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The Hollywood Freeway Battle Stallion

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Book Two in The Los Angeles Mysterium Trilogy

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The Los Angeles Mysterium Trilogy

Foreword:

In the first book 'A Breeze on La Brea', the heroine, Lisette Nice, a young actress working her secret dayjob as The Famous Fellatrix, lands a small role playing opposite the Sexiest Man in the World, an aging alcoholic actor struggling to stay sober risking fortune, reputation and, it transpires, his life, to direct an ill-written movie in the northern wilderness. It goes badly wrong. Aided by a feral tomcat, her Hollywood friends the Great Sex Doctor Doll and Cornelius Gunsmoke, Lisette sets it right.

In this, the second book, Lisette, now five hit movies later, is an International Movie Star. Fearing for her safety, and rather than worry her dying husband, she commissions a dangerous but good man from her old life as the Famous Fellatrix to help her, and coincidentally discovers an aged horse who seemingly, impossibly has been in historical cavalry charges; a battered friendly old chap she uses him in her latest movie only to find the source of her unique talents is decidedly out of this world.

The third book, *'Rocket Bob plays Sunset Boulevard'*, set in wartime LA in the near future, is now in draft. Lisette, a long-dead cult hero with billions of followers, returns. Sunset Boulevard, franchised, stretches from Pacific to Atlantic. Lisette appears with Walt Disney, Salvador Dali, Gerry Brown and Carl Jung to direct friendly California agriweapons fight off a Chinese invasion. And 'once-human' Rocket Bob, an ex-kid's space ride pilot-musician, saves CA, the remaining Free World Democracy.

About the Author

An Angelino-Englishman, cjFitzjames was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, England. During long hospitalization as child lived in imagination; no school until almost nine, could neither read nor write, had vision of destiny in desert: visited Sahara age 23, *not*; discovered Mojave in 1978, based in LA since; dyslectic; after art school became addicted to surrealism, cinema, actresses; after film school in London, wrote advertising & TV drama, indie in Hollywood. Naturalized American. Philosophical mission: chasing the subversive aesthetic in contemporary art, cinema and literature inspired by literary heroes of youth: Henry Miller, Carlos Casteneda, Terry Southern, & J.P.Donlevy.

Gridlock, not

10:52am: A bright, pretty morning on the interstate climbing east out of Los Angeles.

Lisette gentled the old pickup up the endless incline into the desert; after a hundred miles of punishing freeway gridlock the traffic was moving, thinning; she smiled to herself, with rush hour done she could concentrate on scheming her day.

She had the pale, emaciated look millions of women emulated and shamelessly copied; that of a world-famous actress emaciated by her daily struggle with genius; her demons constantly perched her on the edge of the moment; intense, she was always ready to stretch the limits of possibility with her curiosity about life; a challenge that ravaged her strange beauty with concern. She chuckled; at least, that was the bullshit her publicists dreamt up.

The driver of the passing car knew it was an odds-on impossibility she could be the original, an artist of incomparable virtuosity and talent, movie star Lisette Nice.

Puttering along at sixty she was completely self-absorbed, her gaze lost in the golden panorama of foothills set beneath a peerless blue sky. The driver didn't give her a second glance as he tooted past. Her features coarser, bigger, especially her nose; her wispy ethereal look hardly unusual as was her ride, a perfectly ordinary and authentic pickup from the early 60s; a subtle touch of shabby chic; dinged, dented, sporting rust and original paint.

The passing driver caught a glimpse of the girl in his mirror.

Her reflection shocked his senses.

Lisette shone back at him serenely.

She was impossible not to watch onscreen; unintentionally she stole every scene, even in longshot; yet, strangely, enhancing the performances of those she played with; awestruck, he started to slow, keeping her face in his mirror: his own personal movie screen:

Old truck against snowcapped mountains under cloudless blue; lost in his daydream he didn't realize she was overtaking. He looked away from the mirror. Her face devastated him as she passed. She openly exchanged a friendly smile. Just another local woman, expression unguarded, open; older than Lisette Nice - veritable Blonde of the 21st Century; he had seen all of her movies. He liked her 'chariot girl' but loved her 'western harlot', the part where the bee stung her rapist's bare ass. He went back to his daydream to dwell on legend. Hey, it could have been her. It was rumored she could only be truly seen as a reflection...

And the day meandered on. Lisette loved her husband's old truck. She knew enough about it nowadays to tinker around with it on her own. There wasn't much she couldn't do with the old slant-six when she set her mind to it and driving it gave her a sense of security; constructed like a battle tank with solidarity of purpose, its longevity a built-in guarantee of anonymity and safety; items of importance of late. Always trusting of her instincts a few weeks ago she'd sensed she was being followed: more, she was being watched everytime she

left her home or office. It wasn't impending danger, or anything she could put her finger on, more an itch she couldn't scratch; probably the Studio protecting their investment, something she could easily understand currently being the 'Biggest Name in Box Office'.

But something was back there and it wasn't benevolent.

If it was her husband's security she wouldn't have felt creepy, they were cool, the Best-by-Test-in-the-West. The sensation was worrying. She needed help; professional help, at least, someone to confide in.

Not wanting to worry her husband she'd decided to hire her own help, a man from her past, a hard man she knew she could trust. A private detective, *of sorts*. She had sifted through her belongings and found his card:

'Ignatius Chang. Childheart & Chang Associates. Personnel Research Consultants'.

She realized with surprise she now reconized Iggy had a very prestigious address.

Iggy had been happy to hear from her, wanted to help; but his boss had to okay it first.

Lisette dilligently called Mr. Childheart, who was out of town at an *equestrian event*.

Anxious to save a few days she pleaded urgency telling him she was happy to drive out to the desert to discuss her case.

And here she was; and it was a glorious day.

She looked back nervously as her truck gained altitude on the long gradient.

Touches of snow peppered the tallest of three ranges of mauve mountains resembling cut-out paper castle walls protecting Los Angeles, her magic city; but something was amiss, a touch of evil; she could sense it; then she felt a reassuring wriggle in her pocket.

Coyle had woken up.

Lisette felt safe with Coyle. She had brought him along for company. She guessed he had sensed her discomfort and come out of his snooze. Her old linen duster had big pockets; ample room for a snake. She cheered up. The open road spread out before her and she knew she would be in good hands with Iggy. Once he had the green light Iggy would get to the bottom of it, at least, keep her safe.

She thought back to that sunny morning at The Biltmore when she first met Iggy. Immediately sensing something unusual getting down to work she thought fancifully those scars might be bulletholes across the top of his thigh and it didn't take her long to discover he had been tortured. My-oh-my, those scars had to be from electrodes, otherwise, he had a perfectly delectable cock. And for the first time in her career as the Famous Fellatrix she threw a client a freebie; it wasn't patriotism she quickly told herself affirming her aversion to jingoism. Nooners were nothing unusual but inexplicably, mid-morning tricks were rare.

It was just a mental itch she felt connected Iggy to war. He should be dead. But wasn't.

She found her way to Iggy's suite without incident that morning nine years ago.

Leisurely walking to the hotel in the sunshine after finding easy parking on Spring Street and securing payment before she set to work she put the pile of hundreds he handed over

on the sideboard, casually letting Iggy see her gun. She noticed he hadn't been intimidated, sensed from his precise rhythm of deportment he was faster than a snake. He could take it off her before she cleared it from her purse. That was okay. Lisette smiled, she liked snakes; even one-eyed trouser snakes, glad her dayjob had caused no aversion to the male limbless critter. Lisette liked snakes a lot.

Back in the moment she came off of the 10 at Indio and headed to the Polo Grounds.

The two-day equestrian event was easy to find, with ample parking.

Lisette wandered in looking horsey in long duster, boots, and favorite hat. *Want to get ahead, get a hat*; she was glad she had chosen her Stetson over her Borsalino this morning.

It was bright.

All these fancy shiny trailers and horseboxes meant big bucks; everything was the best, the best of brands, the best of breeds; she couldn't concentrate *nervous horses* Coyle was asleep or off duty, either way he was back in his box.

"Whay am I worried Coyle?" she asked, putting her hand her pocket, tapping his box.

Coyle came out and coiled himself around her wrist. Lisette knew there is nothing romantic about rattlesnakes, he just liked winding up her arm; with affection and patience Lisette had taught him how to do it backwards when he was a baby so his head would pop out of her coat sleeve and he could watch the world go by from her cuff. *Still young, he was getting* pretty big, and heavy; soon she would have to release him back into the wild.

The day shone on

Lisette soon realized these beautiful ponies didn't have to do much at the show, just a spot of walking around strutting their stuff looking pleased with themselves. There was to be no dressage or jumping, no polo stuff, perhaps just a little light frolickly trotting. This show was was all about bloodlines and breeding, nothing more than a beauty contest for horses. An accomplished equestrian herself horses usually liked Lisette but today were skittish when she passed, doubtlessly sensing Coyle she summised. She kept her distance admiring them from afar; exotics, arabians, a few big hunters, ponies, quarter horses, paints, apaloosas. Numbers. Stalls. Mountains. Sky. Flags. Fluttering banners in a soft light breeze. *Nice duster but you ain't no congirl baby, tho' I do like yo' boots.*

Lisette startled, who said that?

It was in her mind she realized; she turned as the horse looked away.

He was just a big old horse. Lisette stopped a respectful distance away.

The size of a Clydesdale, he was solid, strong, yet sleek-legged with what she guessed to be nimble, deft feet. There was a deep luster to his coat and his distinctive blue-black tail shone bright as a beacon in the late morning sun; his mane caught the light like blue neon; nobody could say he wasn't handsome, just a little the worst for wear; the patches of bare skin weren't baldness but scars, healed-over cuts and stitched welts, and what a pair!

You didn't need a second glance to know he was a stallion.

Lisette looked up, embarrassed to be caught staring with stark admiration as the big old horse caught her eye.

Now horses don't chuckle, but Lisette thought she heard him. He trotted over to her with a mischievous glint in his eye, not skittish at all. If he knew Coyle was in her sleeve it wasn't effecting him. She felt he was one fearless horse.

And horses don't smile, most times. She felt like she was in dialogue with him. What was he doing here. The answer was clear. Humoring his owner. Lisette shook her head, how could she have known that, and other than Coyle he knew what she had in her pockets. Chinese carrots?

Not quite she corrected. I could only get regular carrots, but at least they were organic.

She fed him one. Desperate to get around the man by being nice to his horse she had especially bought a big bunch at Wholefoods before leaving LA. A very fine young rattlesnake you have there, he seemed to say conversationally whilst chomping. Lisette liked this big horse. He had infinitely kind eyes. I suppose you play some great games with your snake he seemed to say? He is getting a bit too big for that now Lisette answered mentally; she had found Coyle when he was a baby snake basking in the sunshine, actually saved him from a red tail hawk.

"I see you've met Roger," Childheart said, with a wry grin.

"Mr. Childheart?" Lisette enquired. Such a striking looking man. He could have been a aristocratic silent movie star, sleek exotic hero with smouldering dark eyes. "My name is Lisette Nice. I'm early I'm afraid. I hope you don't mind me feeding your horse?"

"Not at all. My name is Mr. Childheart, Mr. Chang's senior partner. How do you do?"

"Very well thank you sir." Lisette said, impressed with his old world formality. She knew her P's & Q's but couldn't stop commenting, "Way cool jodhpurs."

"Thank you. Somewhat overly ornate. They belonged to a dear, dear friend, alas, long gone; a Maharajah, a great horseman; not quite appropriate for modern polo; embroidered steel filigree; couldn't stop a bullet but deflect arrow and lance."

Lisette politely demurred from a response offering a blinding bright smile.

For a long moment she thought she was on set. Childheart was a beautiful specimen of a man: mid-thirties, tall, powerfully muscled yet slim, dark-eyed, dark-haired, with strong fine features belonging to another era; a classic Hollywood heartthrob of yesteryear; his riding clothes reeked of extreme wealth, his manners, manner and deportment belied a military bearing of professional horse soldier, a senior cavalry officer of a bygone age.

Their meeting was to be this encounter, a brief interlude really; to a casual observer just two horse fanciers sharing a minute of pleasantries. Childheart politely reassuring her Iggy an exceptional operative reassuring her, sure everything would be fine, please not to worry:

Call the office Downtown and their Miss Merryberry would take care of the paperwork.

Man and horse quite the pair Lisette thought driving back to town taking the scenic route down Highway Sixty thorough the winding wonderland of golden red rocks, the sense of trepidation that had been following her for weeks kept at bay by Roger's
She had been the heat cool at times she didn't now herself at all Doubt

Impertinent horse a huge goofy horsie grin

Roger I know your secrets are safe with me. And the dear dear friend alas long long gone. What were they truing totell her?

But, almost, she felt, it had been Roger who had given her the okay; if she had been interviewed by anyone it had been the horse; she went to bed, her husband snoring by her side. Iggy would know what to do. She could kill a man with his little finger.

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Summer starts for Iggy

Iggy loved summer; firmly believed the LA light soothed and healed his wounded psyche.

He was convinced the summer heat evaporated his winter aches, from, he suspected, uncountable, unable-to-remember war wounds; there was little, if anything, Iggy could remember of his past from before his brush with death. This big gap in being, in knowing, of having a past, was ceasing to concern him; in summer it seemed to matter less, simply because the long golden days hinted at a childhood where he *just knew* he was immortal:

He was a boy eternal; summer never ending, school never starting.

But Iggy knew this was implanted abstraction; an emotional memory trace lacking specific conscious detail, probably the work of psychiatrists commissioned by Childheart. The pleasantly vague, reassuring sensation Iggy felt in troubled times trying to recall his life before he had come to town seven years earlier though merely an abstraction, he liked to believe was based on truth. He had been happy once, yet what happened after childhood was a mystery he wasn't in any hurry to solve.

Iggy cheerfully sensed he had simply become an asshole.

Albeit a lethal asshole; a simplistic assumption enabling him peace of mind; an asshole wasn't a sociopathic murderer, an indelible character stain even; hey, he could change!

He had been given a second chance.

Wasn't that part of the culture, getting a second chance?

And from what he knew, this was Second Chance City. Hey, life was good, leasurely and pleasant, though lately work had been taking up most of his time:

Fortunately there were contractors to do the speciaist grunt stuff and his two current cases involved women.

Iggy liked women, especially pretty ones, and favored Movie Stars.

And, as luck would have it, both of his current cases involved beautiful actresses.

Whistling, he crossed Figueroa walking along Seventh passing the old library.

He liked the way its exotic colored tile roof spiked the skyline between the towering glass skyscrapers, and particularly liked early morning Downtown, long shadows falling deep across the steep hills of the Financial District; some mornings he would drop down to Broadway for coffee and pastries in Central Market, but not today. **Haircut. Followed by breakfast meeting at ten. And he was unusually preoccupied with his eight o'clock meeting.**

The morning sun caught Iggy off guard; a sharp bright sliver reflected from windows atop the tallest building for fifteen hundred miles jagged his eye:

Originally the Library Tower, the bank logo at the pinnacle now boasted ownership leaving Iggy to wonder how many thousands of anonymous financial services workers were cubicled in corporate slavery up there. He knew he resembled one of them, albeit more elegantly clad in custom-tailored clothes shod in handmade shoes. Aging, he looked fit, and like most of them probably spent hours in the gym, but unlike them he was never in a hurry; always last to crowd into an elevator and would usually wait for the next.

Iggy was a lingerer. Perhaps a malingerer. He preferred to stay down on the street with his feet on the ground. He quietly whistled as he waited at the crosswalk, sun permeating fine lightweight worsted, warming his bones; despite his exquisite sartorial finery he knew he looked dangerous. A man to be avoided. Only because he was an asshole he repeated to himself.

He felt his bones had memories; bad memories; of broken times; commissioning x-rays he proved it to himself. He even had a couple of metal plates. When it dawned on him for the first time that people had actually tried to kill him, and he had probably killed them defending himself, all he could wonder was how many? Was it his pretense at remorse that made him such an asshole? How could he feel remorse for something he didn't know he had done? He concluded his remorse self-pity, the ultimate asshole emotion. His steel plates could be broken bones from a car wreck. Ahh, but what about his poor old manhood, he couldn't imagine some disappointed ladyfriend going at him with eectrobes and cattle prong whatever he had done to upset her. He shuddered. How had he known

Yes, being an asshole is a serious business, but deep in his heart he couldn't quite believe it.

Iggy had gone to great lengths to to pry open his past and failed.

Perhaps his dilemma was simply survival, a mental defense mechanism he knew he was a good guy, or had been once, a long time ago, versus an abstract nagging he had been contemptible, yet had found no evidence of malfeasance. Logically, from his appearance, manners, knowledge, social etiquette and demeanor he knew he ought to be an attractive but instinctively people kept away from him. He didn't know what he had done, for the most part, he didn't care, because, on the whole, Iggy was a happy man today.

He knew wholeheartedly deep down he really liked women.

Lisette was one of his favorites and she had called him with a request for help.

He was only too glad to assist.

Lisette had been instrumental in his happy demise into his acceptance of unknowing. **his once disturbing lack of lifestory now filled with overwhelming emotional benevolence;** he knew had been given a second chance. Lisette big part of it.

This he gladly accepted and took his amnesia seriously because he had found out one night, that if prompted, he could seriously hurt people. As time passed Iggy started to call his condition 'selective amnesia' because he was either unconsciously stopping himself facing his past, or it was being kept from him by a psychotherapeutic block installed by an unknown party, probably Childheart; either way, his history was mischievously elusive. He sometime surprised himself with feats of knowledge or refined social skills and enjoyed a leisurely consulting career with a sedate social life; he even discovered he could tango, passably foxtrot, and was an aficionado of the ballet.

However, Iggy had discovered his heightened sense of survival, and the growing hunch his cultural sojourn was with the two actresses suddenly entering/featuring in his life.

Lisette and Geraldine, two separate cases, hardly connected, except by Hollywood, Iggy was forcing himself not to admit it it was too good to be true.

Plus, after his eight o'clock Iggy was going to breakfast with the only man who could tell him about his past, not that he would; the man to whom Iggy owed his life.

Childheart.

Childheart didn't hold this secret over Iggy. Originally, he used to tease Iggy telling him he would reveal all when he felt Iggy ready, hinting he might have fun trying to find out himself. Then realizing it unfair, he desisted after an apology.

Nowadays Iggy believed Childheart kept him in ignorance from benevolence.

Barbers generally can be good judges of character. **He arrived on time.** Iggy liked the prestigious old hotel barbershop.

"Morning Brian," Iggy said, relaxing into the welcoming, worn leather chair.

"Good morning Mr. Change." The barber knew how exactly Iggy liked his hair and Iggy liked being the recipient of an identical perfect haircut every time.

Brian started at seven so usually Iggy didn't have a wait.

"Breakfast meeting with my boss," Iggy said. "Can't afford to have an hair out of place."

The barber chuckled politely as he started work and Iggy chuckled remembering when Childheart had set him up in business five years earlier. He had handed Brian the very first of his delicately engraved cards:

'Ignatius Chang - Childheart & Chang Associates - Personnel Research Consultants'

The barber had immediately recognized the prestigious Downtown address.

"Chang, pronounced change. Childheart & Chang. We find the Right People." Iggy added, neglecting to supply detail of what happened to said right people when found. This was to become his opening line when introducing himself with flourish of card, softening what he thought was the goofy name Childheart had burdened him with.

Iggy suspected Childheart screwing with him when he created the new identity; driving license, passport, social security, credit cards, all inscribed Ignatius Chang.

What kind of name was that? Iggy didn't have the faintest hint of Asian ethnicity.

Iggy was of distinct northern European origins; tall, lean, light-skinned, with graying pale curly brown hair worn in a boyish crop he hoped foppish enough to soften his face. It was a style he had seen in an old movie. Brian had seen the same movie, so maintained it perfectly. Iggy spent a lot of time watching movies, or reading. He thought himself shallow, curiously not curious, or probing; Iggy believed himself lazy, then a flash of insight revealed it to be patience. A professional patience. Precise, disciplined, military patience.

He was waiting for Childheart to make his move.

Brian knew his haircuts were hypnotic. Iggy lost in reflection, in a sleepy trance, eyelids drooping struggling for mental connections; he couldn't figure what Childheart might want as payback; he stopped had trying to solve the mystery as he ceased to be concerned about his own past and safety; who had been after him had been probably neutralized, probably by Childheart. Meanwhile, he enjoyed a quiet life Downtown; he could walk to the office, the libraries and Department of Records. He lived at a fine old private club where everything was done for him. Where he garaged a fine old car to drive out to the beach when fancy took him. He could walk the boardwalk pier-to-pier or ride the coast highway to Malibu or cruise the neon-bright streets of Hollywood at night; life was a breeze for Iggy, waiting. He always had time on his hands and work was by rote, case-after-case methodically sifting records looking for tell-tale detail with limited fieldwork followup; *an association of trivia* he liked to call it, a jig-saw puzzle of facts. In his gut he knew he was waiting for the real assignment, payback for Childheart saving his life. And he knew that it would be something major to challenge his potential. Months drifted into years. Life was pleasant. Nobody bothered his daily routine. He had an unlimited supply of credit, enjoyed robust health; he didn't limp but a girl he met in a bar told he she thought he looked like he should, had been he been wounded? Then late one night walking home from a restaurant in Little Tokyo he took a shortcut behind Skid Row. Adrenaline hit. The darkness took on a soft red glow. He could see like a cat. Iggy had discovered he was fond of cats so assumed this is how it would be if Tiddles was faced with adversaries. He picked up watchers in the shadows. His assailant came on quickly. Iggy dropped into backstance. His left knee lightly touched his collarbone before his leg snapped straight and his immaculately shone wingtip cracked his assailant's larynx. Iggy drew back with a small bow as his assailant dropped knife, dropped to knees clutching throat: "Do not exert yourself if you want to breathe." Iggy whispered to him. "If you want to live, take yourself off to the nearest ER, asap." The watching eyes put the word out. Iggy was to be left alone. None one had bothered him on the street since. And he was still wondering where he had learned his fighting skills, who had taught him, drill sergeant or dojo master, and his moral dilemma? He could have simply deflected the knife strike instead retaliated with a kill shot. He could still hear the crack as his toecap demolished bone. Did he choke to death. He was still wondering these seven years later.. Back in the barbers chair Brian takes his time. Every small snip of the scissor an action of sweet contemplation and diplomacy, aware of the scars on Iggy's scalp; a few too many for schoolday fights Brian had decided.

Artfully Added Orifice

Haircut perfect Iggy crossing Pershing Square morning humming money money money:

Sidewalk cracking a thousand smiles Iggy jostling along to his eight o'clock basking in happy gesthalt despite serious intent on the upcoming business day hearing chirrups of languages from passerby he could hardly name but understood well enough.

How did he understand those foreign tongues? He had given up trying to find out. But they were interrupting his more interesting thoughts. About women. Women.

Lisette and Geraldine.

Actresses both.

And both quite lovely. How Iggy loved actresses. Now that was something to think about; actresses could be anything and anyone to everyone; all they needed was inspiration, or good direction, or the right motivation; or money money money; passing the grand old building that had once been the LA Fur Mart Iggy wondered how he knew that too. Long gone it now housed a hive of wholesale junk jewelers but the shell belonged to a golden era when mink draped pale thespian shoulders, *movie star* shoulders; *the movies*, ah, yes.

Iggy on Broadway passing more grandiosely ornate shells of Movie Palaces that once hosted glittering World Premieres; pallid architectural ghosts these hundred years later, streaked with grime and gaudy flashing plastic signage for yet more wholesale jewelry.

He was soon in the Fashion District but what was fashionable about it?

How Iggy knew Della Spiga or Fouberg St. Horore was a mystery to him; the great Fashion Houses shining out over wet cobbled streets of Paris and Milan on dark rainy afternoons were sparkling, broken shards of memory; mere motes of his past floating in his mind. Here, in the dusty bright glare *Fashion District*, a euphemism for sweat shop slum he thought, *Garment District* better; wholesome, honest, frenetic, bulging with people. Iggy liked the bustle; the crowds; a rare site on the streets in this city pulsing with a lifeblood of cars; he matched the building to the street number and went in.

Whatever purpose it had been built for, it was now *Artist Lofts*.

Iggy seriously doubted artists lived here. Shrewd developers moved in a few real artists to gentrify the locale, but, Iggy observed, in recent years 'artist' had become alternative idiom for loser and dropped the word: now they were pitched singularly as *Lofts*.

And these were '*Luxury Lofts*'.

Inlays of fine marble set in polished black granite adorned the entrance. The developer had hired a designer with a flair to echo original Art Deco grandeur.

It was 7:55.

Iggy was punctual. He looked around the foyer as he wandered through to the original 1920s elevators; impressed by the elegant resonance and feeling convivial from his haircut, Iggy engaged the security uniform behind the desk with compliments on the décor.

The elevator, renovated with burnished externals, rode creakily slow to the sixteenth:

Iggy emerged, friendly motes of dust dancing in the sunny air there to welcome him; he could see the distant San Bernardino mountains through picture windows at the end of the corridor, hints of snow on their tips. He got to her door. It was wide open with her corpse posed dramatically for all to view.

Iggy cursed.

Fuck, the show was turning to fucking cliché LA Noir.

Her name had been Geraldine Honeydew.

Grateful his gregarious entry would confirm his arrival time in the lobby Iggy called 911.

Then used the intercom behind the front door to warn lobby security to shortly expect a large police presence. Now he could look around. The loft had been made over with exquisite good taste. The artfully draped silk bed canopy made a perfect backdrop for the thoughtfully posed girl so obviously lifeless, eyes open wide yet coyly suggestive even in death; she had been hot stuff; no, she *was* hot stuff but dead for hours Iggy presumed by minuteai. He didn't need to touch her to know how she felt; cold, waxen, yet, strangely, exuding extreme temptation for necrophilia. He shook his head. C'mon man, get a grip.

Geraldine Honeydew had been larger than life.

A starlet for the past thirty-five years. Maybe more. Iggy sensed who had killed her had been unable to make her go away. Iggy had an eerie feeling she could see him from the afterlife, beckoning him with her pose, more, her aura. 'Don't be shy,' she was telling him. 'C'mon big boy, take a peek. I know you want to. Your eyes were just itching to peel back my wrapper right from that very first moment we met.'

Overpowered by growing inquisitiveness Iggy inched forward, drawn to her breasts.

Truly inspired, Iggy was filled with an admiration that doused and hints of common lust; such wonderous creatures with a life of their own swimming in chiffon and diaphanous silk. Meeting Miss Honeydew, *naturally* he had been curious. They were completely natural, he was sure of it. Iggy had long-since discovered he was an ass-man, but was very fond of breasts nonetheless, and.

And Geraldine's were the closest he had seen to total perfection; *natural* perfection, their fluid form and flow went way beyond augmentation -

And what nestled between them was something he could have *never* have imagined!

A puff of soft blond down resembling a little yellow duckling fizzled into longer fine hair that softly curled around sweet pink labia nestling in her cleavage.

Awstruck, he stared remembering the first time he and Miss Honeydew had met.

It had been a dull Wednesday afternoon. *It this very room. She hadn't been wearing a blouse, or a bra; instead, long, sheer, clinging black silk chiffon revealing all but nothing starting high on her throat. She exuded mystery. Iggy sensed she had wanted to talk but was under strict direction not to do so. She had so much she tell but all Iggy learned was she missed her little dog. No one would want to steal it.*

She had wanted to talk but now it was too late.

Iggy was sad. Geraldine extravagant. Extravagant of smiles. Extravagant of spirit. Geraldine dead. Iggy liked women. That was one of the new things he had discovered about himself. Childheart had dumped him in West Hollywood for all Iggy knew he could have been a gay transvestite topless go-go dancer in his past life. Discovering his true proclivities had been interesting, painful and fun after he met Lisette. Life became lighter; he was liberal; live and let live; let live and live.. The minutes ticked off sirens automaticall waiting badge in hand. Geraldine was a first, unique, original.

"Her body has an extra hole in it sir. It's a cute one too. But it didn't kill her."

Iggy didn't notice who said it, or to whom; one of the medical examiner-criminalist types who were on scene minutes after the uniforms and Homicide detectives; it should all be perfunctory, practiced routine. Iggy sensed they had been waiting for Geraldine to be reported dead and been lurking; patrolling nearby in readiness. Now here she was, surrounded by professionals inured to glamour, the grotesquely bizarre and all the hideously imaginative forms of violent death common in Los Angeles, only this time they were dazed with stupefaction.

Iggy noted their amazement bordered on admiration; they couldn't stop staring:

It was a soft, pink, moist hole.

Tight, secretive, private.

Hidden in a soft tight body that instantly made most men think holes and how best fill them; a crass, impolite description Iggy immediately admitted to himself, but qualified: this was an especially female body designed to immediately provoke lust and penetration.

It had once belonged to a particularly sexually provocative woman yet this particularly sweet little orifice between her pert breasts, peeping shyly through demure sheer lace-trimmed lingerie, was paradoxically demure, innocent *and pure*.

Someone finally had the decency to step forward and close her eyes.

Iggy stood captivated immediately he discovered Geraldine's body.

Intrigued, her breasts were real, he was certain, their authenticity guaranteed by their originality, hardly the handiwork of a silicon-sac-inserting Beverly Hills hack; comparing them to firm ripe fruit he recalled in Renaissance paintings he inched in for a closer peek; aesthetic flashbacks were rare and hardly inspired by corpses as he nervously noted the mysteriously shadowed lips nestling in her cleavage.

Geraldine was a peaches and cream and rose petals girl, a technicolored strawberry blonde with bold yellow highlights, ripe lime-green eyes, pink cheeks, process-red lips and perfect creamy skin. Iggy caught himself. Why Technicolor? She was drop-dead beautiful.

Geraldine Honeydew could have been created in 1950. Honeycutt would have been a classier handle for glamorous Geraldine, but she had a sparkle of classic screwball comedy,

so Honeydew was chosen; a little juicy melon innuendo would suit, and help. Geraldine had the unique elegance, beauty and wit of Myrna Loy and like that great legend of the silver screen, she was dead.

Geraldine's limbs had been arranged in a spiral, elbows and knees daintily bent spinning the eye into taffeta whirls of her into her wondrous pointy bosem and soft wide smile, yet unlike most other corpses Iggy had seen freshly rendered dead, delicious Miss Honeydew still transmitted a certain powerful aura from the afterlife. The soul who had occupied her body had taken good care of it in a life that denied convention, Iggy had known that immediately he had interviewed her.

She was fun.

She liked drinking gin, and told him so.

But stopped herself telling him anything else.

Chiffon headscarf teased the eye cleavage. Headscaft and lingerie, she was one sexy hoot. It was impossible to guess her age. Perhaps a minute passed before he called 911. He fought to keep his imagination in check.

Then there was her little, white, poodle dog. Curly.

Curly was why he was there.

Iggy had sat aghast as he listened to how the poor animal had died. Childheart had read him the Report after he accepted the assignment, and handed off the case to Iggy.

And there was a silver framed photograph of Curly sitting watching him as he leant over Geradine's corpse realizing that this was a still life not to be disturbed. not too close but close. Finally he had a use for his Monte Blanc fountain pen.

Chest-cavity vaginal implants were new he thought.

This was his first. But nothing would shock him in the town. Los Angeles, the ultimate 21st Century city he was proud to call home.

I'm glad I'm old school Iggy told himself starting his prelim as he put his Mont Blanc to good use delicately parting and inserting the barrel of solid gold.

Why would a woman want two vaginas Iggy asked himself, and both apparently in full working order? Perhaps it was her man.

B. J. Olive.

· 4 ·

LAPD Hate Crimes Homicide

Iggy didn't touch anything else. He cautiously used the wait time to take a another look around. This second murder in the Olive case came as no surprise. If it was a murder. Geraldine's pose seemed to deny natural causes, or suicide. Iggy had the beginnings of a hunch he couldn't begin to substantiate but the cops arrived ending his speculation. They

wanted ID.

Respectfully Iggy presented his gold sheild. Childheart had done him proud.

The 18-carat gold star eagle-, with heraldry, shone out of the handsome peccary case.

It had an impressive gleam but the bold 202 Area Code phone-number on the photo ID gave extreme gravity. An anonymous Federal Agency answered when Iggy first called to try it out. The operator drily told him he had activated his mission when he gave his gold badge number. That had been five years ago.

Five fun years. Every time he had used it trouble evaporated.

It had been a long vacation he thought *surpcting it was now over* as he stood watching the technicians methodically process Miss Honeydew's body, suspecting this was the start of his payback to Childheart. Iggy was as red-blooded as the next man when it came to women and again penetration came to mind, followed by a cool rationale of his findings from the respectful probing with his Mont Blanc pen. Anatomically, was it possible?

Her chest labia, though highly decorative, were neither ornamental nor superficial.

It was then the techs moved Miss Honeydew. Her head rolled and her eyes opened catching Iggy with a piecing glance of lust and mischief; *if only I weren't dead we could be great friends*. Iggy managed to contain the sudden gust of hilarity with a cough. Gerldine was a riot. And somehow, somewhere she wasn't *very* dead, but that didn't make sense so trying to dismiss perverse concepts of sexual proclivity an anatomical diagram began to form in his mind; her heart, ribs, lungs; sternum xiphoid process; the small pointed cartilage attached to the lower end of the sternum had been removed to let her breastbone serve as a pubic bone, love canal inserted for a touch of romantic cardiac massage.

Romantic cardiac massage?

What! Yep, you could really touch her heart with that one Iggy thought, knowing anything was possible in a town where doctors played fast and loose with the Hippocratic oath. Such were the ethics of money. There were none. Hey, you could get an extra dick fitted in this town if you could afford it. Maybe some rich guys would want one to piss with and one to fuck with. Whatever. Iggy was trying to put this romantic rationale together when, as he put it to Childheart later, a slick effeminate man arrived on scene.

Captain Martin Glass LAPD Hate Crimes Homicide.

He would want to know why Iggy was here.

Iggy had a simple, innocent explanation at the ready; it would gaurantee he would be out of here in time to make his breakfast meeting at ten.

He would simply mention his client: B. J. Olive.

- 3 -

J. Benjamin Olive

Being an Olive is serious business.

Deadly serious Iggy decided the morning he met Old Ben.

A dangerous *gangrenous* geriatric Iggy decided moments after he set eyes on him, thinking this man was rotten inside; listening to Ben describe the nasty, irritating problem he wanted solved confirmed it. He suspected someone had taken and killed his girlfriend's little dog and he wanted to get to the bottom of it. "Not merely killed," Ben Olive insisted that fateful morning in Iggy's office Downtown, "but tortured and murdered!"

Could killing a dog be described as murder?

Iggy put the question aside for later. He liked dogs.

"A diabolical act." The old man continued, "against me. I want to know who who did it. I want names. And I don't want to anyone to know I know. My contingency fee will guarantee confidentiality." He handed Iggy a folder.

Iggy was expected to read it *now!*

It contained 1. A concise report from Ben's company security department, 2. A lab report and 3. A cashier's check. Obediently, Iggy read, grimaced sympathetically several times and started explaining Childheart and Chang didn't do pet animal cases, only personnel searches but would gladly refer a reputable Private Detective Agency when Childheart abruptly joined the meeting. Iggy suspicious: why had Childheart been listening in?

Iggy cringed. Childheart actually fawned, he *so* wanted the business.

It wasn't how the innocent little doggie had been done in but the vile manner in which the news had been delivered to the old man.

It was perverse. It made Iggy very uncomfortable.

Old Ben had been tricked into taking a bite of a sandwich he thought chopped veal.

Childheart quietly took his leave curtly asking Iggy to take the old man's instructions. Iggy trusted his boss and obediently complied.

Under no circumstances was Iggy to let Miss Honeydew know her doggie was deceased. He was to comfort her with his presence and the knowledge that his esteemed organization was looking for said dog. She wouldn't be suspicious that an elite personnel search agency would undertake a missing dog case, because it was for J. Ben Olive.

It would be ample excuse for him to sniff around, talk to her, her neighbors, find out who was behind it...

And that is exactly what Iggy would tell Captain Glass right now.

The poor woman's dog had gone missing. His firm had been hired to look into its disappearance. He was merely reporting back to her. This was only the second time Iggy had met Miss Honeydew. It was simple. It was true. He could prove it. Captain Glass had his back to Iggy surveying the murder scene, hand on hip, striking an effeminate pose of careless indifference, as if the death of Geraldine Honeydew was somehow beneath him.

Despite his limp wrist and subtle pout Iggy knew Glass was straight.

His cunning-bitchy-closeted-queen front bogus.

Why he affected it made no sense, other than it attracted hate crime.

Iggy suspected a psychiatric deformity in Glass but could not muster up enough interest to check it out. Despite this peculiarity, this fey disguise of expensive, fashion-statement suits, Glass was all policeman. He had met Iggy before but kept his piercing curiosity in check behind a thin veneer of superficial civility. They discovered they didn't like each other. He knew Iggy's credentials were in order from an earlier encounter. Glass talked to the officers processing the scene. Iggy had discovered the body and called it in. The local precinct cops wanted to take Iggy in for questioning but Glass overrode. He was a Captain with his own elite unit: LAPD Hate Crimes Homicide. Iggy's current statement would suffice. He would take a fully written-up, signed version at his office Downtown later.

LAPD Hate Crimes Homicide is savvy; private, connected.

They kept to themselves in a quiet corner tucked in behind the Intellectual Property Unit guys at 100 West First Street. In a league of their own; low key, covert, they kept away from general hate crime stuff unless it involved conspiracy or murder. Their balliwick covered big-money, big-business, corporate, finance and media entertainment industry murders; if it sniffed of hate crime, they had at it.

Iggy knew all about their heady, high-power stuff, but hey, albeit despite his Federal licence, he was just a harmless little civilian PI doing a useful little job, a singular piece of legal system detritus reaching down through the cracks finding certain members of society who had fallen into comfortable new lives and new identities.

That was his story and he was sticking to it.

Iggy was private.

Iggy did missing persons.

Iggy's line of business was following paper trails. Iggy had a concealed carry permit but seldom carried. Most times he didn't need a gun in his line of work. Glass would know all this. Glass wouldn't know about the night Iggy discovered he could kill a man with his elegantly shod great toe, but Iggy was getting ahead of himself here. All his job meant was lots of leg work. Probably why he insisted on leather soles.

Glass was in Prada today; pity, Iggy thought, they had rubber soles.

