortably in his seat. “I don’t know what the items would bring on the black market, but they were rare and one of a kind items so I assume they would be valuable to someone.”

“Was Dr. Howard trustworthy, do you think?”

Nick was getting more uncomfortable. He studied his glass, avoiding her gaze. “If you’re asking if I think he would have stolen items from the dig, I don’t think so. But then, I didn’t know him that well.”

“Do you have any opinions about who might have killed him?”

Nick drank the rest of his drink and walked to the

replicator for another. His mind focused on LaCroix, but he tried to push the thought away and remain calm. “No, I don’t,” he lied. He turned to see Deanna Troi’s dark eyes on him.

“It was a horrible way to die,” she said. “The murderer should be punished, don’t you think?”

Nick’s mind flashed to the cavern again. He lunged for LaCroix, only to have LaCroix strike him soundly in the stomach. When he came to some minutes later, LaCroix had gone, as had the fragments of the amulet. And Dr. Howard’s eyes stared accusingly at him.

His hand tightened around the stem of his glass. “Yes,” he said.

“Then why don’t you tell Worf what you know?”

Nick blinked. “What I know?” he asked.

“I am an empath, Mr. Knight. I can perceive that you have lied to me and that you are keeping something pertinent to the murder investigation to yourself.”

Nick walked over to the window and looked out. “There’s nothing I can say that would have any value in solving Dr. Howard’s murder.” Even after everything, a part of him still wanted to protect LaCroix. ‘Why?’ he wondered. ‘Because we’re both vampires?’

Deanna Troi set down her wine glass and approached him. “Well, Mr. Knight, I find that statement rather odd when you just had a strong feeling of hate when I mentioned the murderer should be punished.”

“No one should die like that—not even Dr. Howard.” He looked at Deanna Troi. But his thoughts were of LaCroix. Dr. Howard was only the latest in a long list of murders that he

had to avenge someday.

The Counselor was frowning at him again, so Nick tried to calm himself and concentrate on stilling her budding suspicions. “Have you spoken to anyone about these feelings of yours?”

“Only Worf. Well, that’s not quite true. I felt him out for information on whether he thought you could be involved with the murder of Dr. Howard.”

Nick looked out the window again. “And what did he tell you?”

“That you have an ironclad alibi for the time of his death.”

“I didn’t kill Dr. Howard.”

“I know,” she said. Nick looked at her. “I can sense that you’re speaking the truth about that, at least.”

Nicholas Knight’s gaze was intense. For a moment Deanna felt a sensation of great loneliness and sadness as his sea blue eyes stared into hers. Then he looked back out the window again, putting up a wall around his feelings.

Deanna studied his profile. She wished she had met this man under different circumstances for he was very attractive. His face had a youthful innocence to it, but he also had an air of age.

And what she had just felt from him made her want to hold and comfort him. She blinked back some tears and put some distance between them again. She sat back down on the couch and took a drink of her wine.

When she looked at him again, his eyes were on her. They seemed almost to glow and she watched them in fascination. He approached her and sat down next to her on

the couch. “Please, Counselor, don’t voice your suspicions of what I might know. Dr. Howard’s death will be avenged one day.” Deanna felt the sincerity behind the last remark. And, as for the other, well, whatever the reasons for his silence, Deanna had the impression that they were good ones that he was a good man.

She licked her lips and said, “I’ll keep your counsel, Mr. Knight.”

He smiled and took her hand. “Thank you.” Deanna felt a tingle pass between them. Mr. Knight’s expression became serious and he leaned closer. His lips pressed hers gently.

For a moment Deanna felt an intense desire for her from him, a passion that leaped outward like a caged beast. Then he abruptly released her and stood up, turning away. “You’d better go,” he said and she could feel him putting up a wall again, shutting off something in himself that seemed somehow dangerous.

Deanna shuddered and, without another word, left the room.

Two days later, the Enterprise reached Starbase 112. Nick carried his luggage to the transporter room. He was going to be glad to leave this ship. Now all he had to do was get through Starbase 112’s inquiry into Dr. Howard’s death. At least the mild hypnosis he had used on Deanna Troi had apparently kept her from voicing her “insights” to Lt. Worf and the ship’s Captain Picard.

When Nick entered the transporter room, he was somewhat surprised to find the counselor there. He smiled uneasily at her. She was such an attractive woman. He wished

But her attractiveness was too much of a lure for the beast. He had already once wanted to give her the kiss of death.

The ship's counselor studied him for a moment. "I wanted to wish you luck with your next—dig," she said.

"Thank you," Nick said. "Goodbye, Counselor."

There was a pause before she said, "Goodbye, Mr. Knight."

Nick stepped onto the transporter pad with his luggage. He kept his eyes on Deanna Troi as he dematerialized, the transporter effect making it seem like she disappeared in a sparkle of stars. Maybe one day, some day, when he was free of his curse, he'd be able to find someone like her with which to share his life.

Maybe it was a vain hope ... cold comfort.

"Promise me one thing? Whatever happens, you won't ever stop trying to become human."

Notes

bleak 荒凉的

dark complexioned 脸色阴沉的

dour 不爱讲话的

imposing 令人难忘的

baritone 男中音

Lt. 陆军少尉

gossip 闲话

rife 普遍的

alibi 不在场的证明

artifact 史前古器物

- amulet 护身符
synthetic 人造的
evacuated 撤出
Earl 伯爵
replicator 复制机
interrogation 审问
ransacked 洗劫
apprised 告知
brunette 浅黑肤色的
fogeys 赶不上时代的人
logs 记录
testimony 证据
chronometer 精密的时钟
swooshed 嗖的一声
suffice 满足
affiliated 附属的
ruse 诡计
accusingly 责难地
stem 眼镜架
perceive 察觉
avenge 报仇
dematerialized 消失

多伦多的凉夜

A LIKEU COOL NIGHT IN TORONTOU OR SOMETHING

By Darrel Et MurphyU Jr.



这篇故事像一部动画片，离奇的事情也都变得入情入理。读完以后，闭上眼睛，还可以再演一遍。

HN HEN HEE - THIS IS GONNA BE COOL

David Van Driesen wiped the dirt on his hands on his tie dye peace sign tee shirt and finished cleaning them with a handy wipe, before settling in front of a roaring fire in the woods outside Toronto. Soft night breezes wafted through his shoulder length hair, and as far as he was concerned, all was right with the world.

“Hen hen hee.” “Huh huh huh huhuhuhuh.” “Pass the T. P.” “No way, dillweed, get your own.” “Oh, yeah. Umm ... ”

Van Driesen shook his head as he prepared three hot dogs for roasting in the fire. He'd hoped this field trip to the Great North woods would inspire in the boys an appreciation of the wonders of Nature. But all they seemed to spend all their time

doing was looking for ways to destroy it all.

Beavis and Butthead emerged from the woods, trailing toilet paper behind them. Butthead was wearing his usual /AC“DC” tee shirt, and “Metallica” was emblazoned on the shirt Beavis wore.

“Is everything back there okay, boys?”

Butthead grunted. “Huh huh. Back there.”

Beavis chortled. “Uh, yeah. We’re regular.”

The skin on Van Driesen’s forehead wrinkled. “Did you take care of your wastes properly? Hygiene is important, you know. Especially here in the wilds.”

“Don’t worry,” Butthead said. “We wiped.”

“Hmm,” Van Driesen hummed noncommittally, handing each of the boys a stick with a hot dog on the end. He turned back to the fire, holding his own above the flames.

Butthead turned to Beavis, extending his stick. “Hey, Beavis, pull my weiner.”

Beavis’ mouth turned down severely. “No way, buttmunch.” He slid around to the other side of the fire. “Sicko son of a bitch.”

“Now, Butthead, behave yourself. Let’s finish our hot dogs, then I’ll treat you to a song I made up just last week.” Van Driesen tossed the last bite of his hot dog in his mouth and reached behind the log he’d laid down as a seat for his guitar.

Butthead quivered, his face puckered in revulsion. “Uh, is this gonna suck?”

It did, as far as Beavis and Butthead were concerned. David Van Driesen was a child of Woodstock - it showed in his taste in music. From his mouth poured forth the quintessential sixties’ folk songt Van Driesen strummed the final chord with

regret, having enjoyed the performance thoroughly. He stared at Beavis and Butthead in turn, noting their shocked, frozen expressions, and shrugged.

“How about a little dessert, boys?”

“Um, desert?” Visions of sand dunes swam in the air.

“No. dessert, Butthead. You know, something sweet that usually ends your meals?”

Beavis grinned. “Uh, I usually eat the sweet stuff first.”

Van Driesen set a bowl of berries in front of Beavis and Butthead. “These are wild berries. I picked them myself this afternoon.”

Beavis picked one up, sniffing it. His expression was of dubious disbelief.

“Think of it as Nature’s candy, Beavis.”

“Ohhhh.” Beavis popped the berry in his mouth. He chewed on it experimentally for a few seconds, grunting intermittently. Suddenly, his eyes grew wide. He reached into the bowl, taking another berry. Then another. And another.

“Uh, Beavis, not so fast,” Van Driesen advised.

Beavis ignored him, and started grabbing the berries by the handful, spilling them down his throat in rapid succession. He quickly escalated to grabbing the bowl itself, tipping it back and swallowing the berries that poured freely from it. Berry juice dribbled from his mouth, and he began quivering uncontrollably. His head began to shake until his features were a blur.

Butthead began snickering. “You did it now, dumbass.”

Van Driesen decided Butthead didn’t really mean to insult him, and tried to reach for Beavis. Beavis slapped away Van Driesen’s offered hand, and pulled his shirt over his head.

“I AM CORNHOLIOg I NEED T. P. FOR MY BUNGHOLE!” He took off for the tree line. Van Driesen took off after him, calling for him to stop and muttering “Ohmigod” over and over again.

Butthead stared at the retreating pair. “Huh huhuhuh huh huhuh. That was cool.”

Moonlight caressed the land, creating frightening silhouettes in the curves of Lucien LaCroix’s face as he lifted it from the ravaged throat of a once beautiful woman. His face seemed carved from marble, both because of its hardened look and its paleness. His eyes gleamed, not from the moon, but from an eerie inner light. His blood-drenched mouth formed a perverse grin, his tongue flicking over massive canines. He was much more than the myth of Dracula, for he was real.

He ran a finger over a trace of blood that had escaped his mouth and sucked it from his finger, shivering in the ecstasy. He was thrilled by the hunt, a pleasure he rarely enjoyed in this accursedly modern world.

A boy came crashing through the thick brush, chattering and waving his arms before him. Ulike a drummer who has lost his sticks. “I AM THE ALMIGHTY BUNGHOLEg BUNGHOLIO!”

LaCroix felt his hair stand on end. The boy’s very voice set his whole body on edge. “What?!” He hissed in contemptuous fury.

/I AM THE GREAT CORNHOLIOg I NEED T. P. FOR MY BUNGHOLEg YOU WILL GIVE ME T. P. - NOW!!! ARE YOU THREATENING ME?!”

LaCroix was taken aback by this creature’s adacity. /What if I am?” He glared at the pathetic creature. Ua scrawny

wisp of a boy, his pompadour styled blond hair mashed down by the neckline of his tee shirt that had been raised above his head. This self styled 'Cornholio' held his arms above his head, but not as a sign of surrender. LaCroix felt eerily as though he stood before a powerful, malevolent force incarnate.

Cornholio cackled evilly U gibbering in a faintly south of the border accent. "Prepare to die! You shall drown in your own blood! The streets will flow with the blood of the non-believers!" he proclaimed. "The Mother of all wars has begun!" He kicked LaCroix's shin.

LaCroix drew himself to his full, imposing height, snarling and displaying his fangs. It was only then that Cornholio began to dimly realize he was up against something more than your average buttmunch.

"So it's war, then? A pitifully short war, I imagine." LaCroix reached for Cornholio.

Cornholio raised his arms above his head, screaming. "Aughhhh!"

"Butthead?"

Butthead was busy with a burning branch, chasing small animals. He swung the blazing club, knocking a squirrel from a tree limb. The creature rose on its rear legs, waving its forelegs, almost a parody of an angry man raising his fists at grave injustice. "Uh huhu huh huh huhuhuhuh ..."

"Butthead, we need to find Beavis. He may Oh my God!" Van Driesen grabbed a blanket and started beating at the mini conflagration Butthead had started. Butthead stood at the edge of the campsite, having dropped the crude torch carelessly as he watched Van Driesen's heroic efforts to save Canada's forests.

“Huh huhuh huh huh … uh, hey Beavis. Uh, Beavis? Oh, yeah. Huh huh huh.”

/Butthead**g** I need water!” Van Driesen screamed.

/So! Uh huh huh.”

Van Driesen said, “Hurry Butthead**g** I need water to wet down these blankets!”

“Um, no you don’t. Like, Beavis wets his blanket without water.” Butthead swirled a pot of herbal tea that Van Driesen had brewed in the fire. He poured half of it into the fire, creating a pungent cloud of steam. “I guess this will work, if you can’t uh, huh huh, huhuh … ”

Van Driesen poured the tea over a pair of blankets out of desperation. “Butthead**U**take this blanket over there and use it to smother the flames**g** Hurry!”

Butthead slapped the wet blanket against a burning bush a couple of times. “This sucks.” He dropped the blanket - and his shorts

Hiss**g**

Van Driesen had managed to put out his flames, and turned to catch Butthead peeing on the bush. “Very, uh, creative thinking, Butthead.” He grimaced as the stench of boiled urine struck his nostrils. At least the fires were out.

“Huh huh huh huhhuhuhuh, that was cool. I put the fire out with my hose. Huh huhuh huh … ” He pulled his shorts back up, to Van Driesen’s relief.

“Come on, Butthead. Beavis took off in that direction.”

Butthead paused his laughter momentarily. “Uh, okay.”

/Aughhhh!”

LaCroix had curled up protectively in a ball. “Stop that**g** • haven’t even touched you!”

“ YOU CANNOT TOUCH THE ALMIGHTY BUNGHOLE! MY WRATH SHALL FALL ON YOU AND ALL YOUR CHILDRENg AUGHHHHH!”

LaCroix sprung at Cornholio, grabbing his arms and pinning him to the ground. An explosion of high pitched, rapidly fired epithets assaulted his ears, causing him, one of the mightiest creatures on earthUto cringe. “Stop screamingg You little cretin … ” He raised his head as the dim cries of others pierced the din.

Gritting his teeth in frustration, LaCroix grabbed his adversary’s head, taking on abuse as arms and legs pummeled his body. “You will forget what you have seen here. You never saw me … ”

Cornholio rammed his knee into LaCroix’s crotch. The vampire shed a lone blood tear, and continued to try his attempt to hypnotize Cornholio, in a high pitched voice. “ … tonight. Remember … nothing. ”

“Um, what?”

“Remember nothing. ”

“Um, what? Hen hn hee. ” Cornholio frowned. “Where’s the T. P. gone? I must have T. P. for my bunghole!”

“Forget about the T. P. , you idiot!”

/No wayg There is no future without T. **Rg** My people have but one bunghole. Give me T. P. , or dieeeee!”

“You will sleep now. When you wake up … there will be a mountain of T. P. for you, and you will remember nothing. ”

“Um, okay. ” Suddenly, Cornholio became very limp. The trees rustled as others drew near. LaCroix turned his eyes to the safety of the sky, and launched himself into the wind.

“Beavis!” Van Driesen and Butthead burst through the

dense foliage. Van Driesen lifted the sleeping boy's head, but could not wake him.

“Whoa!” Butthead shouted from a few yards away. “It’s like Ua dead chick!”

Van Driesen settled Beavis “Cornholio down to the earth U and checked the body. “Oh my Godg Let’s get Beavis out of here, Butthead. As soon as we get back in town, I’ll call the police. Butthead, what are you doing to that woman? Butthead Ustop thatg BUTTHEAD!”

HN HEN HEE - THIS IS GONNA BE COOL

Nicholas Knight - vampire homicide cop - nearly leaped out of his chair as a large brown paper bag landed on the stack of papers he’d been wading through. His eyes shifted in his otherwise motionless face to meet those of his partner, the irrepressible Donald Schanke, who was grinning like a baboon at the moment.

/Check it out Upartnerg Primo, A-1 superpdelicious jelly doughnutsg Get ’em while they’re hot!”

Nick lifted the bag carefully with two fingers, like a piece of pungent refuse. “No thanks, Schank. Maybe later.”

“Knight, Schanke.” Nick looked up at Captain Cohen, the Japanese-Canadian who ran the 96th precinct - and she never let anyone forget it. “I’m still waiting for the Wilkins’ report.”

“Right, Captain,” Schanke acknowledged. “We’re working on it right now.”

“Uh huh,” she said, her eyelids drooped as a sign of her disbelieft She eyeballed the paper bag. “What’s in the bag?”

“Jelly doughnuts.”

“Yeah? Are they fat-free?”

Schanke stammered. “Uh, well ...”

Cohen smiled thinly and took one from the bag. “That’s okay.” The smile faded. “I have an American teacher and two of his students in the interrogation room. They said they found a body in the woods. Parker and Case are checking the area out. I want you two to talk to the witnesses.”

Nick spoke for himself and Schanke. “We’ll get right on it.”

“Good. And Nick, the boys seem to be quite upset from the incident. They’re acting a bit, uh, strange.”

“That’s all right with my man here, Captain,” Schanke interjected. “‘Strange’ is S. O. P. for Nick.”

Nick managed to convey a sarcastic thanks with just a look.

The teacher looked up with relief as Nick and Schanke stepped into the interrogation room. Two boys were busying themselves with pencils kept for note taking, playing mock sword fighting.

“Uhem,” Schanke said. The boys lowered their “swords,” and grunted laughter spewed from their throats.

“I’m Detective Don Schanke. This is my partner, Detective Nick Knight.”

“Huh huhuh. He’s scanky,” the brown haired boy said.

His blond-haired friend grinned. “Hen heh hen. Yeah. And he hangs out with Nick at Nite.”

The teacher rose and extended his hand. “I’m David Van Driesen, and these are my students.” He introduced Beavis and Butthead.

“Uh, so you dudes are, uh, cops, or something?” Butthead asked.

“Yeah,” Beavis added. “’Bad boys, bad boys, whatcha gonna do, whatcha gonna do when they come for you? ’”

“Huh huh huhuhuh. I saw that last week. ’COPS’ kicks ass.”

Van Driesen blushed slightly. “You’ll have to excuse the boys, officers. Beavis and Butthead have special problems.”

“Yeah, they’re ’special’, all right” Schanke mumbled to Nick. “So, what can you tell us about the body?”

“Well,” Van Driesen shrugged. “Beavis actually found the body.”

Nick turned to Beavis. “What do you remember, Beavis?”

“Um, nothing.” Beavis eyes became somewhat glazy. “I remember nothing.”

“Great,” Schanke snorted.

Nick was suspicious. “Why don’t you see if Butthead and Mr. Van Driesen would like something to drink, Schanke?”

Beavis and Butthead began laughing again. “Uh, maybe it would be a good idea to call me Don, Nick.”

Nick waited until Schanke had left with the teacher and his student. He turned back to Beavis, who occupied himself by picking his nose. He took a deep breath, and locked eyes with the troubled youth.

“Tell me what you remember,” he said, his voice echoing in the air between them.

“Um, nothing.”

/You were with your teacher and your friend in the woods tonight?”

Beavis snickered weakly. “Wood … hen heheh hen. Uh, I remember nothing.”

“Did someone tell you to say that?”

“Um … ”

“Who told you to remember nothing?”

“Uh, a buttmunch. Hen hen hee-he-he had like, big teethU 'Uh the better to eat you with dearieg ' And he promised me T. P.” Beavis frowned. “But like, I don't remember any T. P. I remember nothing.”

“What did the, uh, buttmunch with big teeth look like?”

“He had short hair, like Henry Rollins, but his was white. But he looked pissed off, just like Henry Rollins. And, uh, he like, had glowing red eyes. And he promised me T. P. and uh, that's about it.”

Nick leaned back and sighed. “LaCroix.”

LaCroix was sitting at the bar of the Raven, enjoying a champagne glass of “the house special,” a delicacy found in no other club in Toronto. He smacked his lips in appreciation and sat the glass before his daughter-in-blood, Janette, a stunningly beautiful brunette he'd “brought across” in the tenth century. She refilled his glass with fresh blood.

“A good vintage, my dear.”

Nick slid onto the stool next to him. “LaCroix. We need to talk.”

“I always have time for you, my dear boy. Shall I get you something to drink?”

Nick noticed Janette's amused look. “No. You've been hunting.” It was as much an accusation as a statement.

“What can I say, Nicholas. I've been a bad boy.”

Beavis' rambling of the 'COPS' theme echoing unbidden

in Nick's mind. He shook his head. "It's not like you to leave evidence behind."

"Ah, the girl in the woods. I must assume YOU unearthed the boy's hidden memories?"

"Enough to identify you. So, it seems you, LaCroix, are the one to endanger our kind this time."

"Hardly. I returned to the scene, of the 'crime' ... " he smirked, " ... and removed the body for disposal. I trust you can take care of the necessary paperwork to make this 'disappear.'"

"What choice do I have?"

"None," LaCroix replied. "As usual, you have NO choice. Pity you won't accept that where your quest for humanity is concerned."

Outside, Beavis and Butthead were walking the streets of Toronto. "Hey Butthead, do you think they have nachos in Canada?"