Iggy insisted on leather but liked Prada. He remembered their original store. A memory fragment. In the galleria next to the Milan duomo. He had bought black crocodile cufflinks to match a black raw silk Montessori tie. He was going to a funeral. A great friend had died. That was all he knew. That was all he remembered. He couldn't recall a name. It was just a brightly colored, splintered shard of his irretrievable past; his old life; old friend in coffin, dead at fifty-two, black crocodile loafers on feet, pack of favorite Boyard papier-maise on chest; he could smoke his favorite cigarettes in the afterlife wearing favorite shoes-

"Doubtlessly you found yourself here this morning trying to trace someone on behalf of a client Mr. Change?" Glass's words cracked Iggy's reminiscence. "Were you successful?"

"A something rather than a someone Captain." Iggy said, torn from his reverie. It struck him the policeman might know more about his own past than he did himself. "We have been commissioned by a client on a case about finding a little dog."

"Ah, a little dog. Ahh. Purely an innocent coincidence your finding a body?"

"Yes. I'm attempting to resolve a delicate matter for J. Ben Olive. My client."

Seconds drifted.

Glass noted, forever a devotee of acute self-awareness, caution clicked up a notch in his reptilian brain.

"I'm sure you're familiar with the name." Iggy continued. "J. Ben Olive; local magnate, owns half of California. Miss Honeydew, the deceased, was a close friend of Mr. Olive. Her little dog had gone missing. As you know we do personell search at Childheart & Chang, and though we had never considered a missing lost dog case before, on this occassion I was *personally* instructed by Mr. Olive himself."

"The Ben Olive." Glass said, in his straight man voice.

Iggy pleased. The mention of Ben Olive intimidated Glass.

Old Ben played cagy with his privacy; he avoided the limelight, fastidiously hiding behind impenetrable LA corporate fortress walls reigning over defense, communications and entertainment industries. Old Ben was sitting on a sizable chunk of fifth largest economy in the world. The Olives had been in the State for over a century, and, secretly, Childheart told Iggy, old Ben had become one of the richest men in the world.

Iggy placated Glass with logical elaboration.

He had simply come to report to Miss Honeydew about her lost dog before she started work for the day. She had a late call at the studio. She was a minor movie star of sorts. At least, Iggy recalled seeing her in a couple of decent productions. He prattled on conversationally. "I have a meeting at ten if that's okay with you Captain. *I'm sure you always know where to find me.* I'm always available."

Glass nodded to his subordinates to let Iggy though.

Iggy pressed through the police lines in the lofts making it down onto the street.

He had just told Glass he suspected he was under surveillance so the policeman would know it was impossible for Iggy to have killed the actress. Iggy had only noticed Glass's surveliance teams on him afer he started to sniff around looking for Geraldine's little dog. Why was LAPD Hate Crimes Homicide so interested in Geraline?

No matter: he hadn't told Glass what had happened to her dog.

The crowded, sunny sidewalk brought immediate relief. Iggy walked briskly mentally backtracking on all he knew of Ben Olive and Geraldine; all he knew of Hollywood; all he knew about big money and those who worshipped it; but this case wasn't about money.

It was all about revenge.

He was relieved the policeman hadn't connected his lost dog case to Geraldine's murder; the cause of death yet to be established. And detail of her surgical chest implant. Curiously, the disturbing surgical demise of her little white poodle now seemed fluff.

Fluff.

Blown to a distant corner of the case; the real stuff was sitting right in front of him.

Walking a a vigorous pace Iggy set off across the periphery of Downtown.

It was 9:40 and he wouldn't be late if he hurried.

Iggy liked to walk. Occasionally he would get his car out or take the bus, but mainly he enjoyed roving around on shoe-leather.

He enjoyed these bustling old neighborhoods; they reminded him of noisy street markets in far-off lands he knew he had visited but couldn't consciously remember; the happy chatter, the aromas of cooking; Iggy hungry, ready for breakfast. His mind drifted, pushing the Olive Case aside, the *The Big Question* sitting squarely in front of him.

It was always sitting there; so big it blotted itself out with its own shadow.

Who was he before Childheart saved his life?

And his big, mysterious, hidden debt.

What did Childheart want in payment for saving his life?

Childheart had saved his life; more, given him a new start that day in the desert:

Iggy assumed payback a given. worked on the hypothesis Childheart had something in mind. Perhaps a secret mission or chore. Iggy suspected the debt collection process had finally started with this, the Olive case. He would soon find out. Iggy fancifully placated himself with the certainty Frobisher Childheart was simply a benevolent Social Register ghost who wafted in and out of mortality on whim, amusing himself righting the wrongs that brought him discomfort. Childheart had been extraordinarily kind and in return Iggy felt protective towards him.

But he had felt guilty reseaching Childheart's past tracing him back to eminent family ties, but that was just modern history; his line went back to ancient times. What was his connection to the Olives, and Glass, they had non-history -

Joy!

A whinny; a bray.

Say what?

Iggy heard a joyfully familiar sound and instantly forgetting poor dead Geraldine and her poor dead dog, and Childheart's peculiar life as a mortal ghost; he racked his eyes into tighter focus. Were they deceiving him?

· 5 ·

Roger the Warhorse

His friend Roger was back.

The old charger was hitched to a parking meter breakfasting out of a nosebag.

Roger had recognized him.

He clattered his steel-shod hooves on the concrete and let go of a mighty snort followed by a chorus of jubilant snuffles. Roger was greeting to him. Iggy was delighted to see his four-legged friend and grinned at the old battered horsey face, long scarred nose, strong white chin, chewed-up black ears, but purposely avoided Roger's eyes after a few seconds; he could get some horse sense later. Iggy thought Roger looked well, and considering his constant eating, not any fatter since the last time he saw him; he knew little about horses but Roger seemed no thicker around the middle; whether this was good or bad, healthy or unhealthy Iggy had no idea. Roger was closely watching him with big, compassionate brown eyes, chewing on his cud.

Iggy realized his mistake, but not fast enough. Please! Cattle chew cud, not horses.

Objections interjected. Roger was no bovine. But from what he could gather the beef was good today. Roger just knew Iggy had breakfast on his mind. The best steak and eggs and crusty sourdough bread.

"Roger, you old nag. Food, is that all you think about?"

In response Roger gave Iggy a playful nudge with his nose that would have had a lesser man flat on his back. Iggy saw it coming, grabbed Rogers mighty head, and wrestled him. From his long periods of reflection with Roger, Iggy suspected he was a brave horse and deserved to retire, wanted to retire, and make his home in LA, after all, he was happy here; Iggy had taken **him up to Malibu**. And street horses were illegal nowadays. The only street-legal equines hereabouts being LAPD quarterhorses so Iggy had been informed by Miss Merryberry, the beloved office manager and the light of his life. Mr. Childheart acquired a street permit for Roger, who was now officially a police horse, (beligerantly working undercover). Iggy had been mightily impressed. If Childheart could fix that, he could fix anything. He had stopped worrying. Roger is a vegetarian, and his big grown eyes sometimes seemed humbly cow-like as he gently ground his jaw around and around; but only **until Iggy reminded horses were vegetarian but not exactly pacifists, Roger could kick ass any time he wanted because Roger was the real McCoy, a genuine warhorse**. They stopped the head wrestling Iggy submitting to Roger's superior horsepower. Looking into Rogers eyes Iggy started picturing a pale blonde. It had to be Lissette. He chuckled. The only person who would carry a loaded rattler up her sleeve was Lissette. Seems like she had seen Childheart and secured their services.

"Good morning Mr. Change. Indulging in a little horseplay this morning sir, ha ha?"

The manager was in his usual effusive maitre'd mood, laughing at his own jokes.

He had come out onto the street to confront the madman staring into the eyes of an horse with the size and power of a Clydesdale, whom he had been attempting to wrestle to the sidewalk. Male bonding with horse, he thought ha-ha, Roger very obviously very male.

"Just getting reacquainted with my good four-legged friend here," Iggy said, embarrassed.

"He's a remarkable old charger isn't he sir. Mr. Childheart has ordered for you 'just how you like it. It will be served shortly, if you would care to be seated."

"What else is going down Roger?"

Roger looked at him quizzically. Iggy suspected he'd never had equestrian leanings, probably never been on horseback, yet he had affinity with Roger. Their rides had been a lot of fun. "You know, I think we should go for that ride we were talking about."

Roger's ears twitched conversationally; he added a horsey nod; definitely *a good idea*.

"I was thinking the Hollywood Hills? Are you up for it Rog? I was thinking tonight?"

What do you have in mind? Iggy visualised what he planned to do.

He could see the steep hillside above the elusive old movie star's house.

It would be a wild ride, if he didn't break his neck, or Roger's.

Was it possible? He felt a reassuring warmth, a soft bristly sensation on his hand. Roger was nuzzling him; *it was doable, easy, safe; loose rocks, no problem*. Childheart would approve. Iggy was struck by a mental image of cheeky mountain goats playfully chasing Roger across a steep hillside littered with rocks. Iggy had realized his affinity with Roger was based on their mutual warmth and respect for Childheart. Roger had been with Childheart a lot longer than he had, and for all intents and purposes he was more companion than horse.

· 6 ·

The Eat-Sexy Meditation Diet

Iggy walked into the restaurant with poise and confidence; he felt at home surrounded by this blaze of white linen; he knew somewhere along the line he had been a city boy once.

Childheart was at his usual table with his nose in a book.

"If I am going to do this thing, I have to be prepared," he told Iggy, referring to his book as he stood to greet him, warmly shaking hands. Iggy was secretly amused; other than formal blue blazer Childheart wore jodphurs and riding boots today. "What impending calamity is causing you alarm today sir, nuclear proliferation?"

"Mass-destruction is one thing Iggy, self-destruction another. I'm talking obesity. Obesity is a new enemy, a serious adversary." Iggy wondered if his boss was trying to tell him something. Childheart continued. "Yes, self-destruction is a cunning foe, we have to take care of ourselves Iggy, and this is a remarkable book."

Their breakfast arrived.

Two plates of steak and eggs. Iggy picked up the book, careful not to lose the page.

"The Eat-Sexy Meditation Diet?"

"A best-selling self-help book by a famous doctor. I'm not quite sure whether its about cooking, eating or fucking." Childheart said, deftly cutting a wedge of steak dousing it in

golden yolk. "I met your good friend Miss Nice. Interesting young woman. She seems in genuine need of assistance. You may proceed with her case."

"Thank you sir." Iggy nodded gratefully. He had already started the operation.

"How's life treating you Iggy?"

"Good, for a mere mortal." Iggy said cryptically, adding, "albeit without memory."

"Patience, dear fellow, and more will be revealed." Childheart said, letting Iggy get a good taste of butter-fried potatoes. "Anything to report on the Olive case?"

Iggy mentioned Geraldine Honeydew's recent demise.

"This might be our first murder, that is, if you don't count her dog."

"Miss Honeydew dead!" Childheart dropped his fork. "Oh no! Tell me more."

Iggy related the scene in detail as they ate, watching Childheart closely; like Roger he never seemed to tire of eating. Childheart has striking good looks; exotic, dark eyes that belonged to another age; aquiline, aristocratic; Iggy was aware of the worn, brown leather strap across Childheart's chest. He was openly packing. A heavy pistol pulled at his left shoulder. Iggy knew the weapon: a late 19th Century Mauser parabellum, 'knew its history, knew of its original owner, a young cavalry officer with a wounded right shoulder. He purchased the pistol because he couldn't swing his saber, used it in a famous cavalry charge.

Iggy felt he had lived the story. Heard the thunderous roar of hooves. Iggy got the picture from Roger; felt he had almost been there, seen the young cavalry officer on his polo pony riding beside Roger firing his Mauser as they engaged the oncoming mounted tribesmen head on. Fierce hand-hand fighting broke out. Blood splashed...

And Iggy was back at the occasion Childheart had decided Iggy would be armed.

"Your gun is like your nose, it is just wrong to let someone else pick it for you: old joke, sorry." Childheart had pushed the catalog at Iggy. The 1911 military Colt .45 automatic drew him. Childheart commissioned a master gunsmith and Iggy was duly fitted and kitted but Iggy's .45 was like Childheart's Mauser, purely for show:

Though the Mauser could blow a hole through the engine block of a Mack truck Childheart was metaphorically packing heavier artillery. He was the only man capable of beating Iggy in unarmed combat.

"There is something you haven't told me Iggy," he said, he had finished eating and was polishing his his plate clean with a crust of sourdough bread.

"LAPD Hate Crimes Homicide," Iggy offered. "After I discovered Miss Honeydew's body I immediately called it in. Predictably the local precinct showed, but Captain Glass was on scene within twenty minutes."

"Glass, such a nasty fellow," Childheart said flatly. "But you are still holding back. There is something you have yet to disclose."

Iggy described the way the body had been artistically posed. "And the deceased, Miss Honeydew, had a certain pleasurable, albeit surgical addition, made to her body that will sound almost a physical impossibility."

"Sounds jolly good fun. Tell me more!" Childheart beamed with a strange bravado.

Iggy started to describe exactly what he had seen, starting with her bosom.

"Quite spectacular!" Childheart said, picturing Iggy's words in his imagination: "Neither voluminous nor voluptuous but frankly works of art; and still completely natural I presume?"

"Yes. And between them nestled something equally exquisite; sweet, pink lips, with a soft peachy down covering - " *and he went on to describe it:*

Childheart's eyes popped.

"Sounds delightfully surreal; a pubis of great beauty and distinction, without wanting to sound disrespectful of the dead of course," Childheart added. "I would have liked to meet her and arrange a viewing of this private work of art." Iggy noted the old familiar sparkle in Childheart's eye as always but suddenly it had a different resonance; Childheart was on a more intense frequency: was he hiding something: and still completely natural was it Geraldine? "Cause of death?" he finished, almost as a diversion.

"I hate to think." Iggy said, "I don't know. I would like to see some x-rays."

"Then so you shall Iggy. I'll arrange for you to visit Mission Road. I shan't come. I don't like the morgue Well, you have been busy. Good work. Take the rest of the day off." He picked up his book. "Would you like another steak? More eggs? Some apple pie perhaps?"

"One thing we haven't discussed." Iggy said. "Her little dog."

"Poor dead girl and her poor dead dog. And such sexual peculiarity it requires one to stretch one's imagination for rational analysis; such a strange manner of death, seemingly for both of them. *And that nasty Captain Glass.* Can we skip the details the perverse murder of the poor canine until after I finish eating. Better, discuss it tomorrow perhaps?"

"Yes sir. It can wait. I had been amusing myself with semantics on this case." Iggy said. "Caninicide, doggicide, I couldn't decide. Now, I don't think dog murder amusing at all."

"Dog murder," Childheart managed a thin smile. "Quite disgusting."

There was something different about Childheart today. A different humor. And, Iggy suddenly suspected, Childheart had intimate knowledge of Miss Honeydew's perfect stack, which meant he had met her, or known her. Then he was hit by a jarring insight. *Childheart was going to kill Martin Glass.* In the following instant, Iggy realized, he didn't mind at all. He didn't like Glass and if not directly helping Childheart perpetrate the crime, like Roger, he would try to protect Childheart and keep him out of trouble. He was starting to rationalize when his thinking was cut short:

"You look distressed?" Childheart said, then picked up his book. "I know you like being with beautiful women Iggy. You still have one left. You still have your good friend Miss Nice to take care of."

Iggy left Childheart reading just after eleven.

He paused at the door, squinting with pleasure and well-being in the bright daylight.

The lingering succulence of a perfect breakfast having a deeply pleasant philosophical effect on his day; happy sun blazing, happy birds singing, happy traffic humming, what more could he want, despite the fact he was no closer to solving the mystery of what payback Childheart might want from him, or gleaning any new clues to his own identity. It didn't concern him. Everything felt right. He was happy in the moment in happy L.A.

Roger was dozing, leaning against the shade tree shrouding his parking meter.

Iggy stood on the sidewalk letting the sun permeate his tropical worsted; it felt good on his bones; he strolled over to Roger in the cool shadows; he felt one with the world, city humming and buzzing in the heat; found the happy cackling chatter of the flock of parrots that roamed city oddly relaxing.

Iggy liked the noisy birds.

They were in the big tree on the corner of Sixth Street. He was happy for them. Wild, exuberant, constantly on the move, not indigenous to the country, state or continent they could be seen noisily winging from Arcadia to the beach; their ancestors had been imported as exotic pets, escaped, found their own, multiplied, and formed their own tribe.

L.A. was like that, tribal.

There were hundreds of second languages in L.A.

Scores of tribes.

Iggy was from a tall northern tribe, blonde. Blue-eyed. Ignatius Chang, right!

Childheart had been humorously screwing with him on that one Was he screwing with him again. Iggy chuckled taking in the view. **It was unseasonably hot. Felt like summer.** Ah, summer in the city; downtown skyline shimmering in the heat beneath peerless blue.

Iggy standing absently stroking Rogers nose when it came to him; tribes.

This is what the whole thing with the Olives and the dead doggie was all about; tribes.

His mind stopped there, blocked, frustrating him; tribes?

Roger nodded; he sympathized in a woozy sort of way; half-snoozing, weight against the tree. Horse tribe, that was him. His. What? Go back to sleep. Horse-zzzs. Behind him, sheltering in the shadow of the next tree, two wizened old Asian men waited patiently, horsy-size pooper-scoopers at ready, respectfully bowing to Iggy when he caught their eye. They knew him. Ignatius Chang, white-devil Childheart's gun servant. Big .45 knew dojo tricks. Iggy knew why they were waiting. Horseshit. Roger's. *Somehow* the Japanese had discovered its magic growing properties for their miniature trees and for the Chinese a medicinal sex potion. At least, it was their story and they were sticking to it. Iggy knew the L.A. tongs and yakuza were keeping an eye on Childheart along with the cops, and the Childheart & Chang office was equidistant between Chinatown and Little Tokyo. Tribes again. Tribe territories. Roger yawned. The meter maid's electric cart whirred up. She knew this old horse. The first time she had seen Roger she hadn't noticed his permit and

mistakenly given him a ticket. Roger had thought the kind lady had left him a snack, and ate it, indignant spitting out the plastic envelope in disgust, which in turn disgusted her. Iggy watched the elderly woman and old horse appraise each other with mutual bemusement and disrespect and left them facing off; he would see Roger later, they were going for a ride in the Hollywood Hills.

And the sun shone on.

Iggy decided combine business and pleasure, take a leisurely drive and drop in on his client B. J. Olive. After a leisurely twenty-minute stroll back to his office to get his car out he had decided how he was going to personally break the sad news of Geraldine to old Ben.

Afterward, he had a date with Lisette.

The 1949 Cadillac fastback coupe (in sedate pale gray) skimmed along Figueroa up out of Downtown with a friendly low burble. It took three minutes to get onto Sunset Boulevard. Iggy frowning thinking this half-mile run hadn't always been such a depressing dump. This urban redevelopment plug ugly. The huge new apartment complexes soon left behind. Ahh, these little old storefronts had their own special charm: fiesta paintjobs on nightclubs, restaurants, bars, auto repair shops. Iggy just loved 'em; and traces of old world charm flitted past of how it had all been back in its heyday; touches of white stucco and red tile Spanish Revival peeping out of frothy palmy green hillside tapestry with Sunset sweeping down through Silverlake into Echo Park. And along the roadside, above the rooftops, larger-than-life, mighty billboards dwarfing the storefronts beneath them:

And there was a big close-up of Lisette!

Her eyes as blue as the sky cut out of the day, against the clouds, glowing.

The Hollywood Hills peeping up behind her.

Lisette. Glorious. Beautiful. Immortal Screen Goddess. Alive in the firmament.

Iggy loved the big billboards.

Iggy loved the movies; 'knew they were highly addictive. See one you were hooked for life. It was the same for people who worked making 'em. Miss Honeydew had been in movies. She had made it. So why quit a promising career. It didn't make sense. She had the looks and the talent. When he interviewed her about her little dog she didn't strike him as the lazy type, or a quitter. She wasn't a suicider -

Lisette again, caught on another billboard; beautiful girl struggling in the arms of ardent admirer, deciding if she wanted to receive his kiss -

Lisette.

He would meet her later. He knew she liked donuts. He had arranged the perfect rendezvous. An innocent addiction, donuts. Afterward he would pick up Roger and they would have some fun. Hopefully he would remember to save a donut for Roger.

Yes, the day was on. Donuts and dates with movie stars and rides on Roger.

The car gurgled along with a restrained rumble, just the right hint of thunder he thought with satisfaction; he was Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer. Iggy liked that. This was his rod, his heap. The sedate caddy was Miss Merryberry's taste. She had chosen his car. She was his

Zelda, his detective noire secretary and Childheart's personal assistant. Iggy adored Miss Merryberry, wondered why she had stopped pursuing her acting career, she was Jane Russel in *Outlaw*, Elizabeth Taylor in *A Place in the Sun* and Candace Bergen in *Live for Life*, albeit with a dark rinse -

A Lisette billboard again. Her wide smile again. She seemed to have more teeth than humanly possible. The traffic thickened demanding his concentration. He crossed Fountain. Soon Sunset would branch left and he would carry straight on as the street became the start of Hollywood Boulevard.

Hollywood Boulevard, *yay!*

This was Iggy's special treat. He planned to drive the complete length of Hollywood Boulevard until it became narrow winding lane high in the hills. And where it ended he knew he would find the Olive compound, safe in the security of the Trousdale Estates.

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Strung Out at Noon

Iggy's eyes had their own set of special danger filters.

Installed, he guessed, by decades of pre-memory life-and-death survival.

Iggy couldn't recall incident or detail but knew he could trust his eyes.

He would see differently sensing his lizard brain danger filters had cut in. He had sharper perception. To see past the obvious. He couldn't see around corners, or see through walls but he blanked out the innocuous, focused on pertinent detail; saw the problem:

Sometimes the hairs on the back of his neck stood on end, but not today.

All he could see today was desperation.

Hollywood Boulevard garish, bright, dirty; Iggy looked out of his fine gray leather cocoon through green tinted autoglass; brash contrast, luxury car vs. raw human survival on cracked, dirty sidewalk: ahh, his helplessness, his powerlessness, over life: kids strung out at noon; hanging out, waiting out; his lizardbrain danger filters efficiently scanning sidewalk; a mechanism probably installed by military psychiatrist hypnotherapist courtesy Childheart. Why? Was it empathy; the kids powerlessness, their craving, for dope, booze, or powerless over obsessive survival dreams; neon pale young faces in glare of the midday sun; anemia and pimples; trackmarks to the stars; stars in dull eyes; escape into fame glory fantasies maxxed to potential in pain-blistered imaginations, guile and willingness to risk all; wanna listen to the most painful story you'll ever hear?

It's your own, stupid motherfucker! Ha ha ha ha.

They came to LA following dreams escaping brutality; their own director's cut of their own shitty nightmare life; sell their ass find joy with tawdry clowns and street entertainers; stars of the sidewalk dotted with black chewing gum spots; soon to be celebrity stars set in clean concrete. Lisette had been one of them. And now she was a for real movie star.

Hollywood Boulevard coming up to Vine Street:

Fuck it man! Who killed Geraldine Honeydew?

1949 fastback coupe (in sedate pale gray) whitewalling along in sweet Technicolor noonlight:

Iggy's danger filters flashing little primary-red pointer arrows into sidewalk crowds picking out predator grifter pimps from freedom waives, hustlers from junkies, naïve tourists from cheesy souvenir vendors.

Iggy strung out at noon; on darkness, hopelessness and desperation.

Iggy could see Lisette amongst them years before.

This had been where she had started out when she was sixteen or seventeen:

Iggy knew her story. He had it straight from her mouth all the times they shared donuts and coffee. New girl in town working the strip in West Hollywood up around La Cienega; plying her wares, soon to be known at the Roxy, the Rainbow, the cafés and bars. Made for a sour feeling in his belly earlier he knew her story, knew how much of it was true, but from whence she came?

The Famous Fellatrix had to start somewhere.

That was a mystery. But Lisette was kind, Lisette was likable. Are you hungry? Lisette with a crisp new hundred earned twenty minutes earlier in the Pavillions parking lot buying a hungry friend a cheeseburger and fries at that joint on the corner of Santa Monica and Robertson. Lisette always got a hundred and was reputedly worth more. She was yet to make it to Melrose Lisette already a growing legend starting her the journey to the Château Marmont via NYC. *She was a nice person. Always polite. Meeting the right people getting her first parts leaving a long trail of benevolence. The Famous Fellatrix had to start somewhere.* That was a mystery. What did Iggy know. Only what she had told him. Iggy wired up and strung on a reality of LA crime thriller noire; all he knew he hastened to add, the misery of reality

it the Great Sex Doctor Doll had saved her life.

Daytime Downtown Hollywood always depressed Iggy.

Stuffy.

Struggle debilitated by long-term was Iggy caught a red light at La Brea Avenue. and eased to a halt. He was getting a headache so cracked a window.

A little breeze blew in.

And all the red lights in LA turned green for Iggy. night blooming jasmine

under the influence of reality, the breeze ;

night blooming jasmine leafy idyllic dappled pavement above crossing Laurel Canyon the Boulevard abruptly narrowed. Her history in her very first movie building blocks of history

A book, A Breeze on La Brea Lisette

The great sex doctor

These leafy places had history; golden era

The flashes of palm fronds and sparkling clean glass windows dark cool rooms took off along a trail

Los Angeles was on view from on high;

high walls Iggy found the Olive property.

He knew been lined anonymity but despite its size, this place was so anonymous it . Iggy let his eye rove over the property. That all it was, a property a turnoff with fancy paving, its own parking and an entry booth tucked in beside ornate fifteen-foot cast-iron gates.

"I'm not expected but I'm sure Mr. Olive will see me," Iggy offered his engraved card through the slot in the smoked bullet-proof glass. "It's a delicate matter."

Minutes passed.

Iggy drifted back into his reverie unconsciously running recon: the concrete booth was covered in carefully coiffed ivy; a couple of grizzled gardeners appeared to stare in awe at the 1949 fastback coupe (in sedate pale gray), drooling over its automotive majesty. Iggy hoped Miss Merryberry had had the forethought to get it bulletproofed (maybe she had) because the gardners weren't fooling him; probably had machine pistols stashed in their baggy green coveralls. Security was tight. A blacked-out Chevy Suburban rolled up on his rear bumper and a second rolled out of the trees on the other side of the ornate gates.

"Please follow the car sir," the hand returned his business card as the gate swung open.

Iggy obeyed, slipping in behind the blacked-out Suburban up the dark narrow driveway through thick blossoming ornamentals ending in a vast expanse of clean-air blue sky:

The Olive house silhouetted on a mini-peak all of its own.

Impressive, but Iggy realized it couldn't decide if it was a French chateau or a Bavarian castle, either way its black granite and gray slate had a certain imposing dignity, albeit marred by slick lines of Disneyland fantasy architecture; below, the Santa Monica Mountains started their journey north. The blacked-out Suburban stopped. Parked. Iggy did likewise. Cut the motor. Silence. Wind. More clean-air blue sky.

Iggy unbuckled, stretched and took in the view.

Los Angeles filled the horizon; beneath, Bel Air and Beverly Hills; panning eyes right, Iggy took in the distant ocean and the pink Italian marble pile of the Getty. The builders had cleaned out a complete Italian quarry for all that pink eye candy to clad their hoards of art treasure; albeit posing seductively on a hilltop overlooking the Sepulveda Pass, it still looked like just another L.A. mall to Iggy.

He sighed, his gaze returning to the blue Pacific, a pewter blue After all this glitzy shit was done, he promised himself he would take Roger for a paddle in the Malibu surf...

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K9icide

Gravel crunched crisply.

Iggy guessed it was authentic European crushed granite. It had a hard, glassy sheen.

The warm flowing lines of the faded greened bronze statuary in stark contrast to the black and gray stone of the house. The front foor was also bronze; warm, worn, polished. The doorframe wrought dark steel to take the weight. All so civilized, sordid, bespoke old money. Lots and lots of it. Iggy paused on the doorstep continuing his stream of consciousness conversation with himself; the Olive Case had all started when someone had simply stolen a little dog.

Miss Honeydew's dog.

Iggy muttered "canine homicide isn't serious crime, unless you're a dog," and politely thumbed the bellpush again.

Deep in the house melodious chimes unnessesarilly announced his arrival again. They knew he was here. The house obviously bristling with cameras but he couldn't see them. He settled down to wait realizing he'd always liked dogs, though hadn't really considered it until recently when sadly confronted with this, his first case of caninicide, or doggicide.

A conversation with Miss Merryberry echoed. What had Childheart taken the case. "Missing persons and executive thuggery is a whole lot different to animal cruelty," she had insisted. He had agreed, it repulsed him more than human-on-human cruelty, except with children. So why he was here. Dog death? It didn't connect. On a personal level he could only speculate somewhere along the line he had loved the furry little fuckers once. But love? Love was a first-equal motive with revenge and hatred, and money. Who had loved and possibly hated Miss Honeydew? Obsession was -

His revelry evaporated the moment the front door opened.

The young security butler managed to contain his superior scowl; almost a muscle stud, certainly an exponent of mixed marshal arts, he started to posture but changed his mind when Iggy grinned at him. Iggy in a dangerous mood, doubtlessly generated by the animal cruelty he had been thinking about; he was respectfully led through to the master wing.

In stark contrast to the exterior the interior was impeccable Mid-century Modern.

Authentic 1950s: Iggy decided he liked it in a high-tone department store sort of way, reminding him of a Neiman Marcus floor layout, with slick Ace Gallery wall decor; light and airy yet crammed with exotic goodies suggesting avid collector. Iggy knew better. It was simple investment strategy. The work of shrewd fine art professionals; curator, dealer, decorator; good contemporary and period paintings, interspersed fine antiquities, objects d'art, carpets, rugs and furniture all casually, subtly arranged and matched, but to Iggy's eye, strangely impersonel.

A bold contrast to B. J. Olive's study:

The warm buff-colored walls walls were full of large, impressive photographs in slim ebony frames; monochromatic architectural studies; hand-printed silver bromides matted in ivory behind thin picture glass; beautiful sweeping commerical office buildings, vast factories

and giant industrial structures from the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, some Iggy recognized as familiar landmarks scattered around the city.

Now this *was* personal.

And behind the big ol' plain ol' desk sat old Ben.

Iggy knew the old man had owned them all at some time or another during in his life, even built some of them. Ben Olive was working in deep concentration. Iggy became lost in a evening landscape study of glittering refineries set against ocean with pillars of white steam and black smoke rising into the evening sky. Next to it, an aerial shot of acres of what could only be soundstages taken in a time when the studios had acres of Back Lots; a time when open land was still available in Los Angeles, perhaps in the years when he first met Geraldine Sunnydew. Iggy thought about old Ben's Mid-century Modern interior. It needed a woman's touch. Gereldine was authentic 1950s, maybe it was for her. Could she be so old, no, she didn't look a day over- As if on cue Ben Olive looked up from the mottled pages and spreadsheets. They were yellowed. Jaundiced. Like him. This was the third time Iggy had met the old man. Now he looked sick. Jaundiced and gray with worry.

Whoever had it in for him, their plan was working.

"You've found the little dog?" The old man started. "Of course not. I would expect only a *written report* if you had. This *delicate matter* concerns Miss Honeydews death?"

"You've heard sir," Iggy asked quietly. "My condolences. I am very sorry."

"There must be an explanation. I'm looking for a clue. That's why I am working from home today." Old Ben prattled on helplessly, running his fingers through the yellowed papers. "This thing goes back a long way. I want to know who they are. Why they killed her. Sit down Mr. Chang, you obviously suspect a connection with her death and missing dog. Otherwise why visit? I'll be with you shortly. You may smoke if you wish."

Iggy thanked him. He couldn't remember the last time he had smoked a cigarette. For all he knew it might have been twenty years ago. Perhaps he had never smoked at all. He sat patiently watching the old Ben shuffling documents; a reflex; the old man thought Geraldine's killing was about money. From what Iggy had been able to ascertain, everything Old Ben thought about was directly connected with money.

Iggy's first meeting with B. J. Olive had been three weeks earlier.

The old man looked healthy, confident, unapologetically arriving late; he strolled into the Childheart and Chang office Downtown Los Angeles as if he owned the place; a short man Iggy noted, yet paradoxically of medium height.

As the meeting progressed Iggy decided old Ben's shortness was moral stature; he was a genuine short-ass despite a tight tennis player body and cardplayer face that gave away nothing. Ben Olive had reached the age where he owned his face; late-seventies, touching eighty his creases revealed raw cunning; whereas Iggy hoped his own assholeism a temporary condition, Olive, publicly the great family man and patriarch, was privately a total scumbag;

yes, this little fellow had been a life-long asshole; he knew it and relished it; the initial Childheart and Chang intelligence report revealed a Olive family history going back to ancient ancestors and a far-reaching and vast family fortune going back a thousand years. Iggy pored over the document going back through centuries of wars, invasions, migrations; frontiers shrinking, frontiers expanding; countries coming, going; fortunes survived, thrived; hidden in properties, mines, mining companies, diamonds, gold, movies; Iggy was impressed, Childheart liked to know who he was dealing with, Iggy knew that. He also knew that Childheart's interest was hardly connected with Geraldine's poor little dog.

That first meeting with Olive had been on a day when Iggy felt his assholeism glinting out of his frozen, perfect, white porcelain smile and perfect white Pima cotton shirt; he sat motionless letting old Ben drone on about the dog - *a friendly little fellow, white, a mutt, Miss Honeydew call it a muttapoo* - adjusting his glazed medium-starch cuff to show no more than regulation three-quarter inch; knowing his burgundy foulard necktie had one eighth-inch knot tolerance at the collar; knowing old Ben had taken his slice of the family fortune and riding political tides of war in the Twentieth Century shrewdly multiplied it to be high on The Richest Men in the World list; nuances of neurotic greed clung to Olive, his money owned him Iggy decided and politely enquired: "was it a feirce little dog sir?"

Olive rolled over his question without pause; it was movie star's dog, discretion was required; Iggy understood perfectly, nodding looking around the room; a Private Detective Office of such crass opulence was Childheart's twisted humor, a wry slant on Postmodern Noir; even Iggy's wristwatch was in exquisite good taste; a rare Patek curvex made for a celebrity jeweler in Hong Kong in 1948; that such a brutal man would wear such an exquisite timepiece was more of Childheart's buffoonerie but, hey, try to take it off me Iggy thought and what did Childheart want from all this, what was this whole charade about? He felt for theoor stolen dog but couldn't feel for Ben Olive. Iggy wanted to like the old fuck because he liked dogs but couldn't and he knew he never would. Not that it mattered. He took his coat off. Giving Olive an eyefull of his .45 might prompt the little runt to stop yapping and maybe tell him something.

Iggy had a fondness for traditional brown gunleather.

All the current nylon speed draw paraphenalia was perfect for combat and efficient self-defense but the chestnut lustre of his holster against the blue gleam patina of his classic .45 1911 military auto sobering inspiration for onlookers; the big could blow a hole through a man. Hanging his coat up Iggy made sure Olive saw his gun, which turned his tone perhaps one notch towards reverence. He now had a theory. Finding the lost dog was a ruse. Something small enough that wouldn't arouse suspicion if the old man sought help from an outside source that he didn't want to bother the authorities, especially since it belonged. That had been thenBut the death of Geraldine Merrydew changed things a few weeks later.

Miss Merryberry knocked and walked right in.

Old Ben looked her over with a smiling appraisal bordering on an open leer undressing her with his eyes, weighing her breasts. Iggy contained his anger. If anyone was going to weigh them, it was him.

Iggy knew he was the kind who would take what they wanted despite the protests feelings if others. And so did Miss Merryberry. is of rambunctious high breeding such vulgarity was beneath her scorn. She informed Iggy his next appointment had arrived and would gladly show Mr. Olive the confidential exit. Iggy agreed telling the old man that he would be receiving a report in due course. It was a nice dog he was telling Iggy, cute; white, with curly fur that didn't shed.

When iggy found the poor creature it was missing its fur. And its flesh. Iggy had a hunch the dog would never be found. It was dead. And the old man wanted revenge. Iggy had no real idea what he wanted and was glad to see him go following Miss Merryberry's magnificent derriere.

Miss Merryberry walked into their offices one morning curious about Roger offering a

meager experience in business yet ingratiating herself with a charm that was frightening in its potency. Miss Becker is not a petite girl. And neither is she a girl, but she refuses to be addressed as anything other than Miss. A strapping woman of perfect proportions, exquisite deportment and dramatic complexion, who, on that particular morning, wanted to find about the mischievous old horse parked on the meter downstairs on the street.

Her curiosity was superficially understandable considering her riding attire.

What she could have been doing Downtown in tailored equestrian weeds was another question Iggy asked himself afterward. It had been a golden late winter morning with spring on the air. Roger was being tended by the doorman who thought he was good luck. Childheart wasn't in the office and wasn't expected back for hours. Roger had a police department permit that seemed to confuse Miss Becker, which in turn confused Iggy, who had no idea about the daily running of the business, or anything else, but she took pity on him, seeming to think Iggy overworked. Childheart returned and was very impressed with her riding boots. She was wearing spurs. She immediately engaged him in bright conversation and hired as Iggy's executive secretary, showed up the next day in business clothes. She soon became indispensable, a companion of sorts, a kind of surgical practitioner, a nurse of sorts; she could be relied upon to minister first aid. Childheart found her attractive in a sisterly kind of way but Iggy's feeling for Miss Merryberry far from sisterly:

Iggy was back in the day in the Olive House in Trousdale Estates.

The old man was looking at Iggy talking intently:

Telling him about relatives dying, his family shrinking; Iggy nodding, it was hardly unusual, it happened all the time; families grew, branched out, lost touch or got smaller, shrunk and died out; branches that separated in earlier generations had grown, prospered and kept the name alive. That hadn't happened for Old Ben. Iggy sat behind his best bland smile waiting for Olive to wind down. He was telling Iggy all he had now were two, a nephew and niece. That was a lot of people dead Iggy but didn't want to tell him that; it was all innocent enough if you believed in coincidence, if you didn't believe in curses, or revenge.

He didn't tell he had a brother. but didn't want to tell him that he didn't want to encourage him. He didn't like him, didn't want to work for him so just told him he liked dogs too.

He had forgotten about Miss Honeydew being found dead that morning.

Ben Olive looked at Iggy deciding whether to be offended, but that was why he was here, because someone had killed his good friend Miss Honeydew's darling little dog. (and he had eaten part of it;

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The Famous Felatrix/The Parrot Tribe

Iggy left the Olive estate without incident.