"Uh, no. Canada sucks."

/YeahU hen hen hen heet UhU but Canada does have 'nad' in the middle of it's name."

Butthead considered this. "And it begins with Man."

"Yeah," Beavis agreed. "I could use the can right now. Using the can always gives me that SPECIAL feeling."

"You mean like the time you lit a fart and set your butt on fire? That was cool."

/No it wasn'tt That suckedg I ... " Beavis paused as a woman sauntered by, clad in strategically placed scanty leather. The boys stood agape, their eyes grown to the size of saucers.

/Huh huhuhuhu huhuhU uhU come to Butthead." They

began to follow her into the Raven.

They stood at the entrance, entranced by the volume of semi-naked, dancing women. “Beavis,” Butthead announced in a hushed voice, “we are in Heaven.”

LaCroix, glancing about, caught sight of Beavis. “What? Nicholas, YOU didn’t bring THAT in here, did you?”

Nick slipped through the crowd, grabbing Beavis and Butthead by the arm. “Where is your teacher, Mr. Van Driesen?”

“I don’t know,” Beavis said. “I know nothing.” He stared at LaCroix. “Um … I remember, uh … ”

LaCroix rose from the stool. “What?” he demanded.

“Uh, nothing. Buttmunch. Henheheh.”

Butthead looked with obvious lust at Janette. “Huh huh. Hey, baby.”

Janette glared at both boys, gold tinting her eyes. Nick shook his head. “Janette, may I use your phone?”

Beavis and Butthead slid into the vacuum left behind by Nick’s hasty exit. Butthead lifted his hand and placed it on the one Janette had on the bar. “Wanna do it? Uh huhuhuhuh.”

Janette looked at LaCroix, who shrugged. She formed an exaggerated grin, flashing perfectly straight teeth. “Why don’t you two come in the back room?”

Beavis and Butthead froze, their eyes bulging. Janette led them to a door to the back, when Nick reappeared at the bar. He moved in front of them, perhaps faster than any mortal should have, but he was more than a bit concerned about Janette’s intentions.

“Your teacher will be here soon, boys. I want you to leave.”

“Uh, no,” Butthead said defiantly.

Janette leaned against Nick, whispering in his ear. “Let me kill them, Nick.”

She blinked sadly at his disapproving stare. “At least let me mangle them. One. I’ll let you choose. I’m easy.”

Butthead chortled. “She wants it.”

Nick looked about in desperation. “Come with me, Beavis and Butthead. He looked back at Janette and LaCroix. “I’ll get rid of them.”

“Ah, Nicholah, but permanently?” Janette asked. Her expression became a pout. “Sometimes your concern for these mortals is sickening.”

Nick led the boys out the door. Butthead leaned forward to talk to Beavis. “She was going to do it with us.”

“Yeah. This sucks.” They brooded in silence until Van Driesen arrived at the club.

“I honestly don’t know how they got out of the hotel,” the teacher apologized.

“I suggest you take them back home.” Nick released the boys to their mentor.

“But the dead woman … ”

Nick stared into Van Driesen’s eyes. “It’s taken care of. You have no reason to stay in Canada. Go home … and take these two with you.”

Van Driesen stood mute for a second. “Okay, detective. It’s been nice knowing you.” He considered Nick as he retreated back into the club. “He looks very familiar. Woodstock! NoUhe’s much too young … ”

MODELS ...

THEY'RE NOT EVEN HUMAN. THEY'RE
CARTOONS.

SOME OF THE THINGS THEY DO CAN GET
YOU

HURT, EXPELLED, ARRESTED - POSSIBLY
DEPORTED.

TO PUT IT ANOTHER WAY ...

... DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME.

HUHUHUHUHU THAT WAS COOL

Notes

tee shirt T 恤衫

Hygiene 卫生

noncommittally 含糊地

Sicko 疯的

puckered 皱纹

quintessential 精萃的

strummed 胡乱弹奏

dunes 沙丘

sniffing 嗅

dubious 可疑的

intermittently 间歇地

dribbled 滴下

snickering 窃笑

BUNGHOLE 桶孔

silhouettes 影子; 轮廓

ravaged 有创伤的

- eerie 怪诞的
blood-drenched 血淋淋的
perverse 反常的
ecstasy 心醉神迷
accursedly 可憎的
contemptuous 瞧不起人的
scrawny 骨瘦如柴的
pompadour 往后梳的发型
malevolent 坏心肠的
incarnate 化身
shin 胫骨
conflagration 大火
swirled 大口喝
herbal 草药的
brewed 酿造
pungent 有刺激气味的
hose 紧身裤
momentarily 立刻
cringe 抖缩
cretin 白痴
Gritting 摩擦作声
pummeled 用拳头连续揍
rammed 撞击
crotch 裆部
Whoa 惊叹声
wading 揉成圆团
irrepressible 管不住的
baboon 狒狒
jelly 果冻
doughnuts 油炸圈饼

precinct 选区

sarcastic 讽刺的

glazy 失神的

snorted 哼着鼻子说

smacked 咂嘴

vintage 陈年好酒

nachos 三角形的玉米面烤饼，涂有辣椒粉，胡椒粉，干酪和其他调味品

fart 放屁

butt 屁股

agape 目瞪口呆地

lust 动淫念

Wannab want to

defiantly 大胆反抗地

pout 生气

mentor 良师益友

mute 无声的

merits 优点

祝你平安

Fare Thee Well

By Tammy Morrison

一段歌声，一波三折，一咏三叹，你唱我和，令故事里外的人都怦然心动。为了感受这段温情，我把这篇故事又细细地读了一遍。

Natalie had survived. LaCroix had flown her to the hospital after he'd seen Nick's clear tears and she'd been transfused with 10 enough blood to bring her back to him. When Natalie got out of the hospital, LaCroix had told them to leave quickly before he changed his mind. They'd run. For a while they just travelled Canada, wandering. A coroner, an ex-vampire and a cat in a caddie. Sounded like the beginning of a bad joke. Then one morning Natalie had ran to the bathroom of their hotel room. Nick had followed, very concerned, he found Natalie hunched over 'the porcelaine god' wretching. When she looked up at Nick she had a glorious smile on her face. "Time to settle, Nick", she announced, "I'm pregnant."

They'd discussed it a good long while, but Natalie wouldn't allow Nick to go back to police work Utoo dangeroust

She knew he wasn't used to being a mortal again and would take to many risks. She intended this baby to grow up with a father. When it was all settled out, it was decided that Nick would become a teacher. Aristotle had told Nick he'd arrange for one last 'life' change, and that Natalie would set up a small private practice after the baby was born. They'd decided they liked Eastern Canada better than Western Canada but Natalie wanted to live by the ocean, so they ended up in Black Harbour, Nova Scotia.

Tasha came back to school after summer holidays, wondering who her new social studies teacher and home room would be. The previous teacher had resigned as he'd agreed with her mother, Katherine, this year and so the school board had hired someone new. She heard he'd come from Toronto and used to be a cop. To Tasha, on those recommendations, he sounded like someone who should be teaching in her old school in LA. Gabbing with Michael as she entered her home room, she didn't notice the teacher scribbling on the black board. "Hi, I'm Mr. Knight. You're new home room, and you're?" A startlingly familiar voice asked pleasantly.

She turned around and nearly dropped her books, even Micheal was gaping. "DAD?" She asked loudly, staring.

He smiled broadly, "So that's why I've been getting the odd stares since I got here. Fraid you've got the wrong guy, I'm Nick. Nick Knight. Just moved here with my wife, Natalie." Even the amused twinkle in his eye was the same, just he dressed better and had a nicer haircut.

"My dad's name is Nick. Nick Haskell. This is just too creepy." Tasha sat down in a desk still stunned. Michael voiced a muted good bye.

“So your dad’s pretty good looking, huh?” Mr. Knight asked jokingly.

“I never thought so”, Tasha responded.

‘Ouch, that was a broadside’, Nick thought and he spoke again, “So you’re dad’s Nick Haskell and you’re … ”

“Tasha. Tasha Haskell”, she responded, other students were walking in and whispering.

Mr. Knight smiled again and shook his head, “Short for Natasha?” Tasha nodded, “You’re going to have to meet my wife.” Then Knight looked at his filling classroom and spoke up, “Okay, class, as I was telling Tasha here. I’m you’re new home room, Mr. Nick Knight, and I will be teaching social studies and music. And before you ask, NO I am not related to Tasha’s dad, Nick Haskell.

He started right into class with such enthusiasm that he drug every student in the room along for the ride.

After school Tasha stopped by homeroom to see Mr. Knight. “Hi Tasha”, Knight looked at her as he spoke, “What can I do for you?”

“I was wondering if you would be coaching soccer too this year?” She asked hesitantly.

“Soccer, huh? I’m not really familiar with the game. I take it that was something, the fellow who had the position before me did. Sorry that I can’t help.” Nick looked genuinely disappointed.

“That’s okay”, Tasha stood just staring at Knight.

“Well, I have to get home and help Natalie unpack. Our furniture and stuff from Toronto was supposed to have arrived today. She’ll do to much otherwise.” Nick closed his briefcase and stood up from his deskUthen spoke again conspiratoriallyU

“She’s pregnant with our first.”

“Maybe I can stop by and help”, Tasha offered.

“Sure”, Nick smiled broadly, “And when we’re away from school call me Nick okay. I hate the sound of Mr. Knight.” They walked from the classroom together and exited the school. Nick hopped into a classic cadillac convertible parked in the lot, waved at her and pulled out turning down the same road as she and ’Nonda walked to get home.

She stood still stunned by Nick and then took off at a run to pick ’Nonda up.

“I don’t believe you”, Anonda harumphed at Tasha, just within Katherine’s earshot.

“About what?” Katherine asked. She missed Nick so badly that she’d buried herself in housework, the new restaurant, the boat yard, whatever to keep he mind off of him and their troubles.

“Her new teacher”, Anonda blurted out, “She says he looks just like daddy.”

“He does, he could be dad’s twin!” Tasha stated as she walked to the fridge and got a glass of milk. “He just moved here with his wife, Natalie. I found out they bought the old MacNeill place up the road from us.”

“They must have money to afford that place”, Katherine commented, “It’s like a mansion practically, an old victorian house. We all used to avoid it as kids because of old Mr. MacNeill. They must have been the ones who payed to have it all fixed up over the summer.”

“Yeah, well I promised I’d go and help them unpack”, Tasha commented, “He’s really nice and they’re expecting their first baby. So he’s afraid she’ll do to much otherwise.

Will it be a problem mom?”

“I don’t see why it should”, Katherine commented, “You can go after supper and be sure to be back before ten, okay?”

“Thanks”, Tasha kissed her mom’s cheek and ran upstairs to get changed.

“I still don’t think he can look that much like daddy”, Anonda grumped.

“I don’t either, but let’s humour Tasha, okay?” Katherine smiled at her youngest and went back to work on supper.

Tasha walked up the drive of the old MacNeill place and was surprised to see a little white sedan parked out front but no cadillac. She walked up to the door and knocked, and a pretty young woman, short with long auburn hair and sparkling blue eyes answered.

“Hi, I’m Tasha”, Tasha spoke up, “I promised Mr. Knight, I mean Nick I’d come and help unpack.”

“Hi Tasha”, the ladie said as she swung open the screen door, “I’m Natalie, Nick’s wife. He mentioned you might come by.” Tasha looked around expectantly and was greeted by an overenthusiastic grey and white cat who bashed her legs with his body and purred loudly. Tasha bent down and picked him up.

“Oh Sidney, you big old mush ball”, Natalie smiled and petted the cat’s head, “Don’t let him bully you into petting him, he’s a old dear but a terrible flirt. Come on in and sit down, would you like a coke?”

“Sure”, Tasha followed Natalie into the kitchen where a round, antique dining table and chairs sat covered in boxes and bags and sat down. Putting the cat down in the process The

cat walked over and began to munch contentedly out of food bowls. Natalie opened the fridge, one of the state of the art jobs that Tasha hadn't seen since Hollywood and pulled out two cans of coke.

“I like to drink mine from the can”, Natalie handed Tasha one, “Would you like a glass though?”

“Nah, this is fine”, Tasha looked around, “You guys have some great stuff.”

“Wait til you see Nick's big screen TV and stereo set up..” Natalie smiled, “He's out picking up his DTS system.” “Wow”, Tasha's eyes gleamed, “Can I come over and watch MTV sometime?”

“Well I prefer MuchMusic, but sure I don't see why not”, Natalie shrugged and chugged her pop.

“If you don't mind me asking, how far along are you?” Tasha looked at Natalie's slightly bulging tummy.

“Only three months. It's either one huge baby or twins ... or I'm just eating too much.” Natalie smiled, “Tit for tat though.. Is Tasha short for Natasha?”

“Yeah, I guess..” Tasha answered reluctantly and Natalie started to laugh, “Why?”

“Oh, because I always used to get called Tasha or Natasha by my grandmonther. Natasha was her name and I was named for her, but my parents anglicized it. She refused to stop calling me that though. At least it's really your name.” Natalie smiled, “Well shall we get to work?”

“Sure thing”, Tasha jumped up as Natalie eased herself out of her chair, “where first?”

“Living room, I think. That way Nick can just set up the DTS when he gets back”, Natalie smiled and led the way into

the living room.

Tasha had been spending every moment of spare time with Nick and Natalie helping them unpack. Nick was a lot like her dad, but happier. Natalie had laughed when she said that and had commented that she wouldn't have said that if she knew him when they lived in Toronto. "So where is your dad, Tasha", Natalie finally asked.

Tasha stood silent for a while and then said, "Mom and him are having problems. He's gone back to LA."

"Oh", Natalie answered rather lamely. She had guessed that that might be the case but hadn't wanted to bring it up till now.

"I miss him real bad", Tasha said the emotion coming through in her voice. Natalie came over and wrapped her arms around the teens body. Tasha sobbed into Nat's shoulder. "Why?"

"I don't know Tasha", Natalie stroked the girl's hair, "These things just happen sometimes. Look at the brightside though, they may be seperated but at least you still have them both. My parents died when I was young, my grandmother raised my brother and I."

"I guess", Tasha said.

"Sure and who knows what'll happen in the future", Natalie commented, "you may be suprised. Sometimes miracles really do happen." Natalie's face was so hopeful that Tasha started to believe too.

"Thanks Nat", Tasha said.

They continued to dust and set out the small bits of decor left in boxes until they had finally finished unpacking and Nick had promised them a celebratory barbeque this afternoont

“Nick’s a great teacher, but there’s one thing I’m going to miss”, Tasha spoke up conversationally.

“What’s that?” Natalie asked curiously.

“Soccer, we don’t have a coach for soccer anymore ... ” Tasha sighed, resigned to a year with no soccer.

“I may be able to help”, Natalie volunteered.

“YOU”, Tasha looked at Natalie suspiciously.

“As long as I take it easy, this shouldn’t be a problem”, Natalie reassured the girl while patting her belly, “I used to play soccer at my high school and then I was Team Captain at college. ”

“Alright”, Tasha squealed enthusiastically and hugged Natalie.

“What’s that all about?” Nick asked as he walked into the living room.

“Just made Tasha an offer she couldn’t refuse”, Natalie smiled and kissed Nick deeply cutting off any further questions from him.

“Okay, we’ll get back to that later”, Nick smiled bashfully, “I have some bad news. I am a horrible barbequer ... ”

“What have you done NOW Nick?” Natalie stood glaring at her husband.

“I burnt everything”, Nick shrugged, “Good news is, I’m taking all of you out for dinner. We might as well get your sister and mom too, Tasha. ”

Natalie sighed, and pulled Tasha up the stairs behind her, “You can help me pick something out to wear.

“This is going to be weird”, Tasha shook her head as they climbed the stair.

“Nick specializes in weird. One day I was eating a peanut butter and banana sandwich and he wanted to try it.” Tasha looked a little disbelieving that he’d never tried on before but Natalie continued, “Nick’s family stuck very much to normal food. You know meat and potatoes. Anyway I made him one and used up the last of the peanut butter. He loved it so much that he wanted another one, but no peanut butter right? Well he created the banana and raspberry jam sandwich …” Natalie stuck her tongue out and made the ‘gag me’ motion. “Gross”, Tasha’s face scrunched up in disgust, “That’s worse than the stuff ’Nonda likes to eat.”

Natalie smiled and pulled a denim jumpsuit out of her closet. “What do you think?”

“That’s really cute, Natalie”, Tasha nodded, “What I meant was I’m gonna love seeing mom and ’Nonda’s reaction to Nick. They don’t believe anyone who tells them how much he looks like dad.”

“Really”, Natalie laughed, “Well they better get used to him. Nick’s talking about buying one of your family’s lobster yachts. He loves his expensive toys.”

“So, I’ve noticed”, Tasha laughed and plunked on the bed while Natalie got changed and ready in the bathroom.

“Well, I’m ready”, Natalie came out, hair fixed, and make-up done, “You better call your mom and tell her we’re coming.”

“Kay”, Tasha picked up the phone and dialed.

Katherine was relieved. Tasha had called and said that Nick and Natalie Knight were taking them all out to dinner. She was going to insist on meeting them soon anyway, since her daughter was spending most of her free time with them

Even her brother and sister-in-law was telling her how much Nick Knight looked like her Nick. She still didn't want to believe it.

There was a knock at the door and she yelled out, "Coming." She pulled open the door to find Nick standing there. Crying out "Nick", without thinking she threw open the door and wrapped her arms around him, kissing him full on the lips at the same time.

He blushed bright red, and withdrew from her grasp, "Sorry. Wrong guy, Mrs. Haskell. I'm Nick Knight. Tasha's new teacher. Hope you're ready for dinner."

Katherine stood there gaping, this man and her husband could be twins. Tasha had been telling the truth. "If I can get over my embarrassment I will be. Please forgive me."

"No problem", Nick smiled graciously, "Will .. Anonda be joining us tonight?"

"No, she's out with her grandmother", Katherine said as she stepped out and locked up, 'Thank goodness', she thought, 'Anonda would never take the shock.'

"Alright then, let's go", Nick smiled, "I made reservations for us at the Cove."

Dinner had started out a little strained but soon Natalie and Nick's good nature and vibrant personalities won out and put everyone at ease. Katherine offered to throw the young soon-to-be mother a baby shower and Natalie accepted graciously. Dinner had been excellent and they talked about a multitude of subjects, from parenting to Natalie's practice she wanted to start when the baby had been born. As they finished up, Katherine noticed Vicki going into the lounge.

"Mom", Tasha started, "Isn't that Vicki? Maybe you

should go and ... ”

“Just what I was thinking Tasha”, Katherine got up, “Thank you all for dinner. I have to go and make sure a .. 'friend' gets home from the lounge okay. If you could take Tasha home?”

Nick and Natalie looked at each other, “If you could use some help. . ” Nick offered.

“Yeah, mom. I can get home on my own. Nick and Nat are good at this kind of stuff. ” Tasha got up and picked up her jacket. “I'll go get Michael to drive me home. ”

“Alright”, Katherine replied, “but straight home, you hear?”

“Yeah mom”, Tasha split, kissing Natalie and her mother on the cheek.

“So what's the story”, Natalie asked.

“Vicki has 'problems' and sometimes she takes herself off her medicine”, Katherine started out.

“And either way alcohol isn't a good idea”, Natalie nodded, “Is there anyone we should call?”

“Tasha will get him”, Katherine stated matter-of-factly as if not wanting to bring up his name. Natalie backed off sensing a sore spot.

“Okay so we just go in and keep an eye, til the cavalry comes”, Nick gestured to the lounge door. “After you, ladies. ”

They entered the lounge, a band played rollicking country and folk tunes. The woman 'Vicki' mingled and made her way to the front of the stage. The band invited her up and she began to sing. Nick looked at Katherine.

/She wanted to be a singer”, Katherine explained, “And

it's an open stage tonight.”

Nick nodded and watched. Vicki had attracted the attention of someone who looked very familiar to Nick but he couldn't place from where. Nick continued to watch closely as she came down from the stage.

“Maybe we should move closer to the stage”, Natalie suggested. Both Katherine and Nick nodded and they moved up. Many stares followed them but the trio was oblivious, only trying to keep an eye on the woman. She'd been approached by the handsome stranger and he'd bought her a drink, they were now sitting at a table not far from where they were.

One of the waitresses came over. “It's your turn”, she said.

“Our turn?” Nick asked.

“No one sits this close to the stage and doesn't sing.. House rules”, the waitress informed them. Katherine made a sorry I forgot motion and Nick shrugged pulling Natalie behind him.

“Come on”, Nick said, “Might as well not break house rules.” He climbed the stage stairs with Natalie being forced to follow.

“Why the hell not?” Natalie asked exasperated.

“We'll have a better view to keep an eye on her from up here”, Nick whispered into Natalie's ear. She nodded reluctantly. Nick turned to the band, “Silly question, but do you know 'Fare Thee Well Love'?”

The band leader nodded and the music struck up. Nick started after the intro, gazing at Natalie lovingly.

“Fare thee well, love

Fare thee well, love

Far away, you must go.

Take your heart, love

Take your heart, love

Will we never meet again no more?"

Natalie looked deep into Nick's eyes meeting his gaze and started her verse.

"Far across, love

Far across, love.

O'er mountains and country wide

Take my heart, love

Take my heart, love

No one knows the tears I've cried. "

It was obvious to everyone in the bar that this song had special meaning for the two. The emotion that echoed from their voices in the words spoke volumes. It was obvious that the pair had narrowly escaped this fate. Together they sang the chorus.

"So I'll drink today, love,

I'll sing to you, love

in pauper's glory, my time I'll bide

No home or ties, love

A restless rover, if I can't have you by my side. "

Nick took Natalie's hand and bent down onto one knee.

"Oh come back, love

Oh come back, love

The sun and moon

refuse to shine. "

Natalie pulled Nick to his feet and sang to him.

/Since I've gone Ulove

Gone away love

this lonely girl has had no peace of mind.”

Nick pulled Natalie into his arms and they swayed gently to the music while they sang.

“So I’ll drink today, love,
I’ll sing to you, love
in pauper’s glory, my time I’ll bide
No home or ties, love
A restless rover, if I can’t have you
by my side.”

Nick noticed Vicki and the stranger get up and leave together, but he and Natalie couldn’t just leave and not finish the song. Instead Katherine got up and followed them out.

Nick sang the melody and Natalie sang the harmony.

/Fare thee well Ulove I Fare thee well, love)”

/Fare thee well I Fare thee well)”

/Far away Uyou must go I Far away, you must go)”

/Take my heart Ulove I Take my heart)”

/Take my heart Ulove I Take your heart)”

Then they sang together.

“Will we never meet again no more?”

“Will we never meet again no more?”

Just as the song ended the lounge exploded into applause, there were tears in some of the patrons eyes, and Nick remembered where he had seen the stranger before. At the Raven, before Divia … He was one of the young ones that LaCroix housed.

“Damn”, Nick yelled, vaulting from the stage and began to push his way through the crowd, pulling a wooden beer tap from the wall as he went. Natalie cried out after him but was unable to follow due to the crush of bodies.

He had no idea where to look but he checked the alley and then headed down to the docks. He saw them standing beneath, the fellow had already vamped out and Katherine was standing either mesmerized or in horror as the vampire pulled Vicki to him.

Nick charged down the beach forgetting that he was no longer a vampire. The young one sneered and batted Nick aside violently as he reached him. “LaCroix’s little lost son”, he laughed haughtily, “Stupid human now.. Meat for the beast. Don’t worry De Brabant, I’ll get to you next.”

Then suddenly there was a flurry of movement and two familiar figures held the young vampire. “He shall never be meat for the beast.” LaCroix growled.

“Oui”, Janette grinned evilly, “You however ...” And she drug the offender away to be dealt with.

“So Nicholas, still protecting the innocent”, LaCroix strode to Nick. Katherine was still terrified but now just cradled Vicki in her arms. LaCroix glanced at them dismissively following his one-time son’s gaze. “Do not fear Nicholas, they are safe. We will make sure they are -safe- for all involved. You very nearly caused me to have to kill you as a hunter, Nicholas. Do not -ever- do so again. Stay here and I will make sure that the community knows that Black Harbour is off limits to all.”

“Thank you, LaCroix”, Nick said.

“No thank’s are necessary”, LaCroix smiled malevolently, “I am looking forward to seeing my grandchildren and great-grandchildren and so forth grow up.” LaCroix turned away when he heard the young vampire’s

scream of anguish, looking in that direction, then turned back to Nicholas. “Do not think however that my motive is a humanitarian one, Nicholas. You see I have decided to watch your line and when one is born that interests me, I will come to him or her and make the offer. I am certain one of your children will have the sense to take the gift that you rejected.”

Nick gulped, there was nothing he could do. For now he could protect Nat and his children, but later. Time was on LaCroix’s side, the only thing he could do was pray that Natalie’s good sense was an inheritable trait. LaCroix had turned his attention to Katherine and Vicki and was making sure that the events of this evening were suitably clouded. Finally they were done and LaCroix and Janette took off, when Natalie finally found them on the beach.

“What happened?” Natalie asked pointedly. Katherine and Vicki were shaking their heads.

Nick mouthed, ‘I’ll tell you later’ but said, “I found them down here arguing, very nearly had to break up a fist fight. Let’s take them back up there.”

“Yeah, Vicki’s husband is waiting for her”, Natalie informed Nick.

“Good”, Nick said. He didn’t know how to break the news about LaCroix and Janette to Natalie. He’d have to find a way later, but for now Black Harbour was the safest place for them to be. Whatever else, LaCroix would keep his word, here there would be no vampires as long as his ex-master and ‘daughter’ existed.

Finis.

Notes

transfused 输血

hunched 隆起

Aristotle 亚里斯多德

resigned 已放弃的

LA b Los Angeles. 洛杉矶

home room 学生固定上课的教室

Gabbing 唠叨

scribbling 潦草地书写

staring 瞪着眼看

Ouch 哎唷

coaching 指导

cadillac 凯迪拉克轿车

harumphed 哼着说

blurted 脱口说出

auburn 红褐色的

bashed 猛击

purred 咆哮

chugged 发出轧轧声

tummy 肚子

anglicized 使英语化

lamely 不熟悉情况的

decor 装饰

barbeque 烤肉

belly 肚子

Captain 队长

squealed 尖叫

bashfully 害羞地

raspberry (植物) 悬钩子
 scrunched 皱
 jumpsuit 伞兵跳伞服
 lobster 龙虾
 plunked 扑通落下
 graciously 优雅地
 reservations 订座
 vibrant 活跃的
 cavalry 骑兵
 rollicking 热闹的
 trio 三重唱
 intro 流行音乐的引子
 chorus 合唱
 pauper 穷人
 rover 流浪者
 melody 曲调
 applause 鼓掌
 patrons 顾客
 vaulting 跳过
 haughtily 傲慢地
 flurry 疾风
 strode 迈大步走
 anguish 痛苦
 humanitarian 人道主义的
 Finis 完

勿忘我

FORGET ME NOT I REDUX

By Pam Jernigan

年幼的时候，读《孔雀东南飞》，读《梁祝》，读《罗米欧与朱丽叶》，我曾想，假如那些痴情的人们幸福地如愿以偿了，他们肯定会相亲相爱，白头偕老的。后来我才明白，那也未必。毕竟梦中情人也好，白马王子也好，都不能当饭吃。雷鸣电闪，风狂雨暴之后，柴米油盐，鸡毛蒜皮才是实实在在的生活。幸福的保证必须有比爱情比金钱更重要的责任心。像 Clark 这样的丈夫，才是生活中女人们真正的“良人”。

“Lois, are you sure you're okay?” Clark asked anxiously. Although Lois had mostly recovered from her injuries, and could function in many ways, her personal memories had not yet returned. She'd had a steady stream of visitors over the past two days (her parents, his parents, their boss and others). With pictures and documents, they'd told her about her life.

Clark had been there most of the time, answering her questions, telling her stories of their lives, watching her sleep. He'd ignored the rest of the world, she needed him more, and

he needed to be with her. In more ways than one. Mindful that she barely knew him, he'd struggled to act like a brother to her, not showing any hint of his desire for her. He was determined not to make her uncomfortable in any way. Being patient had worked before, so it would work this time, too. He had to believe that, because he couldn't face a life without her.

"I'm fine," Lois insisted testily from behind the privacy screen, struggling into the last of her clothing. She'd been in the hospital for two days now, and she was thoroughly sick of it. All bland, blank walls and cheerfully noncommittal nurses. She still didn't remember much of her life, but that was no reason to hide from the world. She suspected that she'd never been one to back down from a challenge.

"Maybe you should stay here a little while longer." Clark suggested uncertainly. He didn't want to do anything to hamper her full recovery.

"No, I won't, and that's final." Now fully dressed, she stepped around the screen to face him. His eyes were full of a concern that warmed her heart. He was so amazingly kind. She'd been told that as well as being her partner at work, he was her fiance. At first the knowledge of their engagement had caused an odd thrill of fright, but as she'd considered it, and seen his innate gentleness, the fear had melted away. This man could surely be trusted with her life.

And with her body? She couldn't remember if he was her type, or if she even had a type, but she found that she enjoyed watching him. The lock of hair that fell so engagingly over his forehead, the breadth of his shoulders, even his strong, gentle hands ... all of these and more were starting to make her shiver in breathless anticipation of his visits, in hopes of his kiss. She

could tell he loved her, she reflected in wonderment. It was there in the way he treated her, in the way he looked at her ... and there was desire in there, as well, she'd glimpsed it ...

At the moment, however, he was looking harassed and beleaguered. She hid a smile. Her visitors had all mentioned that she tended to lead their partnership, and based on his reactions, she could believe it. He was resisting now, though, and she supposed he might have a good reason.

“Out with it, Clark, what's the problem?” she asked, arms crossed.

He looked at her helplessly for a second, then sighed. “Well, you were kidnapped right during the wedding ceremony.” A familiar stab of guilt assailed him at the thought, but he steadfastly ignored it. Dwelling on what might have been was too painful.

“Yeah, and ... ?” Talk of her wedding—a wedding she couldn't even begin to imagine—caused her stomach to flutter, a sensation she preferred to deny at the moment.

“Lois ... you'd already moved into my apartment, and out of yours? It's been leased to someone else already I checked.” He watched her anxiously.

“Oh.” She sat down on the hospital bed, feeling as if she'd had the wind knocked out of her. So, she had nowhere to live. Nowhere, unless ... she looked up at Clark speculatively, and made up her mind. She took a deep breath and spoke quickly, not giving herself a chance to reconsider.

“That's all right. I can stay with you.”

Clark felt his eyebrows raise in astonishment. She had, in a way, only known him for two days, and she was proposing to move in with him! It had taken him over two years to win

that much trust, the first time around, to get through her protective layers. Surely even a memory loss couldn't erase such deeply ingrained barriers.

She smiled tremulously at his surprised expression. "If I want to get my memory back, I should stay in familiar surroundings, right? All my things seem to be at your place, and I guess I was probably pretty familiar with it, anyway, wasn't I?"

"Yeah ... " he admitted reluctantly.

"Well, there you go then." She stood again, gathering her courage. This would work out just fine if it had to. "The only other place I could think of to stay would be with my mother, in her hotel room, but just between you and me, I don't think she and I get along very well."

He quirked a smile. "No, not really."

Lois took a moment to appreciate what a great smile he had, reassuring herself. She smiled back at him. "Then you have no choice. You have to help me. I'm homeless."

He sighed once more, looking around the room for guidance that wasn't there. Could she really mean what she was saying, that she trusted him to be that close to her and not try anything? Could he trust himself?

Lois saw the worry written across his face and advanced until she was standing close enough to rest her forearms on his chest, her hands exploring his shoulders. She noted that he automatically opened his arms to receive her. His nearness, his body felt good, setting off waves of desire outward from where his hands rested on her hips. "Clark, look at me."

He looked down into her intent brown eyes. God, she was beautiful, and he still marveled that he had found her

again. He didn't care how long it took her to regain her memory, he could wait months if he had to, as long as she was safe.

“Clark,” she repeated, all trace of amusement gone. “There are a million things that I don't know about you, that I don't know about me. But I do know this. You are kind, patient, and more considerate than I deserve. And my ... previous self ... wanted to marry you. How could I not trust you?”

How could he resist her? “Okay. Let's get you out of here.”

It took some time to complete the paperwork, but the hospital staff could no more stand in her way than Clark could. She would be an outpatient at a local memory clinic “sanitarium” for the next few weeks, but she was free to stay wherever she chose.

As Clark drove her Jeep to his apartment, an air of tension rose between them. Lois kept sneaking looks at him, when she thought he wouldn't notice. Who was this man? How well did she know him? How well did he know her? They were engaged, by unspoken agreement, that engagement was on indefinite hold, but she had no urge to break it; had they been ... intimate? She felt her cheeks flushing, feeling excited by the prospect. She knew general things about lovemaking, but it was all distant, impersonal.

Clark was aware that she was looking at him, darting glances at his face, and at his body. He shifted uncomfortably as he drove. What was the matter with him? She was injured, and barely knew who he was. He shouldn't even be thinking of making love to her. But he was. Under the cover of

checking the Jeep's blind spots, he kept an eye on her. She was pale, and thinner than she should be ... but she still took his breath away. And he was going to be sharing his apartment with her. He swallowed hard.

“Well, here we are.” His tone was determinedly cheerful as he pulled into the parking spot. Lois looked around, hoping for a glimmer of memory, but none came.

“Nice place,” she offered, to let him know that nothing was coming back.

He nodded, not really disappointed. He knew that when he'd lost his memory, two years earlier, it had taken time for familiar people and places to bring him back to himself. He got out of the Jeep and headed for her side to open her door and help her out. He found her standing on the sidewalk, looking around. He smiled despite himself. Some things apparently didn't change.

“The entrance is around the side.” He touched her elbow to guide her, and she fell in step next to him.

Lois felt a jolt of awareness at his touch. It was only his hand on her elbow, for pete's sake. She had to get control of herself. At least until she had some answers. “Oh, what an unusual entrance!” she exclaimed, enchanted by the wrought-iron porch.

He smiled tightly as he fumbled with his lock. Taking a deep breath, he swung the door open. “Welcome home.”

Lois stood on the threshold, seeing his apartment as if for the first time. It was more or less all one room, decorated with souvenirs of his trips around the world, he'd told her about that sometime yesterday. She noticed a tenseness about him, and suddenly realized how hard this must be for him. He'd

expected to bring a bride here, not a virtual stranger. She turned to meet his eyes, surprised to feel a glimmer of tears in her own eyes. “Oh, Clark, this isn’t what we planned, is it, for me to not know you … ”

Clark felt his heart twist at her wistful expression. On its own accord, his left hand reached up to cup her cheek, and she tilted her head into his palm, the way she always did. “No,” he admitted hoarsely. “But I’m just … so grateful, that you’re safe, that you’re here, that you don’t hate me.”

She enjoyed the touch of his hand on her cheek - it was an unusual gesture, and yet it felt so natural. How could a simple touch make her feel so good? “I don’t think I could ever hate you,” she whispered, running her gaze over his face, focusing on his gorgeous eyes, and his full lips. On impulse, she raised herself on tiptoes and leaned forward to kiss him. It was a quick kiss, a mere brushing of their lips, but it left her breathless and tingling.

Clark closed his eyes and took a deep, shuddering breath. “God, Lois, don’t do that. I can’t control myself if you do that, and I have to control myself.”

Hurt, she stepped away, and entered the apartment. A few steps later, however, she thought she understood, and she was ashamed of herself. He was determined to treat her like a sister, to not take advantage of her. She shouldn’t make things harder for him. Unless, of course, her treacherous inner voice whispered, you want him to take advantage of you. She smiled.

A few deep breaths gave Clark back his balance, and he followed his fiancée into the apartment. She was looking around appraisingly carrying her small bag from the hospital

Acting as if nothing had happened, he pointed out the apartment's features. "Okay, here's the living room with the new lamps we bought after the old ones were shot up." The lamps were one of few features they'd purchased together they had been waiting until after the honeymoon to make decisions on major pieces of furniture. "In the kitchen, we have all the regular kitchen stuff - plus I stocked up on cream soda and chocolate ice cream for you."

She followed him, looking around with interest. "I like ice cream?"

He chuckled. "You like chocolate."

"Ahh, that's good to know." She nodded wisely. "Good thing I have you to tell me all this stuff."

"Just ask, and I'll tell you what I know," he promised.

"So why were the lamps shot up?" She turned to face him, with an inquiring expression.

He grimaced, wishing he hadn't mentioned that detail. "This couple was trying to kill me, and kidnap you ... " He really didn't want to tell that story in any detail. The subject of Superman had come up several times in the past two days. So far, he'd always managed to gloss over things, only telling her what was general knowledge. He fully intended to come clean to her again sometime soon, but not yet. Not until they had some other things sorted out.

She lifted one eyebrow. "This happens to us a lot, does it?"

He shrugged helplessly. "We're reporters," he temporized. "And we're good at it, especially you, so sometimes people don't appreciate us investigating them."

"Good thing we've got Superman to look out for us then,

huh.” She could tell that he wasn’t telling her everything on that particular topic, but it could wait. One mountain at a time, Lois. She wandered further into the kitchen.

“Yeah.” Clark let it go at that, glad to escape the topic. “Okay, behind this wall is the bedroom …” The tension that had leaked away earlier was suddenly back as they stood by the side of the bed.

Lois swallowed, her mouth suddenly dry. Had she spent much time in that bed? They obviously hadn’t been living together, but that didn’t mean they hadn’t slept together. She looked up at him, wondering if she dared to ask.

Clark commanded himself to think of something to say, anything to move the focus away from his bed … the bed he longed to be in, with her a full and willing participant. It’s not an option, Clark, he told himself sternly. Behave. You don’t want to scare her. He looked around the room, searching for something to say. “Um, no one can see in the windows, so you don’t have to worry about that.” That was better, he told himself encouragingly. “Over here’s the dresser - you’ve got the top two drawers, and most of the closet.” He pulled open the top drawer to demonstrate, and froze when he saw her lacy undergarments lying there. Good one, Clark. He pushed the drawer shut after an endless moment, but it was too late. He could feel his blood rushing southward, bringing him back to the familiar, aching fullness that had begun with her innocent kiss.

Lois was too far away to see into the drawer Clark opened, but she could guess the contents by his expression. A blush crept over her cheeks, but more importantly, she thought this was a clue. He wasn’t familiar enough with her

underthings to be blasé about them. That was interesting.

Clark moved blindly back towards the living room. He couldn't stay here much longer, not with them both upright. "I'll sleep on the couch."

She followed him, feeling curiously elated. She could tell, now, that he was just as affected by her as she was by him, and it was equally clear that he didn't intend to act on his feelings. This seemed to leave her in control. A familiar, safe feeling, but thrilling at the same time. Just like flying ... where had that thought come from?

The evening passed slowly. Clark was very business-like, drawing on years of painful experience in controlling his feelings around Lois as he told her about their stories and their sources. Her nearness still affected his breathing, though, and he was achingly aware of every move she made.

Using the excuse of getting them dinner, he took a break around eight. He wanted to take time for a quick trip to the Arctic. He somehow didn't think a cold shower would be enough, and besides, in order to take one, he'd have to explain himself to Lois and he just didn't feel up to that conversation before heading for their favorite Chinese take-out restaurant. Before he could get far, however, he'd heard the familiar refrain of, "help, Superman!" and he'd had to respond - he'd neglected the world for too long already.

Left completely alone for the first time in days, Lois wandered around the apartment. She saw many pictures of herself, alone and with Clark. They both looked so happy. She picked up one of the pictures, and wistfully touched Clark's image with a finger. Why couldn't she remember anything about her life?

The more time she spent with Clark, the more she wanted him. This boldness, inexplicably, surprised her. Had she been previously uninterested in sex? She couldn't see herself as shy, unless perhaps she'd had bad experiences before meeting Clark ... With those memories gone, perhaps her true desires were coming out. Whatever the reason, she'd felt herself hungering for him, leaning towards him as he'd spoken about invisible men, cyborgs, and Intergang. None of those topics had been anywhere near as fascinating to her.

She decided to sit in the living room to watch the door for his return, but that didn't feel right. A restlessness gnawed at her, so she rose to pace again. Her steps took her into the bedroom. In the darkness the bed was even more inviting and she was tired but that wasn't quite right, either. A chair by the window seat, under those wonderful glass panels. She curled onto one end of it, arranging pillows around her. She could see a strip of sky from here, and most of the apartment's small balcony. She couldn't explain why, but this felt like the perfect place to wait.

One small job for Superman had turned into three. Clark was glad to have challenges to expend his energies on, problems he was well able to fix. As soon as he could, however, he hurried back to his apartment. Lois wouldn't know why he'd been gone so long, and he wasn't sure what to tell her.

He unlocked the door quietly. She wasn't in the living room, and his heart stopped for a moment before churning into overdrive. A quick x-ray scan located her, to his great relief. He took a moment to make sure he'd stopped shaking, and walked into the bedroom. She was curled up with her head

resting on the glass, fast asleep, and looking very uncomfortable.

“Lo-is,” he murmured softly, indulgently. He recognized her spot - this was where she used to wait for him to come home. She must have been very tired. The doctor had said that she could use all the rest she could get, but she couldn't stay there all night.

He gently slipped his arms around her, gathering her to his chest. She turned in her sleep and snuggled into his shoulder, making soft noises. He stood stock still for a moment, reveling in her response despite his frustration, and then turned to carry her to the bed, floating over the floor to avoid the possibility of his footsteps waking her.

Clark gently lowered her to the bed, wishing with all his heart he could join her. She moaned a protest when he withdrew his arms. Unable to resist, he leaned forward to kiss her forehead, then settled back on his heels to watch her. He'd spent many hours in the hospital, watching her sleep. She'd never been so beautiful or so tempting as she was now, in his bed. He could only hope she'd be comfortable sleeping in her clothes, because there was no way he trusted himself to remove them.

He tiptoed out of the bedroom and turned off all the lights in the apartment. If he could do nothing else, he could still guard her sleep.

Lois woke, confused. Why did she feel like she was lying down? She had been sitting up. She stirred, and opened her eyes. Ah, she was in bed - Clark must have carried her. She glanced around the room, which was dimly illuminated by the neon sign on the adjacent building. Where was Clark,

anyway? She rose up on one elbow. “Clark?”

Almost before she'd finished calling his name, he was there, standing in the archway. How did he do that?