He saw several roving armed gardener patrols before clearing the front gates. He took the long route through Bel Air down to the city. Soon the 1949 fastback coupe (in sedate pale gray) was heading east on Sunset, traffic thickening for rushour. Lose his tail.

Food on his mind Iggy's donut menu came online mentally. He had a sudden craving for a buttermilk glazed. (with raisins). East to West Hollywood to that little place where he had landed. Lose his tail.

The deputy challenged him Got more than she gave They were probably Jungian Parrots Iggy Decided.

Tribes since the cradle of civilization - Childheart, Olive, Glass

He only had five years experience of doughnut meditation. What they were doing here was serendipity. It had been 11:10 when he left Childheart and was now five pm. Parrots were tough birds and easily cover the eight miles or so. From downtown.

- They had found their own tribe. Chang was from a tall northern tribe, blonde. Childheart has been screwing with him This was what the thing with the Olives was all about: tribes.

He could now deal with Lisette's problem.

And have a donut.

She was cccc when he called. It wasn't a convenient time to offer detail so her ytold her that from now on she would be being tailed, but he would somehow signal he to let her know it was him.

This was the place when he could think things through. The years he had been eating there staring out Perhaps they were connected.

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The Famous Felatrix

Iggy had needs. And like all healthy men, required relief and release.

In his first days in town Iggy landed in West Hollywood, at least, it was where Childheart dropped him off, in neighborhood mainly for single gay men, in a service apartment on

Havenhust and Fountain. It was a run-down, overgrown palm-frond paradise with a territorial blue jay who thought he owned Iggy's kitchen window; the nuisance bird decided Iggy was in need of a friend and kept him happily entertained pecking the glass begging for food. Iggy was sick. The maid thought he was dying. Thought it might be contagious. Left him alone. The heat healed Iggy. He found the local restaurants and bars. Found it was female company he craved. Found he could drive. Found the driving license and car Childheart had left for him. Caution led him get his needs taken care of in the anonymity of motel rooms; soon found out the safe havens of retail sex on Sepulveda. None of the girls quite took him for a cop, several thought he was a soldier in the anonymity in those early months. Iggy found the women in restaurants and bars were too curious about his life. He would have gladly told them had he known. Childheart had given him a potted history and enough time and money to research it, give it color and authenticity. And then Childheart gave him a job downtown and a second chance at life.

Quietly spending his time studious self-discovery Iggy found he had good taste, and enjoyed the better material things in life; he could afford to dress in the finest clothes and eat in the finest restaurants, and strangely, carry it off and do it well. Impressed by his quiet generosity the maitre'd at a trendy fine dining bistro on Melrose gave him a pink business card.

A phone number followed by three simple words.

The Famous Felatrix.

She was a Hollywood legend.

With a plentiful supply of money he could afford the best and from what he had heard, she was well worth a try. He wasn't disappointed.

When he was in the mood for a little non-strenuous high-octane escapism he would call Lisette

Self-sufficiency was something He wondered what it was like to get lonely It's not sex.

19

Worth More Dead Than Alive

Iggy met Lisette in his first year in town. A tall girl with rapturously wide smile who worked the high-end hotel circuit. watching her polishing his knob with hot spit became a familiar treat, a ritual. I might have a military background somewhere along the line his big ol .45 in the shoulder rig In Iggy's first futile attempts to get his mind to focus on his own story he had not considered hers. There were things about her that didn't add up, little things; but suspicions about her were illusive, fleeting; little itches of incredulity that he erased with humor; his grasp on reality was frail enough and he valued his sanity. Money was hardly a problem. Iggy had plenty and the stigma of paying for a woman was a distant echo. He liked Lisette. His sense of identity was sketchy at best, he became comfortable with his name and as the months passed. He sensed Lisette would have liked to fuck, but she couldn't - hey lay

in bed and talked, or she did for the most part; her voice captivated him she talked about her dreams as if they were living people.

And now Lisette was a movie star.

Iggy couldn't really believe it. And Martin Glass was sniffing around.

Jakeson and Rye hated the machine. The machine was self-renewing, self-perpetuating; it would never die or wear out Edison trust

· 9 ·

Famous Felatrix Movie Star Metamorphosis

Lisette looked around Iggy's plush book-lined office with approval:

Miss Merryberry had shown her in with compliments about her roles onscreen.

Lisette was seated, waiting for Iggy, stroking the long fronds of the large potted palm that lived on the corner of his desk; palms seemed to adorn everything; there was green everywhere, ferns, ivy, even grass; the room had soothing fresh grass scent being circulated by a lumberingly slow antique desk fan. Lisette was drawing another long, luxurious, deep breathe when Iggy rolled in with an apology for being late.

"I didn't know what to expect, but *salubrious* is the word I think." Lisette rolled the word with a grin as she stood up to greet him, "or palmy."

"Palmy? Yes, I do like palms. Calming critters ain't they." He affectionately kissed her cheek. "Good to see you Lisette. How can I help you?"

They settled down on opposite sides of his desk.

"I guess you know what happened to me after I gave up my old day job?"

"Of course, I'm a great fan." Iggy nodded with a grin, too sentimental to mention her retirement from her previous career. "You became a *Great Star*."

Lisette beamed innocently. "Yes, I did, didn't I?"

"And quite rightly too. You have earned the acclaim. You've done truly great work Lisette. You are a fine actress. You've won the respect of your dreams." He remembered her concern; her dreams felt had she let them down; she had been very young.

"Thanks Iggy. And I kept your card." She read the motto: "*We find the right people*! You *find* people?"

"That is how we somewhat euphemistically define our business here at Childheart and Chang. Missing persons. People that might fit in or help organizations when found."

"I'm interested in the finding bit. Someone is watching me. Or following me. Its just a *feeling* I get sometimes, but I trust it. I've had it in the past when something shady was going down. I want to find out who they are, and what they want."

"We can handle fact-finding like that." Iggy said.

"It is only a suspicion though Iggy. I have no proof. "

"When did this problem feeling start troubling you?"

"A couple of months ago."

"We mainly subcontract surveillance assignments to specific agencies with specialist skills and individuals most suited to handle them. The only thing they all have in common is strict confidentiality." Iggy hesitated. "How to ask but -?"

"No, it's not my husband," Lisette laughed. "We're very happy. I was going to talk to him about it. He has his own security people. I didn't want them to know I was coming here I even took precautions when I met your partner Mr. Childheart; I had a valid excuse for driving out to the polo grounds. I have been looking for a horse. I made a great show of looking over a thoroughbred."

Lisette was rattled. She reached into her purse and handed him a check.

Iggy looked at the amount. "That should get us started."

He called in Miss Merryberry. She arrived with tea. Asked her to get a receipt and start paperwork. Miss Merryberry was very impressed. Iggy knew a movie star. And she sensed a familiarity between them. She shot him a sly, approving crotch glance. It was nice to know her boy had seen some action before she showed up on the scene, and prove she was jealous.

"I'll have some people onto it. I think I should go for the very best for a two-week period and see what they can find. See if they can get close to you, in the process they might uncover in doing so they will see who is watching you. Phone numbers and computers and all of that stuff. "Once we know I am sure I will be able to advise you on remedial action."

"That's settled then." Lisette said, implication and let out an immense sigh of relief. She felt pressure loosen in her sleeve. Coyle peeped out of hiding.

"That is a *very nice* little rattlesnake." It was Iggy's turn to be impressed.

"He is usually very shy. Rattlesnakes are you know Iggy. Shy. But he likes you."

"Yes. I like rattlesnakes. I suppose he senses it. I spent some time with them up in the desert before I came to town." Lisette was interested but Iggy broke off his revelry. "You still have your pistol?"

"Yes, but you can't really have a pet pistol, they are quite cold and deadly. I find pets warm and comforting. And lately, well having Coyle with me has been he is quite protective. He is nicer than a pistol. Do you mind if he gets a bit of an exercise stretch?"

"Be my guest." Iggy watch the young rattler. "I don't suppose he has bitten anyone?"

"No. He would though. He is a snake."

"Where did you get him."

"I saved him from a redtail hawk when he was a baby." Iggy looked at the snake on his desk. He was sunning on a path when a redtail swooped. I ran over and bashed it with a stick before it could kill him. "I'll have to let him go soon. He's getting too big. He will be happy back in the wild." "Common Coyle, up!" she put out her arm, tickled his tail, he reversed up her sleeve.

"Wow, that was way cool" Iggy exclaimed. up around her arm
lets meet for donuts like the old times

Iggy called for Miss Merryberry to show Lisette out.

The sun slanted into his office through the wooden slats. Time slanted

The old times; Iggy enjoyed seeing Lisette up on the big screen. Small parts, smaller films but she always shone stealing the scenes He liked to think they were friends, that he hadn't been just another john; just another trick; he wasn't the type to fool himself but -.

"If I ever need help Iggy, could I give you a call?" Lisette asked him that last time as she started rolling a cigarette. Iggy had been surprised. "It's what you do isn't it Iggy. You're a private detective, *sort of*, aren't you?"

"Sort of," Iggy laughed. "Why'd you start smoking, you didn't used to smoke?"

"My new doctor smokes. Perhaps it's good for me. So why not?"

"She rolls cigarettes like that too, one-handed?"

"That's right. You didn't answer my question Iggy."

"Are you anticipating trouble Lisette?"

"No, but I'm giving up this line of work," she blew a sad smoke ring. "Doctor's orders."

"I take it this is to be our final liaison?"

"I officially retired a month ago Iggy, 'guess I wanted to say goodbye." Lisette stayed clear of pimps and gangsters and Iggy had been her contingency; she sensed if she ever had trouble he would willingly help her. She also sensed he was a man capable of anything.

"Ignatious Chang," he handed her a card extended his hand "pronounced *change*. Feel free to call me at the office day or night. My service they will contact me for an emergency.

"Ignatius, that's cool Iggy; Childheart and Chang, with a very salubrious address Iggy, most proper. And here was little ol' me, thinking you were some dapper ol' retired government assassin or special forces hoodlum."

"Government Assassin: very interesting speculation." Iggy chuckled, Lisette surprised he had taken her seriously. "You realize we've been watched?"

Listte looked around. "The little mouse? She's my pet. Normally I don't bring her to work. Her name is Miss Midnight. Would you like to pet her?"

Iggy gingerly held out his hand. Lisette put the tiny black mouse in his palm. He noticed she had left the hundreds on the dresser.

"It's on me Iggy." She kissed him on the cheek. Popped the mouse in her pocket and left. She had never kissed him before. He had paid for the room so why not Lisette

After she left dark secret light. She had made his life worth living.

That had been seven/fiveyears ago. Now was time for payback.

25

Buttermilk Glazed vs. Apple Fritter

Now Lisette was a superstar.

Girls wanted to be her. Women wanted to be her. Emulate her pale skin, pale hair, pale eyes; the girl in the old pickup who pulled into the suddenly vacant slot outfront Joze Donut had the look, baggy sort of, mysterious; scruffy lightweight trenchcoat, untidy blond hair, shabbychic jeans and beaten-up-good boots.

Iggy didn't recognise Lisette for a split second.

No one else gave her a second glance.

He had been careful to lose his own tail after leaving old Ben's house; surreptitiously left his car in West Hollywood City Hall and walked up the alley behind Santa Monica Boulevard for a couple of blocks, sneaking over over the cross streets and into the rear of the donut shop to met Lisette hiding in plain site. He would track down Glass later in the evening night; Hate Crimes Homicide had requested to see Iggy asap.

Lisette ordered at the counter and joined Iggy.

"Grease tastes good," she said.

They chowed down, happy to see each other.

"Whats that you've got up your sleeve," Iggy asked. "Still packing rattlesnake?"

"Yes, you've been hanging with Mr. Choldheart's wise ol' horse," she said, delicately demolishing her apple fritter. "Roger is cool, like you know what he's thinking."

Iggy watched her tear a chunk off of the golden glazed dough and dunk it in her coffee. She popped a glazed crumb up her sleeve, "I didn't know rattlers ate sugar?"

"Neither did I. If anyone tries anything up close Coyle is my element of surprise. I'm glad we met here Iggy. It's like the old days. But you're not a sentimental type."

"I wanted to put a tail on your tail." Lisette looked non-plussed, Iggy continued,"if perchance anyone should should try anything, you will have assistance other than Coyle; from here on in you can be sure you are followed, by friendlies; they will make your tail, and tail them. I'll soon have a report yo you."

Relieved, Lisette drifted into conviviality and her passion; they talked avant-garde cinema; she was working on a new piece due to start shooting in a few weeks. Hey, would Iggy like to visit her on set?

Thrilled, Iggy leasurely strolled back to his car down Santa Monica Boulevard; heading up Havenhurst to Sunset he picked up his own tail crossing Fountain:

It was 4:35 Downtown when he walked up Sixth to LAPD Hate Crimes Homicide.

• 10 •

More LA Glitzy Shit and the Genetics of Genocide

Iggy was shown into the Captain Glass's spacious corner office.

The Captain was not his usual immaculate self. Iggy noted a few proverbial hairs out of place; small, unusual imperfections in grooming; perhaps Glass meant Iggy to notice the small coffee stain on the cuff of his Armani shirt, or the slight rumple in his Brioni suit.

Was it genuine fatigue?

Or camouflage to put Iggy at ease so he could play tired.

Or an excuse to slip into abstractions; get philosophical. Fuck Glass. Glass was fishing.

"How can I help you Captain?" Iggy sat down, opening the third button on his Turnbull and Asser shirt cuff to offer a glimpse of his second-fave Patek: a 1965 diamond chronometer knowing his LA Glitzy Shit would wake up Glass.

Childheart had taught Iggy glitzy shit was important in Los Angeles, and Iggy knew glitzy shit was important to Glass.

"I thought we might exchange notes Mr. Chang?" Glass said, eyes bulging at the huge Patek Phillipe.

"I can't imagine what are you working on that might involve me?" Iggy said innocently.

"We cover a wide variety of *killing* here at Hate Crimes Homicide," Glass said with studied cool. "Ethnic, racial, religious discrimination *killing*, some sexual orientation *killing*, a limited amount connected to political issues. I'm sure you're aware of our mission."

"Vaguely, I merely do executive placement *lost and found*. I outlined the Childheart & Chang mission statement at first earlier talk. The only extreme prejudice bordering on hatred we typically encounter is murderous greed, usually driven by financial motive."

"Money. Yes. Quite. Money." Glass said, savoring the word.

Iggy sensed he had given Glass his opening, continued. "How did she die? I can only assume Miss Sunnydew's *passing* wasn't murder?"

"Yes," another smile from Captain Glass: "Cause-of-death oldest in the book."

"Old Age?" Iggy offered.

"Good guess! And you don't seem surprised Mr. Change." Glass delighted. "Geraldine Summerdew appeared a mere girl; mid-thirties at most."

"Extremely well-cared for. Anything is possible in LA," Iggy let the sentence drift.

"With money," Glass finished. "The work she'd had done was quite *unique*."

And very, very expensive.

And requiring big, big money. And knowing where to spend it.

A comfortable silence separated the two men; they waited, watching each other. Despite feint flounce of wrist Iggy knew Glass was straight. His subtly effete affectation was a front, and Iggy thought, an *affront* to gays despite his Hate Crimes vocation.

Simply, Glass was creep; a divorcee with child support and alimony subsidizing kids, ex, and her boyfriend in Encino. Iggy knew Glass had him under surveillance since he started inquiries about Miss Honeydew's lost dog.

Why? And now Miss Honeydew was dead.

Iggy doubted Glass knew Iggy knew Hate Crimes Homicide had him under surveillance or knew Iggy had the skinny on him, and was delving deeper into the police officers life. Was it illegal to surveil a cop, Iggy didn't know; unusual, certainly, but he really didn't care.

He wondered why he suspected Childheart wanted to kill Glass.

Perhaps other than being a policeman Glass was tied into some real hate crime slime.

Or had something on Childheart. Iggy forced himself back into the subject he loved, movies, and broke the silence:

"I knew Geraldine Honeydew as a fine actress. I was a fan."

Glass nodded back into focus.

Iggy resumed, casually. "I was certain I had seen her work in several old movies, good movies too; small, challenging quality roles, so I was surprised I couldn't find mention of her in any industry database. All traces removed. I believe she goes back a very, *very* long way. But, *nothing*. Rewriting film history even in a small way would take clout. And I can't think why anyone would want to do that. Wipe away screen credits."

"Money. Follow the money. Money is always big motive, superficially," Glass said. "That is, for little people the likes of us Mr. Chang. Power a bigger motive, revenge deeper, but hatred unfathomable, irrational; hatred is the biggest motive of them all."

Glass paused, sighed melodramatically:

"And this is LAPD Hate Crimes Homicide. We encounter the diabolical here."

"Yes, of course Captain." Iggy nodded reverence; *'little people the likes of us'*.

Clever. Glass taking himself out of the equation, putting himself beside Iggy in the same humble category; they were both humble worker bees; insinuation there was a queen bee. Glass was using an old police interview technique called funneling; talk around and around circling, leading into specifics; Iggy let himself be led.

"When I did find her movies they were a lot older than I thought," he said. "This goes back a long way. Movies are the connection. The girl an actress and apparently the secret, if unwilling, mistress of a business magnate who owns much of our local defense, technology and telecommunications with a substantial chunk of the entertainment industry, including film production; this could be about old families, old money and old enemies."

Glass nodded thoughtfully as if digesting an agreeable dinner; Iggy waiting for him to segue into an innocent question about Childheart; Iggy suspected he was being surveilled only because of his boss, but Glass kept schtum.

The late afternoon impinged Glass's office with a glowing, soft pink tinge of sunset; a buzzing motor in the traffic hum down on the street passed by; sounded like a bee; a question came to Iggy.

Worker bees; was Glass the queen bee?

Evil queen pulling strings: the question sat quietly, distantly, unimposing, unobtrusively as Iggy started a clever monolog proffering a notion of genetics; the genealogy of race hatred; resentments older than time; genetics of genicide.

Glass nodding again but he wasn't interested, interjecting what could be bigger than hatred? "Three major holocausts in the past two hundred years!"

"It's not a perfect world," Iggy cut in, "maybe hatred is physiological, born in the blood."

"Imagine a man with no idea of his past; his ethnic origins; his blood," Glass said. "He just arrives one day seeing how the world works. We wouldn't know about that would we?"

Iggy thought about it for a few seconds. So Glass knew Iggy was a man with a hidden past, or no past, and was about using that knowledge as a tool to pry him open for dirt on Childheart. That is what this funnelling had been about. Iggy laughed out loud. That wouldn't do; it was time to play his ace in the hole and silence Glass with absurdity. They had been following each other around, spy -on-spy, in comedy of surveillance:

Iggy liked carrying a briefcase albeit it a wonderful *LA Glitzy Shit* prop, a shiny slim black crocodile skin lozenge lined with fine red calf. Today he something to carry in it.

"In the spirit of cooperation with the police," Iggy snapped open the case. Handed the report to Glass

33

Poodle Parfait Paté

"A poodle parfait pate sandwich!" Glass turned on his desk lamp.

Re-read key sentences. He wasn't seeing things. The poodle had been sent to Mr. Olive in a sandwich. Innocently ordered favorite deli.

It the wax wrapping paper beside the pickle spear, curly white poodle wool with a paw; a little black pads, claws. What did it mean? Eat shit, eat crow, or simply, eat poodle?

"This is hateful." Glass said, fey gay aghast; secretly, perversely, delighted.

"Isn't it just? Interested? Perfect for Hate Crimes Homicide. Hate Crimes Doggicide."

"Paté." Glass ignored the gallows humor and smackd his lips as if he had a bad taste in his mouth. "Poodle Paté." The first Removed and sautéed. Get it tested. Certified Iggy had a suspicion the animal was still alive. Iggy went on to offer the explanationWent on to cordially suggest they exchange work files Mutual cooperation.Extreme discomfort. Her dog, then her. Who next.Ever thought of why we hate. It had gone on for months, Restaurants. Iggy Glass wanted Childheart. But why? What had he done?

It was 5:20 when Iggy came out of Police HQ.

He still had an hour or so before his evening ride with Roger. He could do a little paperwork. The Childheart and Chang office situated in an historic building of charmed antiquity a mere five minute walk away on Broadway;

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Inner Life in the Postmodern Paradigm

Molecules of history floated on the air as Izzy ascended the elegant stairwell:

He entered quietly to find Miss Merryberry whispering, whimpering, sensually cajoling her computer keyboard with gentle strokes, pats and prods as if it were a naughty pony.

Particularly beautiful hands he thought; strong, pale, shapely, stopping himself leaning across her desk and politely taking it to suck on each of her long fingers, one-by-one.

Iggy watched closely her for a full minute before she chuckled.

She had looked up and caught him, but not in time to stop himself imagining her fingers dripping with his masculine juice after she had performed an act of adolescent kindness that brought him immense relief; offering her his clean white handkerchief in the secluded doorway she had chosen to show mercy; his fantasy in an authentic location, a dark passage off the busy city street were they lunching at her favorite cafeteria.

"You are obsessing on me again Iggy? You really are a dirty old pervert. Though I rather liked the clean handkerchief bit; 'most *gallant* in a seedy, *tawdry*, schoolboy sort of way."

"It's very unfortunate Miss Merryberry. I think it might be your sweater today."

She stared him down. "My sweater? Your lack of embarrassment is almost endearing." She rolled her shoulder generously to give him a mischievous jiggle. "My sweater is antique you know. Authentic. Carole Lombard wore it in 1937's *Nothing Sacred*."

She put her computer to sleep, stood up, picked up her purse and reached for her coat.

It was her horse riding, Iggy had decided, that allowed her to maintain such a perfect derriere, but Miss Merryberry also had *succulent* breasts he added quickly, plus her winning smile; the perfect movie noir PI secretary stereotype, she knows it, works on it and -

"You are so icky Iggy. *Succulent*, really! Goodnight."

She smiled to herself as she stalked off in mock-indignation, secretly pleased.

Iggy was only a boy. Her boy. He could control his hands but couldn't control his thoughts. An adolescent experiencing new emotions in life; the things he would like to do to her; one day she would tell him she would let him, when he'd grown up a little more...

Iggy let himself into the Childheart & Chang law library.

The aroma of lavender wax furniture polish sucked him into the deep patina of aged dark oak; he sat down at the long table, his reflection a sheen in the somber luster; civility enveloped him. And silence. Iggy loved Miss Merryberry because she was one of the few people who didn't treat him like an asshole. Or wasn't frightened of him. Or perhaps because she is telepathic? Or maybe she wasn't. Not that it mattered. He could control his hands couldn't control his thoughtspleased Her eyes gritting his teeth, grinding his teeth even under her coat her he hadn't killed anyone, at least this time. Roger

Childheart had added a detective fiction section containing every crime novel written, mainly paperbacks, pasted into tooled leather binding. Iggy had read them all in his first year with Childheart and Chang. It had seemed a good idea to get to know the detective business that way. He immersed himself in apparently every crime thriller written about private investigators. It was an enjoyable, easy read. The books were well-thumbed, someone had read them before him; Childheart he guessed, when he started his phase in this day and age. Iggy was spinning from one author to the next, one period after another; he started with

Sherlock Holmes and progressed into the 20th Century; Iggy assumed he was trying to find meaning for his own life; didn't it sum up life for most men today, thoughts were substance, memory identity. Who was he?

Who had he been before Ignatius Chang before Childheart saved him?

The daily anxiety of not knowing had lessened after he met Lisette.

drawing closer Lisette explained she had no regulars he liked Lisette.

More, he owed her a debt of gratitude.

Compassion he liked the irony sitting in his own library a fictional character himself.

What was the plot?

He knew Glass was following him. He would soon know who was following Lisette. He was following glass. Initial findings about Olive; wondering what do you do when someone is systematically wiping out your family? It was almost beyond his comprehension. Iggy had come to trust his instincts. He had not liked Olive and thought the lost dog a gambit. He wanted Rye

He had specifically requested what was Olive's connection with Rye.

Iggy wandered back to his palms/office.

Before she had left for the night Miss Merryberry had sent out for his favorite sandwich. Off on a jaunt with Roger She knew he wouldn't be having dinner and here it sat waiting for him on his desk. He had just room for it after his donuts. He sat back in his leather armchair to enjoy it.

Gustav Rye.

How did the lost dog connect to him? He would pay a visit to that evening. Rye was the same age as Olive.

WFD

Childheart,

sexual betrayal. stealing another mans woman.

His meeting with Glass came to mind. Resentments can last a lifetime, a moment in the history of mankind. Resentments can be passed on to the point where they become inbred, a bloodline.

Childheart had a mission and Iggy was becoming more curious to find out what it was. He didn't want his boss to die.

The day drifted to a close and his thoughts/speculation with it.

Little slaps stopping him thoughts of eating other thing.

What was the plot.

It was a comedy of surveillance shrouding an exercise in vengeance.

Roger would be dined, wined, watered, brushed, groomed, what ever they did at the stable to shine him up.

Intrepid Mountain Goathorse

High in the Hollywood Hills:

Location: one of the numerous scenic parking places along Mulholland Drive presenting magnificent views of Los Angeles, the Valley (as the endless San Fernando sprawl is known), the Downtown skyline and way across the Westside to the ocean.

Iggy had pulled the horse trailer off into an empty public lot offering a picture postcard panoramic vista: West Hollywood and Beverly Hills glittered in the twilight.

Roger made a proud silhouette against the sunset; completely motionless, the old horse was checking out the hillside terrain below; Iggy affectionately watching him across the deserted lot: did horses meditate? He guessed that's what Roger was up to.

"Is that horse with you?" Iggy turned to face a cop cautiously hefting a flashlight.

"Yes Officer." Iggy said, realizing the parking lot was only virtually deserted it must have been the elderly couple watching the sunset from their camper who had called the cops, or someone in a nearby home who could see Roger.

"He isn't tethered," the cop continued.

"Oh, he won't run away," Iggy grinned, and called: "Roger, can you spare a minute?"

Roger turned and trotted over.

"He's kinda big." The cop said, backing off nervously.

"Probably weighs in at 1700lbs, 18 hands. Yep, that's big. Roger, the officer is curious. Show him your badge." Roger helpfully lowered his head. The cop stepped back. "It's okay officer, a flashlight won't startle him."

The cop recognised the LAPD permit in the holder attached to Roger's halter:

"A police horse," cop suspicious. "Light on tack, especially for a stallion." Roger had no bit in his mouth, the reins were purely for the rider to hold onto. "I didn't know we had stallions in the LAPD, at least, horse-type stallions."

Horses don't chuckle, but the cop thought Roger had; he'd definitely heard something.

"You might like to check my ID," Iggy offered, anxious to put the cop at ease.

His gold star shield had the desired effect. The cop read the 202 numbers into his radio, had to stop himself cringing with servitude when the answer crackled back: "Is he difficult to handle Sir? I sense he's spirited for such an old fellow?"

"Roger, yes, and he is old; very, very, very old." Iggy said.

The cop saluted lost for words, retreated to his cruiser and left, ordered to return to the station and write up the incident; the 202 numbers always had that effect on the local constabulary.

"Need to see the map again Roger?"

Roger snuffled and nudged Iggy; overcome with the reassuring sensation that Roger could clearly see the property and all the possible pitfalls, Iggy tightened straps: he had thrown on the saddle exactly as Childheart had instructed and adjusted the stirrups.

He climbed up onto Rogers back. LA held its breath; the flicker in the city lights below paused with expectation:

Iggy knew little of show jumping but was sure the old couple in the camper were impressed:

Roger wheeled in a tight canter, took a couple of horsey, gallopy bounds and elegantly leapt the fence deftly avoiding the precipice on the other side.

Knees tight holding on for dear life Iggy saw it all in slowmo. Fortunately Roger had thoroughly checked the lay of the land in his meditative gaze down into the canyon.

Circumnavigated the steep dirt path with surefooted dexterity Roger used momentum to clear cracks and crevices Iggy wondering if the thick brush fifty feet below would be thick enough to break their fall.

Next, all they had to do was cross a row of jutting boulders.

Roger paused an instant to measure his angle; daintily hopped, skipped and jumped:

Gustav Rye's property was surrounded by an almost sheer mountain wall.

Heart in mouth Iggy yelled silently, How would they get down that?

Easy-peasie: Roger Sideways and across.

5

Enter Battle Stallion

Gustav Rye was a hundred fifty pounds overweight, probably more.

A corpulent yet *stately* man Iggy decided, so the last thing he wanted to do was describe him as morbidly obese; least of all, fat; such people carry a haunting stigma of weakness Iggy thought, but not Rye. Iggy had seen every one of Rye's movies; thought him imposing, and strong; rightfully sitting atop a towering pedestal of achievement: a beloved and highly respected screen idol who had come very close to being a Great Man, *a Great Actor*.

But greatness had eluded Rye, though tides of fame and adulation still rolled in.

In early youth in the 1960s great roles had the habit of finding him. Performances that faithfully kept him elevated him from obscurity in his decades as a recluse; an actor of stunning sensitivity he had captivated moviegoers representing the rebel they could have been, or should have been, if only life hadn't got in the way. Rye didn't have it in him to sell out to *The Machine*. Rather than accept roles he felt would have diminished his talent he stopped working crowing all he owed the industry was scorn; his star dimmed as he brooded over a fortune he publicly attributed to earnings from his acting genius. Iggy knew better. He had discovered the source of Rye's money. And Iggy wanted a face-to-face, an interview, but meeting Gustav Rye was no easy task; unapproachable through official channels, so despite respect for Rye as an artist Iggy took it upon his own initiative to seek him out in his private fortress high in the hills. Roger had been chiding Iggy to take him for *A Real Ride* when Childheart stuck him with the Olive Case, then gave him the green light on Lisette's job. Now he could have some fun. Iggy's trusted intelligence subcontractors began reporting back; apparently Gustav Rye spent his evenings on the patio drinking; a creature of habit he

hadn't altered this routine in two decades. Iggy took a gamble suspecting the old actor would be tickled by a dramatic, if uninvited, illicit entry; not strictly an illegal intrusion of privacy but it might prove to be an entertaining interlude for Rye. Roger was in need of a workout and Childheart had been very trusting with his old four-legged friend and Iggy was quite enjoying his new equestrian hobby, it made sense to him the best person to teach a person to ride a horse was a horse. Roger was a great teacher. Iggy sensed he had never ridden a horse until he met Roger. If it all went wrong and the cops got involved the perfect excuse was getting lost on a ride in the hills and just happening on the Rye house; And though he believed what he knew from reports on Rye to be true; a principled, honorable and honest man, Iggy still took the fast route to talk to him. Something was off; Rye's connection with Ben Olive.

Gustav Rye sat alone watching the city lights by the pool.

He heard a noise. His hand moved towards the heavy antique Mauser pistol beside his goblet of wine as a light hail of small stones bounced down onto his decorative tile.

He looked up to catch a glimpse of the descending horseman.

Roger almost daintily hopped across the giant boulders atop the cliffs, coming down was almost a sheer drop, but a doddle for Roger, who, it transpired, was as agile as a mountain goat. Rye, contemplating starting his evening cigar, dropped his cigar cutter and watched heart-in-mouth as horse and rider balanced in an perpendicular dance of locksteps across the almost vertical rockface slowing with controlled leaps and bounds of lightness at the bottom of the mountain:

"Bravo! Magnificent, truly spectacular." Rye cried with delight.

Roger, hooves clattering as he caught himself inches short of the pool, reigning himself in, avoiding damaging Rye's blossoming, ornamental shrubs with sublime dexterity. The fat old actor laughing as Roger hammed it, rising up on his hind legs, throwing his head back letting go of a mighty, melodious bellow, and Iggy, relieved the ordeal over, leapt off in an athletic dismount offering his card. "Sorry if we startled you with our uninvited arrival."

"Not at all, not at all. Wonderful entry, wonderful. I'm Gustav Rye," he staggered to his feet, applauding heartily as his servant rushed in, telephone in hand, in the process of calling the police. Rye stopped him and extending his hand to Iggy:

"Not at all. Delighted to have company. Quite the most spectacular treat." Rye gracious, bowing. "A few fallen rocks but nothing broken. Rare to see a stallion nowadays, and if I knew my eyes weren't deceiving me I'd say those were battle scars on his flanks; yes, a saber would do that. But forgive me, would you like a drink. Take a seat please. What can I offer you both?"

Rye dismissed his servant with a drink order and instructions to prepare Roger crudites as they small talk pleasantries as Roger fought the temptation to snack on the fragrant blossom beneath a tree and waited to nibble on the plate of chilled crudites that liveried help sipping the sparkling mineral water from large silver punch bowl

"I do believe he is a genuine Battle Stallion."

21

Risen from the Dead

"Do you mind if Roger looks around?" Iggy "He gets a little restless."

"He is very light on his feet. He won't trample your flowergarden."

Rye looked at Roger with a critical eye, laughed, "or snack on the plants I hope."

"No, he's fine now he has his view of Malibu."

Roger leasurely clip-clopped off across the patio and garden, being careful where he put his big feet, to a spot where he could see the ocean.

Iggy and Rye stood with their drinks

"Golden sea of city lights." Rye sighed, staring into the endless glow of Los Angeles after dark. "Many are called but few are chosen; our city overflows with lost souls drawn to the flame of fame; humanity's clowns gamboling through time; fortunately a city of Angels.

Do you like it living here Mr. Chang?"

"I do Mr. Rye. I do." Iggy said. "Very much."

"And you are here to tell me a story?" Rye said, savoring his cigar.

"Well, yes. As a matter of fact."

"Usually people wanna pitch me, a role, a story, business deal. I never accept but always listen. What have you got for me?"

"Story; time-before-time theme; cradle of civization; original tribes, ancient peoples; an old soldier who refuses to die, though he has already been killed several times."

"Consequently he is a very old soldier." Rye

"True story sir." Iggy sipped his drink. "And that's his horse, Roger."

Hearing his name, Roger turned and gave Rye a polite snort that might have a snuffle of affirmation.

"Basically it is about two men bonded by an incident in the desert where one saves the other from a violent death," Iggy paused. "By professional killers."

"Political killers perhaps."

"Perhaps. I have never been able to and their adventures in as Private Investigators."

Frankly, I didn't care who was killing all of the Olives, my prime motive was justice.

"I should be fearful but alas, I'm too old." Rye picked up the big Mauser.

"Really. Is that so. I like fanciful stuff. Tell me, do you smoke hashish?"

"Well, not while I'm working."

"Do you mind if I do."

"Not at all.

"That looks good stuff..

Yes, it is.

"Battle Stallion has a nice ring to it," Iggy said. "Maybe a new motor cycle."

All of the right connotations,

Roger is known to produce his silly toothy grin when he is please with himself.

Iggy gave him his best transparent silly grin

Supernatural stuff

"No one would think I was crazy if I insisted that animal was bred for carrying an ancient warlord or warrior king in full leather and metal body armor into battle."

"He's just a big pet." Iggy said to reassure him. Roger liked Rye and had inched closer to him. He caught Rogers gaze. Were man and beast locked in silent debate I wondered?

It was time to get down to business

"What does he want?" Rye said as Roger nuzzled him.

"Bubble gum." I said, "he has been seduced by bad habits of the twentieth first century and taken to

"Woud he take regular chewing gum." Iggy nodded. "I use it occassionally and he is welcome to my stash." Rye called for his servant again and packs of gum were procured.

Iggy like the pungent aroma of burning hashish and wondered why.

"That animal was bred for carrying an ancient warlord in full leather or metal armour into battle if I'm not mistaken.

Roger liked Rye; the old thesper had caught Rogers gaze; were man and beast locked in silent debate I wondered? Enough of the supernatural. It was time to get down to business.

"Are you acquainted with a Mr. Ben Olive sir?"

Rye was pensive for only an instant before answering

"I did not kill his girlfriend Geraldine's little dog sir, nor commission said act. I assume that is why you are here?"

"You're well informed," Iggy taken by surprise. "You know Mr. Olive personally sir?"

"We are -" Rye stopped himself. "We were, business partners, of sorts, once. But I'm sure you know that."

Iggy had known of a business connectio tenuous their acquaintance

"Ben wanted to get into the movie business. I wanted creative control of my own projects."

"You didn't know Geraldine was dead," Iggy paused. 'Murdered,' he finished.

Rye's answer shook Iggy.

"It doesn't surprise me. There will be more," he said flatly. "Killings. Someone has been waiting a long time to do this, and their time has come. Ben Olive will be surrounded by death. Some might believe deservedly."

"A vendetta," Iggy asked.

Falsetto Vendetta Racisto

"I'm not going to say more. Not out of fear of incriminating myself, nor aiding the killers, though you know Ben Olive is my enemy or - albeit, I hasten to add, not a mortal enemy. He would not want me dead. *not our business*

Rye was one of the few to openly criticize the racisto olives

Now, fifty-five years later, could he be the mastermind behind murder? Iggy thought the easiest to find out was ask him; the most straightforward way, face to face.

Perhaps.

"I enjoy conspiracy theories." End his bloodline.

Curious.

"Are we having fun?"

"Do you mind if I roll another." Rye asked, already crumbling the hashish over the strands of tobacco.

"At my age curiosity takes on a different perspective."

Golden night Century City

"Once one has savored the many delicacies of sensual experience life has to offer, the adventures, it becomes some academic why we are here and our role are questions

can real endlessly

"Really?" He handed Iggy the big pistol.

Wooden bullets

"You acquaintance with Mr. Olive sir?"

Rye was pensive for only an instant before answering "I did not kill his girlfriend's little dog sir, nor commission the act.

I have extraordinary loyal friends keep me well informed."

I wondered if Roger had told him anything Same ways as we came as if on cue.

"Would you like to screen test him?"

"What? Who?"

"Roger." Rye was literally rippling with excitement, "for a movie? He's a natural. A star."

Would he like to screen test.

What.

Roger.

Rye up on Roger fit into Listtes movie. It's the thing. Fantasyland America. Believe anything camel.

"There's the MGM I can see Century City from up here.

Sucked down more smoke "this is really good hash

"I can see him now. They have vintage planes. Mustang Rentals.

"I'm not sure if I should get him wet.

Iggy looked up at Roger quizzically. His horsy happy gaze told Iggy quit worrying, he could easily find his way back to the horse trailer by road.