“I'm here, Lois. Are you okay?”

She thought about it for a moment. “I don't know. I had some really strange dreams.”

He entered the room cautiously. “About?”

“You, me, Superman ... all mixed up. Clark, I need to ask you something.” She gathered up her courage. “You've told me all about work, now tell me about us.”

“Us?” He cocked an eyebrow at her. He'd expected a question about Superman. That suddenly seemed like it would have been an easier issue to deal with.

“Yeah, you know, us.” She was blushing, but her voice was steady. She arranged the pillows so that she was sitting up against the headboard, and held out a hand to him. Slowly, reluctantly, he crossed the floor to sit on the edge of the bed.

Clark was terribly nervous. He was afraid that she didn't want him, he was afraid that she did. Mostly, he was afraid of saying the wrong thing, or of losing control and kissing her the way he wanted to. “What do you want to know?” His voice was husky.

Now that she had him here, she was unsure how to proceed, but she was determined to clear some things up. “How long have we been engaged? How long had we dated before then?”

“We were only engaged a few months. And, well, we didn't really “date” much before then - we knew each other, and worked together, but didn't have many real dates.”

That was interesting but didn't really tell her what she

wanted to know. “But we were in love, right?”

He smiled at a happy memory, his teeth flashing in the semi-darkness of the bedroom. “Yeah, we were. And after a while, we even admitted it to each other.”

Another clue. They’d had a difficult courtship, apparently. Maybe there were other reasons that they hadn’t moved in together. The next question was the most difficult, but she had to know. “Clark,” she almost whispered, “were we lovers?”

Clark groaned at the images that word evoked. Images from many passionate evenings danced in front of his eyes. He had trouble making his voice work. “No. We kissed … and things … but we’d both decided to wait until we were married before taking the big step.”

Lois mulled this over. She wasn’t quite surprised, but she still didn’t understand. She looked away from Clark, glad for the darkened room. “Why?” she asked softly. “Why did we want to wait?”

Clark kneaded his hands on his thighs, keeping himself on a tight leash. He swallowed again. “There were a couple of reasons. You had had some bad experiences, so you were a little unsure.” He studied the far wall as if it contained the secrets of the universe. “I’m kind of traditional. And I, ah, well … I’ve experimented a little, gotten pretty close … but I’ve never actually made love to anyone.”

Lois filed the information about her previous experience, but she was blown away by his revelation. Amazed and touched. This gorgeous man had waited - for her? What a precious gift. She had suspected he was a romantic. She reached out to hold his hand. “Well, as far as I can remember,

neither have I.”

Clark looked down at her tiny hand on his, heard her attempt at a joke, and felt his control slipping away. The weeks of alternating highs and lows, of doubt and fear, of needing to be strong, suddenly caught up with him. To his horror, he began to cry. “Oh, god, Lois. I’ve missed you so much, needed you so much …”

Lois heard the ragged edge of exhaustion in his voice. He must have been worryingUwaiting for weeks nowno wonder he was worn out. She swung her legs out of the way and hugged him as best she could. He instantly turned towards her, holding her tight, burying his face in her hair. She soothed him and patted his back as a few sobs escaped.

Clark didn’t know how long he clung to her, drinking in the feel of her body, the scent of her hair, the sound of her voice murmuring reassurances. She was there, she was safe, everything was okay. When he had recovered enough to stop crying, he pulled back just far enough to see her face. She removed his glasses and gently wiped away his tears, her heart in her eyes. He cupped her face in his hands, and slowly leaned in for a kiss.

Lois watched him approach breathlessly. A small part of her brain noted how different he looked without his glasses, but she ignored it as unimportant. He was giving her plenty of time to escape the kiss, a kiss she had no intention of evading, a kiss she had been waiting for as long as she could remember. She closed her eyes and tipped her face up to await his touch.

His lips brushed hers gently, then retreated a few millimeters. She smiled, but quickly wanted more. Her lips parted of their own volitionU and she closed the distance

between them. Finding her mouth open, he moaned and set his tongue questing after hers. They met in the middle, dancing passionately. His hands left her face to trail down her sides and across her back, leaving shimmering paths of desire along her skin.

She ran one hand through his silky hair, while the other attacked his shirt, working the soft material loose from his waist.

The touch of Lois's hand on his bare midriff brought Clark back to his senses. He pulled back from the kiss, far enough to see her face. She was wide-eyed and panting slightly, looking sexier than he'd ever seen her. But if he took advantage of her now, he'd never forgive himself. "Wait." It was the single most difficult word he'd ever said.

"Why?" She didn't need her memory to know that she wanted to do this. It was right, more right than anything she'd ever done, she felt it deep inside. Along with an aching hunger for this one special man.

He was breathing heavily, too, he noticed in a distant corner of his brain. "Because ..." He was having trouble articulating a reason. "Because you don't know what you're doing."

She shook her head, dead serious. "Oh yes I do. I loved you before, and I love you now - all I've lost are details." She searched for ways to convince him. "We made it to the church, we had every intention of getting married - it's not our fault that it didn't happen. I don't want to wait anymore."

"Well then," he countered, with a flash of dark humor. "Because I don't know what I'm doing, remember?"

She laughed huskily, sending shivers down his spine. “Let’s learn together,” she suggested, then sobered. “Please, Clark, I need you. Please, be my first time … ”

His good intentions vanished before her obvious sincerity. More confidently than before, he reached for her, bridging the gap between them. This time, there would be no pulling back.

Lois woke and stretched languidly, feeling wonderful for no reason that she could recall. She froze when her outstretched hand hit something warm and solid, but then memory of the previous night flooded back, and she opened her eyes with a smile. “Morning, Clark.”

“Morning, Lois,” he replied, grinning from ear to ear, reveling in the sight of her in his bed, in the touch of her hand on his bare chest. How long had he waited for a morning like this! It wouldn’t be perfect until she had her memory back but that should be soon this Dr. Deter she would be seeing today was supposed to be the best. On impulse, just because he could, he leaned forward and kissed her.

She returned the kiss, closing her eyes to devote her senses to it. It had been a spectacular night. Their mood had been changeable, from explosive to sweet, tender to funny, and they hadn’t gotten much sleep. She reluctantly opened her eyes again when he pulled back.

He propped himself on an elbow, watching her. She noted with amusement that he’d put on a pair of sleeping shorts at some point, and he was already wearing his glasses, too … She glanced down at herself, covered only by a thin sheet, and grinned. “You’re overdressed.”

He felt the blood rushing to his cheeks, and elsewhere, but merely smiled. She was still recovering. “I made breakfast

for you. Come on out when you're dressed."

She watched him leave, noting from his profile that he wasn't as indifferent as he sounded. "I knew there was a reason I wanted to marry you!" she called after him. Sensitive, sexy, and he cooked ... what more could she ask for?

"Superman!" At the sanitarium, late that afternoon, Lois waved to the superhero that she was starting to remember. During her day there, she'd noted strange happenings, and had stumbled across an assassin for Intergang - apparently reporter's instincts don't have anything to do with memory. Luckily, Superman had arrived in time to save the day.

He detached himself from the newly arrived policemen and walked over to her, the cape waving in the breeze. He looked strangely familiar but she ignored the feeling of *deja vu* she suspected it would be pretty common for a while.

"Yes, Lois?" he asked in what he hoped was an impersonal tone, fighting his body's reaction to her. They'd spent hours last night exploring each other before drifting off to an exhausted sleep, but he still hadn't found the time to explain about Superman.

"I'm starting to remember things, Superman!" she announced excitedly.

He smoothed his face to a stern expression. What if she remembered her crush on Superman? Well, he'd just explain things to her again, if necessary, but the mere thought that she could fall for someone else after spending the night with Clark made him tense up. "That's good, Lois," he replied belatedly.

She smiled brilliantly. "I need you to find Clark for me."

Oh really? This was interesting. “I can take you to him,” he offered.

She nodded, and he scooped her up, trying valiantly to think of her as a sister. At least from this position, she couldn't see how tight his briefs were becoming. He flew her away from the sanitarium, towards Centennial Park, and the fountain where they'd gotten engaged. He wasn't above subtle hints.

She looked around blankly when he set her down. That fountain was vaguely familiar, but she didn't take the time to chase down the memory. “Where's Clark?” Superman looked around, and she suddenly was afraid he would leave. “No, wait, I want to talk to you first.”

He crossed his arms and looked at her, unsure of what to expect. She started pacing, but glanced at him frequently as she talked. “I don't remember a lot, very clearly, but I think I remember that you ... that you have romantic feelings for me.”

Clark had no idea how he should respond to this, but she didn't seem to require any input from him.

“I just want to make sure you know that I'm in love with Clark. And I have been, for a lot longer than I ever told anyone, I think.”

He blinked in surprise, temporarily speechless. Sometimes it still amazed him that she could love him at all, let alone that she could prefer Clark to Superman. She kept proving it to him, though, again and again, and it never failed to awe him.

She saw the thunderstruck expression on his face, and winced. “Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to hurt you ... ”

He shook his head slowly and managed to reply. “You

haven't hurt me, Lois.” He began to smile, feeling happier than he'd ever expected to. In a way, this was even better than last night.

Lois saw Superman's smile for the first time, and gasped, her eyes narrowing. This was more than *deja-vu* ... she'd seen that smile, just recently ... she searched his face, and the light dawned. “Clark? Is that you?”

Clark nodded, his smile broadening. She slowly began to return the smile, and then suddenly she was in his arms. “I remember.”

He held her tightly, and rose off the ground. It was time to head for home ... their home.

Notes

redux 回家的

hamper 妨碍

fiance 未婚夫

harassed 困扰

beleaguered 围攻

leased 出租

speculatively 思索地

ingrained 根深蒂固的

outpatient 门诊病人

sanitarium 疗养院

jolt 摇晃

wrought-iron 熟铁的

tightly 酣畅地

fumbled 摸索

threshold 门口

- souvenirs 纪念品
bride 新娘
wistful 渴望的
hoarsely 嘶哑的
impulse 冲动
on tiptoes 踮起脚尖
tingling 麻刺的感觉
fiancee 未婚妻
appraisingly 用品评的眼光
honeymoon 蜜月
temporized 见机行事
undergarments 内衣
blase 玩厌了的
elated 兴高采烈的
refrain 节制
inexplicably 到无法说明的程度
gnawed 折磨
reveling 得意
headboard 床头板
courtship 求爱时期
mulled 细想
kneaded 揉
unsure 没有自信的
soothed 安抚
sobs 呜咽
volition 意志
shimmering 微微发亮的
midriff 中腹部
panting 喘气
articulating 清晰明白地说

huskily 嘶哑的

spine 脊骨

languidly 疲倦地

profile 侧面

assassin 刺客

valiantly 勇敢地

Centennial 百年纪念

呵护天使

Guardian Angels

By Wendy Rigney



静悄悄的圣诞之夜，寒星闪烁，雪花纷飞。
孤独寂寞的他们，相互依偎着，怀念着各自的
童年时光。

The snow fell softly and steadily as Nick gazed out the window. The lights were out and he sat on a window sill, his hand making shapes on the foggy glass.

He was thankful for the winter. It afforded him more time to enjoy such a beautiful view. Even after hundreds of years, he could recall the winters he spent as a mortal boy, before the disillusion of the Crusades and his subsequent meeting with a beautiful alluring vampire named Janette had changed him forever. He and Fleur had loved to walk in the snow. Fleur. It was the time of year he missed her the most. Christmas and the family ideal. Now, he had no one.

Well, not exactly. He did have his connection to Janette and LaCroix, but it wasn't exactly a Norman Rockwell scenario, Nick thought wryly. There was Schanke, who, for all his obnoxiousness made Nick glad for such a loyal friend

A friend who, despite all the evidence, so easily dismissed Nick as just an odd guy. He smiled. And grew pensive as his thoughts strayed to Nat. Nat made him laugh, made him smile, made him feel human, and ultimately, made him want. His fondest hope was to someday share his Christmases with her, by his side. But he tried not to dwell on that hope too often. It was too easy to torture himself with it, and LaCroix gave him enough trouble.

Nick lay his head back and closed his eyes. Then, he heard his elevator. The heartbeat inside was unmistakable. Nick almost laughed, thinking how easily his thoughts must have conjured her up.

And then ...

“Hello? Nick, are you here?” Nat asked, as she opened the door to the loft. It was pitch black. Unlike her own place, Nick’s loft was devoid of Christmas decorations. It made Nat feel a bit sad. But more determined to follow through with her idea. “I’m here, Nat.” Nick’s voice called to her right. As her eyes adjusted, she saw Nick sitting on a window sill, drawing on the glass, while staring absently out the window. She walked over and stood by him. “So, this is how you spend your night off, hmm?” Her voice held no rebuke, just teasing.

“Look at it this way, Nat. I’m saving money for the electric company.” Nick rejoined, a smile in his voice. Somehow, he didn’t feel so lonely anymore.

“Like you need to,” Nat said in reply, swatting his shoulder. “Actually, I was wondering ... well, I noticed that your place is less than ready for Christmas. I was thinking maybe we could go looking for a tree. If nothing else, we can play in the snow for a while.” Nat braced herself for the

refusals, but to her surprise, none came.

“Sounds good,” Nick replied. Seeing Nat’s face, he placed a hand on her cheek. “You always tell me to rejoin the living. Having a Christmas tree, like any normal person, is as good a place as any to start, I guess. Besides, I always liked the snow.” He grew quiet for a moment, then said, “Fleur and I had some of our best times in the snow.”

“You miss her, don’t you?” Nat asked, softly. Nick only nodded, then snapped out of his thoughts. There would be time to discuss his long past later. Now, he wanted to escape himself, if only for a little while.

“Just let me get my coat, and we’ll be on our way.”

Moments later, an excited Nick, so much like a little boy it made Nat melt, grabbed her hand and demanded they go have some fun. Natalie, somewhat taken aback by his attitude, laughed and agreed. Who was she to question it?

About a half an hour later, Nick and Nat stood in the midst of a Christmas tree farm. Nat jumped around, excitedly. Nick’s enthusiasm hadn’t waned. Though unusual in the extreme for the tortured soul that was Nicholas B. Knight, it was also contagious. Nat told him, “You seem to be lucky! Lots of great trees left! I think a big tree would be perfect for your place. You do have high ceilings.” Nat ran from tree to tree, disregarding each one for their imperfections. Nick felt his grin grow into a full-blown smile. Yes, she was right. He was lucky. No matter how hopeless things became for him, Nat was there to pick him up, along with the needed swift kicks and lectures.

“Well, Nat? You going to stare at the trees all night, or are we going to actually buy one before next Juno?”

Nat's eyes filled with indignation and she placed a gloved hand on her hip. "You could help. But ..." Nat grinned. "it does take a woman to do a man's job."

Nick didn't reply. Not in words, anyway. Instead, he picked up some snow and began to make a perfect snowball. Wiggling his eyebrows, he slowly advanced toward Natalie. "Really?" he teased. Nat licked her lips, noticing the devilish gleam in his blue eyes. "Um, er, I was joking, Nick." But Nick kept coming closer. "Nick!" Nat stuttered, retreating for every step that Nick advanced. Despite herself, Nat giggled. Nick smiled and threw the snowball. Nat sputtered and yelled, "That's it! This is war, Knight!" as she returned fire.

They happily played in the snow, enjoying the respite from their sad lives. Close to twenty minutes later, reality intruded once more. Natalie caught a glimpse of two young children, presumably a brother and his younger sister, and her thoughts turned inward and to those close to her ... or rather, to those that she had once loved and who were no longer with her.

In one respect, there was something she and Nick had in common. They were lonely. Alone. Essentially, anyway. It was her first Christmas without her brother. Richieo he was the only immediate family member she had left. His death, twice, had shattered her. Nick, meanwhile, had little desire to be with LaCroix and Janette for Christmas, understandably. LaCroix spent every moment of his existence scoffing at mortal folly, and Janette, though less biting, echoed their 'father's' sentiments. What it came down to, Nat realized, was that she and Nick had only each other. So she'd decided to make the most of it.

Nick noticed that Nat had gone quiet. Turning to steal a glance, he saw that flakes of snow sparkled in her hair, the dampness making the auburn curls unrulier than usual. Nick thought, not for the first time that night, that Natalie looked beautiful. But he couldn't tell her. It was not to be ... at least, not now. So to get his mind back on safer ground, he attempted to break the silence. "You're awfully quiet, Nat. Anything wrong?"

Natalie looked into Nick's concerned blue eyes, touched that he cared. She'd take what he offered, though the wish for more always beckoned. Carefully, she replied, "I was just thinking of Richie. This used to be his favorite holiday, too." Nat's face lit up at a childhood memory. "When our parents were alive, we'd go the whole nine yards. Baking Christmas cookies, decorating the tree, parties. But," Nat chuckled, "whenever we'd make the cookie dough, Mom used to always yell at us because by the time Richie and I got done eating it straight from the bowl, there'd barely be enough left to put on the cookie sheet. And our father, well, he'd find and put up the tree. Then play referee when Richie and I would fight over whose turn it was to place the angel on top of the tree." Nat smiled at the memory, but it faded as she went on. "After they died, Christmas did too. Nana seemed to close off, especially after Dad died. He was her only child." Realizing that she was probably boring Nick to tears, Nat started to apologize. "Listen to me. I brought you out to have some fun, not to listen to me ramble." Nat began to turn away in embarrassment, but Nick's hand on her own stopped her.

"I'm not bored," Nick assured her.

And it was true. Nick realized Nat was about as

forthcoming with her past as he was with his own. Then again, Nick thought, he had more of a reason to keep his past to himself. Still curious, trying to learn more about the events that made Nat as wonderful as she was, Nick prompted her, “You didn’t celebrate Christmas after your parents died?”

As time ticked by, Nick thought he was pressing too hard. Nat looked into his eyes, as if to gauge if he was truly curious, or merely being polite. She must have noticed that Nick meant what he said, since she continued on. “No, well, not really. We’d have a tree and a few gifts each … but all the warmth … it was gone. It was ironic. I was the older sister, yet Richie always tried to take care of me. I think maybe it was because he felt bad that Nana always favored him over me.” As if to explain, Nat reddened and shared, “Nana was a bit critical of me.” Nick said nothing, but silently supported her by squeezing her hand. He had a feeling that being “critical” wasn’t all there was to Natalie’s relationship with her grandmother. He could relate. His thoughts strayed to LaCroix, then he shook his head to clear it. Not now. It was Nat’s turn.

Natalie smiled at Nick, realizing just how glad she was that he was here with her. Then she finished her story. “Richie used to make Christmas decorations with his crayons and paint sets. He’d decorate our bedrooms and he could tell the best Christmas stories. It was because of him that I never lost my love of the holidays.” She let out a little laugh, “I remember when Amy was born. He had all these plans for how he’d teach her to appreciate Christmas. And he did. For as long as he could … ”

The words faded as Nat saw Nick’s face become paler

than usual. Nat cursed herself for inadvertently reminding Nick of what he had done ... at her insistence. It was her turn to offer comfort. She placed a gloved hand on Nick's jaw. "Don't." Natalie rebuked gently. "What happened was as much my fault as yours. Maybe more. I was so intent on willing Richie to live, no matter how, and disregarded your reservations. I see now that it was wrong."

Nick offered a protest, as she knew he would. "I damned his soul to hell, Nat. I made him a monster ... not you ..."

But Natalie was ready to refute him, and did so. "The God I believe in has infinite forgiveness, Nick. I'm confident that Richie is watching over me now. My own guardian angel, just as he was in life. A real Christmas angel." Nick turned slightly and placed a kiss on the palm of her hand. A silent thank you.

In the midst of the snowfall, they stood together. Their eyes held and locked. The snow still fell lightly, dampening them. Nick continued to hold Natalie's hand to his cool face. As the wind picked up, a shiver went through Natalie, breaking the spell. Nick was both relieved and disappointed. Time to go back to neutral territory.

"We should get home soon. You're cold. See any tree that you like here?" he inquired.

But Natalie wasn't quite ready to go just yet. "We can get the tree in a minute. I'm fine." At Nick's dubious gaze Natalie smiled and assured him, "Honest. If I get too cold, I'll tell you." First, though, it was her turn. Natalie wanted to know more about the man before her. It was only fair, she told herself. "What about you?"

"What about me?" Nick asked.

Natalie smiled and took his hand. They started to walk again, from time to time comparing Christmas trees. Nick liked holding her hand. He knew he shouldn't let her get too close, but for tonight, with the Christmas lights twinkling around them, and the snow falling, it seemed right. As they strolled along, Nick waited for Nat to tell him what she wanted.

He didn't have to wait long. "Tell me about some of your childhood. Vampires have perfect recall, you've told me." Nat gave a sly grin. "So you can't tell me it was too long ago."

RegardlessUNick tried to resist. "NatUI don't think ..."

Nat laughed. "Goodg Don't think, just talk. What were you like? In all the time I've known you, you've never told me about your early life. Don't forget," Nat pointed out, "I told you about me. Your turn."

Recognizing defeat when he saw it, knowing that Nat wouldn't let him leave until he told her a little about his early past, Nick gave a sigh, and gave her a look as if to say, 'You win'.

"Well, as for me, my father died when I was twelve. I instantly became the head of the household, and lived with my mother ... and Fleur, my younger sister." Nick's eyes took on a distant look and his face softened at the memory of his beloved sister. "I guess you could say that Fleur was my angel. She saw only the good in the world, when even as a boy, I was a cynic."

Nat interrupted Nick's reverie only long enough to tease, "You? I never would have guessed."

Nick gave a laugh, then sobered. "Christmas in my time was much different. The religion was so much more

predominant in our lives. God wasn't the forgiving man you believe in, but someone to fear.

Everything someone did would determine if he or she would go to heaven or be cast into hell." Nick knew he was a bit off topic, and got back to his least favorite topic. Himself. "Still, Fleur and I were extremely close. She was so gentle. And smart. I think she would have loved the twentieth century. All of the opportunities for women. She loved books, though she couldn't read. You see, I read to her as much as I dared." Nick smiled, as did Nat, picturing Nicholas De Brabant, protective yet indulgent ...

"We would make up stories, look at the stars. Fleur loved to stare at the sky on a clear night, counting stars. I'd point out the constellations. I ... I miss her very, very much this time of year." Nick focused on the string of colorful Christmas lights that illuminated the trees and reflected off of the snow. "Christmas being for family, it just reminds me so much of both she and mother." Nick felt Nat's eyes upon him and turned. "So, I understand about you and Richie. Very much."

Nat nodded, her hand still in Nick's. "I guess we'll never stop missing them. But we're not supposed to, are we?" Nick shook his head.

Nat suddenly asked a question that Nick was unprepared for. "Nick, I know what I said about Richie being my angel ... but ... " She took a breath. "Fleur and Richie ... do you think they're here now, watching out for us? That Fleur is keeping an eye on you, as Richie is for me?"

Nick's first inclination was to deny that anyone above would care anything for the monster he was. But it was almost

Christmas. Maybe, for the time being, it would not hurt to have faith. To believe. He walked, thinking.

“I think ... yeah, I think they watch over us,” Nick said, thoughtfully. “And ... if Fleur is looking out for me ... maybe ... ”

Natalie's eyes brightened in understanding, grateful to see Nick happy, if only for a brief time.

“Yes, Nick. Maybe ... after all, Christmas is a time for miracles.” Like before, their gazes locked. Then ...

“Thank you, Nat.” It was only three words. But they held a wealth of meaning. Nick cupped Natalie's face and kissed her softly on the lips. Neither noticed the break in the clouds where two bright stars twinkled in approval.

The Christmas tree would wait for another night ...

Notes

sill 窗台

disillusion 幻灭

Crusades 十字军东侵

alluring 迷人的

scenario 情节

obnoxiousness 讨厌

loft 阁楼

devoid 完全没有

rebuke 责备

swatting 用力打下去

braced 做好准备

refusals 拒绝

waned 消逝

- contagious 传染性的
indignation 愤慨
licked 舔
devilish 如恶魔的
respite 休息
scoffing 嘲笑
dough 生面团
referee 调解人
Nana 奶奶
close off 隔离
forthcoming 即将来临的
gauge 测量
crayons 蜡笔
curse 咒骂
refute 反驳
sly 淘气的
reverie 沉思
constellations 星座

圣地避难

Holy Ground His Only Refuge



半夜三更躲在前人们安息的地方避难，尽管有些吓人，但确实很安全。即使有些什么动静，神灵也会给以庇护。

Emerging from the dense fog, Connor ran through the gate into the cemetery and stumbled over to the nearest gravestone. Leaning back against it, he slid tiredly to the ground to sit and wait. He checked his shoulder briefly to see how bad the wound looked. Wonderful, he thought sarcastically. His shoulder and jacket were a mess. Maybe if he took the jacket off, folded it just right and draped it over his shoulder it would pass. It had too he needed to get back to his hotel room without attracting attention.

When blood ran into his eye again from the cut above it, he wiped it away with his sleeve and glanced around. Luckily the cemetery was deserted this time of night, deserted except for him, of course, and someone he was just now beginning to sense.

“Tsk, tsk, MacLeod. Hiding out on holy ground?”

He turned to see his pursuer calmly lean on the gatepost and regard him with a sneer. “Sorry to ruin your fun, Hannah,” Connor said, though he was not sorry in the least.

The other Immortal looked at him with mock disappointment. “Aww. And I was so looking forward to the good time we could’ve had.”

“Only until you took my head,” he said with a sarcastic laugh.

Smiling, Hannah said, “That’s when the good time would’ve started.” Pushing off the gatepost, she glanced around and shook her head before putting her hands in her pockets and sighing dramatically. “Another time, MacLeod,” she said. Leaving the cemetery, she disappeared into the fog.

“Not if I can help it.” Connor leaned his head back against the stone to rest. This late at night—early morning, really—he should have plenty of time to heal without the risk of discovery. He closed his eyes briefly—just to rest them—and tried not to fall asleep ...

“My, my. What have we here?”

A voice woke Connor from his unintended nap. How long had he slept? A few minutes? A few hours? The throb in his shoulder indicated the former, but it had been long enough for someone to sneak up on him.

Looking up, he saw a tall man with fair hair and ice blue eyes smile down at him in a way he did not like. The expression on the other’s face reminded Connor of an Immortal waiting to strike, but the man was no Immortal. Still, the look worried him for a reason that nagged at the back of his mind, but refused to surface on demand.

“I was just resting,” he explained

Before Connor had time to react, the man abruptly reached forward and touched the cut above Connor's eye, coming away with blood on his finger. While the man regarded the blood thoughtfully, Connor stood slowly and moved a couple feet further away. "I fell ..." he began, but trailed off hesitantly, since the man seemed uninterested about why Connor was here. Instead, the man seemed completely engrossed in studying the blood on his finger, regarding it from different angles, sniffing it curiously, experimentally tasting it ...

Connor's jaw dropped. A vampire! Finally the look that had made him uncomfortable made sense: it was the look of a predator. It meant Connor was prey yet again and this time holy ground was no refuge.

Then he relaxed. A vampire. Right. Just because he was in Toronto, where Nick and Janette lived, did not mean every stranger was a vampire, however eccentric the stranger might be.

However pale.

However fascinated by blood.

However long his eyeteeth happened to be.

However much his eyes glowed ... Then again ...

"Very tasty," the stranger said, smiling politely in a dangerously evil sort of way. "I thought I smelled someone interesting as I passed by. Now why is that?"

"I'm Scottish?" Connor looked around quickly for a place to hide, but realized there was nowhere nearby he would be safe from a vampire. Glancing at the sky, he saw it lightening slightly in the east, but not enough: dawn was much too far away. Smiling innocently, he backed up slowly.

The vampire approached at the same rate, keeping pace calmly. “No, I don’t think so. I’ve had Scottish blood before and yours is definitely different,” he said thoughtfully, humoringly.

“Still, I don’t think I’d make a very good meal … ”

“Aah, but I do. ”

Suddenly Connor stopped backing away. He might as well there was nowhere to go. Defiantly he glared at the vampire and said, “All right, do it, if you’re going to. But do us both a favor and make sure you kill me. Don’t try to bring me over. ”

Pleased that his quarry was being so cooperative, the vampire smiled agreeably. “And why should I do that?”

Before Connor could answer, he heard a whooshing sound and Nick appeared out of the sky, landing gracefully a few feet away to Connor’s right. Walking forward, Nick said, “You’ve made mistakes with your victims before, LaCroix. Remember Jack the Ripper?”

“But this one isn’t like that, Nicholas,” LaCroix said, indicating Connor with a wave of his hand. “He has none of Jack’s evil and where Jack tasted like poison, this one has a fascinating taste. ”

Connor edged towards Nick as the vampires carried on their debate.

“His people are different,” Nick said. “I’m not sure we can kill them and I don’t want to find out what happens if you try to bring one of them over. ”

LaCroix smiled indulgingly. “But maybe I want to find out. ”

By now Nick had placed himself between Connor and

LaCroix. Connor used this to his advantage and backed away, looking around for anything to protect himself. A cross, maybe? No, most of those around him were carved into the stones and he could not see how they would be a proper deterrent. What then?

“LaCroix!”

Connor turned back just in time to see LaCroix arrive suddenly in front of him and grab him by the collar of his jacketUalmost lifting him off the groundt He struggled brieflyU then gave upo vampire strength was far beyond his own. “I don’t want to be a vampire,” he stated angrily.

“And why so ever not?” LaCroix said with a bemused expression.

Bitterly Connor said, “Who wants to be immortal?”

He saw Nick, a few feet away, waiting to see what LaCroix would do, ready to intervene if necessary. He wondered what Nick could do if LaCroix decided to bite him.

But LaCroix’s expression gradually changed to one of confusion, then understanding. “You’re one of the others,” he said, emphasizing the last word.

Confused himself now, Connor looked from LaCroix to Nick and back again. “What others?”

Releasing Connor, LaCroix walked a little ways away, seemingly thoughtful. After a few moments, he stopped and turned back to them. “Over the yearsUI’ve heard of ‘others’t Like us but noto lacking our strengths but also lacking our weaknesses.” He gave Connor a curious glance. “And immortal.”

“You knew about them?” Nick asked.

“Only vague rumors,” LaCroix said with a shrug. “But if

some of the rumors are true, you were right to warn me away from him, Nicholas. His kind should not be brought over.”

“Someone should tell Janette that,” Nick said with a grin.

Connor laughed to himself. So there were advantages to being Immortal.

“Your kind will leave us alone,” LaCroix told him pointedly with such mental force that Connor cringed slightly.

“No problem,” he assured them. “We can’t sense vampires anymore than we can sense mortals.”

Nodding quietly, LaCroix turned to Nick. “I’ll be seeing you, Nicholas.” With a whoosh, LaCroix disappeared into the night.

Very much relieved, Connor turned to Nick. “How did he know I’m an Immortal?”

“A guess. Most people pick some of the other problems with being a vampire, like never seeing the sun and having to drink blood. But you indicated you didn’t like immortality, the only thing you have experience with, but not something many others would’ve argued against. Besides,” he said with a smile. “Your bitterness was too convincing.”

Connor nodded wryly. “Your timing is excellent, by the way. Thanks.”

“Someone reported a swordfight. You’re lucky, it was me who got called to search the area.” Looking Connor over briefly, then glancing around, Nick asked, “Where’s your sword?”

“At the bottom of the river.” Sighing tiredly, Connor shook his head. “While I was walking along the river, I felt another Immortal I heard a noise and turned right into the

knife she threw. It had to be my sword arm she hit,” he said sarcastically, peering at his mostly healed shoulder.

“I take it you lost the fight?”

He nodded. “And ran.”

“Why here?”

“It’s holy ground,” he said simply.

“So?”

Connor looked at Nick silently for a bit, before deciding Nick knew enough about him that one more bit of information made little difference. “We can’t kill each other on holy ground.”

“Why?”

He shrugged. “It’s one of the Rules. No one breaks that one.”

“No one?”

“Not even the Kurgan did.” At Nick’s curious look, Connor added, “Remind me to tell you about him sometime.”

Nick turned and started toward the cemetery gate. “Let’s go find your sword before someone else does.”

Following, Connor took off his jacket and draped it over his shoulder as he had originally planned. Shifting his shoulder experimentally, he found it felt much better. As they walked along, he asked, “Just how many vampires are there in this city?”

Silence answered him. Why? What was Nick hiding?

Suddenly he knew. “Should I wear a cross from now on?” he asked sarcastically.

Nick laughed. “Better make it a big one.”

Notes

cemetery 墓地

sarcastically 讽刺地

throb 脉搏

trailed off 减弱

eccentric 行为古怪的人

quarry 猎物

whooshing 飞快移动

deterrent 妨碍物

bemused 发呆的

rumors 传闻

cringed 奉承

wryly 表情冷淡地

冲破坚冰

Icebreaking

By Valerie Meachum

万事开头难，头一脚难踢。无论什么事情，没做之前，总有一种浮在空中不着边际的感觉。实际做起来，有了一个良好的开端，事情就成了一大半。

“What are you doing, Nicholas?” He shook his head in answer to his own silent question. Allowing himself to be caught up in the enthusiasm of a wellmeaning but very naive young woman, that was what. Didn't he know better than that by now?

“Solving a puzzle is its own reward for me,” she'd said and he had no doubt that she'd meant it. Even if the statement proved false later on, he was certain she was not deliberately deceiving him.

But she was quite a puzzle herself, this Natalie Lambert. A doctor, a scientist, buried so deep in her work that she remained there far into the night even on her birthday. He had never expected such a mind to accept the reality of his existence with barely a blink, let alone hold tightly to that knowledge

despite his efforts to erase it. Failing that, he had drawn on long-discarded mannerisms to frighten her away — and succeeded only in drawing her closer. That proximity scared him, scared him more even than his inability to predict her reactions. He didn't want to be the one to teach her how deadly such unbridled curiosity could be.

But for now he had agreed to consider her offer, and found to his surprise that it seemed possible. Science had explored so much territory that in his proper time had been considered magical why shouldn't it be able to find the key to vampirism?

“Dr. Lambert?”

She looked up sharply from her desk, her face that of a startled child for a split second before the rational woman took over. “Hi. I wondered if you'd ever come back. You seemed pretty determined to get rid of me the other night.”

“Not determined enough.”

Crossing her arms, she leaned back in her chair, regarding him thoughtfully. “On purpose. Maybe I'll bet you could have chased me off if you really applied yourself. I'm probably not that unflappable.”

“No.” He shook his head. “Not on purpose, Doctor.” Taking a seat in the chair opposite her desk, he went on, “Before we make any agreement, I must be sure you really understand how dangerous an undertaking this is. I am not a safe person to know, Dr. Lambert. Ever.”

“You seemed safe enough the other night. You could have killed me any time.”

“/And still could,” he insisted. Uher blunt clarity taking him off guard yet again. “Before either of us knows what has

happened. Don't ever doubt that.”

She studied him for a long moment, finally replying, “I have to doubt it. The evidence says otherwise. Injured, confused, apparently starving, you went for the cooler instead of me. How am I supposed to believe you'd suddenly turn around and attack me without warning?”

“It has been known to happen.”

“Yeah? When?”

The instinct to keep his secrets to himself was screaming at him, but he had to make her understand if he was going to let her endanger herself. “Too many times to count, Doctor.”

“When?” she repeated firmly.

“Not in a hundred years,” he admitted. “But that is not a vow that's easily kept.”

“A hundred years?” she repeated. “So why are you so worried about me in particular?”

He could have given her a hundred reasons for that, but something in the way she asked the question stopped him short. One of the things that made her so unpredictable had just clarified itself: here was a beautiful woman who was honestly oblivious to that fact. What she was really asking was why would I be special? And there was no false modesty hereo she really didn't know. How had this jaded world produced such a person? “Because you should be afraid and you're not,” he answered finally. “Fear may be based on ignorance, but it's also a safety net. I meant what I said: keep your distance.”

“All right.” She nodded, digesting this. “So why did you come back?”

He considered the question for a moment. “I'm not really

sure,” he admitted finally. “Several reasons, I suppose. Because I wanted to make sure you wouldn’t do anything foolish. Because it’s nice to lie to myself once in a while and pretend I’m not completely alone.” He shrugged. “Because I do want very much to believe you can help me—which doesn’t mean I do,” he added hastily.

A broad grin lit her face, reminding him that she was really not beyond youthful impetuosity, however well she might conceal it behind a very professional facade. “So you do know how to smile,” she accused impishly. “You should try it more often. It suits you.”

“All right.” Had he really become so grim? “Though I’ve had little to smile about in a long time.”

“Guess we’ll have to change that.” Her smile faded almost out of existence, and the look in her eyes was openly challenging. “I meant what I said, too: You’re not evil. You’re not hopeless. You got a raw deal, and I don’t see any reason why it shouldn’t be reversible.”

“But you don’t see any reason why it should, either,” he pointed out. “And I haven’t yet agreed to let you try.”

She nodded. “All right, then. Am I being tested?”

“I suppose you are. Does that bother you?”

She thought about that a moment. “Not really.”

Leaning on the desk, he replied seriously, “It should. What right have I to judge you?”

“As much right as anyone else.” She shrugged. “I am asking you to trust me on something pretty heavy-duty.”

“And in return you’re trusting me with your life,” he reminded her again. He was still afraid she didn’t take that danger as seriously as she should. But he didn’t know how else

to convince her without really frightening her away. And he knew he no longer wanted to do that — if indeed it was possible, which he was beginning to doubt.

“Looks that way.”

“Then I’ll have to work hard to be worthy of that,” he told her solemnly. In a lighter tone, he went on, “Your turn, Doctor. What are you doing here?”

Chuckling, she translated, “What’s a nice girl like me doing in a place like this, you mean?”

“Something like that,” he acknowledged, her humor infecting him. “Surely your desire to help is not limited to me, but your … patients here are a bit beyond help. Usually,” he added as an afterthought.

“Yeah, well, they don’t talk back,” she returned flippantly. “Usually.”

“I see.”

The neutral statement earned a puzzled look from her, reminding him again of a questioning child. “I admit it’s not the most glamorous occupation, but like I said, I love solving puzzles. And these puzzles help put killers away when I do.” With a flash of a sour expression, she added, “Anyway, I don’t need to do this to see what people can do to each other. Not these days. So it really doesn’t matter much.”

Nick suspected that she still hadn’t given him the real reason, but he let it go for now, saying instead, “You don’t make a very convincing cynic, Dr. Lambert.”

“Maybe not,” she acknowledged with a smile. “So, I’m not a good cynic, and you do in fact possess a smile. So maybe we should both stop wasting energy on the very aloof and serious routine?”

Nick quirked an eyebrow at her. “Do you really think that’s wise?”

“As a matter of fact, yes,” she shot back. “I think I’ll stand a much better chance of being able to help you when we stop playing verbal chess and start working together.”

He regarded her for a long moment, sternly forbidding his mouth to curl up in a smile, and failing. “But it’s a game you seem to excel at, Doctor.”

“Yeah, well, we can’t always like what we’re good at. I’m not big on games in general.” The self-deprecating almost-smile that accompanied the statement seemed to be an expression her face fell into easily, one Nick suspected she wore more often than any other he had seen. “And it’s Natalie.”

“Natalie,” he repeated, uneasy about establishing first-name familiarity but seeing little choice. “Then I’m Nicho—Nick.” This prompted the gamine grin again, the one so completely at odds with her peculiar profession. The one he found a bit too appealing for comfort. “HeyUyou have a smile and a nameg You’ll be human in no time!”

“If only it were that easy.”

“We’ll do it,” Natalie assured him — and, he suspected, herself.

“Well, Sydney, I think we may have made a start.”

The grey tabby answered her with a sleepy blink, clearly finding her announcement less than earthshattering.

“You’re impressed,” Natalie chuckled, scooping up the cat from his place on the couch and scratching under his chin. /I can tellt But you try consulting with a cagey vampire sometime.”

A vampire. There was no denying Nick's anomalous existence, for all that it ran contrary to what she had always been told. All other puzzles in her reach paled in comparison to the chance to try to understand a vampire.

Not merely to understand him, either, but to find a way to erase those anomalies and return him to the state of grace he considered humanity to be. A tall order. That one, in fact, he still wasn't convinced that it was possible.

And, for all her put-on confidence, neither was she. Still, she hadn't made him any promises she couldn't keep. She had only told him she'd try.

That was all Nick expected of her, but Natalie knew that she could not just try. She would solve this puzzle, the greatest of her life. She would give him back his humanity.

"I don't mean to be judgmental, Natalie, but don't you have any cheerier places to spend your time?"

The coroner looked around her, at the sickly green tile, the cold stainless-steel furnishings. "I guess it is pretty blah in here. Uhuh?"

Nick stopped himself from saying it didn't seem to suit her. He was finding it increasingly difficult to keep this disarming young woman at a safe, impersonal distance and that would not help. Instead he suggested, "Maybe we should find a more comfortable place to talk?"

"And leave my secure turf?" she asked in mock horror. Or maybe not so mock, he amended to himself. He had already noted that she seemed to be hiding here from something. "Well, if we must ... come on, I live pretty near here. You can meet my cat."

Nick shook his head. "That's not a good idea."

“Oh, Sydney’s okay with everybody,” she assured him, shrugging out of her lab coat and picking up a light jacket.

“I’m sure Sydney would be fine, but … ”

“But what?” She gave him a sidelong glance, lifting an eyebrow. “After surviving a pipe bomb blowing you to bits, you’re not going to tell me you’re allergic to cats?”

That earned an amused half-smile. “No, I’m not allergic. It’s just that I’m not … comfortable with the idea of going to your house. ”

Without missing a beat, she came back with, “Okay. What about yours?”

“Natalie … ”

“Didn’t think so. It was worth a shot. ”

“It’s for your safety. ”

Natalie nodded. “So you keep saying. ”

“What do you mean by that?” Immediately Nick realised the question had been too sharp, as he watched a flash of startlement cross her face before being carefully put away. She really was much too good at that.

“Just that I still have no evidence that you’d hurt me. But we can argue that point until we’re both blue in the face — if that’s possible for you — and it won’t get us anywhere. ”

“True enough. ” Nick smiled. “For instance, we still haven’t decided on a place to go. A public place. ”

“Where you have an excuse to censor what you tell me?” she challenged. Crossing her arms,

Where it’s easier to keep you at arm’s length,) he wanted to answer, but he knew it would do no good. “We’ll see,” he allowed.

“Okay. ” Hooking her purse over her shoulder, she

dug through its treacherous depths for several seconds, at last fishing out her keys. “There’s an ice cream place a couple blocks away that’s open until 11.”