"Horses don't climb rocks" Rye said. Iggy had no Idea, If Roget

But perhaps Roger had goat in his blood, or his soul; he reared up on his hind legs and turned dramatically, took a long sidelong run at the boulders. Rye gasped in amazement as horse and rider up over the wall into the drive and He had noted poking ten minutes earlier

Iggy heard Rye shout happily, "hey, you could have just opened the gate!"

Passing hillside estates of the rich and famous Iggy and Roger leasurly clip-clopped up the exotic tree-lined streets returning to the horse trailer in the parking lot. Lighted-headed and head spinning pleasantly in a contact high from Rye's second-hand smoke Iggy drove down from Mulholland to Cauenga passing the Hollywood Bowl heading east on Santa Monica; freeway streaming beneath them in a river of lights he took surface streets Downtown.

It had been a fun night after a full day;

Ben Olive Lisette Gustav Rye and now Roger was going to be a movie star. Iggy dropped off at his stable where his 24-7 groom set to work bedding him down for the night. Iggy still had a lot to think about. Childheart was going to kill Captain Glass.

Selpt three weeks passed,

• 11 •

Comedy of Survelience cont'd /Lenny the Lesbian

Downtown; dawn; bright corporate pinnacles of glass glitter in the rising sun.

Iggy, arms swinging happily marching down Figueroa; at one with the world, grinning to himself; no sleek black crocodile briefcase this morning; workload locked safely in brainbox: his overnight pressure cooker; on a low, slow boil, or was it baking? Or mixing more metaphores, cooking? the case simmered slowly with its own internal heat; three weeks had gone by without real incident. And now he almost had all the ingredients; three weeks of research, gossip, reports; the best by test, best in the west, best kept close to the vest; Childheart & Chang had an unlimited budget for limitless research for this client.

But which client. Lisette or B. J. Olive?

Iggy discovered they were linked. By the movies. He had lots and lots of juicy stuff to read and it was all about the movie business. How he loved the movies. Using trusted subcontractors known for serrupticious stealth investigations Iggy had a wealth of intel on his two subjects within days; a comedy of survelience; cop tailing half-baked ; his grinning good humor

after stopping in at Central Market for fresh coffee to go he was soon at the office steaming cup in hand.

This was Iggy's special time. Iggy was looking forward to two hours of quiet time to put it all together on paper but the night guard called him over.

Overnight a high security messenger service had left a heavy confidential pouch. Iggy recognized the seal. Lenny the Lesbian

Too confidential for email.

it had been weeks since they had dined on donuts. Lisette doing a movie with Rye.

He has obtained call sheets. Who was doing what with whom and when. He even had the skinny on the screenplay. Independent tribute satire summertime productions shoot Miss Merryberry had arranged the contracts.

Too early for Miss Merryberry. solitude processing.

Roger was going to be a Movie Star.

The hills would frazzled brown

'Touch of Evil' meets 'Falstaff' with a strong .Hard because it was securely under wraps

Even get to see Lisette on set. Meanwhile the was work to be done

He settled in to his office to read solitude processing. Now it was down to analysis, instinct, his gut. Iggy Leads jealousy profession and call sheets of people working on set. There was really nothing in her family life. No acts of violence. No red flags. The same for her work. Almost; all he could find was one incident. On Geraldine's last production a writer was fired after a dramatic flareup with the Director. Iggy thought there might be a connection. It happened only days after she had landed the part. She had power to have someone let go. Her association with Olive Grove Films went back years. There might be a lead, however tenuous. Geraldine's association with old Ben and his corporate web interested him, anything untoward between her and the production company. Iggy broadened his nets; a suspicion forming the missing dog was bait; the old man was interested in opening a secret source of investigation outside of his own security machine working with the cops: specifically Captain Glass and Hate Crimes Homicide.

The messenger service delivered lists of phone logs the following morning.

Iggy had asked for hard copies.

Iggy liked old-fashioned paper. Processing it gave him a sense of productivity. He also liked its smell. Iggy hummed happily as his unconscious chewed over the contents.

Lenny the Lesbian!

The fired writer's name was Dane Disely. Iggy became curious about calls to the fired writer from a Leonard Devore, who, it transpired, was a sales promotion executive with a

yard equipment division of a sprawling and anonymous manufacturing corporation Ben Olive owned.

Movies and lawn irrigations systems were opposing ends of the production process in there could be no business connection, it could be something. Iggy contacted a business intelligence outfit specializing in collecting seemingly irrelevant personal gossip and put a rush on Hipipe. It would still take a week to build a profile. The the report Disely was easier. A hack.

It was then that the client's lost dog starting turning up dead. In sandwiches.

3

Meet the Olives

As the early days of Iggy's investigation began to unfold he unsuccessfully tried to interview Oliver and Olivia Olive, old Ben's least favorite people, the sole members of his remaining clan; the spoiled brat siblings of his deceased sister, now in their thirties.

After reading the intel on them Iggy was left to entertain the uncomfortable notion they were also lovers. They shared a house in Hancock Park and after being a no-show for their first appointment had resheduled Iggy to see them at ten-thirty that morning.

It was 9am and Iggy had time on his hands.

He meandered off to the underground garage to retrieve the 1948 Fastback Coupe (in sedate pale gray) and set off with time to kill on his hands.

Iggy utterly adored Union Station.

It stood as a monument of refinement in luxury travel.

And trains.

in a time when leasure often meant style panache meant minus pressure; a three-day journey coast-to-coast Atlantic to Pacific; the Chicago Limited then Super Chief and then straight out of Union Station onto Sunset Boulevard riding out to the beach

It was probably the most famous highway in the country and a favorite jaunt for Iggy. ; Iggy passing the train station on a circuitous route up to the Olives home in Hancock Park; the 1949 Fastback Coupe (in sedate pale gray) spinning along Sunset before heading south down Cauenga to Larchmont to Rossmore: picturesque 1920s

The street address presented an idyllic half-timbered Tudor mansion.

Iggy noted pointy black-and-white eaves above early twentieth century redbrick masonry peirced by authentic leaded-glass casement windows sitting atop a soft knoll of rolling green lawn powdered with an abundance of buttercups and daisies. It was all too-fucking-much, especially with the towering ladiadah trees still decorated with lanterns from the holidays; all very twee Iggy thought as he sloped up the aged flagstone path and rang the front doorbell.

No answer.

He was on time for his appointment but hardly expected to find them at home.

It was unlikely they would be out in the world working. They had completely forgotten their first appointment but this was mid-morning, midweek; perhaps they had simply forgotten to get up but the door opened before Iggy had opportunity to enjoy a second helping of the ornamental bell chimes.

Iggy presented his delicately engraved card.

The lithe young woman checked Iggy out with cashometer eyes. He made sure to give her an eyeful of his solid gold wristwear. The value of this particular modern Patek would pay a year's rent for the average Joe. The cut of his suit said more. She swept off up the hall hardly bothering to hide her sneer of indifference: "Do follow me Mr. Chang. I am Olivia Grace Olive. In here please."

Impressed by her incuriosity Iggy wondered if it had taken her a lifetime to develop such supercilious nonchalance; her male half was waiting in the day room, the likeness to his twin startling:

"Mr. Chang. So pleased to meet you. I'm Oliver John Olive." Her twin said, hand extended foppishly; a studied mix of false humility and self-pity Iggy observed.

A uniformed maid stood to attention behind a gilt service trolley with steaming samovar and delicate bone china.

"Can we offer you morning tea." Oliver said. "I'm afraid we don't drink coffee."

Iggy politely declined. He looked around the room nodding with appreciation, it had a ring of mockery; the ostentatious designer homeliness, her offer of tea; the twins were self-drawn caricatures of themselves; *poor, poor me for being so, so rich*. It was immediately obvious they were brother and sister, out of the same egg, except alarmingly, there was tension between them: sexual tension.

"Uncle Samuel is concerned Mr. Chang. How can we help you." Olivia said.

"A few details -" Iggy started. Uncle Samuel? They made the old thug sound like:

"You have been hired to bring the killer to justice!" Oliver interrupted.

"Please understand we are not homicide specialists," Iggy said. "Childheart & Chang is purely a *personell location agency*."

"And we have every faith that Childheart & Chang will do an admirable job locating the killer." Olivia smiled weakly. "The whole affair is quite abominable so we would like to help with the costs of the investigation."

"I am sure I would make a lot of mistakes. However, I am sure I could find an operative for you with the appropriate professional homicide experience who would gladly-

"We would much rather have an inspired amateur on the case than some professional hack. Isn't that so Oliver? "

She handed Iggy's delicately engraved card to her brother.

"Quite right Olivia. All that we ask is you keep us informed."

"Yes.

Iggy let them talk; occasionally asking could decide which killing they were talking about; their uncle's late secret mistress or her deceased dog. They knew it had been a white poodle,

and for some reason he wasn't aware of, Iggy knew he really liked poodles. This gave him a similar feeling of disquiet when he discovered his passion for ballet. Upset he would field strip and clean his 1911 military .45 auto, even though he never fired it. He reached in his jacket to make sure it was still there. Oliver caught the move and saw Iggy's gun. The look in Oliver's eye caused Iggy's danger filters to click in. Iggy had seen something. He was talking automatically discussing telling them Miss Merryberry would be calling to

They offered him tea again. He declined again.

He doubted it would be poisoned but now he was quite sure the Olive twins were insane: possibly criminally insane. Oliver Olive was a psychopath and Olivia a tad behind. She was yet to kill. He had no idea who Oliver had killed, and doubted it was connected lurking there Blamed in on inbreeding so intent on guarding their precious bloodline

IT WAS THEY WHO HAD KILLED THE DOG.

It was they who had killed the dog. Or who were behind its disappearance. But why?

21

Risen from the Dead

Iggy liked barstools. He knew where to find the finest examples in Los Angeles.

For Iggy, in his daily quest for identity, barstools became to mean pews of meditation, perfect for staring into endless club soda cocktails waiting to hear the special little voice in his mind instruct him for his next move. In troubled times nothing else would do but the barstools in the Superior. They were the finest; brass-studded with buttoned two-tone leather upholstery, high wraparound backs, sturdy arms and adjustable foot-rests designed to provide support and comfort desired by the serious drinker intent on enjoying serious drinking, hence the heavily textured non-slip leather hide. Plus, the Superior offered a benevolent darkness; daylight hidden behind heavy velvet drapes at the door; it guaranteed intimacy, privacy, civility, anonymity and dignity of the old Hotel Superior clinging onto respectability on one of the few blocks of Downtown undemolished by developers. Iggy's favorite perch was in a cosy nook at the end of the bar, a perfect cocoon for contemplation. He could relax lost in the decorative mirrors, pictures and bottles in the half-light. Customers arrived in flashes of bright sunshine bleaching the sidewalk; he could see his 1948 fastback coupe (in sedate pale gray) in the hotel lot from the door, the teeming sidewalk, the traffic on the street.

An old woman got out of a cab: hybrid broken-down hooker-50s Movie Star.

Floral headscarf around straw hat, faded platinum tufts, outsize darkglasses on a face worn-around-the-edges by decades of hangovers; shapeless, ratty, ponco-shawl; sagging pink Bermuda shorts, white Dallas Cowboys cheerleader boots, an aluminum walking cane, her old bones bouncing on air-cushion strut (with a slight limp); Iggy was filled with affection as she crossed the lot; a sexy old mess, years past her sell-by date.

She creaked over to Iggy; at first, nobody recognized Geraldine Honeydew in the bar.

Which was understandable for several reasons; firstly, she was very publicly dead so who would expect to see her in a swank joint like this, and, secondly she was, after all, a uniquely gifted actress *in disguise*.

It was her choice if she was recognized.

Dropping the limp, she hoisted herself into the stool beside Iggy.

The bartender, about to ask her to move on, was surprised when Iggy greeted her with a warm smile of recognition.

"You don't seem surprised to see me Mr. Change."

"No. But I'm very, very pleased to see you Miss Honeydew. You look wonderful."

She spluttered a huge, dry laugh.

She asked for a gin fizz. Dazed by her sultry voice, which sounded familiar, the bartender took her order and moved off to make her drink.

She turned to Iggy, and slipping ooy of her grungy poncho flashed her cleavage, fortunately now fully contained within a clinging, tight, soft white angora sweater.

"The battered old broad didn't fool you huh?"

She took off the straw hat with faded platignum tufts attached; her strawberry blonde tresses tumbled free.

Next came her dark glasses to reveal famed green eyes.

Resurrection.

"Cool disguise huh?" She laughed, "done up like this I only look half-dead. You weren't even a little shocked by my death? It *was* strangulation."

Iggy made sympathetic, apologetic word sounds with an apathetic grin.

"It was a very painful murder Iggy. I didn't like it at all." She shook out her glorious blonde tresses revealing the softness of her mouth, getting her sharp white teeth around her next line as she delivered it: "And you were a very naughty boy with your fountain pen."

She slipped out a gold compact looking in the mirror age dust mention

"About your little dog," Iggy said, embarrassed. "I have good news and bad bews."

The bartender arrived with her drink and nearly dropped it.

Geraldine Merrydew's beauty grabbed him.

He recognized her as she took the glass and licked the rim: "Mmm. Gin. Yum. Thank you sir."

Dead for three weeks and now she was back.

She was gorgeous; vivacious, vital.

The bartender had the scoop. For the time being. He went away to make the phonecall. This news would be worth something to someone.

Iggy listened. She told him she had been hiding out.

Her lawyer had arrived in time to stop cutting her up on religious grounds. She had just got up and walked out of mission Road. Hardly giving the coroner time to begin.

"I couldn't allow a post-mortem examination Iggy." Miss Honeydew

"I noticed there was no blood, at the scene of the crime," Iggy said cynptically.

"What little blood I have, I wanted to keep - I came out of shock on the steel table

"Where I'm coming from

"It doesn't matter, I like you and," Iggy chose his words carefully: "I do believe you are a benevolent soul."

"How magnanimous of you," Miss Honeydew smiled thinly, sipping her gin. "I think you're cute too."

Iggy's eyes had fully adjusted to. He had hardly expected this. Geraldine was It was like a date. In the light she suptuois, albeit slightly faded; The place was authentic thirties. Carefully cherished and obsessively preserved right down to the last detail, even the glass ashtrays were authentic. And Geraldine fitted right in. The red gash of her mouth and face paint seemed right. This was her time. She sipped her drink again, decided she was thirsty, drained her glass stretched and called for a refill"

Iggy wonder how amn atime she had prcticed that move in front of the bathroom mirror Perfection alibe under her sweater. He lughed they were sublime

Mmmm.

"I have the report. He slipped it to her said she smiled. Sublimity as the first camera flashed.

"Curly isn't dead," she said. "I know that. I just know."

Geraldine arched her back and stretched like a cat.

"But aren't you going to ask who killed me?"

Iggy knew she already knew, as she did but the new media arrived and excusing himself allowed her to revive her celebrity with reporters.

49

Man without Guile

Iggy stared the fat old man straight in the eye.

"I have just been talking to a friend of yours," Iggy said.

Gustav Rye twinkled a glint of curiosity encouraging Iggy to say more.

"Miss Honeydew." Iggy said. "I had a drink with her earlier at the Superior."

"Geraldine isn't dead?" Gustav Rye's face crinkled as if bubble burst tickling his nose.

Iggy read

"Geraldine, Geraldine; wonderful, funny, eternal girl!" Grave concern. "She's alive?"

"Yes." Iggy chuckled, "she was guzzling down gin at the Superior when I left her."

Rye sighed with relief. Iggy tried push him further, but Rye hurried on.

"How is Roger? Dear Roger, I do like Roger. He is such a sweet soul."

"Yes he is, and Roger is fine. But you know Mr. Rye, Roger has an inordinate amount of horse sense and might see incalculable risks appearing in a movie."

Rye stopped to think, deflated.

"I could talk to him..."

"Thank you," Rye sighed gratefully.

"You know about Geraldine's surgery?" Iggy said.

"Her second vagina?" Rye scoffed with a giggle. "It's a myth."

"It's not Mr. Rye. I've seen it."

A long moment passed between the two men.

"You've been there?" Rye said finally. "Lucky man."

"No, no," Iggy protested hastily. "I saw it only after her death. Or rather, her temporary demise." He pictured her soft golden tuft, remembering the delicate examination with his Monte Blanc. "Quite the rare treat to see, sir. A thing of great art if I may say so. Rarely have I seen such naturally formed beauty in this city of the cosmetic surgeon's knife."

Rye paused for long moment, face set with stern deliberation:

Finally the obese actor lightly floated to his feet like balloon, straightening his back with theatrical dignity:

"People are very set in their ways of thinking and beliefs Iggy," Rye said, softly finishing his line with gravity and humility, "please consider Miss Honeydew might have been born that way. Please consider she became that that way other means than by - ?"

"Made that way?" Iggy's world paused in orbit for a millisecond. "But not of this life."

"Very well put. I think you have it. You, sir, are the proverbial Scholar and Gentleman; somewhat civilized refinements for a *professional killer* in today's corporate America."

"*Professional killer*? Wow! You've read my real resume." Iggy asked hopefully.

"No. I was being facetious. Please forgive me Iggy. You obviously have a genuine soft spot for Miss Honeydew."

"Yes. I like her. And indirectly, she is also my client. But I was only hired to find her lost dog."

"You found her little poodle?"

"Yes, partly." Iggy decided to be forthright. "Someone ate part of him."

It was Rye's turn to he plopped backward into his divan.

"Yes, removed a rear leg, and served it as chicken salad in a deli sandwich."

"That is disgusting. I'm flabbergasted! Who would do such a thing. And who ate it."

"Your brother."

"My brother ate Miss Honeydew's poodle?"

Rye's eyes popped. Then narrowed.

"I don't have a brother!" Rye picked up his Mauser. "Oh, all right! I do."

"That would be Ben Olive." Iggy smiled.

"So what do you know about my brother?"

"He commissioned us to find Miss Honeydew's lost dog sir. We tend to be thorough in our investigations at Childheart & Chang. We made the usual routine family background check, i.e. a dognapping by a resentful relative et cetera, and discovered his brother. You."

"In turn I made my own investigations Mr. Change. So I know *all* about Childheart."

"Really, this is very interesting to me, what did you find out?"

"Now, don't get me wrong." Rye pensive. "I don't think Childheart a scholar and a gentleman. He isn't in this for academic interest. I believe the man once a warrior, now out for revenge."

Really, this is very interesting to me, what did you find out?"

Rye was impressed by Iggy's wide-eyed innocence that betrayed his curiosity.

55

Man without Hate

October 31st 2002

Iggy lay back in the tub. The hot water transported him.

The whole Olive Case floating in suspension of disbelief.

Not that he doubted the facts. The actuality of a business magnate commissioning him to find a lost dog that was already dead, which led him to a secret brother who seemingly wanted him dead, was plausible; then add a couple of extremely sexy high-calibre movie star actresses to the *cauldron bubbling colorful mix of Hollywood Noir; he was enjoying himself but sensed soon the murders would start flames*

Why had Childheart taken notice of him that fateful day near death on the desert?

Again, he rationalized their relationship; of all he knew that existed between them.

What had been Childheart's purpose that fateful day?

Had he saved Iggy out of the goodness of his heart?

Why Childheart had bothered to save his life?

Childheart had uncountable opportunities to save many a life in his previous centuries of eternal days riding the ether above those in the mortal coil; so why choose him; why was Iggy so special? What had he done to deserve to be plucked from death?

Childheart could have just rode on, he must have had reason.

Rye's words reverberated: "I believe the man once a warrior; now out for revenge."

Iggy wasn't sure Rye's theory held truth. Iggy had been flirting with one idea that he was Childheart's guinea pig. A special experiment. Not quite a little white mouse, or lab rat, but Iggy had been a clean slate.

Iggy was was a man didn't know hate.

What were the implications

Childheart already had his scheme running and needed.

Iggy knew it is one of the oldest dramatic notions going - man wakes up and doesn't know who he is.

"The most precious thing we have after health is our sense of identity."

Perhaps here is a man with no conscious memory, so can he hate?

Iggy knew he could dislike people purely on sight.

Do we come into this world preprogrammed racists

Or is it just survival instinct.

Knowing enemy by instinct.

* * * * *

benevolence

the racist is only immortal whilst he believes he is on earth

the intelligence fascinated by sex -

how could people be motivated y such shallow things a glands!

* * * * *

56

Man without Past

Tribalism. It was all about tribal retribution and old family feuds.

Iggy was sure of it.

He had watched it all unfold this past month now he could report to Lisette. She was safe. He was sure of that too.

He relaxed patiently contemplating the first bite of his first buttermilk glazed waiting for the fresh pot of coffee to drip through.

Bill's Donut Paradise was quiet. It was a beautiful evening on Santa Monica Boulevard.

Hot coffee ready. All was well with the world.

Iggy watched the parking lot rhythmically filling and emptying with customer's cars from the liquorstore, smokeshop and quality french drycleaning as he sipped and nibbled occasionally licking glazed sugar from his fingertips.

Santa Monica Boulevard had finished rush-hour and was starting to run a leisurely dinner crowd traffic; the cars, restaurants and bars twinkling in the low sun. The panel van doubled-parked for a second and two boys got out; skinny boys, chattering effusively, enthusiastically; a common sight in West Hollywood. They stood on the streetcorner immersed in animated conversation at the entrance to the parking lot.

Iggy looked at his watch. Lisette was punctual. She wouldn't be late.

Sure enough, her old rusty pickup rumbled in. The boys gave it room to pass as a blacked-out Benz parked outside Bill's Donut Paradise conveniently abandoned its slot:

Lisette slipped in, got out of the her truck, bemused, staring after the Benz as slipped into the traffic on Santa Monica Boulevard.

"I keep finding parking Iggy," Lisette dumped the huge apple fritter on the tabletop between them, sat down with her coffee and stared at him. "Every time I take Ralph's truck I keep finding parking, virtually everywhere I go. I don't have to look. It's weird. A space opens up, like here, just outside, or a meter outside a store, or -" Her tone demanded an explanation. "It's you, isn't it Iggy?"

"All part of the service," Iggy smiled innocently, leaned over and squeezed her hand.

"Help me eat this apple fritter Iggy. I know you like them. It's fresh. What's going on?"

Iggy let her dunk a chunk of fritter as he watched the lot. The van had gone round the block and taken position at the entry. Still gossiping the boys were backing toward Bill's Donut Paradise. Professional. Tightening fire lines. Lisette munching, watching him watching. "So, what's going on Iggy? Why the need for a one-on-one? Privacy?"

"Do you know Ben Olive?"

Her face darkened. She looked at Iggy for a long breath deciding if to tell was worth the risk. "I know of him. I met him. Once. Back in the day."

"Not socially." Iggy prompted, diplomatically.

"You are so chivalrous Iggy. No, not socially, professionally."

"I serviced him when I was a whore. Is that what this is about? The Famous Fellatrix."

Iggy nodded, lips pursed tight. Lisette silent. An unpleasant memory prompted a frown.

"Mr. Olive wanted seconds but I didn't. I rarely gave seconds. Did you know that Iggy."

"Yes. Sort of," Iggy said. Lisette was pissed. Hurt.

"Sorry. We were friends, sort of. Still are. It was a long, long time ago Iggy."

"Seven years?"

"More," Lisette frowned again. "It could be a coincidence but Olive Grove Films have been onto my own production company several times in the last few months: offering attractive financing packages: my choice of role and project. I, we, had never heard from them before. And old Ben Olive made sure I got his message, he had my assistant tell me word for word. He wanted me. Money no object."

"Wanted you?" Iggy smiled thinly. "He wasn't talking movie role. You are a married woman now. He's an insulting little fuck."

"Once a whore, always a whore," Lisette shrugged philosophically, and dunked.

"Short-assed ugly little *narcisist* fuck," Iggy elaborated. Remembering Ben Olive was a client, he immediately regretted talking like that, but he really liked Lisette. There was something very human about her. Almost more than mere human, superhuman, but very

humble. Perhaps she was an extraterrestrial, or an angel, what's the difference, sometimes he had thought she glowed when she had been su -

"Stop looking at me like that Iggy."

"Like what?"

"You know what. Sippy eyed!" She laughed, "It's funny, but why do you mention Ben Olive. It's no coincidence is it Iggy. What's the connection."

"A few more questions first; back in the day: did he ask for a *second appointment?*"

"Yes. I made excuses. I just didn't like him enough, whatever the price."

Iggy smiled thinly; Lisette continued.

"I think if I'd have asked a million bucks he would have paid. Say it Iggy."

Iggy smiled again. "I'd say you were worth it."

"A million dollar B.J.?" Lisette studied his face; he wasn't being facetious. "You are a good friend Iggy."

"Oh, I thought I was sippy."

Lisette watched Iggy munching donut, shuffling facts; suspicions bubbled, popped:

And there it was. He laughed. He'd put it all together. It couldn't be more obvious.

It had cost a good deal to get to read Ben Olive's medical records; felony burglary was not an inexpensive commission; getting past Olive's security a serious challenge; the high-dosage testosterone shots, the geriatric 'roids rage, the erectile dysfunction medication; *the old man couldn't get it up!* And Old Ben was looking back to past experiences; golden times of exquisite sex. He knew Lisette's professionalism infallible, she would be able to restore him, revive him for Geraldine; his beloved Geraldine a demanding woman, keeping her satisfied had finally done him in:

"Do you know Geraldine Summerdew," he asked Lisette.

"Not personally, but I know her work. She's very good. And from the little I do know of her, she's somewhat of an enigma; been around forever; impossibly, almost." Lisette said curiously. "Her name has been linked to many powerful men. Now she is a friend of Mr. Olive I believe?"

"Yes, for the past twenty years," Iggy nodded. "Tell me about Mr. Olive's recent business proposition."

"Nothing unusual," Lisette briefly reconnoitered the recent past. "He had production funds requiring investment before the end of his fiscal. Without wishing to upset such a powerful man we told him our prior commitments made co-production impossible."

"And Olive didn't believe you."

"He wanted a personal meeting. An obnoxious prospect but my excuse was legitimate. I had acquired a new property, a script; I start preproduction next month. I never gave the man another thought. Until now."

"I need a minute to get the facts straight in my mind." Iggy said.

Lisette got up and bought a couple more a buttermilk and pink glazed with sprinkles.

Iggy took more fresh coffee; it could it be that simple, he gave Liette his take: Olive was freaked into impotence by Geraldine's death and dining on poodle pate sandwiches.

Then the little dog had been found fit as a fiddle, albeit with three legs and a wheel.

Lisette aghast as Iggy related the poodles left rear leg had been amputated and a prosthetic fitted. It was macabre. Cynical. He had the little dog safely stashed until the time was right to find it a home. But who was behind it? Lisette agape in avid concentration as Iggy proposed it was someone who wanted to take the very thing the old man believed he loved the most; his very masculinity. Then Iggy expound theory; paranoid, the old man hadn't believed Lisette and wanted to find out if she *was* still operating her Famous Felatrix persona; Lisette smiling blithely hunting lone sprinkles and crumbs with her fingertip.

"Mr. Olive wanted to be sure I wasn't lying to him, operating my old sex business behind his back, denying him,' she said. "So I was right. sensing someone following me."

"Yes. They are good. A specialist crew. I've used them in the past so they were easy to make. As improbable as it may seem, that's my theory.

Lisette thought about it.

"No. It's not improbable. Ben Olive is disgusting. I'll go with it if you do Iggy?"

"He's a lonely old man. His regular squeeze failed him. I suspect he was trying to recapture that special once-in-a-lifetime sensation that made you famous so he might get his mojo back. And, Miss Honeydew's little dog isn'y connected at all."

"Rumor is Geraldine was his regular squeeze for years." Lisette darkly speculative, "but who killed Geraldine? And why? Her murder is still all over the news?"

"Ah, but she isn't dead Lisette. She was drinking gin at the Superior last night." Iggy grinned. "I was with her."

Lisette brightened, her eyes wide! "It's true. Seriously. She's not dead."

"She was in a coma. " Iggy paused with a frown. " At least, that's the official story. You'll hear about it soon enough. "

"Wow!" Lisette was impressed. "So what's the scoop, what's the real story?"

"She was in hiding," Iggy said. "I suspected, but I actually didn't know."

"Was she on the run from Ben Olive? Or someone kidnapped her to get a ransom from Ben Olive? Or, where -" Lisette delighted, incredulous, then concerned. "But she's going to her lost doggie back, right?"

"Right. And tomorrow you'll start finding it difficult to find parking again," Iggy said.

"Which means case closed, right? At least my part of the case, but Miss Honeydew?"

"I'll fixit. Can I leave it at that for the time being?"

Lisette nodded. The job was done. She she trusted Iggy. What more did she need to know: "How do you do it Iggy? Find me parking everywhere I go. I can only assume an extreme invasion of privacy?"

"I usually know where you are going and be prepared. You really don't want to know how. Your new movie sounds good from what I overheard. Sounds like a hip biopic?"

"Biopic? Good job I trust you Iggy." Lisette startled. "How could you know that?"

"Secrets for sale. You can buy anything in Los Angeles," he said. "Nothing is sacred but everything is worshipped."

"Profound." Lisette chuckled.

"There anything you can tell me about the production?" Iggy already knew about the Disney connection. "I know you want Roger in it."

"It's supposed to be under wraps. What I can tell you is it's going to be a lot of fun."

"A comedy?"

"More a mystery thriller satire." Lisette said.

"You've never made a straight-up comedy," Iggy said, "but everything you've done has always had a certain humor, a certain edge."

"I didn't know you followed my movies that closely?"

"I don't really. But I only like serious film. I've discovered I like movies but love cinema. Your films certainly qualify as cinema. They all push expansion of new possibility of the medium into -"

"What the fuck Iggy?" Lisette laughed, "I didn't realise you had been reading up on the subject, making a serious study?"

"Just make observations. Can't help but develop an interest in this town with everyone wandering around in their own private little genre writing their private scenario as they go through their days. We are all itsie-bit players Lisette. Even a great actress like you. It's L.A. It's special here. We are all stars waiting go shine. Some even brighter. You. Monroe. Streep. Marlon Brando, Gustave Rye, H.G.Welles, *even Roger sometimes*. None of us are who we appear to be," Iggy said. "Especially Childheart."

"Even me too." Lisette said, looking at her hands. "Lately I have begun to wonder -"

Iggy stared at her expectantly. "Where you came from, where we came from?"

"I know your story Iggy." She picked up her napkin.

"You do?" Iggy gleamed hopefully.

"No. Only what you've told me. Sorry Iggy." She dabbed a spot of sugary glaze from his chin. "You looked like a little kid for a second there Iggy, professional guile fell away, professional investigator no more," *she said cops had killed a man Iggy had been there - and so had childheart I know it fucks you up not knowing. Their times eatin donuts before*

"I like to think of myself as inspired amateur," Iggy said.

"So what are we then?" he asked

"Friendly, benevolent ghosts. Or not so friendly. Hey, I'm high." Lisette suddenly giggled. "I'm high on sugar Iggy." *"You are just trying to find yourself, who isn't.*

"What if you can't - " he said

"Find yourself"

'This is L.A. - if you can't find yourself, or do find yourself and don't like what you've found you reinvent yourself. At least, most of 'em. Childheart Even Geraldine. She'd been around forever.

"Roger isn't a ghost," Iggy said solemnly. "He's just a good ol' flesh'n blood horse."

"A real horse." Lisette said. "You like Roger don't you Iggy."

"Roger won't get hurt in all this?"

"No, we have a great stunt coordinator, and our wranglers are -"

"No, not on your movie shoot Lisette. In all the dark shit that is going to rain down. I can just feel it coming." A long pause; the shadow passed. "You're safe from Olive though."

"I have to go Iggy. My husband will be wanting his dinner," she smiled suggestively.

She kissed him on the cheek and skipped out.

Iggy watched her get into her truck and drive off, the remains of the day following trailing a pink twilight; the boys finished their innocent conversation as their van arrived to follow her truck; Lisette didn't know Iggy knew her husband was dying; Lisette no longer movie star, simply caring wife, soon to be widow.

Occasionally, he wondered could it could have been different with Lisette; because, Iggy, *Man with No Past*, sometimes had the idea that Lisette had no past too; that she too was not of this world, but of the Astral plane. He was completely accepting of her ways, she seemed to transcend her chequered past, her sex career, as if she belonged in another realm, in the ether; she was a wispy one, almost a waif; Iggy needed to think; he strolled back to his car down Santa Monica Boulevard enjoying the pastel streaked sky; he would drive out to the marina and watch the flights floating in over the Westside to land at LAX.

Twilight is a quickie in Los Angeles.

By the time the 1949 Fastback Couple (in sedate pale gray) had smoothly slipped through the thick westbound traffic to cross Robertson the evening twilight had become dusk, lights from sidewalk storefronts picking out silhouettes of passerby; the presence of people pulled Iggy; Dan Tana Iggy knew things were off with his travel plan and hung a right up Doheny the long steep hill towards the bright lights on the Strip

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The Hollywood Forever

It was night.

Iggy needed to think.

He knew driving would help.

The ride along Sunset east of Doheny a benevolent tunnel of hypnotic neon imprinting a soothing psychic montage conducive to heightened awareness; ahh, beloved billboards; one-after-the-next towering above the rooftops touting news of what to expect from the latest billion-dollar franchise about to splatter the planet with righteous all-star escapism; a cute

ninja chicken thirty floors tall in blinding yellow luminescence commandeered the sky as the glittering boulevard swept up through the long bend heading into Sunset Plaza. Miss Merryberry came to mind as undiluted glamor shone out of the sidewalk cafes and elegant chic oozed from the exclusive boutiques so Iggy indulgently shot a cuff to get into the spirit: the Patek threw a gleamer should anyone be looking. the 1949 Fastback Coupe (in sedate pale gray) heading downtown passing the Comedy Store, the Laugh Factory, the Directors Guild in the Guitar Center shadows Life on the street. Fast food fast love fast sex fast cars fantasies Lisette, a hundred dollars here a hundred dollars there and she made the rent, and look at her now; Chateau Marmont signage bulbs chasing bright flicker and glitter transportation were, of let it all settle It was all he had. All he knew; Iggy chuckled, laughed out loud. He loved it. He was home and he loved it.

Iggy was okay with being a cipher; big, urbane, ex-assassin with badge; noir-stereotype P.I. with gold star credentials outranking the LAPD. Iggy knew, despite his many failures to establish his history, his past, that biologically he had a mother, and a father, but hard fact ended there. Blank. He could assume they probably looked like him. But it ended there. The growing awareness he would never know frightened him in the early years. He'd had had a family once; seeing Lisette had made it easier. She blew him with a friendly little tickle, she made sure he saw her working in a mirror he owed her; whatever she did to him came in slow, rolling tides. Of she never had regulars, he was her only regular; money to him it could have been five bucks. Lisette met the doctor and skinny flat-chested girl became slim, elegant, young biologically possibility. His skills from some master's dojo but not off-planet. Iggy knew he was of this world, and not of the next, like so many of Possibility wrought from pain; Loved L.A. or you didn't. Lisette was light; the silly Olive surveillance was an old mans vanity, a search for a hard-on; but dark eddies through trees scarred with shadows Hollywood High School closed tight for the night coming up to La Brea.

Stuffy Iggy, took a deep breath; the breeze filed him with night blooming jasmine.

Hang a right!

Head south down La Brea back to Santa Monica Boulevard; the going getting grittier on the sidewalk,

Hang a left. East of La Brea Santa the city blocks heading Downtown along Santa Monica grew steadily darker. . Shadows of memories indistinct lurkers street corner

He wanted to think; think it through Lisette was an innocent, a victim of circumstance.

Olive was only looking for comfort from Lisette. He lost Geraldine and missed her. out of his routine But Ben Olive was a victim of an altogether different foe; dark eddies of malevolence lapped around his ankle, waiting to materialize, waiting to pounce

And Geraldine. What hold did Olive have on her.

Olive and Rye were connected.

Glass - but Lisette was safe now Geraldine was alive again.

And Childheart wanted to kill Glass.

Her life force energy lighting up Ben Olive - they were all there being manipulated - but there was some someone missing - him - who was manipulating him - Chilheart?

Whoever had performed surgery on the little dog had been very good.

Take a respite from speculation. The exertion had He had to see it for himself.

Iggy's usually obliging intelligence subcontractor had been unusually vague. And, Iggy felt, gaurded. The dog had been discovered and recovered in Burbank.

Crossing Vine Street the shadows started dancing a happy gash in the Hollywood Cemetary, resting place of the stars; Hollywood Forever mausoleum How long could he wait felt comfortable a gap before they penetrated the plant security again - they were willing to do it, and take Iggy with them as a ridalong - something was big behind Enlightenment shoots it enlightenment wafts in an out hunger, I like that part of it.

retruns the mauser

in an hour I will be human enough to thoroughly enjoy dinner.

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The Intelligence and Sex Angel

Wednesday, August 26, 2009

The script came in through normal channels.

It was exactly what Lisette had been looking for; her own story.

Two years had gone by since Lisette let the word out to literary agents; she was interested in finding 'Ancient Aliens Subject'.

And here it was the latest, hot off the press:

'The Intelligence' an original screenplay by Dane Disely

Lisette skimmed the manuscript: 120 pages; 3 Acts; on paradigm.

Disely again. Why wasn't she surprised? Fuck Dane Disely. She knew the man's work: knew he was a plaigiarist asshole. The story Disely sold her husband eight years earlier had been a stolen property. So it was likely he had stolen this story too; in fact, she hoped so:

From the very person she had given the story to; a young, very green screenwriter.

Eight years ago Lisette had been plagued by a story germ mischievously bumping around in her head; a fanciful self-portrait, a '*Waif on Sunset Boulevard Makes It Big*' story.

She had been having a hard time with life and naively trusted a naïve boyfriend with her big secret of being the Famous Fellatrix. He freaked and dumped her.

She then found she had a debilitating disease.

She found a doctor, *The Great Sex Doctor Doll*.and, she believed, the reason why she was having some very strange dreams variety dressed up with some wacky, anti-social, satirical themes.

It would be a great vehicle for some young up-and-coming actress.

Lisette knew she wasn't a writer but with the right writer?

Everyone was a writer in LA; wannabes and would-be's when they actually started, so it made sense there were a few good wordsmiths around on the lookout for material. Lisette had to dump her story; set it free, get on with her life. It was a wild hope it would **take** seed and grow and get back to her. She knew the writing, constant rewriting and submissions takes years dealing in favors, readers' reports and talent agent bone-fides.

It was eight years since she had given the idea to the naïve green screenwriter. Then, somewhere along the line since, Disely had acquired it. Lisette didn't want to consider how. She skimmed a few pages. Disely had been true. He had used her '*Intelligence is Sexy*' tag. 116 pages, 3 Acts, but lots of tired, cliqued padding. Fortunately her idea was hack-proof. The story of a teenage girl who believes she is an angel, a sex angel - she will die at the end but starts to get rolls - Lisette had thought it through.

Lisette had now done some very big productions, but this would be a small one, like 'The Get-Sexy Meditation Movie' that shot her to fame, the filmset where she met Jakeson.

...The Intelligence knew the time was ripe; appetite; knew it had waited long enough; the 1960s were a good time to start life, the natives had finally managed to leave their lovely blue world and get to the nearest moon, social reforms and scientific achievement, now all it had to do was find a good place a lust for life.

...the intelligence knew that if it had an heart it would be pure, so when it was born keep it pure find the right place; from past experiences in the flesh it knew it liked light and warmth, palm trees; there were plenty of places in the world where it could get that but it wanted more; cultures come and go; nations and states and political systems this was different

despite food and sex doing its research the the idea of cooperation moon the intelligence liked movies. After a while the intelligence had decided it wanted to be a movie star and to make things truly interesting, it decided it wanted to be a girl...

End:

The intelligence decided it wanted to be female; being a male hadn't worked out the last time. It remembered that visit only a couple of thousand years ago. A painful experience; in those day prophets where celebrities Kings - this time it would be a movie star

Lisette has made five movies get sexy sirituality movie; the second, about charriot girl, then the third a fourth all in three years;

puzzles - like attracts like - or the attraction of opposites

...thinking like a southern evangelical? No, just joking really I guess Gav, plugging into the national consciousness - or should I say 'national god consciousness' life when I was a kid: America, the big perfect place beyond all existing horizons I might find in England or Europe - even though nowadays I know it has changed and the golden era has gone (like childhood) the glow of the dream still lingers.

"America's place in the world today seems hardly important in comparison to the quality of life we experience actually living here; it is hard getting past all the commercial and corporate hype and hoopla and searching for meaning other than shallow materialism; your line "...a leader who can only offer 'hope'. Not muscle, invention, ingenuity or commerce. Simply hope" hit the spot, but I ask myself, why aren't I grateful for that?"

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High Nooner at The Hygienic

Five thousand dollars for a blowjob.

Cash.

No way!

Fifty new hundred dollar bills.

But Lenni had the money.

In a brown Kraft envelope especially purchased for the express purpose of transporting it: his *fee of exchange*. Appropriate he felt. A sign of respect. Fee & Exchange. He kept taking the envelope from his inner jacket pocket and putting it on the passenger seat where he could see it, touch it, stroke it, before returning it to his pocket. Every contingency had been planned for. He had folded an extra hundred for a gratuity. As instructed he had booked room 69 at 'The Hygienic'. And there it was: his insanity. No one in their right mind would pay five grand for a blowjob. And there it was. The motel. Accross the street.

The Franklin Tropics Motor Lodge.

A Guaranteed Good Nights Rest - Famous Seaside Ions - Soundproof All-Hygienic Rooms

The signage original, discreet thin-gauge neon tube artfully wrought; a dim ruby-red glimmer of a lost 1930s elegance in the ornate style of a roadside inn sign. Now a backlit, garish, 60-foot plastic popsicle-on-a-stick motel sign added thirty years later towered above two wings of extra rooms added on the small lot next door in the 1950s, and the elevated Hollywood Freeway roared past two blocks away. Other than the inner autocourt parking in front of the original cabins there was ample free parking nearby; convenient, plentiful, secure and hidden from the street. Lenni knew there was also two side entrances, a service entrance come rear entrance on Yucca Street.

'The Hygienic' was the perfect rendezvous for anonymity.

Conspirators could take separate entrances, wander the maze to meet in a prearranged room, which, rumor had it, had been built to the same soundproof specifications as the original autocourt next door, guaranteeing racous or rest as required.

Lenni was early.

He dawdled down Franklin after driving in on the surface streets from his single on the Westside. He liked Franklin Avenue; the pretty, period apartment buildings and old homes nestling behind the big leafy trees lining the clean wide sidewalks, and he especially taken a day off from work for his five-grand blowjob. He found a shady space and stayed in his car enjoying the pretty little butterflies pitter-pattering around in his stomach, smoothing the envelope in pocket, enjoying the view. Lenni loved Hollywood, loved its tawdry beauty; loved its backdrop of untidy hills and spindly palms sprouting up out of the concrete menagerie of miss-matched architecture styles; Lenni where some of the weirdest and most dangerous breeds of humanity were to be found; stroking and smoothing his money old pinball machines bouncing flashing lights banners of plastic he loved it this was the front entrance. and required good eyesight to read from the distance; 'The Hygienic' street frontage a red brick rustic pink flamingos up in the great lakes mishmash. in the shadow of the glaring sprawling expanse add-on rooms

Lenni had never been inside one.

Months previously Lenni made a reconnaissance of 'The Hygienic.'

He strolled into reception expecting to savor the famous seaside ions to be welcomed by a hit of sweet disinfectant stink. It instantly demolished his dream. How could men of refinement mistake gross floral bouquet reminiscent of coffeshop bathrooms for bracing sea air. He'd heard all about of 'The Hygienic' at his cigar club; the famous ions, the magic AC. He liked the men there, *the Quality of Membership*; yes, that was it.

Lenni emulated their masculinity; their liking for illicit Havana cigars, the tobacco high shadows leather armchairs fragrant. He had patiently worked on his inclusion; membership of the cigar club was strictly by referral; working on his friend Froddy, they always met after dark. Let Froddy take his virginity, Lenni enjoyed his confusion. Froddy had stiff rogering. There had been no affection.

He was the junior member.

He had his membership card.

The so and so had a hot 'Take her to 'The Hygienic', ha ha. Had his birthday party there, a very private party, at 'The Hygienic'; there had been eight of them, and two girls; bravado and bluster always careful to avoid overt braggadocio;

Five grand was membership into the small clique of those who had. He knew they

Calm, Confident and Sure, No Mental Fear.

Lenni repeated the mighty mantra. That was he: "Man of the world. Calm, confident and sure: no mental fear. His cigars helped. Their aromatic smoke curing his doubt they might

stink up the place for others. Lenni had been accepted in the cigar club; he strategy of accepted into circles of confidentiality; he had he had heard family secrets. Afterward they would be quiet. Their smiles said all. Relax stretches sighs

Rumors and legend and mystique finally he had worked up courage open curiosity about her telephone number.

Traffic rumble on Yucca street went up a notch. Sirens blared. Lenni looked at his watch. Time to get going. Struck with a premonition he was about to lose something he hastily took it off locked it in glove box took it out put it back on again. He was very, very nerous.

Day happy sunshine yellow; midday glared bright; Lenni strode with purpose *calm, confieent, sure, no mental fear* in the middle of smelly ol' Downtown Hollywood expecting. Antiseptic Disinfectant Restroom He collected his room card key from reception; a tall, ordinary looking girl was waiting, buying a candy bar from the vending machine. cool breeze cean in your scent big lift to the mood lifted immediately The Hygienic had a private laundry. Famous urple sheets and museum quality art prints

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Calm, Confident and Sure, No Mental Fear

"Hello Lenni." The voice that greeted him belonged to the tall, ordinary looking girl.

Gawky was the word that came to mind, which he instantly regretted. Wispy was better. Yes, she was wispy, sort of wafting; Lenni was proud of this piece of descriptive thinking. dismissed

"Can I take your coat?" It was a hot day. The formal suit nervous. He was sweating.

He handed her but the brown envelope took his coat he caught her reflection in the mirror and shuddered. He looked at her fearful his lip trembling.

Lisette laughed living dangerously

"Have you been in trouble before Lenni?"

like a medical examination

"You're in trouble now my dear." Lisette "I am the Famous Felatrix."

She was moving him around the room. It was almost a dance, her special dance He say himself in the full legnth mirrow

Red garter belt

It had never been bigger

Grown an inch.

This was wild, really wild.

Long duster slowly

riffled the banknotes her gun,

light headed, another reality

Another dimesion maybe he was overdosing on ions.

Maybe it was the ocean breeze.

Hey, dontcha mean the stink of the motel disinfectant pal? That is what you smell. Get your money back and get out of here

But he had never heard of anyone ever having any complaints
mistakes

"Tell me Lenni, what is it that you do for a living?"

Calm, Confident and Sure, No Mental Fear.

"Tell me Lenni, what is it that you do for a living?"

"I'm a screenwriter," he said, puffing up.

"A screenwriter," she said, impressed.

If only he thought, deflating his chest with a rare, humble burst of self-honesty. "I also write literature, catalogs and ad-flyers. For a patio and yard furniture company. I handle the publicity. Boring shit really. "

He looked at her with a plea

"We all have dayjobs Lenni." She led him into the bedroom. "This is mine." She gestured. He acquiesced. She unzipped his fly. "I am the Famous Felatrix."

"And we all have our secrets."

She patted the plump mattress, pulled back the soft purple wool blanket. "I am the Famous Felatrix."

The music was louder in here he thought; no, it was just clearer. He smiled with satisfaction; he liked it.

"Tell me about yourself." Lisette sad but Lenni played coy; embarrassed, shy. Lisette felt disquiet troubled a gay man, or a girl; soon find out. "You seem the type who likes to read.

She had noticed Lenni's arousal.

It had been

"Do you like sci-fi. History. Biographies, trash fiction."

"Trash fiction?"

"What we are in now." She looked around the room. "Take a deep breath Lenni. Is that Jasmine or Lysol?"

There was a scene on the in "Yes, jasmine; night blooming jasmine."

Impossible right Poinsettia

In a trick motel in Hollywood.

"I could give you a story Lenni. It would be yours. Original. A gift. By the time you have written it down on paper I am sure you would have forgotten where you heard it. Would you like to hear it?"

Lenni nodded. This wasn't what he expected. The girl was skinny, plain; but in the mirror on the ceiling and behind the bed there was second person in the room.

A rare beauty who wanted to suck his cock.

And Lisette knew how to work the room.

Work the mirrors.

Knew where the mirrors were.

Knew when to make Lenni look.

she kept her hat on. It was a silly hat. With artificial flowers and fake fruit. But in the mirror. It was more comfortable to watch in the mirror.

She took him in her mouth. "Once upon a time, a time before time existed..."

Lenni realized it was a beautiful room. The swirling yellows on the soft cotton bedcover flowed

Lenni became aware of eyes watching him.

A cat, and a mouse, on the nightstand.

"They are mine. My friends. My pets. My bodyguards." Lenni was incredulous: a cat, a mouse, they shouldn't be watching. "I take them everywhere in case I get lonesome. I usually don't take so long with my clients. I guess they got worried, or curious. Scat cat, you too mouse. Back in the bag. Now!"

Lenni craned his neck as the animals obediently complied with a playful scamper

"Are they dangerous?" Lenni managed an attempt at humor

"You wouldn't like to find out," she giggled. "Shall I start to tell you your story now?"

"Do you tell all of your johns a story?" Lenni said with a smirk.

"John's?" Lisette pulled back popping him out with a comic plop. "Oh, my customers, my boys. They are most certainly not john's Lenni. You'll see. John's are suckers. You are special, a lucky boy; so play nice okay Lenni."

She bit him.

He yelped.

But not with pain. It hurt but it didn't. He saw stars. Fizzed and popped. His arousal unusual; he had never been harder here realized. John's are suckers. I'm the sucker.

The words came Bedtime story

A bedtime story for boys.

Big boys - like you.

It was a soundproof room.

Long licks the words doodle-looodle-looodle, do do - dooddl, it was a movie theme, a foot tapper; his life rearranged

A little girl

Who got lost in the stars

The stars Lenni

"Can you see them," for a moment Lenni was scared,
Close your eyes, there they are sparkling bright
Lost in them

"She went to each and every one of them all, one after the the next,
untill

"You're good. Where did you get this story
its mine I made it it up moments ago. Its true.

Lenni hadn't heard the tune in years. He wondered why. It was his favorite. He would wander around the apartment pinging it off his lips. He was four years old He couldn't hum it because it was a played on zither. He had to ping it from one corner of his mouth to the other. Pinging not singing. He thought no one knew it was him. He was four years old and now here he was sitting on the edge of the bed, happily pinging his favorite tune, all neatly zipped up.

Overcome with panic Lenni unzipped.

Yanked up his shirt. Pulled down his shorts. Everything was there, manhood intact. And carefully arranged, dick nestling right, balls lolling left, just as if he done it himself. What did he expect? The girl had stolen his dick. He laughed. She had taken something, he was sure of that. Something was missing. doodle-loodle-loodle, do do undid his belt pulling his The room was paid for. Panic again; write it down before he forgot. He began to write. Occassionaly he paused. Little girl lost in the stars.

By two he had finished and returned the room key on his way out. The kindly old lady on reception thanked him added an early checkout point to Lisette's room 69 coupon account. He got home went straight to his computer and worked directly from his notes:

Prologue

True intelligence is endowed with, perhaps, intrinsic kindness. Survival being the universal prime instinct this assumption would make sense; to survive countless ages would certainly include experiencing suffering, anguish and perhaps, the perils of exacting revenge. Avoiding annihilation, or self-destruction, would inevitably need enforced self-searching to cleanse, heal, forge meekness and humility; attain the highly evolved ability to see, to perceive, exactly as is...

The Intelligence had survived for so long it was in no hurry to get hurt again, or hurt a living thing again, but it knew from experience that when exercising free will, there is always risk. Especially with it had decided to do next. It waited patiently, observing the planet: listening, watching, imagining, cautiously tasting the sensoria: its particular interests food and sex. It was carefully preparing to ready itself, to manifest itself, in life; human life...

...world spinning along; blue ball in orbit, rolling through time; overcrowded but spacious, talking peace but waging war, admitting mistakes to make them all over again; 'perfect in its imperfection' the Intelligence decided, knowing it was not above morality, or mortality itself. Next, decisions. Where to

live? Choose a country, a race, a color, a sex, a religion, a philosophy; a belief system. Fortunately the intelligence was not without humor. And, kindness...

Lenni knew he was messed up. She had taken something away from him. In his journey he had seen That could come later He needed to write down the story

· 11 ·

Iggy Hot on the Scent

L.A. forcibly bathed in high-temperature, high-velocity, hot-air molecules.

Bad-tempered hot winds blowing in from the desert charged with bad ions.

Iggy was amused; he knew Captain Glass would be having a bad hair day.

Mussed from the atmospheric mess and **the hate crime scandal** hitting the airwaves **on TV**. LAPD Hate Crimes Homicide was in a fluster trying to cope with an animal declawing case in West Hollywood, where such vile procedures against felines was strictly against the law. There had been an RPG attack on a fashionable veterinarians office at the posh end of Melrose; perpetrated, it was rumored, by The Boys Department at Code Pink; nobody had died but they could have. The attack had occurred at 3am on Friday morning in order to make the weekend TV news cycle. The rocket-propelled grenade had a hard sugar shell-case loaded with low-charge explosive packed with highly-concentrated pink boysenberry cream curd. It had easily penetrated the storefront office window glass splattering ceilings and walls, animal paintings and the white leather waitingroom furniture with indelible pink, leopard-skin spots. The controversy raged on. Was animal cruelty an Hate Crime? Captain Glass was expected to have an opinion, representing his department, presented in a politically correct report that would easily translate into a press release. Glass didn't even like his family dog, likening its upkeep padding his alimony; if some animal terrorist took an RPG to the slobbering fucker he would fix their parking tickets for life. How Iggy knew Glass felt this way had cost the Childheart & Chang agency a lot of money. An awful lot. Passed onto the client of course. With commission added. But Ben Olive could afford it.

Iggy knew the hot winds brought a brooding dark mood that made people crazy.

Iggy didn't mind their energy, he loved the Santa Annas. They always came with an interesting sky and he liked their smell. He imagined he was in a desert sandstorm as he tootled along Third in his surveillance rental fighting the traffic passing the Beverly Center. Cars slowed as, reminiscent of a giant, black, vampire bat, a twenty-pound palm frond came erratically floating through the air in a long wobbly arch to crash-land on a bus roof; meanwhile the city went nuts. Iggy liked cats, Roger liked cats too.

Captain Glass was concerned about his hair, he couldn't do anything with it; fucking Santa Annas. Glass was reading the intel report: Code Pink were adamant, they didn't have a Boys Department. Iggy, reading the same report, procured at great cost, had

Glass, now there was a sad specimen; wondered how Childheart would kill him.

But more importantly perhaps, why? His usual sources Childheart had no objections about pumping more money into buying all the intel he could get his hands on.

Winds picked up, (died down) by the time he had made it to the beach they could have blown over. Glass connection his past dark corners going back to school

And the Disely-Petrides connection was tenuous.

Iggy wondered if it was ions at root of his cynicism today. The Santa Anna winds fanning wildfires ad Under the usual shallow motives of greed and money something darker underbelly of Los Angeles.

His little cast of characters were shaping up never find out about his own predicament

· 12 ·

Lenni the Lesbian

Leonid Petrides is a very complicated man.

Iggy sensed something untoward immediately meeting the man; perhaps it was those big clear eyes shining bright behind big powerful lenses; strangely innocent and submissive, whites pure, unblemished, surrounding speckled sage; highly bemused, Iggy found himself wondering about Petrides' vagina, albeit *paradoxically* he quickly qualified Leonid Petrides ostensibly a stereotypical Alpha Male; a hard-charging penetrative phallus-variant type-A who obviously did not possess such a splendid female accoutrement; but the snatch of coiffed pubis Iggy vividly imagined seeing whilst interviewing Leonid bowled him over:

He was talking to Leonid on a subject loosely connected to the missing poodle case, Leonid worked for an Olive subsidiary, and it took Iggy several minutes to rationalize the sensation; on a reading binge several months earlier Iggy had come across an article on sexual mysticism in ancient cultures. One old mideastern seduction myth particularly amused him; if a man powerfully visualizes the glories of a woman's vagina as he engages her socially in polite conversation she will eventually become powerless to overcome his desire, and gladly succumb to his every wish, depraved or otherwise.

Iggy thought this a harmless pastime for adolescent boys juiced up on their new hormones, especially as an important part of the technique is looking deeply and intently into the intended seduction victim's eyes, without blinking. This had to be done naturally, without impertinence or familiarity, and without the seductee realizing, as a stare could be disconcerting and frighten the seductee away. Then, to amuse himself, aware he had too much spare time on his hands, Iggy had practiced in the bathroom mirror before he tried it out. A normally reserved pretty young teller in his bank had succumbed with startling results. Judging from her hair color Iggy had conjured up a sparkling apparition of her silky secret sweetly powdered and delicately perfumed blossoming in wild anticipation of the rising full moon, and she had put her phone number on his deposit receipt. Rather than accidentally do

the same thing again, or be forced to start wearing sunglasses indoors on a permanent basis, Iggy decided to play the game in reverse and wait to see what, if any, intimations of sexual telepathy came his way. It was springtime after all.

Nothing happened.

By the end of April Iggy had forgotten about his harmless little game as the Olive Case started to warm up and justice for Geraldine Honeydew's poor little murdered poodle started to demand all of his attention. **Her film Iggy soon found his way into her private life and secrets.**

"Leonid Petrides is surrounded by women but Petrides is not a good looking fellow."

Iggy at desk loving his morning ritual imbibing words, coffee, photographs:

"Attractive but not a good looking fellow." Ah-ahh, interesting. Whoever had written the report had a flair for innuendo; there were the facts, and *hidden facts* lurking beneath, which, by definition, were not strictly facts, but hints of possibility; juicy possibility; gossip.

"However, what Petrides lacks in looks was compensated by machismo personality." Iggy read on with enjoyment: the sourcing obviously not Police Department artfully seduced speculation; gossip. A cocksman with secrets. Leonid had always wanted to get into the entertainment industry, he had always wanted to be a screenwriter, had flashed on business administration and ended up one of Ben Olive's companies.

The interview was pretext perfection.

Miss Merryberry had arranged it with her fine sense of social dexterity. Iggy was Lenni had a chance of promotion

Iggy had never been an HR Consultant Miss Miss Merryberry had spent time coaching him.

Lenni was a class act. Highly assertive then turn on the humility. In his early thirties

when his imagination gave him a flash - of pubis. Leni was complicated, but just how complicated he was yet to find out... It was all he had.

Iggy held a grudging respect for criminal psychology.

It dimensionized his hunches when he managed to uncomplicate the jargon.

Screenwriter Dane Disely had done well by Olive Grove Media down the years.

Iggy had a tail on Disely for three days when the screenwriter met with Petrides in a homosexual liaison. An unexpected connection, Iggy had interviewed Leonard only the week before on the pretext of.

It was a Tuesday evening in mid-April.

Iggy had carefully measured his bladder intake for the stakeout.

The waiting was pleasant enough; primrose lingered in an endless mackerel sky, clouds on high folding down into the distant feiry sunset. Iggy **ran perspectives** in his surveillance

rental. Dane Disely: family man with neat little house a few miles inland from the beach on a leafy street of landscaped anonymity a few blocks off Olympic Boulevard. Iggy priced the property. Considering his income Disely lived humbly.

A lanky fellow, Disely came loping out in sweater, blue jeans and sneakers, got into his anonymous SUV in the drive and meandered across town up Barrington hanging a right on Santa Monica Boulevard. Iggy followed him into West Hollywood. Rush-hour traffic almost dissipated Disely turned off Santa Monica up LaCienega, hung a right on Fountain, parked and walked a block to an elegant 1920s Chateau-style apartment building.

Disely entered the lobby with his own keys to the street door; and Iggy noted a relaxed familiarity, of ownership; he checked a mailbox, and perusing his stash, made for the stairs.

Iggy had priced cost of running the family home at the beach, including property taxes and school fees, as realistically within reach but this posh gaff? He made calculations. The old place was beautifully kept up, expensively appointed; high rent and still home to the local gentry; but doable for Disely. He could afford it. Iggy had read the reports, he knew what to expect, but he wanted to see it with his own eyes. He settled down to wait. Fountain is a busy street running East from LaCienga between Sunset and Santa Monica and a perfect alternative to the cramped main boulevards. An hour drifted by. it is is security instinct would open anything parked underground garage. tall woman in white taking the stairs down. The coral pink Thunderbird had frothy white whitewalls with powder blue hardtop creamy cream interior and cute little portholes; a very pretty car, the perfect ride for the tall woman in white.

Iggy had caught a breif

It took a millisecond to register. Comprehension. Disely in drag. Iggy following glad he hadn't 1948 fastback coupe. Iggy acted fast leaving Disely behind the smoked glass adding the final touches to his mascara from in the glove box. In luck heading east. to Silverlake - a double life. Parked

Disely carried himself well on heels Iggy thought.

Accomplishment of years of practice. The reports came in. speculation was intel, gossip was intel. Childheart and Chang were generous with overtime allocations. Three man teams working 24-7

55

Chinstrong

Leonid Petrides lovingly stared at his reflection.

Carefully, he adjusted the mirror to scrutinize his profile.

First to the left, then the right.

Gently, he patted his chin pouch, jutting his jaw to tighten and flatten the line.

A little more jaw and he would have been a brute, a man's man; oh well.

Since his liked himself more

Lenni has the mind of a woman; he found men attractive but could never admit that to himself; he wanted to be cruel to the men he admired, if he could get chance; seducing them with friendship then unable to stop himself Get him up against the wall and punch his lights out. Lenni liked that. Stop short of violence. Excitement. Rough. Standing up. Despite this, he really liked girls better. So he couldn't be gay, could he?

Who cares. He had a date with Dane.

When Disely and Lenni hooked up that first time they felt so psychically complete for weeks afterward they had been forced to find each other again. to try and they did; the peculiar emptiness they had felt for years had been filled; the chemistry was perfect, for Lenny it went deeper, he believed he had finally found love.

Kidney punch Dane gasped working quickly Lenni penetrated Dane gasped again he liked it he liked a battered woman, he liked that.

But there was nothing gay about Lenny, he saw to that, he was sure of that.

Lenni hardman in hard-charging masculine mode, buttoned-down medium-starched shades of business blue; it would take a lot of imagination to picture his thong and pouch that he wore to the office under his dull, thick, regulation cotton underwear that showed a seam ; danger and daring the thrill

And there was nothing gay about Disely either, he just liked dress-up. Occasionally.

Wearing women's clothes. That was his story and he was sticking to it. He had been Snow White that night, he liked satin. Snow White liked it when Leni pushed him hard against the wall turning him lifting his skirt; it happened so quickly with mutual urgency Dane loved wearing expensive perfume. Bought it for his wife so he could steal it and if she caught it on him Deeply touched Stange mixture; orient at Lenni remembered the motel in the Castro. Their solitary stolen weekend together. Their candlelight dinner for two. They had even walked hand-in-hand, as lovers do.

"You're just a dildo Lenni," Disely unusually caustic, "an excuse for a man."

Dildo was the worst thing he knew he could call Leonard. He knew Leonard's story, his unhappy circumstances; finally, his chance at happiness; have a family, enjoy a normal life, failed. Dane Disely had his family, his wife and kids.

"It's the story of your life Leni; shooting blanks." Disely finished cruelly. When Lenni was hurting

"That so," Leonard said, his failures in life flashing in a bright instant, the very moment that he knew he was going to kill Disely.

To think that he had once believed he loved the man.

The pistol he had chosen to kill him was appropriate; big, dull, lumpen, gray with age; delivering a thunderous report.

Leonard test-fired it just once fearful it would explode in his hand.

The old army revolver slammed the big .45 bullet so deep into the tree trunk he was sure the poor pine had been killed with shock. Lenny wanted noise because he intended to shoot Disely twice. He wanted his lover to know pain. It was a strange sensation to anticipate murder. , he wasn't quite sure what to expect; inside him there is an expectation for ridicule associated with distant voices from childhood, some kind of mockery, "but you took me seriously. (after page 99)

· 15 ·

A Screenplay to Die for

Dane Disely loved TV; deeply, passionately, without reservation.

His first living memory dancing colors and shapes flickering on TV by his crib, birdies; cute cartoon tweetie birdies singing and twittering; fluttering, dancing; it was love; it was wonderful. Childhood was wonderful. Dane's father important man the community; pity he just didn't have time for little Dane living the dream. Dane wasn't lonely. He could be like mommy and he had TV. mesmerized

Ditzy Dane too intense to be class clown.

His secret life intense kid Dane felt the man about to give it give it to Lenny, until the dark night standing Lenni turned him, slammed him into the wall banged him and made him whimper for more. Lenny kept it that way, making Dane whimper.

Disely wasn't really from Manhattan; or NYC; that was okay; most people Lenny knew who came out to California from New York where from Jersey too.

Leonid Petrides became a man's man soon as he could.

Lenni their dance chest out, clenched

hard-charging Lenny would go all sweet; coy, shy, sweetly submissive; he was a girl and oh how they laughed; at the absurdity of life; their life together; Dane Disely a lady; a real lady with a penchant for Ladies Foundation Garments; and Lenni, all of the messed-up working and crossed-over wiring that made him who he was

Lenny a girl in a boy's body. It made sense. A girl with a preference for other girls. Ladies. It was an easy secret to keep; ideas predator Dane was glad he wasn't gay. Transvestites didn't have to be gay, everyone knew that.

Lenni was just a another business deal. Looking at Lenny's soft jawline reminded him of who he was dealing with. Chinstrong, yes; he was chinstrong. Make a deal and move on.

Down to Laguna Beach.

Disely finally had it, the full story. It had been three months since he had heard from his agent Lisette Nice was looking for an ancient aliens subject.

Now he had it, he could start pulling away playing the long game. There were lots of talkers. An ET who-dunnit. It was a romantic comedy. With pathos. Nobody knows who the extra terrestrial is. Listening to Lenni in bed.

Lenni had been very happy, very trusting. He just knew they had a future together. Pillow talk Lenni started talking about his big idea.

Disely was hooked. He had to get more. Finally. after. Lenny told him the story.

It was about benevolence he said.

Lenni mounted Disely.

Disely wimpered going cross-eyed with joy; there were many weird things in LA
"Loser, you're a loser

And Lenni knew he was a loser simply because he loved Disely.

Prologue

True intelligence is endowed with, perhaps, intrinsic kindness. Survival being the universal prime instinct this assumption would make sense; to survive countless ages would certainly include experiencing suffering, anguish and perhaps, the perils of exacting revenge. Avoiding annihilation, or self-destruction, would inevitably need enforced self-searching to cleanse, heal, forge meekness and humility; attain the highly evolved ability to see, to perceive, exactly as is...

The Intelligence had survived for so long it was in no hurry to get hurt again, or hurt a living thing again, but it knew from experience that when exercising free will, there is always risk. Especially with it had decided to do next. It waited patiently, observing the planet: listening, watching, imagining, cautiously tasting the sensoria: its particular interests food and sex. It was carefully preparing to ready itself, to manifest itself, in life; human life...

...world spinning along; blue ball in orbit, rolling through time; overcrowded but spacious, talking peace but waging war, admitting mistakes to make them all over again; 'perfect in its imperfection' the Intelligence decided, knowing it was not above morality, or mortality itself. Next, decisions. Where to live? Choose a country, a race, a color, a sex, a religion, a philosophy; a belief system. Fortunately the intelligence was not without humor. And, kindness...

it was perfect; a perfect piece of writing; though hardly screenwriting.

It had taken him years. Now he and Dane could share a life together, co-writers, partners

Hollywood is a small town. Full of the right people. If you knew who they were. Rich people or people who knew people. Dane knew just who to take it to, just the right person. And he had got the timing just right. The fee from producer would get him out of the hole. His family and the other, secret half of his double life.

Disely leaning on one elbow staring in admiration at his lover:

"Where did you get it Lenni, you just couldn't have made it up?"

"Oh, a girl who gave me a blowjob."

Something inside him stopped him going further; She had asked him what he wanted to do when he was older.

99

A Personal Genocide

Flattened by unseasonal heat, Los Angeles shimmered in the late morning sun:

On hot days like today with food addiction nagging Gustav Rye liked to picture the city as an endless, golden, buttermilk pancake plopped across the horizon like a hot pan; in turn Rye was plopped across his patio lounge contemplating the view; absently picking out old Hollywood landmarks Rye was unconsciously playing with his Mauser unloading and reloading the magazine polishing the heavy brass cartridges on the hem of his mu-mu.

His dark-suited servant appeared with documents and pen. "Your eleven o'clock is here, sir; a Mr. Childheart sir. He's early."

The fat old man drained his goblet, wiped his lips, took the papers and after a perfunctory glance, signed with a flourish.

"More mimosa sir?" Rye refused with a nod. The servant picked up the empty goblet. "It seems Mr. Childheart is armed sir."

"So am I." Rye said with a chuckle.

"Should I disarm him sir?"

"That won't be necessary Jones. You may show him in." Rye said, rising his feet with surprising energy and lightness for **such** a big man. "My study in five minutes if you please."

Childheart paused at the door, impressed by the opulence of Rye's art collection.

The old actor now seated in an imposing, though overtly feminine, brocade divan; his guest's entry a perfect excuse to gracefully alight despite his great corpulence.

"Mr. Childheart," he said, scraping, bowing. "So *pleased* to meet you."

"Thank you for seeing me sir." Childheart said. "I'm indebted. I understand a *personal viewing* quite a rare privilege."

"*Viewing*? You consider a work of art? No matter. Yes, I do not see many people." Rye said as they shook hands, the energy electric, almost open animosity. Rye gestured for Childheart to be seated. "We do have a lot to talk about I believe. Or don't we?"

Childheart continued to stand, holding his ground, amused by Rye's theatrics, disarming the old actor with an embracing smile; they stood silently measuring each other, servant hovering should the tension erupt into violence:

"I suspect we have history though we have never met," Rye said cryptically. "At least, in this *incarnation*."

Childheart laughed. "Incarnation? How very interesting. Yes, I understand you've met my horse. Roger has a wonderful way of charging one's imagination don't you think?"

Mention of Roger's name had the immediate effect of defusing the room. They agreed, chuckled, surprised they liked each other. The energy polarity reversed, hummed.

"Ah, Roger. Yes." Rye said. "Now there's a character, a wonderful old chap. I was thinking would you be interested in optioning him for a movie. Roger is extremely cooperative. I have recently been offered a role I find worthy. I think I might easily persuade the producer to include Roger as an expansion to my role. *As my horse.*"

"An expansion?" Childheart said. "Mmm, yes, I'm sure Roger would be interested in an expansion, or at least, give his nod. We tend to forget Roger is only a horse. I understand he let you ride him. It is a good start. Roger is very picky about riders."

"Really? I'm honored. It was such a great thrill."

"I'm sure." Childheart

"Roger is a genuine warhorse if I am not mistaken?" Rye **Stories battle of little bighorn charge of the light brigade**

"You live very humbly sir." Childheart ignored Rye's question, swept his glance around expansively, impressed by Rye's rare artifacts. "Yes, indeed, a beautiful, if small, yet priceless collection of very fine treasure, *considering your great means.*"

"You must be mistaken sir, or misinformed." Rye said. "I am *comparatively* poor."

Childheart wanted Rye to know he had plumbed the depths his true wealth:

"When we unearthed Olive's financials we accidentally came across some of your smaller holdings in Lugano, Luzerne and Zurich."

"Smaller? Accidentally? Really?" Rye muttered. "The records those officious, greedy, tiny-minded Gnomes of Zurich keep are virtually impenetrable."

"Quite right, they are most efficient protecting client confidentiality, usually; but we utilize intelligence service resources usually only available to **government** military agencies, so perhaps you can be a little forgiving."

Rye considered. Childheart looked around. The lushly woven wall tapestries entranced him. "Yes, all considered, you live very humbly."

"My small digs are hardly a palace considering I'm crowded out by the rich and famous." Rye said turning to the picture window offering a view of the canyon; distant rooftops; cypress, palms, exotic topiary, a primed expanse of verdant lawn with smattering of white marble statuary, a bubbling waterfall, and more rooftops.

"Hardly a slum." Childheart said. "But admittedly yours is one of the smaller estates hereabouts."

"Perhaps all of this faux material humility is a decoy for my vanity," Rye continued. "My palace perhaps my worldly achievement."

"Vanity? I would hardly describe your body of work in cinema such," Childheart said. "I understand you have just come out of retirement to work with Lisette Nice?"

"Yes, I'm very excited about it. It's the project I've just been telling you about. I wondered, would Roger be interested in doing his own stunts?"

Childheart laughed.

"People tend to forget Roger is a horse. They have different priorities to us two-legged types. But I'm not here to talk about Rog, your work or personal fortune, rather a case of *personal genocide*."

"Really? Interesting. *Do* sit down sir." Rye said. "We *lesser gods* need to take a load off, just like our fellow mere mortals."

His guest seated, Rye settled back into his luxurious brocade divan.

Childheart, crossed his legs and relaxed in the armchair, unbuttoning his jacket.

The old actor beamed at the holstered Mauser under Childheart's arm:

"We both have the same gun sir." Rye said, and slowly reaching into the folds of the divan to produce his own Mauser.

"Yes. It adds an element of fairplay," Childheart said, slowly, purposely drawing his own identical gun, laying it in his lap.

Rye dismissed his nervous servant with the order to bring tea.

"The Mighty Mauser. The original parabellum pistol. Fascinating aren't they?" Rye said, hefting and lovingly sniffing his own Mauser. "Firearm aroma therapy. Gun oil has a calming effect on me. Why are you here Mr. Childheart?"

"I'm not sure. I thought I knew; possibly, kill you." Childheart said. They both laughed, waving their pistols. "Now I'm not sure." Childheart continued, "I think, warn you?"

"Warn me?" Rye said. "I take it that is not a threat."

"No, not at all." Childheart said quietly.

"Warn me about what exactly?"

"Personal genocide."

"Oh, that again. You just mentioned that. Sounds abominable. You speak loosely of course, in the abstract: metaphorically."

"Not at all Mr. Rye, I speak literally; I understand your family has shrunk considerably over the last few generations?"

"That is personal information Mr. Childheart."

"Your personal family history came to light when investigating another altogether unconnected case. It goes back a very long way."

"I have a long history. Family feuds. Clan battles. Tribal wars. You name it."

"Does 'LAPD Hate Crimes Homicide' mean anything to you? Childheart asked.

"I try to steer clear of the law," Rye chuckled. "If you'll excuse my flippancy."

"A certain Captain Martin Glass?" Childheart said, slowly, carefully reaching into his inner breast pocket, and handing Rye a sheath of photographs. "You recognize him?"

Rye studied the pictures.

"You have the police under surveillance, I'm *very* impressed Mr. Childheart."

"You do recognise his *type*?"

Gustav Rye looked at the photograph. A tight shot of Glass caught in inner reflection, unknowingly caught starting into the telephoto lens:

"Do you recognise an *enemy*?"

"Interesting face," Rye sidestepped the question. "Such pronounced features; a quite handsome specimen if he didn't have such a malignant aura."

"*Aura*. Ah, the metaphysical." Childheart sighed. "An intriguing subject."

"An intriguing subject indeed, the *metaphysical*: the otherworldly."

69

Secrets of a Modern Princess

"Otherworldly?" Rye asked. "I sense you want to reach a mutual understanding."

"No. Perhaps I want to glean understanding."

"And what do I get in return Mr. Childheart?"

"I have offered clues of 'personal genocide'..."

"...oh dear; impending doom; yet I feel no threat from you." Rye said.

The two men shuffled their heavy pistols, chuckled in synchronicity.

"Where does all this upcoming darkness stem from?" Rye said.

"I can only assume it started a long time ago." Childheart said.

"Yes, a long, long time ago" Rye said as the tea arrived. Childheart impressed with the contents of the silver tray; two paper-thin blue Ming cups and a heavy brown clay teapot enveloped in a thick, hand-knitted woolen coat covered with embroidered rosebuds.

"Quaint ain't it, but highly functional. It's called a tea-cosy, keeps the pot hot." Rye dismissed the servant and began to pour tea:

"Thanks," Childheart said conversationally. "Delicious. Who killed you the first time?"

Rye sighed. Stared into his steaming teacup. "I wish I didn't know..."

Mutual understanding established both men reflected; silence descended; time slanted; motes of dust hung motionless in the sunlight; late morning surrendered to noon.

"This is really about sex isn't it."

A clock struck, time released a benevolent chime:

"Yes, a long, long time ago." Childheart opened first. "My beloved, my darling, my beautiful young wife, put her tribe before her marriage. And killed me."