Natalie was hard-pressed not to burst out laughing at the look on Nick’s face when she held out the cone of fudge ripple. “Have you tried?”

“Not ice cream.” He shrugged. “A few other things, when circumstances gave me no choice. It may interest you that my gag reflex is alive and well.”

“I’ll put it in my notes,” she chuckled.

Nick’s sudden scowl at this surprised her. “Notes can be found, Natalie. Remember: however you plan to go about this course of treatment, you must work in absolute secrecy.” He offered no more, but Natalie couldn’t help thinking it was the same tone he used when harping on the issue of her safety.

/Don’t worryo I’m not in a rush to be led into a nice white roomU thanks.” (And besides,) she added to herselfU I this is my puzzle.) She neither wanted nor expected recognition from her peersU certainly not for this surreal little enigmao what she wanted was the answer.

Nick’s severe expression melted as suddenly as it had appeared. “Of course not. I’m sorry. But I really can’t exaggerate how important that is. A whisper of this gets out, and I can guarantee you will never see me again.”

Natalie nodded. “I figured that was the deal.”

“So long as we’re both clear on it.” He watched her work at the ice cream cone for several seconds before asking, “What does that taste like, anyway?”

She held it out to him again, and he eyed it uncertainly. “Go on, it’s not going to kill you.” Dropping her voice to a

conspiratorial whisper, she added, “At least, Bram Stoker never mentioned ice cream.” “Well, he wasn’t entirely on the mark,” Nick chuckled. “But no, ice cream is not on the list.”

This time she did crack up, as he accepted the cone, gingerly attempting to take a lick of it and looking for all the world as if it were laced with ground glass rather than chocolate. “Oh, give me that!” she sputtered finally, snatching it back before it dripped everywhere. “Well, I certainly see where we can start!”

His stricken look at the prospect of further food experiments sent Natalie into renewed laughter, and a second later he joined her.

When both had settled down, she pulled the conversation back to a serious note. “Nick, listen: if we’re going to discuss your case in confidentiality, it’s got to be in private. That means either we go back to the lab, or one of us is going to have to play host. If we can’t talk, I can’t help you. It’s as simple as that.”

The ancient eyes regarded her across the table for a longU uncomfortable moment but she refused to back down, to look away. “All right,” he conceded at last. “And since I would rather trust you with my address than trust myself with yours, I guess it will have to be me.”

“You live here?”

After all that had happened in the past few days, he hadn’t expected this to throw her. “By your definition, I guess so.” He shrugged. “I reside here. If I say anything else, I’m going to start an argument.”

“If you’re going to insist on believing you’re not alive, you’d better get used to arguments,” Natalie returned tartlyt

“This looks like a storage space, not an apartment. How long have you lived here?”

“About a year and a half.”

“And in a year and a half you couldn’t get furniture?” She shook her head, surveying the spare loft. “No wonder you almost forgot how to smile.”

“Vampires in general are very wrapped up in surrounding themselves with things,” he explained. “I’ve had enough of that. This is all I need.”

“A mattress, a shower stall, and some boxes. Nick, has it occurred to you that humans like to have a few things too? Like where are we going to sit?”

“I don’t usually have company,” he countered.

“Yeah? Maybe you should start.” She looked around again, wrinkling her nose. “After you make this place habitable, that is. I assume you have the money, if you can afford the alarm system.”

Exasperated, he replied, “Of course I have the money. I have more money than I know what to do with. But,” He stopped short at the triumphant little smile she was failing to hide. “You’re trying to start an argument!” he accused.

“And succeeding.” Natalie perched on a nearby crate with a thoroughly exasperating smile. “The dead don’t argue, Nick. Trust me, I’ve met a lot of ’em.”

Privately he reflected that he had known some very argumentative dead in his time, but since he was beginning to think Natalie Lambert could give any of them a run for their long-standing Swiss accounts, he let the thought pass. “Fine,” he challenged. “Do scientists generally argue with their puzzles?”

Her face fell, and he wondered whether he had made a dreadful mistake. “I’m sorry,” she ventured, carefully holding her dignity together. “I shouldn’t let my … enthusiasm get ahead of my professional courtesy.” She stood up continuing in the same artificial doctor’s tone, “But you are a patient whose condition is the puzzle. And as such, you deserve to be”

“No,” he interrupted. “Don’t do that.” At her puzzled look, he continued, “Don’t be the perfect doctor. Joke, argue, enthuse all you want. Be human.” He had taken her hand in both his own, the first time he had dared to touch her in friendship rather than an attempt to frighten her away, and for a second he considered letting go—but only a second. “Be alive. That’s what I need, that example. That’s what I’d forgotten.”

For a moment she just stared at him. Then the coolly professional veneer was gone, replaced by the slightly shy smile as warm as his distant memory of sunshine. “That makes sense. But I’ll bet you haven’t forgotten as much as you think.”

“We’ll see.” He wasn’t yet sure he believed she could accomplish the task she had set for herself, but something had changed tonight. Whatever it was, this woman was the catalyst, and it was as the choices that had brought him into the darkness.

Maybe more so.

—The Beginning—

“A man died. He seemed like a good man, though I did not know him. Don Quixote is not dead, Sancho. Believe.” —

“But, Aldonza … ”

/My name is Dulcinea.”

Notes

wellmeaning 好心的

naive 纯真的

Failing 如果没有

proximity 接近

unbridled 无拘束的

vampirism 吸人膏血

unflappable 镇定的

offguard 不警惕

oblivious 健忘的

jaded 疲倦不堪的

digesting 消化

impetuosity 性急

facade 表面

impishly 顽皮地

flippantly 轻率地

aloof 远离

self-deprecating 谦虚

gamine 淘气的女孩

tabby 家猫

cagey 小心谨慎的

anomalous 反常的

coroner 验尸官

blah 乏味

censor 删改

fudge 白糖, 牛奶, 黄油做成的软糖

scowl 愁容

enigma 谜

sputtered 急忙地讲

tartly 辛辣地

mattress 床垫

emb them

longstanding 长期存在的

mystified 有迷惑力的

veneer 虚饰

catalyst 催化剂

irrevocable 不能变更的

Don Quixote 堂吉诃德，西班牙作家塞万提斯所著小说“堂吉诃德”中的主人公

Sancho 桑丘，堂吉诃德的仆人

Dulcinea 理想中的爱人，出自堂吉诃德想象中美丽并与其相爱的普通农家姑娘

喜欢纽约

*NEW YORK. DO YA LOVE THIS CITY,
OR WHAT?*

By Mitch Lemus

都市的喧嚣与忙乱，各处都差不多。淘金的人，目标专一，孜孜以求，心无旁骛，乐在其中，自然忘掉了身外的世界。要是打工一族，偏又和陶渊明同好，忘又忘不了，逃又逃不掉，不胜其扰，可就苦不堪言了。

/Attention passengers Q This downtown number 7 train is being 1 unintelligible) ... track fire up ahead Q For your safety please (unintelligible), then switch for the 1 unintelligibles train there.”

Just another morning on the IRT.

I know better than to make eye contact with potentially psychotic passengers. So while the train sits motionless, I gaze hypnotically at the ads above. Why are so many aimed at the physical anomalies of society? Does the medical community regard the strap-hanging public as a pack of humpbacked, hammer-toed, hemorrhoidal mutants?

Ads from ambulance-chasing law firms display headlines like “Dropped On Your Head As A Baby? ... You May Be

Entitled To A Big Cash Settlement.” While another asks, “Illiterate? Addicted to Crack? Out on Parole? The Department of Motor Vehicles Is Now Hiring.”

At 59th Street, the conductor kicks everyone out, announcing the train disabled. I impatiently wait in the commuter sewer for another train, wondering why I ever bothered to shower earlier. Rather than arrive at the office sweating like Patrick Ewing, I opt to catch a cab. But before I reach the street, some nudnik shoves a Jews for Jesus pamphlet at me. Yeah, right. And sign me up for Vegetarians For Meatloaf while you're at it.

Upon exiting the subway, Madam Zelda, one of those smarmy storefront fortune tellers, hands me a leaflet promising the answers to all my love, health, and financial problems. If Madam Zelda were truly psychic, wouldn't she already know not to waste her fliers on me?

Unable to find a cab, I cut in front of a couple of unsuspecting tourists and jump into the one they've hailed.

“Broadway and Astor,” I tell the driver.

“Bowery and Eleventh?” mumbles Turbanhead.

“Broadway and Astor,” I repeat.

“Broadway and 80th, you say?”

Should I expect anything less from a guy with 29 letters in his name, none of which are vowels?

Lawrence Taylor is on the car radio announcing the grand opening of the newest Nobody Beats the Wiz store off some exit in Jersey. If The Wiz can always refer to itself as Nobody Beats the Wiz, can I legally change my name to No Store is Cheap Enough for Mitch?

At 9:50, I finally arrive at my officeUwhere I sneak past

my boss through the back hallway.

Lunchtime. Head to a nearby ATM machine, and as usual, find myself stuck behind the woman who's applying for a mortgage.

Afterwards, I make myself a salad-to-go at an East Village Korean grocery, then pass a half dozen Korean knickknack shops on my way to the Korean-owned dry cleaners. I'm convinced these people heard a voice saying, "Open a business, and they will come."

Outside Tower Records I walk past a group of 20-somethings with logos etched into their haircuts. Wonder when the human head became the newest outdoor advertising medium. Contemplate if at 31, I'm too many letters removed from Generation X to be cool, or if I'm just turning into my father.

On my way back to the office, I pass a lineup of street peddlers displaying their wares on the sidewalk. Should I ever be in the market for a single worn sock to go with a pair of 70's platforms, a 1989 issue of People magazine, or a clock-radio from the days when they had dials, I now know where to shop.

Return to my desk where I eat lunch and make my obligatory weekly call to my mother in Florida. When she insists I call her neighbor's niece, Mindi, for a blind date, because "she also lives in Manhattan," I tell her I have another call, and abruptly hang up.

5:30 - 6:00: Look busy while I wait for my boss to leave work.

6:00: Boss leaves work.

6:01: I leave work.

Outside Astor Hairstylists, I pass a clique of hard-core punkers sporting black leather jackets, Doc Marten combat boots, and mental institution haircuts. Sweat and body odor are worn as alternative outlets of expression. When they blow their pierced noses, does it find the path of least resistance — and squirt out the side?

Entering the subway, I steer clear of a rowdy group of inner-city teens wearing baggy pants with crotches nearly sweeping the floor. Could they be hiding something down there? Like pistols?

On the uptown 6, two schmutz-incrusted panhandlers enter the train from opposite sides and simultaneously begin their spiels. When they meet in the middle of the car, they engage in a territorial dispute.

At five to seven, I arrive at my tiny 5th floor walk-up where I sidestep two Chinese menus and a carpet cleaning flier slipped under my door. The phone's ringing as I enter. "So, Mrt LemusU we'll have Caller *It d.* hooked up for you by Monday, OK?" says the NYNEX telemarketer, as he wraps up his monotone scripted pitch. "You mean with Caller ID, I could tell if it's an annoying salesman like you even before I pick up?" Click.

I search the refrigerator and find Empire Wok leftovers from the night before last. I eat it cold, straight from the box. Surf the channels but find nothing on but authoritative-looking men in suits spewing *Ot 9.* analysis.

Fall asleep on the couch, then wake up to the 11 o'clock news, where an outraged citizen proposes the Department of Social Services declare the entire city dysfunctional^t It occurs to me that the only way to survive this city is to be

dysfunctional. Or, at least, a little crazier than the next guy.

Notes

Ya 年轻人

hypnotically 用催眠术地

ads 广告

anomalies 异常的人或物

humpbacked 驼背的

hemorrhoidal 痔疮的

ambulance 救护车

Illiterate 文盲

Crack 玩笑

Parole 假释

conductor 列车员

opt 选择

nudnik 无聊的人

pamphlet 小册子

smarmy 令人厌烦的

tellers 出纳员

hailed 招呼

Broadway 纵贯纽约市的大街道；百老汇

Turbanhead 戴穆斯林头巾的

ATM 自动售货机

mortgage 抵押

knickknack 装饰性的小东西

etched 蚀刻

contemplate 沉思

Generation X 指 1961 年~1972 年出生的一代人，他们大多受过高等教育，对职业选择不满，对人生持悲观态度

- peddlers 小贩
hard-core 绝对的
punkers 反传统文化的年轻人
combat boots 陆战靴
odor 气味
squirt 喷出
steer 沿着某一行动路线
rowdy 好吵闹的人
schmutz 粉末
panhandlers 乞丐
simultaneously 同时地
spiels 喋喋不休
walk-up 没有电梯的
It d. 身份证
Telemarketer 电话直销商
Wok 铁锅
Spewing 指满口胡言乱语
Ot 9. 指轰动美国的辛普森杀妻案
Dysfunctional 功能受到损害的

现眼波特兰

Throwing Up In Portland



一个人要是言行举止数十年如一日，整个都是好孩子的模样，他会不会还有个性？

Hardly anyone remembers Camel anymore. They were a British band whose popularity peaked in about 1977, not to be confused with Frampton's Camel (which was Peter Frampton's I remember him?) band of the same era. Camel was a /progressive rock 3 band I like ELP U Yes U and Genesis U though they sounded nothing like any of those bands whose airplay was limited to /AOR" (album-oriented radio's FM stations. Their biggest hit album was "Moonmadness", though they were fairly well-known for their earlier album "The Snow Goose".

Anyway U Camel toured the greater Ut u. in about 1977. In Portland U they would be coming to the Paramount U and REO Speedwagon I I was never much of an REO fans would open for them t The Paramount Theater in Portland (there was one in Seattle too s was just about the best place in the world for a rock concert. It held a little over 3000, was beautifully

decorated, with chandeliers and exquisitely detailed and brightly colored woodwork everywhere. Standing was not allowed. There was no “festival seating” (the kind of seating where everyone stands). The place was fully carpeted. Even the walls were carpeted to a height of about *y* feet and acoustically, it was one of the best venues for a rock concert ever.

So it was with much anticipation and excitement that I made plans to attend the concert with two friends of mine from school. Tracy was diminutive fellow with a lisp and an unending appetite for drugs. His next-door neighbor, Steve Harrell, was of higher than average intelligence but every inch an anarchist. His cerebral but socially out-of-it ways made him lots of fun to get high with. And, he was a fellow Camel fan.

Strategies were outlined for attending the show. Now, the Paramount had no reserved seating, so there were two ways to ensure a good seat. One, you could show up verrrry early and camp out in front of the doors (the groupies usually did this), or Two, you could wait until the precise moment the doors opened, and crowd in at the corner of the block, beating all the chumps who had lined up along the sidewalk, the line sometimes reaching all the way around the perimeter of the building. As always, we would opt for Method Two.

I was the driver for this event, I had a new lime-green Pontiac Ventura with a Craig Car Stereo cassette deck I'd installed myself, so I was usually picked to drive.

We arrived about two hours before show time. We were incredibly lucky to find a parking spot right on the corner, just across the street from the doors. Here, we could imbibe all we wanted. Then simply hop out and walk up to the doors when

they openedt Wonderfulg

Steve, being the bravest, went off to try to score some wine at a little market up the street. He managed to procure some liquor by bribing an old alcoholic street person, giving the old guy enough for his very own bottle. Then he returned to the car with the goodies: A half-gallon of warm, pink chablis for Tracy and him to share, and for me, my very own fifth of warm, pink chablis. Of course it was yucky-tasting, but that was hardly the point: We could get totally shitface-drunk, then just walk up at the right time and get excellent seats for the concert. All our concert-going experience and brainstorming had brought us to this perfect situation. We were very proud.

I finished off my fifth in about 30 minutes, as we knew the doors would be opening soon. Tracy and Steve were too grossed out by the flavor and temperatures of the wine to drink as much as I did, but they had drunk enough to develop a healthy buzz, especially when combined with all the usual weed that was obligatory for concert-going.

We noticed a clamor on the corner. The doors were about to open. We climbed out of the car and crossed the street into the dense crowd, which was when I first noticed that I was nearly too drunk to stand up. After pushing our way into the crowd, the only way I could remain upright was by propping myself against other concertgoers.

Once the doors opened, we raced into the auditorium and secured seats in the third row near center stage. On the stage, there were three huge projection screens set up in back, as Camel had a sort of slide-projection show that would play behind them, very advanced visual-stuff for a rock band at the

time.

Everything had gone perfectly, except one thing: My stomach and the pink wine were not getting along very well. So I sat there, hoping the nauseous feeling would pass. It got worse when it was announced that REO Speedwagon would not be there. I don't remember the reason for their cancellation, but they were to be replaced by a Portland band I had never heard of, and would never hear of again, called "Wrinkle".

Just about then, I realized that puking was inevitable. I calmly got up and walked very fast to the restrooms in the basement of the Paramount.

Now, before I begin describing my technicolor yawn, you need to know two things: One, I have had severe hay fever my entire life, and I get 3 allergy shots every four weeks, a procedure that will continue until I die. My hay fever can sometimes get so bad that it nearly cuts off my breathing, though I test negative for asthma. And this concert was in springtime. Two, the ancient restrooms at the Paramount were solid porcelain and tile, meaning every little sound gets amplified horribly and echos a thousand times.

I leaped at the nearest toilet and began harping up the pink chablis, now warmed fully to 98.6 degrees. But when I went to take a breath before continuing, I found that the hurling had somehow triggered some sort of swelling in my trachea. The only way to get a breath was to inhale as hard as I could, which made a HELL of a racket: Make the loudest, lowest-in-pitch sound that you can possibly make with your throat while inhaling, then amplify it by a factor of ten — not unlike a very large and distressed cow choking to death. Then add the

acoustical ambience of a large restroom full of nothing but hard surfaces.

A crowd quickly formed around my cubicle as the dying-cow sound was repeated, long and loud, maybe ten times. /Hey manUare you all right?” “Yeah (sound of cow choking), I’ll be all right I hurl)”. Once my stomach turned off the chunder-valve, I could breathe again, and felt much better. I cleaned myself up with toilet paper, blowing my nose, wiping my face off, and grabbing a drink of water on my way back to my seat, where I acted as if nothing had happened.

Soon, “Wrinkle” began their performance. They weren’t very good, and my stomach wasn’t liking them either. About halfway through their third number, I realized it was all going to happen again. But this timeUI wasn’t going to be making it to the restroomg So I pulled out my handkerchief and threw up all over myself. Steve and Tracy were most appalled to look over and see my t-shirt covered with pink chablis and what remained of this afternoon’s grilled ham & cheese sandwich. Realizing that I was not going to stop blowing chunks anytime soon, I got up and began running for the exit. Jogging and puking, I managed to nail the lovely carpeted wall of the Paramount and leave a major chunder-puddle right in front of the concessions stand before racing out the front entrance of the theater, still puking, between two startled security guards.

I went across the street to my new Pontiac, where I sat in the driver’s seat, checking the mirrors to make sure nobody was coming up the sidewalk before opening the door and puking every few minutes. This went on for maybe half an hour before I took my shirt off, wadded it into a ball and

threw it on the floorboard, and passed out.

I woke up to somebody pounding on the windowst It was Tracy and Steveg Such good friends they were, they had given up on the concert to check on my well-being, I presumed. I unlocked the door, and they both climbed in, chattering about what a great concert it was and too bad I missed it and the slide-show thing was really cool too. I had slept through the entire thing.

EPILOGUE:

TRACY became a major area cocaine dealer.

STEVE's whereabouts are unknown.

The PONTIAC somehow lasted 186,000 miles before I sold it 13 years later.

CAMEL disappeared entirely.

Notes

Portland 波特兰, 美国俄勒冈州西北部的一个港口城市

Peter Frampton 英国歌星, 歌词作者和吉它演奏家

airplay 通过电台播出

Paramount 最高当局

chandeliers 树枝形的装饰灯架

exquisitely 精巧地

acoustically 听觉上

lisp 咬着舌儿说

anarchist 不受管束的人

groupies 歌迷, 特别是在巡回演出时围着摇滚乐队转的年轻姑娘

chumps 笨蛋, 木头人

perimeter 周长

- imbibe 吸收
 goodies 好东西
 chablis 一种白葡萄酒
 yucky 很糟糕的
 shitface 喝醉的
 brainstorming 灵机一动
 weed 大麻
 clamor 喧闹
 propping 支撑
 hay fever 花粉热，干草热
 allergy 敏感症
 asthma 哮喘
 amplified 放大
 triggered 引起
 trachea 气管
 appalled 非常吃惊
 EPILOGUE 结语

报复的黑枪

Revenge of the Pot-heads

如今这年头，中学教师也成了危险的职业，光是近来这几个月，南方北方的，就听到了好几起教师被害的事件。十几岁的中学生，半大不小的，道理似懂非懂，做事不知深浅，正是容易犯混的年龄，老师们可真得悠着点儿。教育不比打仗，不能志在必得。孔子三千弟子，也只不过出了 72 个贤人，对一般的人才，更不能期望过高了。

I went to high school in the mid-seventies, when the national sport for people my age was smoking dope. I was a most eager participant. At my high school, the main venue for pursuit of this hobby was one of two designated “smoking areas” at the far corners of the campus. Students would gather in small circles to either smoke dope, or not smoke dope. This made it an exercise in frustration for vigilant faculty members seeking to catch a student in the act of getting high, but there were a few self-righteous assholes who made it their business anyway. Usually they were administrators, who were generally student-phating bureaucrats unable to teach or find

actual work. It was their job. But there were a few glory-seeking teachers who took it upon themselves to act out their pathetic fantasy of being a cop, their fantasy being unfulfilled from a lifetime of burying their head in a book and throwing a baseball like a girl. The one that easily stood out in my high school was Mr. Carson, a creepy English teacher with political ambitions who wore a bow tie and glasses with lenses thick as Coke-bottle bottoms. Although he showed up at the smoking areas often, he never had much success dragging the miscreants to the school office. I remember one incident when Mr. Carson caught a student red-handed, but while escorting him to the dean's office we all started yelling, "Rung Run!", which the student did, or jogged was more like it, stashed his weed in the bottom of a garbage can, went to class, got called to the dean's office, professed his innocence there (in possession being ten-tenths of the law), went back and got his weed, and returned to his routine.