"Tribe. Now there's an interesting word don't you think Mr. Childheart?" Rye said. "For us civilized types. *Tribe*. It has a dark, *primal*, primitive connotation. Dangerous too."

They finished their tea, measuring each other.

"Dangerous? I wholeheartedly agree; tribe, tribes, tribal roots; essentially I'm a stupid man Mr. Rye. It took me many, many years before I could begin to understand people are fooled by love."

"You were a young man," the old actor said.

The gentle timbre in Gustav Rye's voice took Childheart by surprise. A yearning. He suspected, for how it had been. For both of them he went onto tell Rye. Childheart in his early twenties; he had the world on a string, taken the bull by the horns, indefatigable, his love powered him; he had found a girl; he had been a fool, she had fooled him and he had let her; he had fooled himself. "I'm learning t the human disposition as I go along," he finished. "You know more about me than I suspect Mr. Rye."

"No, it's a guess. More tea?"

"You were young." Rye said, sipping. "And you married into my people, my tribe. And you came to regret it."

"You put it simply," Childheart said.

"I was young. I actually didn't know. Her family welcomed me. I provided handsomely for their daughter, their sister, their XX my wife; I didn't realize until many years afterward they were different people from my people.

Rye looked at him

"I thought it was because they were merchants, with money.

But it was Customs the customs and rtradions of another people.

Rye laughed.

"And ou did not realize you had married a princess

The bitter edge to the laugh surprised Childheard

Princess

acceptable

she used you

A man took your wife. Hashish his head spinning got to his feet

"You blame my people for your pain, your eternal pain."

"Your people?"

"We blend in, integrate, and we don't hide disguise for a few centuries when the time is right then we do hide in plain sight; sometimes we become too comfortable, forget the customs of our hosts. Take advantage some night say.

"I didn't realize until many years afterward we were different. They were different." An easy mistake.

"Faces, wisdom of old; ethnic origins become easy, and with the passing of years we all become the sage; learn to read faces, the originality of it wasn;t race at all.

Princess had a ccheating heart.

Childheart savored the tea with leisure looking at Gustav Rye. "This tea is good. What did you put in it Mr. Rye?"

"Nothing," Rye laughed mischievously, beaming. "Well, except a little

Childheart relaxed into the

"Your own face. Beneath the your collection of benevolent creases and smile lines the family resemblance is there.

"What do you know of my family?"

"Ben Olive. I know he is your brother."

"My, you get right down to it. Yes, bravo Mr. Childheart. Your Mr. Chang unearthed a family secret. Benjamin is most certainly my brother."

The chiming clock sounded the hour 1pm.

"Quaint, ain't it. Time. What's the hurry, we've got all day."

Impatiently, he put down the teapot with a clatter. "I do think I need a drink now."

As if by magic his manservant appeared.

Rye ordered more Mimosa but changed his mind. "Courvoisier Jones; care to join me Mr. Childheart."

"No, thank you, the tea is fine. I like its pungency. What did you put into it? Hashish?"

Rye dismissed the question with a chuckle and dismissed his servant with a request for more tea for his guest and cognac for him.

"Benjamin. I haven't seen Ben for years." Rye rooted in his divan and produced a silver box. "How far back can we go? We are hardly a highly evolved species. We were apes, still are for the most part. You seem preoccupied with hashish Mr. Childheart."

He opened the box to display a selection of .

"Would you care for some?"

Time stretched, eased itself out like a lazy cat; smoke hung low, casting a soft pink light:

The day hummed on a benevolent frequent, the men relaxed, each patiently waiting to imbibe, passing the fat spliff between each other, pistols in laps, rolling papers and fine strands of moist, golden tobacco on the table between them.

"Your marriage was a long time ago." Rye said

"Yes, it was." Mental gears turned backward and clicked in long pauses of overwrought speculation "First love is inexplicable..."

"First love only happens the once is the only indisputable, explainable fact." Rye said letting his words float and settle as he carefully selected and separated more long strands of moist golden tobacco laying them out on cigarette papers, Childheart hypnotised by the rolling ritual. Gustav Rye now selected a chunk of hard, golden resin, singed the edge and crumbled fine dusted hashish over the tobacco.

"I thought she loved me." Childheart said finally, absently watching Rye complete the spliff and hand it to Childheart.

"But there was another man." Rye said, striking a wooden match.

Startled Childheart looked at him. *How would you know?*

"Just a guess." Rye chuckled, "I'm not a mindreader, like some I know. Roger is fine horse. A remarkable old fellow."

Childheart didn't hear him. He sucked the smoke into his lungs.

"But I couldn't kill him.

"Kill Roger? No, of course not. I meant kill the man that stole your first love. It was a woman for me. Took away my first love, my boy. Convention you know. Social convention. Spoils everything. His family expected him to marry well. Even a dalliance wasn't permitted. I died a thousand times." Rye exhaled a long sigh of smoke, passing the joint.

Childheart stole her abandoned her

"This is rather good hashish isn't it Mr. Childheart. Why couldn't you kill him?"

"I could have. I was close. I went to his home. I confronted him." Childheart sucked down more smoke and held his breath. "We talked. Their sexual liason had been by her invitation. He could have refused of course. But it hadn't been seduction on his part."

Dozing Childheart was contemplating taking a nap himself when

"He hadn't so much fucked her but snacked her."

"Men were kind. The older men. They knew

"It was expected I let it go, let it blow over." She was my wife nd wanted to contune
But I wanted an explanation, from her.

"That wasn't done, she was a princess."

Her Secrets

"She would never give them up. Her secrets. She was a princess.

"Ahh, a princess. a princess can do no wrong."

"Her secrets, that was all she had."

"We all fall in love with the wrong person," Rye said.

"One of these eternal truths I'm afraid. I can still see his eyes.

"Eternal

from since the beginning

How far back can we go?

91

Thousand Year Wall

"The beginning of time. The beginning of meaning." Childheart laughed.

"A little dramatic perhaps. Five thousand years will do. Man had a mind, just. A consciousness, just; a conscience, no."

Rye took the challenge.

"Conscience is a luxury when dealing with survival. How it could have been different?"

"An interesting idea. Would you care for more hashish?"

They talked for an hour. Then another. Their Mauser pistols never forgotten. They talked of nothing everything enjoying the obtuse mental connections but Childheard knew something he hadn't known before he had arrived.

"A need; a fundamental yearning; to explain this thing he could not touch." Rye looked into the sunset. "Ah, burning a red hole in the horizon out at the beach.

"So he chose the Sun."

"And religion was born, or worship.

Millennia passed; thought arrived and things became complicated.

"Meaning became the rule of the day.

"Bottom line was still the need to explain this thing that we could not touch. Deities and avatars came and went with cults and religions all claiming the explanation.

"There is only one God. Mine. Yours is an imposter. Convert to mine. Or die.

"Psychology the latest it seems. The Modern Religion."

"Mind worship. Self-worship. Get the words right and make a fortune.

A meaning for our time.

"This hashish is rather good."

"Yes, but it can't put stuff there that doesn't exist already."

"I take it you have had a new insight Mr. Childheart?"

"So back to the front and the bright shining sun.

Maybe that's it.

"We can't touch it but we know it is there.

We always have.

It doesn't need explaining perhaps?

When a smile will do...

"I knew they would come for me.

"I knew you would come for me. But not as a friend."

"It's equally surprising to me sir."

"You had always assumed when the time maybe it's the place.

The place.

Childheart had watched revenge. enactment

He had seen a line wiped out - could he have helped he had seen so much come and go mental connections snapped and he realized his pride and anger had been a thousand year wall. Keeping him away from insights There had been no men to help an obstruction to insight he wondered if his clarity could remain afterward or forgotten wafted away like the smoke itself.

"Do you like pancakes Mr. Childheart?"

drawn from his xxxxChildheart looked up; he had noticed the antique brass telescope unobtrusively tripod beside a small Rodin bronze; Rye had draped himself around it and was looking out across the canyon gap

"As you can tell by my bounteous form I'm rather partial to them, especially the crappy, synthetic variety. ones recipes formulated for mass-appetite appeal my spyglass sees all

I can just see Los Angeles from this angle.

It is like a benevolent buttermilk pancake. Pancake, munchies -

"Can I offer you a stack?"

"A short stack?"

"A single, perhaps?"

Vanity

A movie star

Be anything, be anyone

"Why would I kill you?"

"Captain Martin Glass of Hates Crimes Homicide."

"Captain Glass" "Hiding in plain sight." Rye hefted his Mauser. "A perfect disguise to perpetrate his the final deeds of his master's plan. I shall be ready."

"You are now a free man Mr. Childheart."

"Don't you feel it - no need for revenge.

No the hashish.

Thank you a use of Rogers time he can do his own stunts

"No, no - take my limosine - its all set for Roget then?"

I will let you have a copy of my part as soon as I get a copy of my lines. I understand they are working on it now.

Rye's vintage Rolls-Royce silently descending the Hollywood Hills; cream coachwork gleaming against sleek black fenders and bright shiny wheels; mystery passenger reclining behind spotless green-tinted glass:

Childheart, senses heightened from Rye's hashish languished in the perfumed luxury of soft leather cushions and fine woods, unaware of the glamorous stir the limousine caused amongst the wandering tourists on LaBrea Avenue: *look at me, look at me; famous Hollywood showcar extraordinaire formal chaffeaur at attention, royal coachman.*

Childheart, savoring new spices of perception a free man puzzle pieces newly arranged facts stacked a free man; for what seemed like eons he had wanted someone to take him

aside and tell him what had happened. A kindly mentor who arm around shoulder would guide him with words all he had was Roger. He finally had his own truth. infidelity

He had murdered his beloved cheating wife.

How he had believed.

He remembered the girl with the foal in her arms.

She surprised him, snuck up on him, "I have something for you," she'd said. "Something you have always wanted."

He had turned.

All he had ever wanted was a horse of his own, and there it was:

A foal, a baby black horse just days old long legs dangling; eyes, curious, amused:

What shall I call him discussion was Roger

He is yours, she said. He looked at the foal. It looked back at him, then grinned. He will always be yours.

I will always be yours. Words in his mind her green eyes

Horse don't teeth he likes you. she wi her mother The Queen. He might be trouble thought of you

Childheart had the driver stop and let him off, he needed to walk.

Be amongst the crowds in mortality.

Hollywood Boulevard was bubbling with life eyes followed him as Gustav Rye's old Rolls Royce sliently swooped into sidewalk the passing breeze for company clowns, jesters and junkie the neon was sting the late evening light with sharp jabs

poster

Geraldine Summerdew Theirs had been a great love. Short bangs red fox complimenting the Without her secrets she had no power. He need not have killed her.

Pedestal off of her face it he had paid He had killed the He had murdered his wife.

56

Trixie's Secret Light

Story meeting: the Director wanted it all mainly left unsaid.

Mood blue, pale; matching décor; pale energy, pale blue company; subdued, sleepy:

Lisette's trailer carpeted pale blue; furniture pale pine, mid-century modern with sleek, slim leather-upholstered cushions in the same pale, dusty blue. It was surprisingly comfortable, especially the couch. The Director dozed. Unapologetically.

The meeting was drawing to a close.

Lisette presiding, yawning; *The Writer* couldn't understand why the Department Heads were present: Director of Photography, Editor, Production Designer, Stunt Coordinator, Costume Designer, what did they have to do with the story? His story?

What possibly could they add?

He was *The Writer*.

He was Dane Disely. They all had dutifully consulted their copy of his script; looked at their notes courteously offering praise, but few suggestions.

The Director said precious little. Except he wanted more left unsaid. Wanted vague. Wanted room for audience participation. Too much literal detail; explanation: nobody disagreed, except the writer. He balked. Voiced opposition. Knew much of his material redundant. Lisette thanked him asking him to submit notes. "Hey, this was just the first story meeting Dane. Moving on to preproduction, location scouting, transpo, logistics."

She got up from behind her desk to usher Dane Disely out.

Wearing a short-sleeved pale blue shift Lisette looked angelic. It ended modestly below her knees. She had accessorized with pale blue velvet hairband and pale blue ballet pumps. She had been all business with Dane Disely. Now her demeanor changed. An assistant came in with food and refreshments; Lucky, Lisette's old black cat darted in too.

Lisette grinned conspiratorially at everyone and tore off her hairband. "Please send in the UPM as soon as he arrives from the airport."

She looked around with satisfaction. This was her creative team (including the old cat). She knew Disely's screenplay *not* good work, but would suffice as a start. It contained the core idea she had given the other young writer all those years ago. Now time was running short. They only had months. She sensed this could be her last movie, and knew for sure it would be her husband's last show; she would nurse him along for his final performance; his doctors had given him a month a year ago. Everyone was waking up, except the old cat, he made his way around the group personally inspecting everyone with a greeting ending up back at the Director, climbing up into his lap and going to sleep.

A tweedy, elderly gentleman in artfully patched riding jacket entered; toting a battered leather satchel he planted a sloppy wet kiss on Lisette's cheek en route to plopping into the armchair vacated by Disely, and slumped into a warm rapartee with everyone.

"Please take the meeting Charlie," Lisette said, treating him with reverence; as a sage. Charlie was the Unit Production Manager. He would be running the show out of town and generally keeping order in town; a heavy, humorous silence fell as all eyes fell on the UPM. He glanced around the array of knowing smiles. They were waiting for something.

"Tell me my people, and *thou shalt have*." He said, "anything, that is, within the realms of the budget and reasonably legal."

The silence continued. Finally he rummaged in his satchel and pulled out an artfully wrapped package. The Production Designer gleamed producing rolling papers. The package contained a large block of black hashish.

"We have all made familiar with the script, yes?" Charlie said, pouring himself a glass of wine. They all nodded. "A bucket of shit but a very nice idea," he continued, tasting the wine. "It needs a certain touch of cinema," he stared at the Director:

"The certain touch of a subversive cineaste, if you please sir!"

Everyone smiled at the Director, nodding agreement and approval.

The cat stirred sensing the energy coming his way and looked around at the expectant faces, then looked up into the Director's face. It was a face he had known for a long time. He was a very old cat. He had comforted the Director through the making of Lisette's first big success eight years earlier. But the Director was prepared now. Without disturbing the cat he opened his script; it was marked-up with notes and scribbled storyboard frames.

Lisette relaxed; with Disely out of the way creative juices could flow.

She knew the Director, knew him and loved him; knew she could trust him to come up with unique; he always did; always had; he was the filmmaker who had brought her fame.

Dane Disely's screenplay a rational, deductive explanation of a misunderstood teenage girl running away from suburban normality; clumsily guiding the audience along as if laying out segments for TV commercial breaks. The extra-terrestrial intelligence element separate in a tight title box. In short, *crap* Lisette thought. But she did like the girl's name, Trixie. Otherwise it was all clique; suburban conformity, restrictive morality, hardly anything new; family conflict, adoptive parents, girl acting out, dreaming of finding true parents; explicit, overwritten ugly sex scenes with pedantic camera direction plus lengthy dialogue in home and highschool. She hated it. It was exactly what she didn't want.

Fortunately the Director wanted different. Lose all that. Find Trixie on the open road. Travelling through small towns way, way north in the cold winter boonies. Runaway kid. A good kid. Existing by charm, warmth and guile. Heading south. To the sun. To L.A.

The Director wanted a more expansive canvas than Disely's trite TV visioning.

He saw wide open spaces testing the eye; extreme longshots with lots of sky; emphasis on sky; space, infinity; *hint* extra-terrestrial; *hint* ethereal getting to know Trixie from afar in light, airy vignettes; turning tricks coincidental rather than central as with the Disely cliché version:

Disely's fumbling fat trucker money changing hands flashes of shiny bare flesh made the Director cringe made everyone cringe ugly sordid victim cliché:

Trixie was no victim. She was likable, capable, sensual. She liked sex. She liked doing it and she liked the people she chose to do it with. Only difference she like to get paid.

Director watching Lisette as he pitched, talked, diplomatically ruminating out loud:

He knew Trixie was Lisette.

He knew Lisette was painting a self-portrait with this picture.

The Director loved Lisette.

Completely.

He knew every inch of her body; between her toes, between her legs, behind her ears; he knew her every taste, salty and soapy, sweet and sour; he knew her before she married; he had saved her husband's career then handed her over for safe keeping. He wanted to keep her

but she had made her choice. It is all in the first book of Los Angeles Mysterium where Lisette and Great Sex Doctor Doll meet to save each other's life. But eight years had passed. And the Director felt an expected premonition walk across his grave; he knew with certainty this was to be Lisette's last picture; the first person singular certainty of I, me, the voice of the storyteller coming at you from this end of the page. The Director is storyteller after all. And the Director wanted to avoid sci-fi, ignore clumsy extra-terrestrial element.

This picture was bigger Montana Big Sky Country bigger, so simply hint; space; open space. Montana Big Sky Country space.

Wyoming emptiness; space; start with simple title on simple blank screen, pick up Trixie on the open road, prairies, mountains, skies. Her spirit, her freedom; *ethereal teenage girl alone, fearless. Subtle, discreet foreshadowing, powerlines intimating man's intrusion on the raw beauty of nature, distant giant radar dishes aimed skyward; a government installation in the wilderness.*

Trixie looking at them with wry amusement.

And the Director wanted to add a character:

A young man in his early twenties serving in the military.

Add a chance at love?

Romantic interest above sex?

Young man heading north to join his new unit, new uniform, new life; two journeys; Trixie heading south, boy heading north through signage and neon; the Director wanted guitars. Guitar rhapsodies of the journey through country blues LA

Guitars, mmm; Lisette liked the pungent scent of smouldering hashish.

She didn't smoke but respected the wishes of those that did, and those that didn't; the smoke, the wine, the coffee; the cognac, the fizzy water, whatever it took except nasty powders and pills prohibited by the wise old UPM; story meeting loosening, stretching new mental connections to thoughts and ideas that might have been inhibited by Disney. followed the Director's lead instinct auditorium of the mind;

The Director opened with a note he'd made. Treat her like a lady

Leaving a trail of happy satisfaction.

Trixie left a kid in his pickup with a huge, happy smile on his face.

Awkwardly asked if he could see her again.

Really likes her, gives her a gratuity and asks permission to kiss her.

He had this visual hunch Signs direction going somewhere.

Then the distant foreshadowing, radar dishes aimed skyward, a military installation in the wilderness.

Objective

an opening with a hard science military angle; dry, nerdy; no glamor, cold; longshots. No detail on people anonymity. Radar dishes. Radar screens. High altitude jet fighters. A graduate on his first post.

idea for a scene
she is in town; inference, innuendo
he meets her in a bar
There are a few other sericemen from the base there.
the girls are with the band; one is Trixie.
he is so straight. The short haircut. The politness, the
they talk
A bar

Lisette spots the boy at a bar The director wanted it all left unsaid.

A roadside burger stand.

A magic trick; a hundred appears in her fingers; she buys him a beer, their awkwardness
exudes innocence; the music and dialogue mixed in the tension

Asks him where he's from.

Maybe they have lunch she is heading south
the style

girls on the street looking for business; touches neon

Signs neon

Telling the old man what they were looking for.

"The distance, the wide open spaces, the lack of artificially dramatic compositions with a
powerful sense of infinity," the DP mused. "Asking the audience to add their imagination
like an extra element of perception to see the unseen; kind of almost monochromatic,
almost Ansel Adams, add your own color..."

"The antithesis of Technicolor and Kodachrome," the Director followed the DP's
thread. "Natural light at its most natural
it would be

With Disely out of the way the Director relaxed. He hefted the screenplay. "Who are we
rooting for here?"

"He likes her but never has her, he has no idea

"Ah, impossible love." The UPM said. "A love that can never be. Sensing it perfect
tension."

The Director was intently watching Lisette again can't

"She likes him but is he is a naif

The trailer a double-wide; as production offices on the lot went, it was luxury. Lisette
sparing for nothing. Pressure could be good, spontaneicity.

Everyone had read it. Produced their own copy.

Throw some money at it.

She had to hurry. Her husband was dying. He had to be in a movie with him again before he passed. She had to give him a great send off, a role to she had to hurry because she sensed she was changing too. She had been frightened. see the great Sex Doctor. Throw some money at it.

GET GLASS IN HERE SOMEHOW!

What did that policeman want? She didn't know Rye. Other than offering him a part in her movie. Lisette was suspicious but of wha?

The Production designer picked up on that.

The DP too. Messaging the complete visual antithesis to scifi special effects
A book The ol' artists liscense After she had gone
All that would be left was her book.

The girl is passing through. Passing through the lives of those she meets she leaves a good . Instead of the threat, that she would violence, the cleancut young man.

The director wanted it all left unsaid.

The middle

Where was the tension. The dramaturgic tension. Who was chasing Trixie. Was she on the run. Try to hurt her. Couldn't hurt her.

Lisette was liking what she was hearing. It was more like rock'n roll social realism satire that Then Lisette produced a photograph of Roger.

With the news that Rye has agreed to make an appearance.

They had a bad script.

FILMING! FILMING! FILMING !

The production designer wanted signs. Going somewhere.

She had wanted Jakeson in the meeting

Then came Act II. She knew the Director. Knew he would come up with something,

Lisette got home. Jakeson had had a bad day. His ideas of thereapy pharmacology
He missed having his wife with him. She needed help. Spinning. Her grip on reality. What was reality.

Big red cat on guard high in the rocks watching over Dr. Glenhenry's little boy playing in the sunshine.

Breeze frolicking around Dr. Glenhenry's ankles lifting her cotton skirt.

Windows open wide; mountain air flowing, bright summer day pouring in:

Fragrance; purity; clean dirt earth; she sighed:

Soon she could finish for the day, one more paragraph and she would be done. It was three o'clock. The breeze had shown up only a few days before so the call from Lisette was not unexpected; impossibly faint hints of intoxicating Night Blooming Jasmine teased her nose, moments later a familiar tickle behind her bare knees; the breeze was back; the breeze let her know something was in the air.

And the big red cat. What did he want? But he was always dropping by; his unheralded visits `always welcome on the mountaintop.

Day lounging in midsummer heat; ocean glittering below in Malibu.

Lisette's car wound its way up through the boulders the dual paved tracks hidden in the long blowing grass. Unable to continue she parked and stood admiring the view.

The blood curdling snarl should have startled her.

"I knew it was you," she laughed.

The cat was hiding right behind her in the shadows on the rocks, bright saucer eyes full of mischief, glowing live amber.

Lisette happy to see his battered old face, scarred nose, strong white chin, impertinent grin, his warm yellow eyes calm, reassuring; long moments passed, and then he was gone. Lisette knew she was in a safe place. She heard the Doctor call a greeting.

The doctor was happy to see Lisette.

Lisette was happy to see the Doctor.

They exchanged news.

She told the Doctor about Iggy, and Childheart and Roger.

The doctor asked how the movie was coming along; waited patiently for Lisette to come to the point and hint what was worrying her: Lisette had been her final patient before she retired, and they had become great friends:

"You saved me once Doctor, but this time I think I'm done for."

"Don't forget, you saved me first my dear." Dr. Glenhenry said.

Light banter turned emotion

Dr. Glenhenry took a long, hard look at Lisette. After about ten seconds her intense frown cracked with a gentle smile of compassion. "When your time comes it comes. There's nothing you can do to change it. It might be painful, but it's the price for being human."

Lisette shrugged, managed a wry smile. "You're right of course, thank you Doctor."

"You are human." The Doctor finished cryptically. "At least for the time being."

Lisette took a long, hard look at Dr. Glenhenry.

A proud woman of extreme beauty, tall, powerful, sublimely shaped, honey pale skin; her head had a smooth pelt of shiny black fur. Ethereal. statue until she moved. Weighing the doctors words Lisette **wait to continu**. The doctor turned and called into the rocks:

"Cat! Bring in the baby please. It's teatime!"

The little boy objected to being corraled by the big red cat.

He fought back cunningly, wilfully; an expert toddler wrangler the nimble cat circled nudging and butting the laughing child; obviously good friends, they were having great fun. The feline-toddler combat grew louder; yelling, hissing, pouncing, rolling around; doctor impatient, yelled: "Stop that noise and come in immediately."

Their game ceased abruptly. **The boy extended his arm, middle finger stiff, erect:**

Doctor Glenhenry turned to Lisette. "I'm surrounded by wild men. He can't even talk but he can flis me the bird. And the cat. He killed a another coyote last week and left it to stink out the car port. And my husband. I suppose he tries but its impossibel to control. It's his cat."

As little boy and cat trudged back toward the house Lisette relised her friend the good doctor was gloriously happy. She hadn't always been that way. Time was when she had been The Great Sex Doctor Doll, driving the nightrroads of the Hollywood Hills with a deathwish, bent on escaping her international fame and fortune for eternal peace with the wild spirits that drove her. Her dillema insanity or death. But the cat added a third choice.

Lisette smiled at the cat. He was standing at the door with the little boy. He smiled back pleased to see her. Lisette remembered thst first time she visited the doctors house. He had built a ritualistic shrine of deceased local predators in an attempt to protect the doctor; a barrier of feathers and bones on the trail from the road; their skeletons bleached white by the sun, feathered wings spread, joined, held down by stones; hawk, buzzard and eagle. She hadn't known it was the cat; that he had made the mountaintop the lair of the enchanted hunter; the cat's odyssey always intrigued Lisette, from whence he came, **spirit** but she had troubles of her own today, with her own odyssey.

She wondered how best to broach the subject with the doctor.

"The cat only does gross stuff because he knows it secretly amuses you," Lisette said. "Besides, it's just his reminder that he is never too far away from you."

She returned the impertinent grin from the cat. The cat got between them, growled at the doctor, turned and slyly smiled up at Lisette; he agreed, suggestively stroking her calves with his tail.

"Look at him. doing his usual disgusting thing the doctor knew better than mess with the cat. He had saved her life that night when she spun out in her car. Myteries of the needle claw. She loved the cat.. though wished he would stop killing

"That cat! Such a man! I'd squeeze his balls hard but he'd take my hand off trying."

As if understanding the little boy reached for the cat's big white furry scrotum and smiled at his mother beligerantly, rebelliously *I can do it, see!* After a second the cat gently pushed the child's away with his big fluffy white paw; and the little boy, as if to prove his

point, extended his arm straightened his middle finger at his mother, the cat grinning his insubordinate Cheshire Cat grin by his side:

"Look at them. Men. Wild men. Proud of themselves. Their bond their testicles," the doctor sniggered. "Forgive me Lisette, would you like tea?"

"Yes please. He flipped you the bird!" Lisette chuckled. "Who taught him to do that?"

"His father."

"Does he know what it means?"

"I don't know. I doubt it. He is slow learning to talk so his father taught him some sign language, the idiot." She laughed. "The cat helps around the house when he's in the right mood. He's quite good at babysitting. I'm make that tea. Cat, go away and take him with you. You can both have a little nap while I talk to Lisette."

The cat nodded and swatted the little boy with his tail; the little boy grabbed it to be calmly led off across the room. Lisette watched as they settled down to play. It was a quiet game; the cat toppled on his side and closed his eyes; time to play zzzz's.

Using the obliging feline as soft, furry pillow the child laid down his head to sleep.

Lisette watched, drowsily:

Big red cat fake napping; snaps open eyes wide.

Captures Lisette's attention. Lisette soon lost in his gaze; lazy ol' cat-think filling her with realizations; her good friend the doctor was happy, she hadn't always been happy, so relax, enjoy; see all; view from mountaintop; horizon curving south in a long sweep lined with a low haze of pale airlight; ocean teal blue today; distant drifts of kelp chipped calm-as-glass water thousands of feet below; see across glittering expanse to distant beach cities in South Bay; see all; Lisette noticed the cats broken fang as he yawned; yawned with lazy possibility, hypnotically; what did it matter if she was of another time and place, who cared if she was from Venus, or Bumfuck Mars, she was here, in the flesh, right here and now; Lisette marvelled at the cat's vulgar turn of phrase, picked up doubtlesly from the doctor's husband, the closest human the feline had to a traditional owner; the windows were rolled back, soft eddies of quietude rolled in with *feint hints of rolling surf; on cloud of blew up with gently billowing invisible cushions of sweet air; tall flowers in the vase swayed in tranquility.* see all: *The cat growled agreement.. Lisette knew he was an L.A. cat, ranging north to Malibu and down to Ocean Park and Venice;* Doctor Glenhenry returned with the tea.

The two women down sit down. The doctor poured.

"The cat is very therapuetic isn't he? He always seems to show up in times of need," she passed Lisette a cup of tea. "On the telephone earlier, you mentioned you were troubled?"

Lisette sipped tea, choosing her words carefully. "I'm human Doctor. You mentioned I'm human."

"Yes my dear. Of course, *very* human. It's a lovely afternoon, isn't it; to be human in?"

Despite the subtle implication that she could otherwise than human, Lisette agreed; the tea an esoteric mix of camomile, lavender and TyPhoo:

"Wonderful tea Doctor, delicious, enervating yet soothing; it has a certain intoxicating benevolence. Have I got long to live?"

Taken by surprise, the doctor smiled broadly.

"Oh you are not dying Miss Nice. No, you could *never* do that."

"No?" Lisette trusted the doctor and believed her every word.

Time slanted steeply; **the two women withdrew into silence to gather their thoughts.**

Lisette faced herself; she knew the doctor was being kind but somehow telling the truth. **Lisette looking back as far as her memory stretched; she was a star, twinkling.**
Metamorphosis.

And the doctor remembered being a virgin.

Meeting her husband. Suddenly she wasn't a virgin. It was her fifteenth birthday. He wasn't her husband then, merely her boy; he had taught her to drive, taught her to kiss, taught her to fuck. He was her first love. Other lovers followed, other husbands; her mind opened; brilliance cascaded, exploded into fame. **Ran her course had her fair share candescence went dark, went crazy became the Great Sex Doctor Doll then came the cat.**

The cat?

The cat was watching her intently now; albeit from his pose as a pillow for her son:

"Doctor, you are the Great Shrink," Lisette said, suddenly back in the moment.

"I know you've heard everything before, every silly crackpot notion about people believing they are Napoleon, the old identity crisis thing. And I know you have personal experience from when you were the Great Sex Doctor Doll, so you can empathize with me. It's happening to me too. I think I'm an alien."

"An *alien*! Oh no, most definitely not!" I wouldn't go that far my dear. Not an alien. Alien has negative connotations. Tinges of trash science fiction, I'm sure we can find a far more original mystical yet accurate *scientific* explanation than that."

Lisette, teacup poised in expectation, waited for the pronouncement not to worry, this too shall pass, reassurance but the gravity in the set - cool gaze

"This is all very obtuse Niss Nice. Quite fun really."

Fun? Lisette

"You will recall when you first came to see me all of those years ago I did a thorough workup on your vitals Miss Nice. Such interesting blood: so unusual. Your physiology isn't quite *regular*. I've always known you weren't quite of this dimension, time and space; but it didn't concern me. I truly believed you a loving, benevolent soul, so why mention it. I assumed you were on a voyage of self-discovery, as most humans are; you just have a certain added originality is all. I assumed you would eventually become suspicious and find out for yourself."

"So I did, and here I am; well, not of this world - and I'm not insane?"

"No, no not at all." Doctor Glenhenry smiled, correcting herself. "Well, no more than most people in my professional opinion. A little anxious today perhaps. But for all intents and purposes you are a perfectly well-adjusted and well-balanced young woman, albeit of yet unknown extraterrestrial pedigree. And I'm sure you've noticed, I'm not exactly common to this dimension myself - so who am I to judge," she grinned. "Or tell tales Miss Nice?"

Miss Nice? Lisette sat up and took notice: from past experience Doctor Glenhenry formally used her proper name only if the good doctor was on duty; a sure sign she was in official MD-shrink mode.

"And you are neither sick nor dangerous; at least in a physically violent way; though you do hold certain socially subversive beliefs, that personally, I approve of."

Lisette laughed gaily. "So I'm sane, that's a great relief; I'm quite a normal, good-hearted, rebellious off-world whore coming out after paying my way though humanity with a lifetime of heavenly blow-jobs..."

"Hardly a poetic statement of great mystical import from such a celestial being," Doctor Glenhenry said sternly. "Please don't sell yourself short Miss Nice.

"Yes Doctor." Lisette nodded

"And other than your *sexual therapy career* your thespian contributions to Cinema Art are more than a fair contribution to the world in payment. And do not worry about your condition. It's not the *human condition* is all, and it hasn't caused you any harm. Or anyone else. When did you begin to suspect?"

Lisette tried to answer:

"When I was little, *I think*: Kids have the craziest ideas," Lisette mused, delving into retrospection; she could see Catalina Island on the horizon from the windows, she could see into her past until it became a story. "I believed I lived in the sky. Way high above New Mexico. Then one day I fell out of the sky. I don't know if I made it up. But I am sure I made up all that stuff I told you about trying to seduce my father."

"A convincing story I thought at the time, almost," the Doctor said, remembering Lisette as the poor girl who had convinced herself she was terminally ill. "When did you begin to suspect you were a fiction your self?"

"Little things, years ago; but really when I came up with a story for a screenplay. I gave it to a young writer. And now we're making the movie. The crew know know its about me; they've been good, kept quiet about it, but they seem quite happy about it really."

"Because they love you Miss Nice," Doctor Glenhenry said, thinking the crew probably thrilled be in on Cinema History in the making. "Please start from the beginning."

Lisette told of her idea for a story that had been banging around in her head and given it to a young writer client on the hunch it would come back to her one day; the Doctor knew all about Lisette's shady past; her dark glory days as The Famous Fellatrix conscientiously

putting herself through school at the Actors Studio (she had been accepted on merit of her Ophelia soliloquy, 'had it down right to her fluttering fingertips). Lisette had been Doctor Glenhenry's final patient before she retired to die, but Lisette saved her and the doctor saved Lisette who made her big breakthrough in *The Get-Sexy Spirituality Movie* (a book was written about the making of it called *A Breeze on LaBrea*, the one before this in *the Los Angeles Mysterium* Trilogy). Then Lisette had found love, married an older celebrated actor; the years had gone by happily and brought fame and fortune. Now her husband was dying.

And now this.

"But Doctor, I'm a female something from outer space?"

"Just treat it like an extreme identity crisis Miss Nice. That's all it is. Everyone has an identity crisis in Los Angeles at some time or another. They are quite fashionable you know - "

Doctor Glenhenry talked on reassuringly. we have to be practical, but hey, this is L.A. The old saying when it comes to nuts the country is on a slope and they all roll on down to L.A., perhaps it's the same for others from far distant places; **no city permit required for being a kook or a nut; social licence living the law is easy; eccentricity so commonplace as to be normal; you have no fear of Forget**

They talked; a hour dissolved into minutes; times passes quickly in good company; the light softening evening beginning to fall, Lisette relieved to be able to gain objectivity; It's all in the postmodern paradigm, her story within the story, them all bound up in this, their story. Doctor expansive, open outstretched fingers open palms containing the world . Locations, the revival Inca and Aztecs and preColumbin art Inca Neo spanish revival neo all drawn and assembled in came here fortune; gold, oil, fame; reprsing her Los Angeles is a magnet drew from all over the world; so why not off-world; it made sense; why had the doctor ended up here; "I'm not a freak

who would believe it you are a great star spin it any which way; deity,

The little boy gently nudged his mother's arm; he had been quietly, patiently waiting for her attention; she looked at him sternly, stood, drew herself to her full height above him, then turned to Lisette:

"And please remember I am also *The Great Sex Doctor Doll*!" then shrieked insanely tossed her little boy into the air caught him perfectly swinging him around and around squeeling with delight as the cat looked on watching their game with resigned indifference:

"It is a shock Lisette; now you have a new secret identity to contend with too."

Lisette was relieved.

For three reasons.

One: the doctor had called her Lisette; which meant she was-off duty and just her friend again. Lisette watched the doctor settle down to take care of her little boy

Two: so she wasn't all

what was there to be worried about?

and Three: Iggy was on the case; down there in the endless dusty yellow carpet of suburbia. Los Angeles went on forever, ending at a soft fuzzy horizon Sky smouldering with molten sunset; desolate that policeman Glass

. Anxiety; facing the unknown; danger, was it real?

She felt a sharp knife swish past her neck.

A killing knife. For an instant Could be dead

"But you are not dead!"

Who said that?

Lisette turned. It was the cat; he had unsheathed his killing claw.

Looking at her, unblinking, the sharp blade uplifted paw. stop fretting

Startled back to reality Bad cat's blood gratitude test

She remember the purposed frightened her. Illusion You are still flesh and blood. The cat liked blood. She was flesh and blood. Human, for the most part.

Face the fear.

Walk right into it

His face scarred nose. He had hardly aged since she first met him; he was a thief. He had stolen the doctor's magic garter belt for her

For the first time in days Lisette relaxed. Overcome by a heavy Doctor Glenhenry excusing her self to go tend to her little boy, Lisette relaxed realising she was being lulled into hypnosis by a deep Purring cat in her lap, vibrated; unburdened, he Lisette fell asleep untroubled for the first time in days... reprobate sleep with you. His big spotlessly white paws kneading her thigh

72

Behind the Night

Iggy enjoyed after-hours stakeouts.

He liked the lulling continuum of dark, quiet hours of enforced inactivity; the solitude gave chance to form new insights and angles into his case. Unlike others he knew he found stakeouts a pleasurable work experience; he could relax, rest up, watch in inert productivity, indulge extended scenarios, imagination roaming back-and-forth wherever his fancy took him. Iggy particularly liked Downtown stakeouts. He would half-doze watching, slipping into a state where he imagined could feel the history behind the old streets; feel the charge of psychic energy of bygone eras; teeming people, horses, carriages, streetcars, the early Twentieth Century; a collective old world consciousness of the peoples who had come to Los Angeles from all over the world a hundred years earlier; their dreams to build and rebuild the city many times over still strong, their spirits bright in the ether, mingling in the

never-ending LA city lights; ah, city lights, electric sunshine horizon beneath pulsing deep purple brown sky; one night, intrigued by their vast glow, Iggy had driven the freeways ninety miles east from the beach before street lighting and artificial illumination gave out to passing patches of darkness natural to night; Iggy had been disappointed to find those first expanses of open country seen beyond the roadside highway detritus; fields, hints of agriculture; foothills, mountains by night; if only the mechanically manufactured incandescence could go on indefinitely until he reached day; he didn't know why. Psychological suppositions were too easy. He didn't care why. He wasn't afraid of darkness. He immediately turned round and headed back to the city. He liked the pale, thin wash of warm yellow airlight over the starry night sky; pollution, haze; accidental, but beautiful; an accident of beauty; LA was about possibility too he decided. Possibility of invention, and reinvention; the build it-rebuild it tradition of LA; paint over it, build over it, make new; all that is sacrosanct is not sacrosanct; non-sacrosanct *was* sacrosanct; he could understand why Childheart had settled here where impervious to convention was convention; new was infectious. Spinning meanings meanings spinning Iggy had spent time in other large cities but the buzz from the booster sedantary what's the hurry **who had grown mind spinning in the night** in the night, but Hollywood was always brightly illuminated. Hidden from the streetlights Iggy had found shadow parked under a clump of sort shaggy palm trees that gave him a clear view of his subject. He settled in crowded motel parking lot. Bright shiny night. The Hygienic's cheerful electric popsicle motel sign shared a clear starry sky with a pale golden moon. The motel itself he wondered about his subject couple; probably doing the ol' in-and-out he thought convivially without spending any energy trying to visualize it; gay bedspring bouncing wasn't something he had given much thought to; **he just wanted to** be sure; confirmation his Intel reports were accurate. Lenny's slick compact was at one end of the lot and Dane Disely's anonymous family SUV the other. Usually they were more careful their cars never seen in the same lot at the same time. Iggy stretched. Changed his angle. The neon Hollywood skyline melded into a light haze it was a pretty night. At precisely 2:02am Disely appeared across the lot walking to his car smiling a dazed smile with a surprising little wiggle in his walk. Lenny had given him a good time. Disely had shown up earlier in regular straight street clothes in his regular straight car walking his regular straight walk now here he was returning home to straight beachlife suburbia. Iggy knew Disely's pretty pink Thunderbird was safely stashed in its subterranean liar beneath his elegant chateau single on Fountain Avenue. The Boys Department paid a serrupticious visit to find Disely's glamorous secret life hidden in plain sight and his closet packed with his fabulous wardrobe. What was their connection? other than casual sex; and even that didn't make sense on a permanent basis and being a couple publicly an impossibility. and even in their secret subculture highly unlikely. Dane had no pretensions other than being a mysterious sexy lady and Lenny had no class. The Boys Department report self-admittedly bitchy, had labelled him a febrile labile dork. Iggy liked the Boys Department reports. The dry humor when appropriate. Feverish Lenny bitchy description of Disely's liking for white spandex and sequins. Iggy yawned. He would give it another

thirty minutes. If Lenny didn't show he would call it a night. Iggy knew Lenny was careful with his money. If he had paid for the night he would want to get his money's worth, sleep late and guzzle the courtesy coffee; the Hygeinic had excellent coffee. If Lenny left soon it meant Disely had picked up the tab for the night, effectively called the meeting: the Boys Department intel had it Lenny and Dane were on the outs and the Boys Department knew everything in West Hollywood; Dane was a user, a notorious emotional and intellectual predator while Lenny the Lesbian was an 'innocent girl', which made sense if you pictured Lenny as a gay women in man's body. Iggy marveled at the complexities of sexuality, glad his own proclivities could be likened to challenging feats of physical athletic endurance with strong willing women, no mystery there; he moved on to other questions about Lenny and Disely. What were the facts behind why Disely had been removed from Lisette's movie? The Director had come up with a story treatment Lisette liked, everyone liked; enough of Disely's material existed in the script so he would still get a credit but he had been paid off. Hey, ask her. She would tell. There were enough loose ends. the sky flashing lights air units and international airliners floating down their glide path into LAX. Iggy wonder what was behind the night tonight. The surveillance rental vibrated with complaint. Iggy realized he was starting the motor. Lenny was strolling across the lot to his car. Iggy choked on his laugh. Lenny had stuffed his cheeks with dentist pads or something. Iggy contained his amusement. Lenny was in disguise.

Neonshine glittering on newly-washed Hollywood sidewalks:

Lenny tootling along eyes-front avoiding eye-contact with the human debris loitering on the cheerful, newly-washed celebrity star-studded walk of fame; city cleaning crew shifting homeless souls into cover of storefront doorways; Lenny passing black-and-white poking spotlight into impermeable shadows and alleys to hang a right on Vine; Lenny heads south. Iggy holds back a half-block. Lenny waiting on red for right turn light Downtown on SMB.

Iggy following down Santa Monica; Hollywood neon fading; soothing gloom.

Coming up to Western Lenny pulls over and walks.

Iggy sails by waits in anonimity.

Whattafuck could Lenny want from a 24-7 pawn shop?

Lenny enters. Transaction smooth; fast.

Lenny knew what he wanted.

Lenny out soon skipping lightly gobbing white dental tootsie rolls into stormdrain.

Iggy curious: why subject Lenny such a happy chappie, checks out drain:

Mmm, dental dressings change shape of face on camera.

Iggy checks out 24-7 pawn.

Night clerk stale; not helpful.

Night clerk had a secret tip jar.

Iggy's gold badge impotent but the hundred had balls.

\$100 fresh crisp clerk helpfully remembering muttering clown Lenny didn't he realize facial recognition technology see past bogus broken-jaw; we get all types. Their CCTV tapes lasted 30 days weird clown kook Lenny been in weeks before bought .44. Had all the papers. Iggy glad he'd decided not to follow Lenny. This was something new to sleep on. What would squeaky-clean Lenny want with a gun. And a crappy old big gun at that. Night clerk read Iggy's confused frown. Described tonight's purchase. Genuine Italian stiletto. Beautiful. Razor sharp. Night clerk liked fine knives. Remembered good points. Excellent balance. Strong thin blade. Styled after commando combat knife.

Iggy meandered home; what was Lenny going to do with a stiletto?

73

Roger Rides the Silver Screen

Roger was having his screen test today.

Miss Merryberry was unusually concerned. Iggy was still in his month-long confused-frown phase after his discovery of Lenny's strange weaponry acquisition; hiatus seemed consequently everything was low key. Captain Glass was LAPD Hate Crimes Homiced Miss Meryberry easily persuaded Iggy to volunteer to take Roger to *Elysian Park*, it might help him gain focus.

It was a beautiful morning.

The traffic was in a good mood.

Politeness and courtesey ruled the road.

This strange phenonemum was unnerving Iggy.

LA traffic wasn't meant to be no-hurry quiet

His groom had packed Roger a picnic with enough feed for the day, so off they set.

By the time Iggy got the horse trailer to the location it was 8am and the crew had set up and were hanging around the craft services table drinking coffee and

He let Roger out and let him wander around unhindered; making his way around the assistant ; he didn't need a groom, Iggy had his packed lunch; *despite his gargantuan size he wasn't intrusive, didn't get in the way, his size didn't threaten or frighten people, his gentle demeanor introducing himself with gentle nudge from his soft whiskery old nose; almost people forgot he was a horse and treated him like a new member of the cast, albeit a giant, and equine, explaining their job to him. Make-up and Hair were particularly impressed, with his flaring tail and gleaming mane*

Grandeur arrived; Rye showed up.

The Rolls Royce caused a mild stirr with the crew, blasé

The Director, standing nearby, thought, mmm, now for some drunk driving on horse.

Roger got the same idea. Rye was was big man. But without real armor and weapons

A pleasant happy workday

It took six weeks to start shooting.

First day of principal photography came after a hectic round of meetings and
Iggy reported to Lisette Iggy and Childheart
Roger was introduced to his traspo crew; the tractor trailer with enough feed to last a
month, his favorite groom from his stable downtown. Set off to the wilderness
Iggy was sensing something happening with Glass something

77

Alternative Movie Reality

Captain Glass had secured a substantial surveillance appropriation for Lisette's movie.

Gustav Rye a key factor; Rye had a file at LAPD Hate Crimes Homicide fat enough to
match his girth; filled with enough financial data to create enough dubious leads worthy of
speculation to last for years, but leads where and why?

Hate Crimes Homicide didn't have to tell; their mandate and mission statement where
above and beyond question on the highest of high ground. But Rye's connection with the
movie was purely aesthetic. He was purely an artist, an artiste, a great cineaste, and a great
actor.

Glass knew differently . He also knew Lisette's movie had nothing to do with Rye's
production company or vast business interests. -

Glass watched as the Lisette's production moved along smoothly; long days shooting scene
after scene slowly adding minutes of screentime; he had a man Ed Editor patiently
assembling small sections of flowing narrative, filmed material coming alive with its own
reality; a reality seen from a distance; we were there, but always across the street, occasionally
we would see something up-close, but it would be fleeting; Lisette transformed into a
convincing teen, her tall skinny frame against the vast expanses of landscape; *the digital
minimal, tawdry slowly embracing Act One*

The Director visualized pages fluttering in the wind *against a moody sky;; road, a thin
figure materializes, could have already been there, a girl:*

Ed was creating a mood sequence; an opening spinning seasons, time lapsed without

...lights go down on the day; rolling foothills, endless peaks; a church tower in a smudge
of treetops and rooftops; a micron thread of brash neon in the dusk; a small town stroll;
girls in short shorts, waiting. John's in john cars, lurking. skinny kid Trixie on the edge of it,
watching; pale yellows and greens secret light; a foreshadowing, what to expect; where Trixie
and the story was going; Hollywood and L.A.

Hollywood, night; same stroll scene; girls rougher around the edges; smiles harder,
bodies softer, tinged with fatigue and decay; *hardly out of high school young men in
uniform on the town young men in their uniforms at airport; Cold daylight sleeping on the*

bus; the young men bus heading north Trixie the highway heading south Radar dishes, runways, endless foothills distant peaks awacs and long range tankers military anonymity

45

Sky Location Scout

The First Assistant had stopped trying to clean up his reputation.

Eddie was crazy, and that was it. But he got things done. *Plus*, he could be trusted; *double plus*, he cared; especially about safety. He was driving. Range Rover inching across the crestline with surefooted dexterity, his passengers secure in the knowledge their life was in good hands; silenced by awe, they stared out in wonderment; sky a hundred-mile dome of bright luminosity supported by distant mountains, sprawling forrests and turrets of rock; the Director had wanted *big sky*; this was big, vast; vaster than vast, visibility infinite in the thin air, color unimpinged by the crush of molecules at this high altitude. Eddie assured them they weren't lost **knew the** nearest paved road was way below them beneath the timberline but no one cared. A new vista slipped into view. The Director choked back a gasp. The sensation of pure airlight and color shocked him. He thought he was underwater. Flying wisps of cloud wafting verdant green slopes cascading greens jarred his senses; fishes darted choreographed by swimming; syncrozized swimming ; but the shoal was a herd; a herd of wild horses coursing through dappled sunlight at full gallop:

"Farmdog," the Director pointed, struggling for words: "That is a total mind-fuck!"

DP in front (a big man) in the passenger seat; the Director and Key Grip in the back

"You got it." The DP exclaimed, reading the director's mind, turning to his Key Grip, a grizzled, bald, whiskery geriatric of highly defined musculature; immediately understanding the DP's intent he shed twenty years in an instant, excitement glinting out of his old face:

"Stop the fucking car Eddie," the grip yelled: "Skycam!"

It took all of thirty seconds for the DP and Key Grip to launch their toy.

They had been together for years and built many of their own camera rigs; dollies, speedrail set-ups, steadycams, off-road camera cars; and now, drones; state-of-the-art military issue with Arriflex payload. Farmdog powered it up on remote as the strong old man held it high, downdraft wash from whirring rotator fans taking its weight almost lifting him; it was ready for take-off:

"Okay Geez, let her go," Farmdog yelled.

Released from captivity the drone left skyward camera coming online. They stared skyward as their speeding toy glinted through a long arc in pursuit of the shot: Farmdog flying the machine operating the camera with singular ease: as Cinemaphotographers go Farmdog is as known for his camera angles as he is for his sensitivity in lighting, eye intuitive never intrusive, never imposing composition on content.

The big monitor in back of the Range Rover lit up.

All anyone could see was sky then a soft puff of cloud and a reveal:
Wild horses streaming through the landscape, approaching at speed.
coming to his subject letting them find him; curiosity, they were including him by invitation
The illusion was these bold creatures guys wanted to be in
Damp steam cloud and pounding hooves three stallions following the leader. Farmdog said. "What a beautiful mare!

The Director and his First stood back monitor:

"She looks like a girl version of Roger!" The Assistant Director said, the-almost indigo mane and flared tail. "She is so fucking beautiful man!"

Playful

The Key Grip secured the drone. They were all slightly stunned.

"It's pretty good footage, kinda smooth
the hint of criticism wasn't lost on Farmdog
Gets Rogers point-of-view view
Him galloping along beside her

"You *are* fucking crazy Eddie." Farmdog laughed. He turned to the Director. "You know what Crazy Eddie here wants to do?" He didn't wait for an answer. "You just want to chase the horses, don't you Eddie?"

"So! This is a good car! It's the toughest car built, just looks pretty is all."

All eyes turned to the First Assistant.

"Our Eddie wants to test his car," the Key Grip said, then nodded conspiratorially.

The horses didn't seem to mind the arrival of the Range Rover.

They were generally hanging out snacking grass and it politely Farm dog leaning picking off hots with Arri

The car wasn't scratched and we got some great footage

There was to be a meeting of girl and horse; none of this had been in Disely's original script; Ed teared up and had to wipe his eyes

Roger set against their majestic scale, with the wild mustangs; now he was big,

The Director had gone away and drunk a lot of coffee.

The still of Roger

The second unit found the herd of wild horses and set Roger free.

to see what would happen; drone cameras unobtrusively following, big wilderness birds soaring, swooping; Roger had easily fought off the three alpha males and they had reached an understanding; a montage of against big skies punctuation to Trixie heading south

Left the heard and headed south
Cross cut with Trixie

Lisette liked the way the film tumbled along.

Roger a motif, the love interest boy a motif; the teenage waif now a nymphet in her early twenties; there was

The inference was, Roger was the intelligence, but who was Lisette

Was she the intlligence, or was it Roger? Who cared, it was good cinemaArt reason

Roger on La Brea - there were no wind machines - the UPM had ordered none, there was no mention of wind in the script Breeze on La Brea

Man and tail nostril flaring

The great horse riding the police car

The Director tried to play nonchalant Farmdog

The time Cowboy had got in his camera, infecting the camer negative with gunfight

Black and white productions The Last Picture Show

Cutting the scenes Staccatto

Rye had been very impressed with Iggy's entrance down the sheer rockface.

And told Lisette all about it: Could it be integrated in the story/script?

81

Interiors with Horse

Roger liked being on set.

And he was very happy Iggy had come along too.

The sound stage was dark and cavenous with lots of new interesting things to look at in the illuminated bits, plus he a plentiful supply of snacks. Roger knew the supply of crisp, fresh carrots from the craft services table was neverending so paced himself, and it was easy knowing what they wanted him to do. Iggy was usually there when the Director explained what was required of him

and when things got tense Roger would occassionally grin at people.

What did Glass want?

Rye and Glass; the policeman interviews

Lisette overhears

Glass wants the Olives dead - he is getting close - Lisette overhears

This means Glass has to silence her.

Glass watched

What could she know. He would have to kill her. Take her turn. He would kill the Olive brothers first.

73

The Sexiest Man in the World is Dead

It was a wrap. Lisette's new movie was in the proverbial can.

Ed Ediror had a rough assembly and various inspired sequences for a rough cut. All that was left now was the finishing; the deciding what was in and what was out; what would end up on the proverbial cutting room floor, and a timeline

Now Lisette could step away. Regain some objectivity. She had known throughout filming the end was near for Jakeson:

Alcoholism is a common way to die.

Rarely attributed as the primary cause, booze killed in the guise of other diseases.

Maladies more palatable to the sensibilities of polite society.

Jakeson'd had most of 'em.

But Jakeson had held on, for years, decades, generations cherishing life, cherishing his wife; loving husband until the end.

Headlines splashed the news across the world.

'The Sexiest Man in the World dies in Los Angeles.'

Kindly, they used old photographs.

Body failing, weakened in his final years, the great actor had lived on by strength of will and worked by power of spirit; it showed if you looked hard enough; but these were heyday photographs; decades of heydays; carousing and marrying and living and loving but all the time working and acting right to the end. Jakeson had played his final scenes opposite his final wife only days before he died:

Expiring in her arms onscreen, then in his bed as he drew his last breath.

Lisette kept a lid on it. Security tight; rumour was his final love scene was in her movie; Ed Editor could be trusted, so could the crew; everyone would guess, but no one would know. It had been a closed set. Now all Lisette wanted to do was quietly bury her husband respectfully beside his legendary mother in Westwood, before the industry spin started for her movie, *his final movie*. But first, Jakeson had to say goodbye to his friends.

Lisette made sure her husband had his 'Farewell Lifetime Show' show.

A spectacular funeral followed by the 'Wake of the Century'.

Working with an team of event planners, she put together an uproariously hilarious glitzy send-off especially for his fans, and a riotous slap-up party for all his old friends, then she planed to quietly slip away and let his past wives and lovers reminisce.

It went off a treat:

Everyone who was anyone to Jakeson was there; dignitaries and world leaders flew in, celebrities from the world of entertainment and sport, writers, artistes, artists, models, artist models, couturiers, courtiers, courtesans. Lisette had followed Jakeson's instructions to the final detail as his final requests near the end. But mainly, Jakeson wanted to say goodbye to his most important people, his fans.

He wanted an event to cause a stir; to wave himself goodbye in his final show...

Jakeson had chosen a plain, white, open casket.

He picked out a design and made arrangements with the funeral home to have it customized for what he had in mind; seat belts were to be fitted so he wouldn't fall out.

The undertaker was somewhat hesitant with his wave pose request but solemnly gave his word to Jakeson to comply when sufficient financial reward was offered.

Immediately Jakeson's beloved 1966 white Mustang convertible was taken to the body shop, the passenger seat extremely modified with special frame constructed to hold his casket semi-upright (with special suspension and shock absorbers to allow fluid movement).

Jakeson was pleased with the end-result. With coffin fitted he took his Mustang hearse out on trial run late one night in the Hollywood Hills. The coffin was a snug fit, and with the top half-lid open, he could wave his final admirations to the crowds of fans.

Six weeks later he died.

His last wishes were to be fulfilled.

Permits were covertly obtained in preparation for the Big Day.

And the weather held with a clear sunny L.A. morning beneath a peerless blue sky.

A small flock of News helicopters hovered at a respectful altitude cameras trained on Jakeson's compound below.

The world was waiting watching the Hollywood Hills.

Lisette's fave posse of retired LAPD traffic officers showed up early on their Klassic Kawasaki Police 1000s and geriatric Harley's in a cloud of blue smoke and blue flashing lights; slightly irritated by the lack of craft services (no coffee) but having worked with Jakeson before, the old cops loved and respected him so waited patiently in formation outside his front gates, proud to be included in this, his final show.

They didn't have to long to wait.

Meanwhile, back at the casket, Jakeson's favorite make-up artist and the undertaker fussed with final small detail, adding the Jakester's trademark sunglasses, clipping them securely behind his ears, for this, his last ride.

Lisette, attired in the outfit Jakeson loved best, reached up and touched his bare cold cheek, squeezed his cold hand, made sure his bottle of explosive hooch was firmly in place, and overcome with emotion put on her own sunglasses to hide her tears as she squeezed

into the drivers seat beside her husbands casket. She fired up the motor. This was a sound Jakeson loved:

The V8 burbled. She pulled her Stetson down tight and blipped the gas.

It was twelve o'clock on the dot.

Showtime!

The gates opened.

The old cop posse rolled. The old LAPD Kawasaki Police 1000's whirred and purred. The old Harley's gurgled. Lisette slipped in after the pair riding point. The second pair sloped in to flank Jakeson's Mustang and reinforcements followed two-by-two.

The world watched as the flock of TV News helicopters hovering above Jakeson's fortress caught his white convertible as it came out onto the street. They followed it on down through the exotic green topiary and ornate rooftops of the rich and famous along Mullholland descending the Hollywood Hills. Newscoper-Nine enthusiastically rattling off a lovingly rambunctuous commentary of the happy scene:

"Jakeson wouldn't lie down in life and would lie down in death - this is *his* funeral - but he is alive in spirit with us still - and there he is waving - his bottle!"

76

Jakeson's Final Fuck Sobriety Show

The LAPD Special Presidential Speed Detail, usually reserved for visiting VIP and Foreign Dignitary high-speed road trips across Los Angeles to-and-from LAX, lay in wait at the intersection of Hollywood Boulevard at the top of La Brea Avenue.

Below, in Hollywood, down the long hill, a squadron of black-and-whites were positioned in readiness to clear the street as La Brea crossed Sunset, Santa Monica and Melrose to Wilshire where the funeral would turn right heading to the famous old hotel.

Crowds lined the sidewalks, waiting.

At Melrose, at Pink's hotdog stand (Est. 1938) a line of frank addicts neurotically undecided about getting a view of Jakeson or losing their place in line for the Polish sausage quivered in a delicious aroma cloud of fried onions; an immobile marching band played in solemn joviality, police radios chattered, then sirens blipped. It was coming. They could feel it. Suddenly La Brea was empty. The cops cleared the traffic. The band fell silent:

At the top of LaBrea a dark cloud of helicopters filled the air.

Forwarned the Nation's broadcasters interrupted regular programming:

Breaking news!

'Live from Los Angeles this is the Ralph Jakeson Funeral Show.'

The Goodyear Blimp supplied aerial coverage; it was gameday on steroids.

TV helicopter amada following Jakeson down LaBrea appears in the sky appeared in the sky fitst, rots rom his fortress Jakeson's Mustang in the hills the tight formation of police motorcycles

This was what Jakeson wanted; sedate, slow, sad procession, no way: speed!

And his beloved production people had got it right, he looked great; he wasn't goulish at all, his spirit animating his body in black bow tie, white whirt, white suit sporting his very last bottle of his very best hooch.

Great show. Exactly as he had promised his fans.

Crowds of 'em lined the sidewalks.

The commentray broke in. Yes, spectacular production values

Makeup and props got it right. Serene, with his own bottle of Holy Qater. Some special imported hooch high-octane schnapps so noxious repudedly distilled using God's Old Socks. He was alive, he was alive, just keeping still. The crowds gaped. Turnout was better than expected. clips of Jakson's final performace with Gustav Rye in the harem scene had been leaked.

Lisette knew cars, and knew her husband's Mustang, knew how to drive it.

At speed speed - the weeping girls at the It was a great show the National Monument, the Great Womanizer who had finally been tamed by the beautiful young woman driving his trademark ride.

West Hollwood sheriffs out in force on their eastern border down La Brea, lending a hand keeping the crowds back. And the fire departmenst were was not to be outdone. a debt of gratitude The fire department of Jakesons great fire chief role in 'Firebrand' La Brea heavy plant as three engine companies and two ladder compnies. Funeral procession roading down LaBrea

One fact was clear.

Everyone loved Jakeson.

Blue smoke from Mustang tires.

Lisette flipped the wheel opposite-lock skillfully drifting onto Wilshire.

Jakeson's casket artfully swayed but he didn't lose grip on his bottle.

Correcting perfectly as per her husbands request, she floored it down the straightaway:

LAPD and Beverly Hills cops had Wishire raceway safely roped off.

Little puffs of smoke as she jammed the shifter through the gears hitting 95mph crossing San Vicente, geriatric motorcycle possie in hot persuit supplying plentiful blast of lights and sirens.

Tight end of the zoom Newchopper Nine caught Jakeson in closeup:

Was the slipstream or a sudden gust of wind? The old actor curled his lip and smiled his famous subversive smile one last time.

Girls screamed, women screamed and The white Mustang

the motor screamed with ecstasy. Teary eye

Breaking news across the county program interruptions.

The Sexiest Man in the World was dead and Los Angeles was giving him a send off.

The city literally vibrated with the thunderous roar as the B17 (built in nearby Burbank in 1943) dropped out of the sky on a precision bomb run; the windows on Wilshire Boulevard rattled as its four Wright Cyclones throttled back. The crowds looked up in awe as with thirteen .50 machine guns blazing blanks, bomb doors opened and millions of white rose petals cascaded down over the white convertible cruising along below in payback from the USAF. This was the very aircraft Jakeson had flown in 'Bomb Leader', a tribute to the Eighth Air Force's March 1944 raid on Berlin when sixty-nine B17s were lost, but the Luftwaffe lost 160 aircraft. And America won the war. The lovingly preserved Flying Fortress hit the gas banking in a long climb up over La Cieniega as Lisette reined in the Mustang. Talent agencies
The hotel

Apache attack helicopters came in low followed by a lumbering Chinook Red carpet
Honor guard

The Saturday morning a glittering patchwork Lisette now changed into black

In the front transferred to an anonymous hearse and taken to a small private cemetery on Westwood Boulevard where at 1:30pm Jakeson was laid to rest beside his mother.

59

Merry Widow

Iggy knew Lisette was lonely.

He knew she didn't show it.

She went through post-production in a mild flurry of gentle smiles completing her tight schedule of recordings and mixes and viewings with professionalism and civility; everyone knew she was in mourning just as everyone knew the show must go on.

The weeks drifted by; Iggy's surveillance subcontractors reporting in.

The publicity was low-key. Word was she wanted a sleeper; success by word-of-mouth only reputation. The premiere was just weeks away and planned to be small, intimate, in contrast to Jakeson's funeral which had been a world event just months earlier. Lisette had hoped the news wouldn't start rerunning The Sexiest Man in the World was dead. And, at his request, the wake was held at the Beverly Wishire, where he had married Lisette seven years before. She looked serene her face hidden by a black veil of fine lace filigree her doctors, gracious to her husbands past wives in attendance. They knew the funeral was about him. Film clips of a life booze tears eyes red cheeks streaked with mascara skills genuine grief the national monument had fallen Lisette's move was his last

Visited the kennel where he had the little threelegged dog safely stashed.

The Fox Westwood **movie house** all lit up like a Christmas tree white tower the kleig lights swept the sky above carbon-arc beams incinerating passing bugs - this was for grown up - up-front pneumatic bliss of breasts and buttocks mystery Rye imposing strange impression of floating on a magic carpet production values - there had been no press shows no hype

Where did they get that horse?

Puzzled critics and excited reporters carted off unceremoniously to the after party was boutique hotel. It was done. Lisette was lonely. But not for a man.

57

An Ancient History After-Party

The hotel bar was quiet for a party.

Possibly because it was a private party.

Childheart joined the line at the bar waiting to congratulate Lisette.

He sipped moderately fizzy designer water from a sleek blue designer glass bottle letting himself be soothed into the chic plush mood of serenity the room was designed for; décor classic moderne, a soothing mix of subtle wallcolors, imported paintings, amber hardwood and honey leather, the picture window a neon panoramic of the Strip; the glittering stream of cars floating by silently on cushions of air in the night. It was a soundproofed bar. The low hum of conversation muted, a serious timbre, a resonance of sincerity, of intent concentration, a direct contrast to the vivacious couture adorning these, the quintessence of the beautiful people; there was no talking bullshit here. They knew it was a great movie. Almost beyond words. They were genuinely humbled. Lisette was taking their compliments and condolences from those she hadn't seen since before Jackson's funeral. She was told she was a great producer. She was told she was a great actress.

The party spilled from the bar filling several tables.

After a while Childheart caught Lisette in the old mirror. Startled, it was as if he saw her for the first time. Rare beauty always surprised him. But hers shook him. A memory imposed itself on the moment. He was a boy again. Staring in awe at the glowing likenesses of the Goddesses high on the temple walls. Their presence filled him with reverence. They were more than beautiful. Their features balanced Sneak into the temples different tribes higher tribes Gods

Lisette in repose, listening to n then he realised he had her complete undivided attention. He looked from the mirror directly into her eyes.

"Now I recognize you. You are - " and he pronounced a name in a long dead guttural language. He wasn't sure if he had wanted to startle Lisette

"You are mistaken Mr. Childheart. I was, am, a simple, humble, temple maiden, sir."

"A priestess to" - again he used the name in the long-dead language.

"I really don't know what you are talking about -" but something changed in her demeanor.

"You admit

"I have gold." "It's not pleasure I seek, I seek the light."

"The light?" Lisette said regaining her composure. "Why, you are a bold one. Are you asking for a date?" And with sly hand produced her card. With her husband gone Childheart would do.

"You fully realize I am the Famous Felatrix."

19

The Famous Felatrix

Lisette wondered if her lingering shroud of morning sadness was melancholia or grief.

She drank more strong coffee. It would lift. It would pass. Typically, her day would brighten. What did she expect. It was grief. She had lost her husband. She was a widow. Loss was all part of the human experience.

She was human, wasn't she?

Partly.

She had to see the doctor.

Lisette was becoming worldly, wise.

And she wasn't sure she liked it. The sense of loss. She knew she had never been innocent but her grief was genuine; she missed Jakeson. *Living with a drunk was tolerable*

The morning sunlight was filtering into the canyon

She drank more coffee, read the trades. The reviews were mixed. *Satisfied, her mind drifted to a highlight reel of good times she had shared with Jakeson. Impending darkness, a constricting box; its walls had fallen away, light fusion face out into a darkness she had would lift by the time her meeting with Childheart later. Arm stuck in a drain with the waters rising she lifted it - the sun crested the rim and*

Lisette left Jakeson's compound driving Jakeson's truck heading for work.

Childheart arrived at her office on the lot promptly at eleven.

He was shown into her office.

Money changed hands *clique "A clique.*

A small courtesy, a bow

Lisette entered.

They exchanged formalities. Childheart removed a small soft leather pouch from his pocket and handed it her, he opened it and five shining coins clinked into her palm.

"Pieces of gold. Really? Wow! And big ones too, thank you sir."

Childheart smiled, uneasy, coy:

"I hate to bring you into the Twenty-first century but I know what you are thinking: All this for a blowjob. Hey, a blow job to change your life he reminded himself. More,

"Of course. Can I take your coat." He slipped out of it and handed to her. She folded it and smooth movement unzipped him and popped him out
Startled, he hadn't expected instinct she meant no harm

He knew she was disarming him. literally mirror we dispense with formalities "You have a very handsome friend there," Lisette laughed, took him in hand grabbing him by the shaft, pulling him across the room to the couch, fingernails pushed his chest with her free hand

"You don't waste time." Childheart said.

"I hope you don't mind if I talk with my mouth full." Lisette

Child collapsed delight falling Lisette on her knees.

He closed his eyes.

It was sunset; late afternoon; sun a glowing red orb low in the winter sky; Roger's hooves pounding a even rhythm winter solstice celebration and love his wife a face in startled; green eyes

"Can I tell you a joke?" Lisette asked demurely, her voice sweet, innocent: a joke during sex? Childheart startled again. It had been so long

"It is a racist joke," Lisette continued. "You might find it in bad taste."

"Try me," Childheart said. My tribe

"Also, a very old joke," Lisette continued

"What did the Italian girl say to her lover after sex?"

Childheart had no answer.

"If I find you cheating on me I kill myself." Lisette pathos merrily carried on chewing

"What did the French girl say to her lover after sex. If I find you cheating on me I kill you!"

Childheart felt her teeth threatening, sharp; bit of off rolling in "What did the English girl say to her lover after sex... "

Childheart screwed his eyes closed. A crescendo of shooting stars lit his mind.- Rolling his whole being convulsed; then surprise tooth extraction something wrenched out of him, rolling in - this hadn't happened - this quickly - like this - since he was a boy Lisette's voice finished, distantly "The English girl said "Are feeling better now dear?"" Then he heard laughter; his own; he wanted to complain, he had been tricked, into premature ejaculation seconds could have been minutes; He had never felt better. he had been feeling distinctly asexual, but his watch told him differently; it eched he couldn't stop himself. He opened his eyes. Secret Light

Now he could see.

How he had been wrong

Goes down on him make you mine

Childheart was on the sofa.

Lisette was relaxed working behind her desk.

"How could it have been different?"

"The secret light reveals all Mr. Childheart: All we need to see to heal."

"Proufound." Childheart said,

"Your irony isn't lost on me.

"Sexual betrayal

"Ah, but Iggy," he challenged her." You have shown Iggy the secret light

"Iggy is cool. Iggy is everyman. Iggy had a lot to let go.

"We are put into life to learn, what, exactly." The question as old as thought itself

99

The Death of Dane Disely

Disely finally had it made: Academy Award nomination in his pocket he was set for life.

Lenny had decided to let his darling Dane live to savor his Big Night at the Oscars.

Well, almost. There would be no black tie for Dane.

Dirty Dagger

Lenni was going to let Dane get a sniff at sweet success then close his book of life.

Permanently, on the Eve of the Grand International Ceremony.

Dane's chair would be empty on Oscar night. The poor White Princess would never make it to be a celebrant nominee in elegant black evening clothes.

Timing was everything. Get the timing right. Lenni organized his vacation

Dane's body would be found to hit the news cycle the night before.

The keycard would arrive find a two day dead body.

The TV news could call the cops.

Taking no chances Lenni would take his own his own pictures to break the story just in case.

They had a hot date where they had enjoyed many a nooner, their very favorite place; their special seedy motel in Hollywood with purple sheets and soundproof rooms.

The legendary motel known as 'The Hygenic'

Lenny loved it but Dane complained it smelled of floral disinfectant secret bouquet a private celebration. Poppers and bubblegum

Intimate.

Anonymity.

Car wash coupons

Play the vanity factor. Wearing white. Trannies and gender benders and cross dressers and boys of the night

Hudson. Yucca

Dane was hardly to know Lenni had booked the room for three days and payed in advance and left a 'do not disturb' and a note for the maid.

Get the timing right.

In all its years 'The Hygenic' had never had a murder.

Just a few miles away down Santa Monica Boulevard it was Oscar Night ..

Lisette was radiant. Jakeson by her side in a wheelchair. He looked good.

Lenni settled down in front of the TV with cold beer and snacks. The family was away.

Oscar parties celebrated with The ceremony ran for hours. The red carpet fashion show.

The appearance of Geraldine Honeydew caused a mild commotion.

Photographs

88

Bullets up the Butthole

Lenni was humming dum-dum dum-dum dum dum dum.

Bang him bang him then bang him again, killing him.

That was his plan. Accidentally on purpose missing his stroke he slipped out and slipped in the gun, before Dane could complain about the cold steel discomfort of the foresight Lenni pulled the trigger three times Dane adored lurid lewd lingerie

And Lenni was going to make sure left them a good clue.

It was an '*Industry Killing*'; the room had been booked by a Mr. Oscar Knight.

The old clerk had heard that ol' chesnut regurlry since she couldn't remember when.

Strange boy who always padded his cheeks with dental cotton

The winter months, mild and sunny as they usually are in Los Angeles, passed pleasantly enough; the hills were soft with green, promising wildflowers for those who knew where to find them. Lenni did. He sat in his car parked high toying with the

It was a big, ugly gun; a .45 revolver of unknown age with a 4" barrel. Lenni had filed off the foresite for quick clean entry. Soon he would have to ththoroughly clean it

Disely liked hurting Lenni. His cruel jibes made Lenni angry. And Disely liked angry sex. Lenni was pissed. Arouse

Atoms of jealousy and bitterness molecules

"Go away a and lick your wounds for twenty years. Ha ha. I want mine now. Getting mine now. The part of him

Dicely had waxed his legs for their date, dark stockings against white thighs.

Lenni knewing his ankles ag smooth stocking slimped of - Dane had shapely long legs we should shared that oscar

his wife habit from cyclingI wasn't mine to shareReached for his gun

"Go away a and lick your wounds for twenty years. Ha ha. I want mine now.

It was a hate crime.

It was homicide. Glass was glad. It pulled him off of his obsession with Rye

Surveillance tapes revealed a well-endowed dumpy woman with spiky crew cut sunglasses bulky summer pea coat and baggy black slacks and loafers they didn't give her a second glance. Lesbian Security officers were

Lenni removed his large bosom appendage on the Hollywood freeway heading south pulling it out from beneath his bulky layers wondering if he had gotten away with murder.

79

True Intelligence

Lisette memory of Jakeson

"Anyway, I had this idea for a story," Lisette said, taking her husband's hand. Jakeson knew he was dying. Knew he had been dying for the past twenty-five years when they gave him a year if he didn't stop drinking. This time they had narrowed it down to six months, which he stretched into two years. Lisette knew he was dying.

"I sort of anonymously put it out there with a writer and waited for it to come back home to me."

"I won't ask you how you did that my dear." Jakeson said, grinning.

"I want you in it with me." Lisette said, piling on intensity and sincerity. "It's important

Lisette had her abnormalities, her overabundance of teeth; Jakeson was surprised when he found out she never went to the dentist. She didn't need to. They didn't wear. Jakeson had long given up trying to rationalize; drunk or sober he believed she was an angel, the days had a bright edge to them, a sparkle, since he had met her.

"So what's with this story," he asked. "What's it really about."

"It is about intelligence, a *Supreme Intelligence*, one of the biggest and best there is. It is floating around out there in the universe when it comes across Earth. It becomes interested and hangs out, curious about the inhabitants; their races, their tribes, their customs and ideas. But what the intelligence really likes about Earth and its inhabitants is the notion of sex. And its many customs and practices."

"Sex." Jakeson said, taking her hand. "I like that. Especially the practices bit."

"Sex is a thing that can only happen in the flesh; a kind of physical *glandular* thing, but it's more complicated than that; the intelligence wants to find out more but only can do so if it becomes one of them."

"Like, a human?" Jakeson said. "This is about you, isn't it my love?"

Lisette ignored him and hurried on: "It has the technology after all, being the Supreme Intelligence. So faced with quite a few fundamental decisions it sets about coming down to Earth. It has to decide what sex to be and where to live."

Ralph Jakeson was proud of his wife.

The best they can do if they all pool their efforts. America it becomes interested in power. Becomes a woman. A female. A girl. "Then a whore. better Movie star started a piece introducing the Famous Fellatrix. This becomes hero, a dreadful girl. Sound you exacty, he laughed.

"Sexiest Man in th world

"I'm not quite sure about playing myself." Jakeson said

"I see Gustav Rye in the role." Lisette said.

Jakeson laughed "When he was young he was unstoppable still has appear

"I see you more as xxxxxx she said.

"Unorthodox casting. I like it."

It really nis isn't it

"Her name is Lisette and," Jakeson laughed and died, uttering his words last with a smile on his face, "and I always thought you were an angel."

101

Final Scenes

You are Now Not Broken

"There was a broken man who had broken heart," Lisette had taken Childheart firmly in hand "soul something that rymes with pole."

"Glass kills Lisette because she knows his secret." Iggy said. "He is behind all this."