Rumor had it that even the administrators didn't approve of Carson's tactics, since it just made their job harder, not to mention having their personal thunder stolen by a wimpy English teacher. But a single incident one morning brought the situation to a head. I was standing in the smoking area one morning during first period with my friend Paul Nagel. Now, Paul was already plenty spaced without smoking dope. He had these beautiful yet remarkably vacant blue eyes and the vocabulary of a farm boy, which he was. He lived just a couple miles north of me on a small farm with his dad. Despite these shortcomings, he was quite a ladies' man. I remember that at the time, he had a somewhat-unwanted girlfriend who, despite being in a completely different school district, could convince

her mother to take her to Paul's school nearly every day, where she would chase him down and try to talk him out of breaking up with her. She was gorgeous, but, I suspect, a little too plump for Paul's simple tastes.

Above all, though, Paul was an extremely kind person, which made him my friend. That, and the fact that he always had dope.

And so it was that Paul and I found ourselves to be the only students in one of the aforementioned smoking areas one chilly morning. Paul had a joint, and asked if I would join him. However, it was first period by now, so I had already gotten high twice — on the way to the bus stop, and with other friends before first period started. So I uncharacteristically declined his kind offer and headed to the cafeteria for breakfast chocolate milk, “the stoner's second best friend”).

Upon returning only a few minutes later, Paul had mysteriously vanished. A lone, young student dragging on a Marlboro was the only soul around. “Did you see Nagel?” I asked. “Yeah, Carson caught him smoking a J and took him away.” I was immediately upset. Carson had been prowling the smoking area for a couple of months now, and he had finally bagged a student too disdainful of confrontation to even take off running. Worse, it could have been ME. I took off for the dean's office, wanting to investigate the kid's story. Also, I knew there was a pay phone with a phone book near the office. I would get Carson's home phone number. This was war.

On my way there, a friend of mine, another stoner named Tracy Kludt happened along my path. After explaining the

situation, he followed me to the administrative offices. We walked by the dean's office, where the back of Carson's slime-green suit was pressed against the tiny, narrow window in the door. It was true. We immediately headed for the pay phone, carefully writing down Carson's phone number. Then we headed back to the smoking area. By now, first period was over and the area filled with students again. We spread the word that Carson had busted poor Paul, along with Carson's home phone number. Soon, the entire smoking area was abuzz with, in addition to the usual things, the news of the bust. We were talking of the awful things we would do to Carson for this.

Suddenly, the double doors leading into the smoking area burst open and through them stepped Paul. Much of the smoking area fell silent with disbelief. It was like the second coming of Christ if Jesus had worn tattered Levis and a dirty coat that smelled of reefer. "Paul? What happened, man?" "I dunno, man, Carson caught me smoking a joint and took me down to the office. I stuck it in my pocket when I saw him. When we were in the dean's office they told me to pull my pockets inside-out and Carson's like looking at me, going, 'Okay, Paul', so I pulled out my pockets like this" — he demonstrated by pulling them out again — "and it's gone man, I don't know what happened to it. Guess I have a hole in my pocket or something." With this, he began shaking his right pants-leg, and a half-burnt doobie tumbled out and onto the ground. Paul looked up with that bewildered blank stare of his. We all shrieked with laughter. Then we finished the joint.

But it wasn't over. With the bungled bust of one of the

kindest among us, Carson had finally overstepped. We began a campaign of phone harassment. With a black marker, I wrote, “Carson’s phone number is 555-4773! Call him and tell him what you think!” in huge letters across the top of the smoking area doors. Unwanted pizzas and taxi cabs began to descend upon Carson’s house on a nightly basis. One time, we even arranged it so that all three local taxi companies and both local pizzerias showed up at his house at the same time. This became the talk of the faculty, some of the teachers never showing up in the smoking area again, and others laughing at Carson behind his back.

STILL he wouldn’t quit. I remember standing alone at the outer corner of the smoking area a few days later when I spotted Carson making his quickstepping approach (I realize now he NEVER ran, probably because he ran like a girl). “Carson!” I called out to a knot of underclassmen near the door, who turned out to be smoking nothing more than Camels. But Carson was enraged, so he approached me, a terse smile on his waxy yellow face. “You have a problem?” “No, sir.” “How come you yelled my name?” “Because we all look forward to your arrival.” His face turned into a frown. “What’s your name?” “Dave Peck”, I answered, recalling the name of a school jock I had recently intimidated. “Beck?” asked the hair- tonic-ensconced dweeb. “Peck”, I repeated, wanting him to get it right, because just a couple of weeks earlier a friend of mine was asked for his name after Carson heard him when he called Carson a “walking fruit salad”. My friend intimated that he was Eric Clapton, and got in a limited amount of trouble when Carson checked the school roster to find no Eric Clapton there at all. As punishment they sent a

note home to his dad explaining how young Steve Harrell had purposely misidentified himself. “What name did you give him?” Mr. Harrell asked. When Steve replied “Eric Clapton”, his dad, an airline mechanic, burst into laughter. So, even after all the pizzas and taxis, Carson was still making the occasional unwanted foray into places where he had no business.

We needed to stop him for good, and I had a plan. It would take teamwork. From John Warthog, whose parents had considerable property at the end of my street, I secured an M-80 and ten minutes’ worth of fuse. The Warthogs always had these goods, as they were used for scaring birds off their property. Since Steve McLeod had a reliable car, he was recruited to help carry out my plan. Another friend, a musician named Jeff, went along for moral support.

I had already scouted out Carson’s home, after all, his address was right there in the phone book. He lived on a dead-end street, and a huge tree blocked his view of his mailbox from the house.

We first went to McDonald’s to grab a burger and cleverly cover the rear license-plate light of Steve’s monstrous ’63 Chevy with black tape. Then we set out for Carson’s, with me in the back seat, a mad bomber with a chauffeur. I lit the slow-burning fuse before we pulled onto Carson’s street. We went to the end of it, turned around, and slowed to a stop in front of his mailbox. I carefully placed the M-80 inside and we drove away, a little sorry that we would miss the fireworks but feeling like heroes nonetheless. Steve was tired and went home after dropping Jeff and I off. But Jeff and I wanted to see the spoils of our victory, so we grabbed my dad’s pickup and went

back to Carson's to survey the battlefield. As soon as we turned the corner, the remains of Carson's mailbox came into view. All that remained was the post and the bottom of the box. One side of the squarely-shaped mailbox could be seen lying in the street. We turned around and got out of there, screaming with laughter and triumph all the way.

Carson never returned to the smoking area.

EPILOGUE:

MRT CARSON I not his real names became a State Representative in 1994 on his third try at election. Naturally, he is a Republican. Whoever runs against him gets a donation from me, even though he doesn't represent my district.

PAUL NAGEL is not dead, as far as I know.

Notes

dope 麻醉药物

vigilant 警惕的

self-righteous 自以为是的

pathetic 可怜的

miscreants 堕落的

jogged 猛地转身

stashed 藏起来

wimpy 很虚弱的

vacant 茫然的

aforementioned 前述的

disdainful 轻蔑的

busted 殴打

abuzz 噉噉喳喳的

Levis Levis 牌牛仔裤

- reefer 大麻卷烟
 bungled 糟糕的
 knot 一群人
 underclassmen 低年级学生
 terse 简洁的
 waxy 蜡色的
 jock 大学里的运动员
 dweeb 小人
 intimidated 明白表示
 foray 袭击
 teamwork 联手做事
 secured 绑住
 fuse 导火线
 scaring 威吓
 recruited 征募
 burger 汉堡包
 license-plate 牌照
 spoils 战利品
 triumph 狂欢
 Representative 众议员
 Republican 共和党人

幽 灵

Eidolons

By David Hemming

上小学的时候读《西游记》，读着读着我就晕了。虽然到底把唐僧读到了西天，但印象最深的却不是他们师徒的行迹，而是哪吒的故事。

后来读斯威布的《希腊的神话和传说》，记不清翻开了多少次，可哪次也没能正儿八经地读下去。看着那些神名啦，事情啦，我头都大了。

我喜欢看哪吒闹海，喜欢看罗宾汉啸傲绿林。这篇现代人写的神话故事，就有那种娓娓动人的味道。

I

“I need to find a way to kill the dead.”

It was an unusual conversational gambit, but I had learned to expect such from James, my sometime apprentice. His quick mind often found questions where others saw only accepted fact, and I valued the stimulus he provided to my own ancient thought processes. When you're well into your

second millennium, anything that can provoke new ideas is a priceless treasure.

I'm a wizard, or at least that's what the villagers call me. I'm so old that I can still remember when people called me a quantum physicist. But that was before the Seraph War, and the Years of Pain that followed, and everything was different then. I sighed, and pulled myself away from the manticore I was dissecting.

/That's something of an oxymoron I think." I wasn't sure I occasionally wished I'd taken an English elective at college, but the lack didn't usually trouble me. When the nearest college educated person is seven hundred miles away, and your sworn enemy to boot, it seems somehow irrelevant.

He ignored me, as he often does when something holds his attention. "The villagers have hung two bandits from the Tree of Wrath."

"WHAT?" Now he really had my attention. The Seraphs had grown the Tree of Wrath, and had hung their enemies on its twisted branches. But their enemies had not been human, and had not died easily. There was power yet in the Tree, one of the reasons I had made my home in this God-forsaken spot was to attempt to tap that power. The same impetus had caused my enemy to build his tower within spitting distance of the Dreaming Crown, a circle of stones erected by ShapeWise before her destruction by Hesod Of The Terrible Fists.

"What happened?"

"They died, as men whose necks are broken often do." • Ignored the sarcasm it was his way of sniping at me for the knowledge I withheld. "But their spirits have returned, and are haunting the village."

I was not totally surprised by his answer. I had been able to determine that the power of the Tree was intimately linked with life, death, and what comes after, but no more. The Tree resisted any further probing as it had resisted my attempts to destroy it (and the less said about that fiasco, the better). But ghosts while not common were a known phenomenon I could not understand why James had come to me instead of the village priest. “So what’s the problem? Surely Father Benton can deal with a simple haunting.”

“These spirits are … different. They do not look quite as ghosts should, nor do they act as expected.” His demeanor changed - he no longer seemed quite so certain of his intent. “The good Father cannot approach the bodies of the men - no one can. Something about the Tree prevents it. And without access to the bodies …” He left the thought unfinished - there was no need to elaborate on the requirements for an exorcism. What interested me was that the power in the Tree seemed to have awakened, something I had not been able to manage in four centuries of study.

“I think it’s time I had a look at these bodies.” I gathered up my staff and a dog-eared textbook, guaranteed to impress the rubes, and moved to the center of the room. I placed my will within That Which Is, and with a Word we were elsewhere.

II

The Tree seemed to dominate the landscape, no matter where you stood. It’s looming presence filled the hollow, the hanging bodies creaking an eerie counterpoint to the shrill wind. I walked carefully towards it unconscious of James’ words

of a barrier. At ten paces I found it and the wind increased until it was physically impossible to advance further. Moving air isn't all that tricky, but the Tree had proven subtler than I had thought last time I'd tangled with it. I essayed a relatively simple spell to quell the wind, but it seemed to vanish before it had even begun. It was as if somehow the Tree bent magic away from it, by some means I couldn't detect. The wind dropped to its previous level as I walked back to where James waited.

"The Tree is warded - presumably a measure to prevent the Seraph's enemies from retrieving their dead." There were one or two other things I could have tried, but the way that the spell had failed made it seem unlikely that they would work. The next step, given that the bodies were out of reach, was to examine the spirits directly.

"But why would the Dhaur F-" I clamped my hand over his mouth hurriedly.

"Never speak that name here. The Tree is ... sensitive to such things." To his credit, he nodded calmly, and as I removed my hand he continued.

"Why would the Enemy seek to retrieve their dead?"

I studied him for a moment as I gathered my thoughts. It was common to refer to the Dhaur Fhialain as the Enemy when the world had learned that these wild, chaotic entities were not simple explorers as they claimed, but rather the remnants of a routed army fleeing an ancient war, many had felt betrayed. The apparent perfection of the Seraphs had persuaded the majority of mankind to take their side. But James had never been one to take the accepted line, preferring to listen to my stories of those times and form his own

conclusions. A tall, gangling youth, he betrayed his need for knowledge with every frown, every twist of his mouth as he tasted a truth and tested it's fit in the pattern of his world. It was his incessant questioning that had persuaded me, against my better judgment, to take an apprentice. Now he sought knowledge I had not intended to give yet, but circumstance conspires against us all, even wizards.

“Those who pass beyond ... step outside existence. They are no longer bound by fate to travel the river - the river of time *p* in one direction Ubut see the whole span.” That was as clear as I could explain ito I wasn't sure I grasped it myself. “If you have a corpse, you have access to that which once traveled within it - the basis for the good Father's exorcism. You can foretell - even change - the future.” This was dangerous groundt Necromancy was one of the few things I would not contemplateo even during the War I had refused it, and my reasons then were even more valid now. Most of my other deeds at that time were less than legend now, but what was left of humankind still spoke of my confrontation at the Walls of Londer.

“Change? How is that possible?” The legends did not speak of that, for good reason. It had taken me over three hundred years to track down and kill almost everyone who knew of it. The only ones left were those with sufficient power to make them virtually impregnable, like Abdul the Damned in Mecha, or those whose demesnes were beyond human reach, like The Wizard of Infinite L. A. That was another of the reasons I had taken an apprentice.

“The dead - man or 'other' - see only a river. By contacting themU they know which part of it to examine

closely. They can also dam or divert that course, if what they see is not to their liking.” The Dhaur Fhialain - commonly referred to as the Enemy for all that they were the first alien entities we had met *p*had attempted just that during the Waro they had very nearly slain Time itself. “But that is absolutely forbidden. The dangers are incalculable.” I augmented my warning with a Minor Block. With luck, it would hold him for the next few years.

/Enoughg This must go no further, James. If ever there was knowledge not meant for man, then it is this. We have work to do.”

“As you say. Let me show you where the ghosts appear.” His eyes glazed momentarily as the Block took, then he shook himself and turned away. He led me down from the hill, towards the outskirts of the village. After about five minutes, he stopped, and pointed to a small glade. “It was here they were first seen.” I smiled thinlyt The spot lay on a line directly between my tower and the Treeo I was prepared to put money on it being exactly equidistant.

“They aren’t ghosts.” James started, his study broken by my abrupt comment.

“What? But ...” He paused a moment. “What are they, then?”

His faith in me was warming, but again I was forced to divulge information I had hoped to keep until later. “They are Eidolons. “ I forestalled his next question. “The Tree has taken the shapes of the hanged men, and crafted Eidolons from them They serve as it’s eyes and ears and in extremis as guardians.” It had been a **a** very **a** long time since I had encountered an Eidolon, and I hadn’t been greatly pleased to

do so then. What next, I wondered. A Crucifix at Slaughters Gate? The Slaich, free of it's Binding and looking for revenge? It seemed as if my past was coming back to haunt me.

III

James gasped, staring at the center of the glade. I turned, knowing what I would see. Two shimmering forms were emerging from the ground, for all the world like a sheen of oil on a silvery mucus and as repulsive. The two shapes resolved into slightly iridescent replicas of two men; the taller of the two grinned at me, a horrible sight. "Elider." Its voice sounded like gravel dredged from mud. I had not been called that for a millennia or more; names die when there is no-one left to speak them. I wasted no time on conversation, hurling quantum fire from the surrounding possibilities into that travesty of a facet.

It didn't even blink; instead it spat a power that hummed with venom and ancient hate back along the channel I had opened. I was hard pressed to deflect it to one side, where the rocks whined as they melted. It's companion, head lolling obscenely, joined the assault, power drawn from whatever source the Seraphs tapped battering down my shields as fast as I could raise them. A twist of What Is, and I inverted the space they stood in. Even the outside of it was on the inside, rather like a Klein Bottle. It's a neat trick, and all my own. The idea being I even if they get a out—, they're still a in—.

It bought me only a moment to catch my breath. With a tearing noise, the first Eidolon simply stepped forward, back into real space. After a moment, it's broken-necked companion did likewise. Interesting; it implied that Mud Voice

was the brains of the pair. Before they could resume their attack, I teleported a 10 foot diameter sphere around them onto the surface of the Sun. Or tried too the region flickered momentarily and then stabilized. I increased the gravity under their feet to that of a neutron staro they staggered, then stepped forwards against I made that region anathema to molecular bonds. Mud Voice gave a leer and raised his power again.

As I was forced back, step by step, it became apparent that this was not a fight I could win, or even survive. I kept myself between them and James as he raised inept shields, barely sufficient to cope with the backwash of the might they directed at me. This could not continue for long.

And then a glimmer of hope penetrated my thoughts - an ancient memory of a debt owed. A long time ago I had freely given aid to two newly born beings, bewildered and innocent in a world of possibilities. They had sworn to repay that debt. If ever I had need I had forgotten it until now. Was it possible? It was my only chance. Skipping backwards three paces, I opened a momentary gap between myself and my assailants, and in the space afforded me by their faltering, I flung my hope to the winds.

“Beriamg Turachalg Bright Scions of Fire and Air. Attend me. Aid me now, in the name of thine ancient debt!”

My words rang in the sudden silence as the Eidolons gazed around them uncertainly. For a moment all was still, and a worm of doubt penetrated my heart. Then the silence was broken as even the Tree of Wrath was bent nearly to the ground by the wind that howled out of the North, reaching down into the glade to enclose it within a circle of killing air.

From out of that gale a voice resolved itself, redolent with breaking pines and the screaming of the Northern storms.

“Thy call is answered, mage. Turachal, Heart of the North, stands ready.”

As the last vestiges of that terrible wind faded, the silence was split again by a series of sonic booms from the West. A line of fire bisected the sky, lancing down to engulf an oak to my right. A resonant voice belled into the gathering dusk, echoing round the bosky dell.

“In the name of that ancient debt, Beriam, Last of the Living Lords of Fire, answers thy call. What would you have of us, Unchainer?”

“I wouldst have thee slay these abominations, that they may trouble my hearthkin no more.” My voice shook as the full cost of the power I had expended settled on me. Seizing James’ arm I dived behind a convenient rock as two of the Ancient Powers leapt towards the Eidolons.

IV

The noise was deafening. The concussions alone made coherent thought near impossible, but James still managed to frame a question.

“Can. They. Win?” Each word had to be forced out against the gale. “No. They merely. Buy us. Time!” It took no thought to answer. No matter how powerful they had become since I last met them, the elementals were constrained by what was left of natural law. The Eidolons, drawing from the power of a seraph, had no such disadvantage.

“Then. What. Now? The Tree?” It was a thought - while all energies were focused on the battleU attack the

source. There was something I had been trying not to face, but now all choice had gone. The Tree alone could not have created Eidolon so it had power, but it was all defence, and it had not the wit to animate guardians. There was a larger threat than a village in fear, something that I had tried to ignore.

“Wait. Here!”

Without waiting for a reply, I gathered what was left of my sorely depleted power and stepped away.

Beriam and Turachal had accomplished one thing. At least the barrier was down. I stood a foot from the Tree, and considered my next move. I didn't really have any choice, of course. I placed my hands against the rough bark of the Tree, and gave it everything.

My power, you see, springs direct from the Dhaur Fhialain. I contain within myself the essence of the entity that initiated me, a miniature version of WayLight. It had been difficult to comprehend the utterly alien viewpoint of those inconstant entities, but I had always felt that WayLight liked me, in his own strange way. While the mess that the Seraph War had made of our reality had opened the door for true magic, the type that could be taught, I drew from a different source. And now I freely gave that source, that dark wellspring, to the Tree.

And for the first time in a thousand years, the joy and the passion of the Dhaur Fhialain was released directly to the cold might of the Seraphs. The dark sibling of their souls, the antithesis of all that the Seraphs embodied. Unfettered by flesh, it sank into the Tree like water on desert sand.

And the Tree exploded. Shards of not-wood were blasted

in every direction, and everything became white as the shock of power detonated across the landscape. Distantly I heard my screams mingling with those of the unborn Seraph maturing in the heart of the Tree

For this was the secret that the Tree had held down the long years so within it a new Seraph was aborning, centuries in its growth. It was this that I had denied, until the presence of the Eidolons had forced me to confront it. As the power consumed the tree, everything faded to black.

And that should have been an end to it. Pure Dhaur Fhialain directly touching pure Seraph should have annihilated each other. But in logic, thesis and antithesis make a synthesis, something greater than the original, and something similar happened that day. Something new was made, or rather something old come again.

I had not expected to return to consciousness. Nor, as my vision cleared, had I expected to see the shining entity that hung, crucified on the wind, before me. Knowledge flooded into me, and I saw, or rather was allowed to see, what I had done.

Once upon a time. As good a phrase as any for a span so great, for I knew now that countless aeons ago, the Seraphs had attempted to cleanse themselves of all imperfection, all taint of chaos. Their horror, when their slewed imperfections had revealed a life of their own, led to a war that had continued for millions of years - until their conflict had spilled over into our dimension. Here, while much of humanity took the Seraphs side, the Dhaur Fhialain had found allies as driven by emotion as they were. For a time, they had managed to halt the Seraphs relentless onslaught

Freed from their suppression within the Seraphs, in some way I could not comprehend, the Dhaur Fhialain - the Dark Mirrors - had blossomed. The Seraphs, without the distraction of emotion or weakness, had grown terrible in their power, though they had learned a cold hate during the course of their war.

I had attempted to slay a Seraph. Instead, I had forced upon it far more than it had once rejected. Through the link within me, all that there was of WayLight had been channeled back into the Seraph's being. My attempt to thwart a new Seraph tyranny had instead brought back one much older. I had created a god.

Notes

- eidolons 幻像；幽灵；妖怪
 gambit 开始；话题
 apprentice 学徒；徒弟；见习生
 millennium 太平盛世；一千年
 provoke 招惹；引起
 wizard 男巫，神汉
 quantum 量子
 Seraph 六翼天使
 Manticore 一种传说中的怪物，人头，狮身，龙尾
 dissect 仔细研究
 oxymoron 矛盾的统一
 elective 选修课程
 forsaken 被弃的；被抛弃的；孤独的
 impetus 动力；推动力；激励
 sarcasm 挖苦；讽刺

- demeanor 态度；举止；脸上的表情
- exorcism 驱邪；驱邪所用之咒语
- looming 隐约可见
- essayed 试图
- quell 压制；平息；减轻
- chaotic 混乱的；无秩序的
- entities 实体；实存物；存在
- Necromancy 巫术
- slain 杀害；残杀
- augmented 增加；增大
- glade 林间空地；沼泽地
- equidistant 距离相等的；等距的
- divulge 泄露；暴露
- sheen 光辉；光彩；光泽
- mucus 粘液；胶
- iridescent 闪光的
- dredged 用挖泥机疏浚
- travesty 滑稽化的作品；漫画；滑稽模仿
- venom 毒液；恶意
- neutron 中子
- anathema 咒逐；革出教门；被咒逐的人(物)
- molecular 分子的；由分子组成的
- Scions 幼芽；子孙
- thine 你的东西；你的；您的
- redolent 芬芳的；有……香味的；令人想起……的
- vestiges 陈迹
- sonic 音波的；音速的；声音的
- bisected 切成两份；对分
- bosky 矮林丛生的；有丛林的；有树荫的
- dell 小谷；小溪谷

- abominations 憎恨；痛恶；可憎的事物
 concussions 激动；冲击；震荡
 elementals 自然力的
 constrained 被强迫的；拘泥的；不舒服的
 antithesis 对照；正相反；对比法
 Unfettered 解开脚链；释放；使自由
 detonated 爆炸；发爆炸声
 synthesis 综合；组织；综合体
 crucified 十字架上钉死
 aeons 永世；无数的年代
 taint 污点
 slewed 回转
 thwart 反对；阻碍；横过

蝙蝠传奇

Myth of the Bat

By AC Chapin



没有金刚钻，不揽瓷器活。警察开舞会，敢去捣乱的，一定是高手。

He missed the light, but darkness was necessary to induce terror. Shadows to make the planes of his face frightening under the mask, to make the place under the folds of his cloak look deep, a place you could get lost in and never find your way out.

So easy to become a creature of the night, something mythical and terrifying.

In the sunlight he was tall, broad-shouldered, a big, imposing man, a handsome man. But in the sunlight the costume was a joke.

Jokes.

Once tears always seemed to be waiting behind his eyes, needing to be stopped, needing to be overcome with brutal discipline. But by this time there was no risk of tears.

The suit covered him utterly, and he wondered if he had flesh or bone or blood under it anymore.

They passed each other on the street, the two pale men, and made note of each other, the way celebrities do on the sunset strip, the way serial killers do on the corridor in front of their cells, the way vampires do, coming out of the Raven.

The man walking east was perhaps more remarkable. His hair was green. That wasn't unheard of in those days, there were punks and there were little old ladies with pastel tints. The angular, grinning face under it, that made it clown hair. He wore clown clothes too, an unfortunate purple seersucker, with a tragic green tie and matching spats.

The other man was nearly a foot shorter, at six feet, and merely blond, his hair savagely short. His features were sensual and brutal and he had somewhere found a black leather trenchcoat in his size.

There was something each recognized in the other, and, dangerously, they smiled over their shoulders.

Natalie Lambert had one good dress, and it was too short for a ball. Despite being a doctor, Natalie Lambert was not rich.

However Nick was. And Nick, in one of the rare moments when he demonstrated that he had actually learned something about people in his eight hundred years, had bought her a dress. It was hopelessly expensive, black, long but low cut. She could see his eyes watching her neck as they danced.

Charity balls. When had she started coming to charity balls?

This was a policeman's ball, of course. The hall was nearly split down the middle, all cops and their dates on one side, all the people who the ball was really for, the people who brought the money, on the other.

Nat could see Don and Myra Schanke sitting at one of the side tables. Myra's dress was old but pretty. She suddenly felt embarrassed to be wearing Nick's expensive gift.

She had come because Nick asked her to. He'd been asking her out on dates lately. Movies, balls, one disastrous hockey game. No more evenings in, watching old movies on his huge television, cuddling on the couch. Things had changed. He was acting like a highschool boyfriend, attentive and distant at the same time. She missed having pillow fights.

Details can build suspense or create boredom. There are the details of the dances (of the things Nick whispered to Natalie (beautiful things, but not so beautiful as the things lost to her)), of the wise way Myra watched them, driving Don Schanke crazy with that expression of hers that said she saw more than he did.

There are the details of the way the Joker gathered up his gang (the way they spilled from alleyways and storefronts to follow him (think of rats, think of a garish pied piper)), the doors he opened and the guns his men used. There are the names of the people who died as the Joker and his men entered the ball. There is the exact pitch of his laughter.

There is the pattern of lines on LaCroix's face as he stood on a sixteenth storey window ledge, watching with purely voyeuristic interest as a bat transformed into a man.

Skip the details, pass them by, they're only mating habits and eating habits, facts and figures. Things only get interesting when you get to the myths.

Instinct landed Nick on the floor with Natalie underneath him as machine guns fired across the hall. "Stay down. Get to Schanke." An urgent whisper into her hair. He wouldn't fully

realize until later how instinctive was the way he kissed the diamond of skin exposed by the cutout design on the back of her dress. Janette had picked out the dress. She had known what she was doing.

He stood, looked around, wondered if he could convince Schanke he was wearing a bulletproof vest under his tuxedo if he took direct machine gun fire in front of such an audience. Probably not. He'd just have to be careful.

Gunfire stopped, but the laughter died more slowly. "Welcome to the policeman's ball!"

He was tall and terribly thin, not skeleton thin, but starving refugee thin, victim thin, a haunted helpless sick thing. A skeleton would have been still and pitiful; he was all movement and manic desperate life.

He was on the news from time to time, escaping and being returned to asylums, endlessly. The Joker.

"You dance divinely darling!" The Joker had swept up a woman in a white dress and was waltzing her around the room. There was blood all over her back, making the material stick to her. The Joker dipped her low, humming to himself, then let her drop with retching sounds, gasps, percussion of thudding corpse ... not quite "Merry-Go-Round-Broken-Down", but it would do, as he would do and do and do, distracted by a blond woman in a green dress. "Sweetie, didja know you've got a snake around your neck?"

The woman just stared, watching his gloved hand move nearer and nearer to her snake-headed torque necklace. Did she see bloodstains on the purple linen? He touched the necklace and she shrieked, a hopeless little sound that deflated to a whine when he simply tore it off her neck.

Nick was still looking for escape routes. He saw Cohen Imperial and solemn in a long red beaded dress standing in front of a seated man with a shellshocked expression, probably her husband. Their eyes met, searched each other for hope. Finally she shook her head. Help had to come from outside.

“I just thought I’d drop in.” The Joker was playing with the necklace. “Every party needs entertainment. Party games.”

Handsome but weren’t heroes always handsome? Gilgamesh had been handsome now there was living proof that not everyone who got immortality deserved it. Handsome, and strong and brave and boorish and stupid. Enkidu had been ugly, and charming, and utterly deserving of his vampire life ... but not a hero.

The Batman. Such a hero, so very handsome.

Will Shaxbeard had been a master of tipping heroes over the precipice, finding their tragic flaws. LaCroix felt he had a similar talent.

Such broad shoulders, not as broad as they seemed in the suit, but that was his myth, wasn’t it? Larger than life.

No, larger than death, larger than some great tragic death that was haunting the man who wore the bat suit.

Enough watching. Time for an interview.

Don Schanke realized that the reason he couldn’t see anything that crazed Bozo imitator was doing was because there was a tall blond man standing between him and the freak with the green hair at all times. Whichever way the Joker moved, Nick was moving to be between him and the table where Don sat with Myra and Nataliet

Which was all very thoughtful, except that the Joker seemed to be the only one of the terrorists who wasn't holding a gun.

“First let's play spin the bottle.” The Joker was saying. Schanke saw only the spray of champagne as he popped the cork off an unopened bottle with his fingers.

“What do you want from us?”

Schanke winced. It was Cohen. God, she had more balls than a buffalo. Couldn't she see this guy had gone through nutso and come out the other side?

“Want? I want to meet my fairy prince, I want to find good black pumps in my size, I want to learn to do the hokey pokey.” He crossed the distance to her in three steps, his legs extending like a heron's. “Let's play spin the bottle, just us two. Say it: 'Me love you long time, GI' Say it!”

Cohen winced but stayed cool. “I'm sure if you give us a telephone we can get started on negotiating a deal. Hokey pokey lessons included.”

“What's your name, cherry-blossom?” He was very close to her now.

She half smiled, wearing the face she used for rookies and full detectives who should know better. “Captain Cohen.”

Why wouldn't Nick move? What was on the maniac's face? “Your first name. What your love-slaves call you.”

Cohen's smile stretched just a bit more, like she'd been waiting all year to spring this one. “Captain.”

Great, they were a double act.

Myra's nails scratched hard against the back of his hand. He turned, saw the worry lines creeping, clawing around her eyes. He wanted to pull her down to the floor and cover her

and hold her until this was all over and they could go home and watch Jennie sleep. And then he saw what she had been seeing. Natalie. While everyone else was watching to Joker, the coroner had reached the nearest fire alarm.

The Joker started to say something, but the throbbing whine of the alarm cut him off dead. Nat had already hit the deck as gunfire destroyed the alarm and splintered the wall around it.

That mad falsetto cut even above the alarm. “Doctor, there’s this strange ringing in my ears.” Nick had frozen, staring, and Schanke was allowed to see the Joker step forward, holding one hand to his head as he beckoned to Natalie with the other. One of the men with guns hauled her to her feet by the arm and pulled her to the Joker.

“Oh won’t you marry me Bi-i-ill” He grabbed a man from the group of people crowding against the wall and kissed him resoundingly. “I god the wedding bell blues!” The man went flying back into the frightened knot of partygoers

He grinned and swept Natalie upo pale arms sticking out from the ends of his sleeves as he dragged her into a tango. “Plan B, kiddies.” He called out. “Party crashers. And turn down the music, you’ll wake my parents.”

Schanke realized that it almost was funny, the helpless, frightened expression on Nick’s face as they danced and the alarm rang and rang.

Laughing again. It seemed he was always laughing at the young, trying to help them see the joke. Like Nickolas, this one couldn’t seem to grasp that philosophers were, at heart, comedians whose jokes weren’t funny. He had heard someone say thatUwhen he was studying radio Q who! He had laughed

until black-red tears ran from his eyes.

The Batman stared at him. Good eyes. If a little too deep set, but he was considering things from a different perspective. For fifty or sixty years, those eyes would be fine to look into, to watch, seeing what they saw. But after a few centuries they would retreat utterly, peering out from shadows under the strong brow. He had learned his lesson with Nickolaso certainly those sad, half squinting eyes had seemed perilously beautiful in the middle ages, but now ... they were tired, they showed Nickolas' age. Janette's eyes, though, those were perfect, shipwreck blue forever.

He balanced on the rail and watched the Batman watching him.

"What are you doing here?" Deep voice, that was always nice.

"Watching you. I was fascinated."

"Why?" trying to determine how much LaCroix had seen. How dull. Very well then.

"You can turn into a bat. I myself ... cannot." He took the step off the rail, letting wind rake across his face as he fell, turned. He hovered in the cool night air, let the moon pick out the color of his eyes, were they blue or yellow or red? Some color of ice and flame, let the moon decide.

"What are you?" Nonplussed. Interesting.

"I do not surprise you?" Mortals were a cowardly lot, it was usually so easy to be something that frightened them, a creature of the night.

"You're hardly the only one who can fly. I've met Superman." Oh but that smile could last the centuries, it came from such a deep place, through so many shadows.

“Have you? Indulge me a question. They say he is invincible ... unpuncturable. Is it true?”

“We aren't exactly close. But yes, as far as I know, he's invincible.”

/Pity.” He let the moon touch his fangst Melodramao such a fools word for living passionately. “Why did you come to Toronto?”

“The Joker decided to relocate across the border.”

“The ... ? Oh, yes, of course. Your nemesis. I saw him on the street I believe. Such a distasteful sense of fashion.”

“Where is he?” Urgency, obsession. Utterly charming.

“Visiting a dear friend of mine.” LaCroix saw the change in moodU the bare start of a lungeU and raised his handsU spreading the fingers soothingly. “You needn't worryo my friend is like you ... dedicated to bringing fear to those who bring fear. A policeman in fact. However he, unlike you, also cannot turn into a bat.”

Go or stay, stay or go? So easy to bait, this one. Such a temptation.

The problem with the girl with the eyes and the hair was that she simply didn't believe she was going to dieUbut oh yesU the time had come for all good girls (and girls who wore dresses like that tooS to lay down their I gold, their green mantlesU or else their maidenheads) lives for “ ... entertainmentg Step right up step right up, spill some blood and win a prize!”

How easy to entertain, policemen, the lowest common denominator. “Keep it for yourself, give it to your date. You've got it Q freedom.” The gun was shiny and phallic as a Christmas toy I Jolly old Saint NickolasUcrucified in a Japanese

It took three weeks before anybody had the nerve to explain to the decorating committee the mistake that had been made and he held it out to them as friendly as the neighborhood dope peddler.

They had pushed her in the corner and nothing rhymes with corner except maybe coroners and she stood there, pale and open as a deer in his headlights. (Deer. Deer. Deer.)

“You heard me, gentles and ladyfolk. Shoot the dolly, win your freedom. Who’s first?”

They wouldn’t do it, of course, and she’d die anyway, but they’d feel so much better about it if they hadn’t done it. “Look at her, she’s crying now ... females, always with the waterworks.”

“Come on now don’t be shy. Step right up.” Like a carnival barker. Like a mad dog barking.

Consider for a moment how much you know, compared to how much everyone else knows. For example, LaCroix had no idea that the name of the man whose blood he was considering drinking was named Bruce Wayne. The Joker knew this, but he also knew that it wasn’t important. Bruce was just a fairly silly macho name. Batman, that was who he was.

For example, Nick did not know that the Batman was in town, talking to LaCroix. Nor did he know what Bruce Wayne’s parents had looked like as they died. The Batman could have told you every detail, picking out details from that perfect snapshot in his photographic memory, down to the stripes on the tie and the run in her stocking.

For example the Batman didn’t know, and probably wouldn’t have cared, that he was having a conversation with a

man who had once raised his sword in Boudicea's bodyguard. Actually, only LaCroix knew that.

For example, the Joker had no idea there was a vampire watching him, preparing to kill him. He would have been delighted.

You and I know all these things. Details, bedtime stories. We know the whole mythos. They only know the myths.

Batman was tall and big, well, that he could manage.

Batman wore a cape. Where was that trenchcoat? Moving too quick to be noticed, he found it folded over the back of a chair.

No one ever saw Batman's face. He turned up the collar.

According to some people, Batman could fly. That was the easy part.

This would work. This had to work.

Speed. Flying straight up.

Darkness. Ripping away the power cords to the overhead lights. Not total blackout, but dark enough that no one would recognize him.

Surprise. "Hello Joker."

"Batman."

"Batman?."

"Batman!"

They believed. Bullets thrashed him this way and that, it hurt. It didn't kill but it hurt.

And suddenly a hundred people in tuxedos and evening gowns turned into cops. Machine guns were wrested away from thugs caught unawares, staring at the man, the Batman, who hovered over them, rocked by their bullets, but still alive, still flying

Myra and Schanke, safe. Cohen and her husband, safe.

Of course, the Joker had taken Natalie with him when he escaped. How else could things have gone?

That's the way myths work, there is winning the battle, and then there is winning the war.

There has to be an endgame†

I The roof or the alley? The alley would be more realistic, but the roof would offer more chances for extravagance.)

Listen. Voices, struggle sounds, Nat's heartbeat. From the alley. (Ah Natalie, always dragging us back to pragmatics. Some heroine.)

"It's tall, dark, can fly, and bullets won't stop it." The Joker, endless descant over Natalie's gasping, Natalie's fear. "What is it?"

The Joker could comfortably hold Natalie with the gun pressed into her temple† Try it sometimeo see how tall you have to be for that to work well.

"I'll give you a clue. It's not the Batman."

Nick stepped where the Joker could see him. How could human eyes be as large as Natalie's? She looked like a Japanese cartoon.

His own eyes must be glowing now, brimstone green. He stared at the Joker and let the full force of his will move between them. "I am the Batman."

A man named Friedrich Nietzsche is often quoted at times like this. You know what I mean. When Nick looked into the Joker's eyes, the Joker's eyes looked back into his.

Deus ex machinat A necessary evilo even I am not ready to look behind that curtain yet. Perhaps another time.

So, enter the Batman. Enter LaCroix.

Hell, enter Captain Cohen and the whole Toronto PD. But slowly, slowly.

Slow enough to miss Natalie, catching Nick as he slumped into the shadows. Slow enough to miss the quick grinning shape that was LaCroix. Slow enough to miss the Batman grabbing the Joker's towering body only after it had already started to fall. (How could he be paler than before?)

The Police Captain, a handsome woman in a red dress, smiled at him as they wrapped the Joker up in a straight jacket and hauled him away. "I've heard of you, Batman, but I never believed it. You saved a lot of lives tonight."

Chattering voices: "I saw it. Bullets bounced right off him. He can fly!"

Well, it wasn't as though people hadn't said that about him before. So the Batman had saved more lives.

He saw a shape moving away across the sky. And behind him, running feet, the quick click-click of high-heeled shoes. And, as the Joker was driven away, laughter.

"Nick Natg there you are!" Schanke looked as though the smile might split his face. Myra hugged both of them, giving Nick a look that said she had maybe seen more than most people. He had snatched an extra trenchcoat from the caddy, to hide the shredded state of his tuxedo. The other coat had gone into a dumpster in the alley.

Ambulances and needless fire trucks were pulling away.

"I, um, followed Batman in time to see him save Nat."

"So for once you weren't first on the scene." Schanke teased.

"Yeah." He was grinning. He caught Nat's eye and they both collapsed into laughter

“Yeah, this whole night has been a great joke. I thought the Joker and the Captain were ready to open for the Buttonville Revue for a while there.”

Myra leaned into him, yawning theatrically. “Don, we’d better get home.”

“Yeah.” He kissed the top of her head. “Yeah.”

LaCroix would have liked to speak to the Joker. When one has talked to half of a person, one wishes to talk to the other half. And he suspected they might have things to say to each other.

Had it been a mistake, pulling Nickolas from the fire yet again? Sometimes the reasonable side of him decided it would be better to abandon the boy, get on with his own life.

He sighed. Probably. Probably. But what the boy had done this night was fascinating, almost inspired. So the Batman didn’t need the man inside the suit anymore. That was the way of myths, eventually they left their realities behind like discarded shells.

But it did make one wonder about the myth of the bat.

Leather flapping, eyes glowing into the dark, he flew away.

Notes

costume 装束；服装

punks 废物；小流氓，年轻无知的人

angular 消瘦的；有尖角的；生硬的

seersucker 泡泡纱，一种织物

spats 鞋罩，长统靴

ball 舞会

disastrous 损失惨重的；悲伤的

hockey 曲棍球

garish 炫耀的；过分装饰的

voyeuristic 喜欢窥阴的

bulletproof vest 防弹背心

divinely 像神一样地；凭神的力量；庄严地

retching 要吐的声音

torque 项链

precipice 断崖；绝壁；险境

cork 软木塞

heron 苍鹭的巢

maniac 狂人；疯子

rake 搜索

invincible 不能征服的；无敌的

nemesis 报应；复仇女神；给与惩罚的人；天罚

phallic 阴茎的；阳物崇拜的

waterworks 眼泪

thugs 凶手，暴徒

brimstone 硫黄