Childheart finished. "Glass steals somethng from her, little realizing it contains Coyle, her per rattlesnake."

Iggy knew he had Glass and Rye cornered. Next up: the Fight or Flight response. But from who, them or him. Who would mke the first move. They had the upper hand, the connections, the firepower; fuzzy, a dramatic ending was required to satisfy:

So Glass was dead. He had been saved the chore. Somebody had been here and done the job for him.

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90

The Man who owned Hollywood The Machine

Iggy could see clearly now.

"Gustav Rye hates the machine. It's a well-known fact." He said. "I believe he hates the machine because he hates himself. Self-hate is the very core of his chronic obesity."

"Psychology. Really." Childheart scoffed pausing to inspect his manicure. "It has an answer for everything. He hates the machine because he is the machine. "

"He is far wealthier than our previous estimates." Iggy said "He has holdings that far exceed and holdings in all the major corporations.

"And that means control."

"The Man who owned Hollywood!" Iggy said. "A great movie title."

"Yes. The idea came to me yesterday in meditation; the machine kills Jakeson and Lisette; legends are profitable. Jakeson was dying anyway; probably it is the Olives who are instrumental in her killing; good for business, just as the Blonde of the 21st Century.

"Another legend." Myth and magic "a culture that thrives on conspiracy theories."

"Gustav Rye is the machine. playing the long game. He must have enemies.

The machine. Secret meetings The Academy alchemy Another talent agency bubbles up
Here you are Pulling strings Hiding in plain site

Genre, Noir spanish revival

the mystery behind the mystery families skeletons in the closet

A brutal murder

"Lisette is worth more dead than alive."

"A girl version of James Dean. I'm sure she won't mind. Being another Monroe.

Jakeson is amazed.

He is reunited with. Lisette is revealed to be the intelligence
cares about her

"Await my instructions, it might take weeks; meanwhile, have some apple pie."

99

The Death of Lisette A Bejewelled Suicide

Coyle was having a nice day snaking around in the deep-pile shag rug when he heard the doorbell. Lisette had taught him to avoid startling visitors so he dutifully slipped out of the rug and zig-zagged away over the parquette to hang out under the sofa. Coyle liked napping in the rug but Jakeson had trodden on him once and he his box. Coyle was getting to be a big snake now and enjoyed freedom of the house. The visitor was a policeman. Lisette was polite with him. Asked her if she had jewels in the house. Jakeon had bought her a She went off to fetch them Coyle watched The Death of Lisette A Bejewelled Suicide

Lisette, sad widow, could have taken her own life.

Glass knew A drug overdose mistake with medication vague accident or suicide either way a tragedy too overt No note, that would be acceptable. He had it all worked out. Lisette;s jewels. All the gems Jakeson and bought her then pulled the trigger.

Coyle under the sofa. Watching.

Drugged, Lisette had not struggled.

Coyle wondered how to get home. He watched her little yellow car, forlorn in the middle of a pack of black and whites.

Soon buried beside her husband in Forest Lawn

He decided to go home with Glass. slip into his case - it was heavy with documnts, sure Glass wouldn't notice the little added weight of a lithe, young rattlesnake.

Glass left the crime scene, an air of importance; a man with placs to go and people to see.

Edwards air force base had seen it all in their time. They knew weird shit was always going down in LA. Warning lights flashed. Airspace intrusion. Sixty-nine thousand feet. A Los Angeles street map onscreen in three seconds. Sighting beamed up directly above Sunset Plaza. Probably those showbiz sensationalist hobbyists at it again fucking around with their x-ray death-ray strato-UFO-drone toys. Ignofucks! They had screwed with the radar before. This time unfamiliar lights flashed. Seven seconds into mission word from Norad arrived. Scramble interceptors. Not quite an everyday command but delivered with a certain cheerful benevolence and reserve. Lieutenant Mike Brody USAF was ready to go.

The brace of F41s slammed into the southern California sky.

Lieutenant Mike Brody USAF hit his blaster button (the affectionately nick-named full-power auto-throttle) his flight suit maxxng-out keeping him conscious as the F41 flattened him into his seat cracking Mach-3. The target lept at him. His weapon systems auto-armed.

Lieutenant Mike Brody USAF thrilled as target optics came online lighting up his helmet array, taking on a special, *secret light* he thought as rationality slipped sideways:

Lieutenant Mike Brody USAF had always liked classic rock and his trepidation eased hearing the opening chords of the old 'Entourage' theme; he really liked Janes' Addiction, then a few licks from Mick Ronson as a glowing triangle of extra-terrestrial luminosity, no:

The target was smiling at him. A girl! A blonde! Wow, this was great shit.

"Foxtrot Lulu." Combat control insisted, "Foxtrot Lulu - "

F41 flat out. He calculated how many miles a minute as she unbuckled his belt. Her fingertips playfully tickling admiration in her eyes -

"Foxtrot Lulu!"

Secretly Lieutenant Mike Brady USAAF hated his call sign, hated being Foxtrot Lulu thought it was sissy but he loved her teeth. He had never seen a smile with so many teeth. She was beautiful. He recognized her

Danger! Oh no, she was licking his balls! The light changed

Norad watched unblinkingly. How a beautiful girl could have stowed away in a F41 cockpit was beyond comprehension. The aircraft's vital signs were all healthy but its gun cameras had gone offline, they were blind except the small cockpit cam; this was the five mile high club on steroids. They all knew who she was; unblinkingly drinking in a certain movie star; they had all seen her on all the big screen at all the movie houses across Colorado Springs.

Orgasm as his two missiles

Lieutenant Mike Brody USAF loved the ocean. It was never the same color twice. A pale silver aqua today; soft, welcoming; fancifully he thought he would hear the surf if he tried; life suddenly full of limitless possibility; a new true love; the girl's kind blue eyes fading in memory; pressure suit easing; sensorium calming; feeling flowing back; dizzy carousel horizon spiral hypnotic, circling black predator bird; no, just his good buddy Foxtrot Rita.

The F41 fell out of the sky, leaf-like; fluttering; gently spinning in a wide circle descending over the naval air station at Point Magu just north of the LA County line in Malibu.

Lieutenant Mike Brody USAF shook the stick, felt the aircraft responding. Control online again the F41 powered up. Foxtrot Rita slipped in on his starboard wing to guide him onto the beam as they leveled out above the beanfields and made a perfect landing.

"Foxtrot Rita," Lieutenant Mike Brody USAF finally asked. "What happened dude?"

"You just engaged a UFO good buddy."

88

Intermission

Iggy had been oblivious of Glass's intention to kill Lisette.

Her death came as a great surprise to him. It caught him unawares/ He couldn't see a connection. He felt bad. Guilt

He had been off her case he could see no reason why anyone would want to kill her.

Roger was thoughtfully chewing when the thought came to Iggy.

Maybe Lisette wasn't dead afterall?

He looked at the horse. "Are you trying to tell me something Roger?"

Nobody leaves LA. You know that. They just check out.

"She'll be back?"

Roger grinned, nodded.

"I've been blind."

called off her surveillance operation weeks after he had established they were Ben Olive's men and Ben Olive's motive for following her.

As soon as he'd killed her Captain Glass knew he had made a big mistake.

But he didn't know why.

He watched her body fall motionless.

He noticed her arm convulsed unnaturally as she fell.

And he imagined the room clicked darker; he looked towards the windows; a partial eclipse of the sun.

Snakes don't cry. Didn't even have tear ducts. By the time Glass made this rationalization and took aim, Lisette's fast little rattler split so Glass saved his bullet. Coyle. Teaching a rattlesnake obedience taming a rattlesnake

99

The Secret Light

Major Magillicuddy believed Military Intelligence bulged with beaurocratic dumb-asses.

His theory based on the fact he clearly recognized traits of his own past, closed-minded dumb-assedness before he'd seen *'The Secret Light'* one rainy Tuesday 3pm in Hollywood.

His theory a subject he rarely talked about, if at all; superficially for fear of ridicule, but fundamentally for fear of losing his pension. Major Magillicuddy believed sanity subjective, so kept everything he knew on a strict need-to-know basis, which suited his keen sense of self-preservation, as nobody in Military Intelligence wanted to know.

Major Magillicuddy had been undercover on a secret assignment so secret for so long he thought he had been forgotten, until the *'for-your-eyes-only top-secret'* Foxtrot Lulu memo.

A Military Intelligence Officer career professional Major Magillicuddy lived in his own bubble of comprehension spending most of his hours in The Federal Building on Wilshire in Westwood. A fastidious man he didn't sleep in his office but spent most of his spare time there. He had made it comfy. He kept a supply of underwear, brightly colored pressed pants, argyle socks and medium starch floral-pattern button-down shirts, though not strictly a fed he had access to secure data bases but wanted blue blazer brigade military he was It was a vast bubble dumb SerendipityThe loneliness of living with until the Foxtrot Lulu report landed on his desk. ad ended on his desk. The similarities

Lieutenant Mike Brody USAF, having gone through layers of security to gain access to the nineteenth floor sat adorned with a big, bold time-in/time-out sticker on his pass waiting outside Major Magillicuddy's office.

He was enjoying the view.

He could see way across acres of white crosses in the VA Cemetery across Westwood Village, the UCLA campus and up into Bel Air; he knew if he kept going as the crow flies he would end up in Lancaster and the Skunk Works where McDonnell-Martin had some really hotshit airframes brewing, so he had heard, Mach-5 with proton motors, if you could believe that. The thought of flying such an appliance was better than sex. Sex.

Sex?

Lieutenant Mike Brody USAF worried all this sex crap had screwed his chances of being a test pilot. Secretly, all he could think about if the girl got home okay. He could still hear her voice. She wasn't an alien. They had photographic evidence. And got her DNA off of his cock. Her saliva. Procedures if he got one the Mach-5 numbers he could chase her down and fuck her brains out -

"Please come in Lieutenant Brody." Major Magillicuddy was a self-decried old fartus non erectus the young man in uniform; he hadn't expected to find a distracted 23-year old,

Lieutenant Mike Brody USAF dutifully reported his experience several several times in great detail in several debriefings. Everyone had been extremely polite. Disbelief in his account was minimal; after all, they had credible eyewitness accounts from the radar techs in Fighter Group and all the image capture material of *'the anomaly'* as it was to be called.

The young fighter pilot had only kept one thing to himself, or, he qualified

Edwards right through to the Norad Foxtrot Lulu engaged the intruder and what followed was -A fine musical interlude with virtuoso fellatio ad had a wet dream.

"I would like you to describe her nose."

This would be truth time. The young pilot fell into a prolonged silence staring at the Major incredulously.

"Her nose?" Lieutenant Mike Brady USAF said. "Big, she had a really big nose."

"Gimme some concentration here Lieutenant. That doesn't look like an overtly big schnoz to me!" hard copy of cockpit, the beautiful face

"In reality it was. Bigger."

Relief in being able to tell his story

, but not ugly, with a

little snick like a skin tag

You too. She blew you too?

Tickling

How would you know that

He had his twelfth man.

Nobody believed me

I believe you

"I think you are a lucky man son," Major Magillicuddy said.

How could he tell him that he was the last man on the planet to have been blown by the Famous Fellatrix before she left Earth?

He had a file

"How have you been since, you know, meeting her?" Major Magillicuddy said.

"Strangely, I've never felt better."

Seen the light eh?

Benevolence

I need you meet a friend of mine.

This is Jameson

Major Magillicuddy was a fastidious man, and because he was ostensibly working under cover he was allowed to no one would have ever dreamed he was a fed.

A mop of white hair they were here. The little green men.

His hangouts on Melrose

21 JWFD:

The Death of Gustav Rye

The Glock plopped death efficiently:

Captain Glass in element dealing hate savoring sweet spot pulling trigger hearing bang head swimming in joyous self-acceptance of guilt-free erotic release: a sexy perquisite for his Service to Justice for his people; smoking gun in hand dealing hate loving glee killing:

Rye's black-suited manservant dead on the floor at his feet.

Rye, boggle-eyed, gunshot ringing in ears, watched Glass reholster his Glock.

"Thank you for seeing me on such short notice," Glass said.

"You shot Jones." Rye appalled. "Murdered him in cold blood. You gave the poor man no chance. He was an innocent Welshman. Who are you?"

Glass didn't answer, instead, handed Rye his card and whimsically stepped over the body, delicately lifting Jones' jacket with his foot, revealing a gun. "Self-defense I can assure you. If it comes to that. And now you are going to die."

"Martin Glass, Captain," Rye pulled himself together, reading from the card. "LAPD Hates Crimes Homicide."

"Correct. Hate, hate, hate; money, money, money; gold, gold, gold." Glass said, eyes darting around the room excited by Rye's extravagant collection of bejewelled goblets. He began jabbering:

"Gems, gems, diamonds, pearls; cash culture marketing merchants media moguls industrialists business magnates landowners of billions of acres landlords of millions of lives; this little lot is just a sniff of the vast family fortune amassed going back a hundred

generations." He picked up a jade-encrusted gilver goblet. "Amassed at the expense of others: amassed, amassed, amassed!"

Rye arranged his obese features into mask of great moral:

"Captain Glass, kindly stop chittering like a manic monkey. It's most unbecoming for a senior officer of your standing."

"Ah, dignity." Glass laughed. "That is what you want, you fat turd. To die with dignity."

Rye moved threatening towards Glass, "you have just murdered my servant in my own home. He didn't deserve -"

Glass stopped him with a sharp backhander across the mouth.

"You will die as you deserve, in *prolonged* agony. Retribution for great suffering caused by countless generations of greed," Glass said as Rye inched back into his divan, reaching for his hidden Mauser pistol.

"We know all about you and your The Olives started publishing and printing Elizabeth Olive Art Dealer that branch had been oil, shipping, amassed amassed amassed greed, greed, greed.

"Why, I understand you have just played 'The King of the World' Glass suddenly calm

"I hear you almost stole the show with Miss Nice's movie playing 'King of the World' on Mr. Childhearts big horse. I'm looking forward to seeing it.

"Sad she had to died in spectacular manner.

"Yes, her her death scene was sublime; she was wonderful - "

"I am not talking about the movie Mr. Rye."

"She's dead." Rye stopped, spluttered: "She was an innocent. Miss Nice knew nothing of all this

"She and Miss Honeydew are of the ilk eternal sluts in the pay " Glass said

The establish values Looking for styles JWFD death scene:

You grand worldly stash

"I know who you are Captain Glass. "I took me a while to get it." Rye said.

"I am not without means. There is always a secret way to buy into the great unknown, the great secret list of the world's secret societies. There is always someone willing to sell."

"I know who you are." " You and your sacred scarab beetle deity."

"Exactly - well, I can do you one better. So there. I know who sold you out."

"Your beloved twin nephew and niece Olivia and Oliver. they told all before they died."

JWFD:

The Scarab Way

Mythology ethnology

"A very seductive idea Mr. Rye; *The Secret Way*." Glass smiled, "it won't save you."

"It won't tempt you?" Rye asked.

"Of course. You can tell me as much as you wish if it amuses you. I am sure you will make it an entertaining story and it will buy you the time it takes to tell. I will gladly listen, but your death afterward is certain."

Rye drained his goblet of wine. "Do you mind if I play with my Mauser?"

"Not at all." Glass point it at me and I will shoot out your shoulder

"I know your brother finds you obnoxious, but I'm sure your death with cause him distress. Especially if he knows you had a particularly painful death. Exactly the same death he will receive from the same executioner."

Rye stared at him then raised his gun

"Do you like my plot?"

Glass drew down, fired; a split second later Rye's Mauser boomed like a miniature howitzer taking \$350,000.00 value off of a Michelangelo atomizing a limb to white marble dust.

"You missed," Glass smiled. "Because I ruined your shot. Perhaps if your tranferred your gun to your left hand you could have a second try."

A Bloodstain blossomed on Rye's right shoulder. He winced, dropped his gun.

"You are a pig Glass

"Innectual but true. Do you like my plot."

"When the police arrive in a day or so and find your stinking fat body a pot of melting pig lard spilling all over this priceless carpet. I can smell the decomp nowt ."

Ah, you've guessed my plan?"

"So how will you prove to my brother you've killed me?"

"I will give him your gun." Better now it's fired it will probably be found you are responsible for the death, a detail lost in the scandal of but you will probably be buried with your brother - do you like my plot?"

Finally glass had got a reaction from Rye

"In fact, I'm sure I will be able to arrange the evidentiary findings that was your wish."

after killing Gustav Rye glass goes to Ben Olive.

Childheart watched from his hiding place.

21 JWFD:

The Death of Ben Olive

"You are going to die." Martin Glass took old Ben's hand.

"I know that. So are you." The old man belligerent. "What's the big deal? We're all going to die."

"True. Very True. But you are going to die today. I am going to kill you."

"Is that right. What's that - it's he recognized the big handgun.

"It's your brother's gun. Everyone will recognize it. He loved it. took it everywhere. Kept it with him at all times. It is going to be the murder weapon. The gunshot residue is already on his hands. It will match.

Because of your hate crimes.

Your family, your tribe, the old country

"You are going to be a hate crime homicide."

"You are crazy!"

"Of course." Glass agreed. By the soft liberal standards standards

I am going to kill you. Your last words. Do you know what they are? Have you thought about what you might like to say?" Glass said

He looked a hard film glazed his eyes. How could I?
scarab supremacy

"If you knew you wouldn't tell me

"I'm not interested," the old man said with finality.

Glass was calm, voice uttering sentences without breath. "I have no power over your last words Mr. Olive. It is your last thoughts that concern me.

"You will die knowing that we have taken out your whole family. All you have strived for, and fought for the past three thousand years. Take out your whole people - the most hated people/tribe/family. Do you know why?

Do you feel it - the black heart

Most hated people no, you and your scarab will not protect

JWFD:

"How many years have I waited for this."

The facial construction of his face; shatter cheekbone

"How many hundred times have I had this conversation
spoke words that I wanted him to remember until his final hours:

"You will die knowing your children will be hunted down and killed."

His people

Dismiss him Glib superiority

Glass sat quietly watching over old Ben's lifeless body. proud of his calm he was in no hurry. He had discovered the body after all. He had his story straight waiting patrol units no lights or sirens

Glass knew the intricacies of the LAPD command structure It would all fall into place harbor highway patrol county sheriffs.

He looked up.

Roger was staring through the window. The horse

He hadn't expected Roger to drop in on the

Make his

99

The Death of Ben Olive

"What is that horse doing here?" Glass said.

Grazing, the young uniform was tempted to say, but checked himself. "He is a police horse sir. I checked his badge permit. He was tied up a minute ago. Sir."

"I guess he got loose," Glass said suspiciously watching Roger savoring the decorative shrubs in the herbaceous border with delicate small sniffs and licks. Glass raised his voice, "police horses do not eat citizen's flowers; at least, on duty."

Roger paused his decorous nibbling and looked up.

"Yes. Sir. I though he was just licking them. Sir."

"Who is this horse with? Where is the mounted officer? Why are mounted division on scene?"

Sensing he was being talked about Roger bent down, took his rein between his teeth, clip-clopped back and draped it over the rail where Iggy had tied him and gave Glass and the young policeman his silly, toothy grin. The young cop laughed, Even Glass laughed. Neat party trick. Who had taught him that. Police horses don't know tricks. But Glass had better things to do than be entertained by a goofy old police horse.

Roger watched Glass enter the house for the second time that morning on the pretext of investigating a murder, he knew Glass had killed the fat old man earlier

He had waited until after Lisettes funeral no connection

Spend the spoils

He had a new place.

The old man was dead.

The last of his family line to die. Wiped out by a tribal feud lasting thousands of years. Iggy wondered could Chidheart finally rest. Knowing the Olive family was completely gone.

He hadn't liked the old man but it gave Iggy no satisfaction to watch Glass supervise the crime scene technicians as the coroner's van arrived. Old Ben's body was neatly sealed and carefully carted away.

did Glass know Iggy had seen him do it, and turn around and kill Gustav Rye.

He suddenly felt very uncomfortable. If they arrested him what would be the charge.

"This time your being the first person at the murder scene is

The person arresting Iggy was hesitant Iggy knew Glass was going to kill Rye. And the the cops lockup would be a perfect alibi.

"This is very cool."

Glass was happy. He was surrounded by dead men. He hated them all. Surrounding supporting roles

"Arrest him, and his horse."

91

The Fabulous Freeway Battle Stallion

Roger enjoyed jail; the big Downtown County lockup.

Unused to arresting and imprisoning horses the cops stashed Roger in the transport yard near the loading docks. It had been an usual arrest. Refusing to be led, Roger led them, quietly clopping back his horsetrailer at the rear of the house, and got in on his own.

Now he A quiet spot enough feed Roger looked out wistfully down at the jammed freeway. Since he arrived in Los Angeles the millions of trapped cars regimented in lines had fascinated him. He felt sorry for them. Where they lived where they were going He knew they were machines. He knew they had replaced horses. who now seemed rare in the modern world. Perhaps they all would soon be gone. He would like to retire while there were a few horses left to play with. He'd had enough time to think about it. teaching cars to think, park themselves. Roger laughed a big horse laugh.

"Whats amusing you, ol' warhorse?" the creaky old yard hand said, wandering over from his chores. "All that noise."

A whinny, okay I get it, he thought leaning on his broom, remembering. "I speak a bit of horse. It was if they were talking to me. It was if before they closed Hollywood Park. I got a few winners. Best was Friday nights watching the thoroughbreds. The three year olds. The young fillies lithe and lovely. Beautifula creatures." Chestnut. Roger nudged him hard, eh, you wouldn't want me to want me to get a boner? The old man laughed. Goddam stallion. Gave Roger a hearty fond slap on the rump and went back to his chores.

Roger went back to his slot in the wall. He knew he could escape any time he wanted. And save Iggy. The cops couldn't catch him; Up the steep embankments Their hooves would take his weight Roget had his escape all planned. He was just staying in County Jail

just to be polite. Yes A huge horsie bellow! The yard reverberated it had been over a hundred years since he got laid.

"That horse is getting restless."

Arrows, hot tar, flying bullets

The old man was riding with the Queen's 42nd Lancers

"Yo. Warhorse." Roger looked up, it was the friendly "you've got a visitor."

Iggy was free.

the Downtown facility of LA County Jail towers over converging freeways

Now his friend iggy was trapped, just like the cars, tied up.

They must be doing something - saving something.

Roger looked over his shoulder; herd of black and whites in hot pursuit.
growing in number; one swerved out of a sidestreet blocking his path.

Ah, a mobilefence. Roger jumped right over it remembering the time Childheart had entered him in a cross-country steeplechase.

That had been fun. The crash of splintering plastic. Unfortunately his left rear hoof took out the flashing light bar on the roof. "Its okay the driver said I thought the horse said sorry"
"Arrested for damaging city property. animal control

99

Hollywood Car Chase with Horse

Hate Crimes Homicide is a short walk from County Jail.

Arresting a horse is one thing, detaining him another. Glass was Roger was passive.
Roget busts Iggy out of Hate Crimes Homicide. The point is, where would they go and what what woud they do?

Pursued by Glass

"Are you sure you want to do this Roger?"

He did a horsie shrug, what the heck, he was bored. Life had been dull after making the movie.

Roger took off down Alameda Street. A few heads turned.

smell of burned deisel fuel on air; bigrigs arranging themselves to off-load their cargo after
This was the point of no return. Roger would be mortal, Roger could die; worse, someone could kill him. Decided he didn't want to die. He wanted to paddle in the sea. Splash I the surf. Go for a swim. Play with the surfer kids. Roger had something to live for.

And took off down the freeway

The Death of Captain Glass

Glass knew he was finished.

Finished with Hate Crimes Homicide.

He had fulfilled his mission. The Olives were done, gone. His Sacred Masters would be pleased. The Great Scarab Council would be pleased. He would be rewarded. Now all the corporate machinations of money ancient enemies The LAPD would be pleased. He had even closed the xxx case. Hw would be rewarded. His secret was safe now Lisette was gone. He could relax in sensuality and live out the rest of his days in enjoyment. luxury.

So why this feeling of impending doom. finished

Coyle enjoyed being a rattlesnake. He had enjoyed being Lisette's pet. Being her friend. She had saved his life. And now she was gone. He knew in some bright corner of his reptilian brain he owed her his life; somehow, in his time with her, she had elevated him to the workings of the higher mind. He missed her in his own rattlesnake way, and was as sad as it was possible for a rattlesnake to be.

He remembered when he was a baby snake living up her sleeve. Coyle knew Lisette wouldn't want him to do what he was going to do now.

He would kill Glass as easy as he killed a mouse. And not because he wanted to eat him. and not because Glas thretatened or endangered him him he remebered her voice revenge and human morality, fuck that shit, he was a snake.

He was torn as he waited for Glass so he could kill him.

Lisette was gone Glass had . to come home. Glass wanted revenge then savage small brain but it would be used to its max capacity

Coyle watched Glass strip and run a tub.

Lower himself into the hot water he moved

Lisette had taught him much. Free rein in the climbing up chair legs - he wasn't a tree snake

Young LA Rattler

Colye didn't rattle and without warning struck Glass to the side of the neck.

Injecting his venom straight into the blood. It would take seconds to get to the brain.

He pulled back with satisfaction as Glass slapped his neck saw the snake.

Coyle rattled in jubilation and rose up in his best Cobra impersonation; eyes burning, tongue flicking; he wanted Glass to see who had killed him as just as Glass had killed Lisette, gloating over her in her final minutes of life -

And struck a second time biting Glass right on the tip of his nose.

Screaming, thrashing in soapy bubbles foam Glass tried to reach for his gun as Coyle decided to add insult to injury strike the man's dick going for the dome.

Fangs run out venom but pain is pain using his favorite human profanity

Glass managed to get shots off but shot himself straight through the ankle and thigh. Rattlesnakes don't laugh, but Almost the fool Coyle thought remembering trailing bubble bath Coyle left through the window frightening the possum on his way down the tree. Flailing in gagging on crappy Coyle coiled around Glasses good leg and escaping from the bathtub as his gunshot leg purted a gusher femoral artery he hit the ground with thump

The Neighbors heard gunshots and called the cops.

Miss Merryberry heard the police scanner and called Iggy.

Iggy arrived late hoping to save Childheart and instead, saved Coyle.

Night popping blue flashing lights; officious cluster of black-and-whites and uniforms behind streamers of yellow police tape.

Iggy knew this crew. Glass's crew. He went in behind his gold badge. Got the word:

Glass bled out in his bathtub. Died fast.

"Died by his own service weapon." Forensic tech said. "Weird double puncture wounds at his neck, tip of nose and end of his dick. Snakebites looks like. Fucking snakes."

Coyle.

Iggy looked around; red chaos; blood; bloody white suds still thick with detergent foam booster; miniscule hint of slimy trail: bubblebath and gore; bathroom window open a crack.

They wouldn't have picked up on that.

It had to be Coyle.

Iggy finessed a fast exit pretext he knew anesthetised by looking for a weapon

Out in the yard Iggy crouched beneath bathroom window making a show of looking in the ornamental grasses and shrubs:

Let Coyle get his scent or whatever snakes did to recognize friend and foe.

Sure enough he heard a faint rustle; heard a timid, feint little rattle.

"Coyle, you little fucker, I know it was you. And you know me, right." Iggy whispered extending a hand. "So don't bite me okay?"

Coyle's bold head and shiny black eyes tongue flicking, reassuring words K-9 unit was the last thing he needed

"Shit Coyle, did *you* kill him?" Iggy extended a finger the young rattler, he undid his shirt cuff; Coyle got the idea backed up Iggy's sleeve. Saved Childheart the job. Snake on human murder was more palatable than human murder on murder

"You're getting heavy Coyle." Iggy remembering Lisette's intentions for freeing her snake. "It's about time you went back into the wild. No LA city stormdrains for you my man, it's back to where you came from in the LA County wilderness."

tickles rattle up under his armp cleared the crime it Made his way back to his car. Cluster of black and whites and flashing lights in his mirror.

Laying his arm "You can come out now."

Coyle emerged and coiled up on the passenger seat. It was a pleasant evening. Iggy knew where Listte had recued him up in Topanga and set off.

The 1949 fastback couple (in sedate pale gray) was soon happily whitewalling along; Friday night cruise along the strip Sunset chatting with his snake cool snake Sunet out to the Ocean. Iggy wondered would Lisette have been proud of what her pet rattlesnake had done.

Talking to his snake, nattering away

Elevated out of the low reptilian mind into higher consciousness he had revenge.

And murdered her murderer.

Hey, he was a snake.

Iggy found the patch of sage by the roadside.

.releases Coyle sage

Iggy set him free Coyle rattled off into the sunset sage

"I was worried you did it." Iggy told Childheart, chewing

"Not me. I was going to. Who did it?" Childheart

"Coyle, Lisette's little pet rattler."

"The snake she kept up her sleeve?" Childheart

"He wanted revenge.

Childheart looked at Iggy, "are you serious? He is a snake.

"So? Roger is a horse."

"But Roger's different.

"Coyle is special. He was Lisette's snake, she taught him stuff. You know she has special I suppose so. what's this?"

"An IOU," Iggy looked at Childheart. "I owe you."

was They were

"I am sure you will cope. Get along without me." "And you do have Miss Merryberry. I'm sure she wants to take care of you." The immuendo was de;ivered with mischief.

"Now you can rest too - retire - Roger

"I'm sorry to dissappoint you. But I'm not ready to be a mortal Iggy."

"Yet. I don't have what it takes.

JWFD death scene:

"I took me a while to get it." "What you wanted from me."

A sounding board."

"A man takes another man's wife."

"The pain, hatred, rage." Childheart said. "It takes a lot of understanding.

The violence of emotion is something

Emotional virgin

"It takes a long time to come to terms with."

"Almost, now I have settled the score there seems nothing left.

"What are going to do?"

"I'm not sure." (I am a twenty first century person.)

"It is imperfect. Hang around. Wait for a suitable time." He lifted his glass. "Don't look so forlorn Iggy, I will drop in to see you. I keep in touch with my old friends (in high places) hence all of this; these worldly things of the physical plabe.ge gestured around.

"It's all yours now Iggy."

"But what about Roger?"

Childheart laughed. "Roger is a horse."

"Exactly, and he is happy here in the 21st Century. He likes these times. His work is done. There hasn't been a cavalry chage with horses in a hundred and thirty years.

"You think he wants to live out the rest of his days giving children rides at the beach?"

"C'mon Iggy, Roger is a warhorse."

"Right, you can only be immortal for so long joke, get it?"

Childheart normally didn't tell jokes, his humor was dark

Iggy looked at the deed of ownership.

"What's this?" he said

"It's Roger's pink slip."

"Roger isn't a car!"

What?"

"Bequeath him to you." Miss Merryberry said.

"No, I don't know how to take care of a horse."

"You won't be taking care of Roger Iggy, he will be taking care of you."

"I'll handle everything.

"You own everything

unfinished business

"I have something to take care of."

"I've had the whole book to think about it," coyly, and battled her long eyelashes just for the hell of it. "I might let you fuck me Iggy."

"Really Miss Merryberry, I think I might like that."

She hadn't been married lately and thought Iggy a suitable candidate; her head filled roger at full speed galloping along the waters edge phantom horse even outrun and outfoxed the sheriffs helicopter always found his way home Doggerel/

99

Poopadoopala

Iggy drove out to Burbank.

It was an hour after midnight; traffic light, night bright, clear; peeping shy moon; drifting high cloud, a mellow mackerel sky patchwork; his passenger licked his hand; ahh, idyllic; all was well with the world.

The little dog was very pleased to see Iggy again.

She rode along in the passenger seat happily, her wheel folded beneath her.

Iggy scratched her head and went back to pleasantly drifting in benevolent conspiracy sifting his end-game plotting for potential mistakes. North Hollywood drifted past. There were few bars and restaurants open. Action was low-key. Benevolence on the air. Good times rolled. Iggy relaxed. It had been a good case. He had found the little dog. And no one got hurt. All the baddies got dead, but they had killed each other. Coyle didn't count. He had killed Captain Glass. Iggy cut Coyle some slack. Coyle wasn't a baddie, he was a rattlesnake. Lisette's pet rattlesnake. Iggy guessed Coyle loved her and wanted revenge. Who was to tell Coyle Lisette wasn't really dead or revenge was bad, hey, he was a rattlesnake. Maybe killing Glass was rattlesnake justice. Maybe he would get it rattling about in the sage. There was lots about life Iggy didn't get. No one got one hurt and he wanted to make sure it stayed that way. as he tied up the loose ends. Lisette's words echoed. "I'm not dead Iggy, okay? I'm just resting, okay? Nobody leaves LA, right? We just check out awhile. I'll be back. You do believe me don't you? I'm your friend Iggy, I wouldn't lie to you. I'll be back, I promise." Lisette had looked ordinary in death. He realized for the first time she had a big nose. Yes, there was lots he didn't understand. Childheart wasn't exactly human, or, he corrected himself, mortal. There was a paradox, He had found the little dog. Miss Summerdew was so pleased she gifted the little poodle to Iggy she was going away, so made made him give word he would find Poopadoopala a good home. That's where they were going now. To commit a reverse burglary. Iggy Poopadoopala the size of Rogers left front hoof. Roger was compassionate.

Parking in abundance. He left the 1948 fastback coupe (in sedate pale gray) safe on Cauenga Boulevard outside a well-lit Cadillac dealership and together they strolled to the Eat-All-Nite diner, the red '24-7-Saved!' janitorial services van out back.

Hiding little doggie under coat Iggy went in, smiling.

Mm! Bacon! Bacon smells good. Bacon grease best. Place popular. Sizzling. Food good. Contractor sitting in banquette. Iggy slid in reaching for the menu. Doggie poked out.

"Er, no dogs in here Mr. Chang."

"What dog? You don't look good Pete," Iggy said quietly. "What's up?"

The contractor squirmed uncomfortably, dutifully munching toast without appetite.

"I didn't see it Mr. Chang, what I did see, I didn't see." He mumbled. Iggy non-plussed. Pete usually a man of adroit vocabulary. "Didn't hear it Mr. Chang. Won't write it up." Pete smiled thinly. "24-7-Saved Janitorial confidential cleanups *guaranteed* confidential,"

"What are you frightened of Pete?"

"Nothin' toxic. You read our original report. Retrieved the animal. Left a false trail."

"Yes, good job. What's upsetting you tonight?"

"You'll see it for yourself. I've checked out the location Mr. Change. It's safe to enter." He picked up the grocery bag from the seat beside him and it shoved over to Iggy. "Your uniform, it's your size. It's okay. This booth's in a security camera blind spot."

Iggy humored him; trustworthy into the bathroom came out wearing the red 24-7-Saved Janitorial uniform Her name's poopadoopala. She won't make any noise. Pete placated little doggie licked his hand.

Red janitorial service truck a bright splash on the shiny night:

Iggy in the back comforting Poopadoopala; the little dog sensed this was goodbye, but she trusted him, licked his hand again.

Iggy leaned forward for a glimpse of the street; shy moon still coy; clouds riding high; soft wind gently fondling the leafy young trees formally bordering sidewalk; behind them imposing studio front offices guarded by famous cartoon character silhouettes welded into tall wrought-iron fence; real gaurds on the gate real friendly, remembering letting Pete out for his midnight lunch an hour earlier:

Smiles and pleasantries exchanged, gates opened.

They were in.

Wow!

The Happiest Place on Earth

Corporate headquarters and production hub; they crossed studio lots; enormous sound stages buzzing with quiet activity and out along a service road under the mountain passing a construction site in the pale moonlight; poured concrete columns and walls and more concrete, giant cranes and giant plant resting for the night arriving at a new complex behind a high perimeter fence. Private. Keep out. Very private. Beward of Dogs.

Gaurds, in the same uniform, were the next grade up in vigilance and armed.

Again, they remembered Pete. Everything was in order. They passed though trundling along slowly Iggy emerging from hiding; landscaping improving dramatically suddenly bulging with sculpted shrubs covered in exotic blossoms, exquisite dwarf trees in rolling

dunes of soft green mossy groundcover, large sculptures of dogs everywhere; hyena, wolves, St. Bernards, ancient Tibetan mastiffs and low structures straight out of Architectural Digest.

They parked in the small well-lit lot.

Pete ebullient for two seconds; they were in in.

Stashing Poopadoopala in a toolbox Iggy followed Pete.

Passage through reception in the dimmed laboratory.

Pete's handheld electronic devices. No one would suspect anything. Everything would be

"Through that door Mr. Change. If I might be permitted to say so sir, this is going to permanently fuck with your head."

Emotionally chummy Iggy thought, surprising himself with his assessment;

It could be the hint of music, distant, rooms away, cheerful; or the holographic dusk drawing him in; sun going down in an infant's nursery. Soft, fuzzy. Non-threatening. And a deliciously natural smell, grass, hay, farmyards; a happy cow moo; music from a picnic. Laughter found his way. Crickets more crickets and and an owl. The moon winked at him. The owl winked at him. It was safe here.

"Hi, *you* came?" The child's voice was close, friendly, cautious, whispered. "What are *you* doing here?"

Iggy looked around. The only sign of life a dachshund sleeping in a wire cage. The dachshund stretched, laughed. "Didn't mean to scare you mister, sorry." It nudged the cage door with its long snout. It opened. The little dog poked his head out: "I like to keep the door closed. It gives the night watch guys a sense of security. You have twenty minutes before they show up. I assume you aren't here to steal anything?"

"Er, no. I am here to help a friend's dog." He opened his coat.

The little dachshund squeaked with joy. "It's Poopadoopala!"

Now Iggy knew what had freaked Pete out.

Now he got it.

It was a talking dog.

It scurried over to Iggy, jumping up to greet the little poodle.

Iggy put her on the floor. She and the dachshund were great friends; sniffing and kissing, licking and wagging. Iggy impressed. The little dachshund was only animatronics, a AI K9 robot, obviously a prototype robotoys; animatronics had come a long way.

"You don't seem too surprised I can talk?" The dachshund said.

"I was warned," Iggy said. "What's your name?"

"Scooter."

"Oh, okay. Hi Scooter. Sounds like you don't like it here."

Scooter looked at Iggy quizzically. "Why'd you think that?"

"Oh, just a thought." Iggy backed off.

"What's your name mister?"

"Iggy."

"Short for Ignatious, right. I like names. Scooter is a typical dog name. I would have liked something more human, on account of my brain, but that's bioengineering. Officially, my name is my model number: 'Scooter-One'."

"Do you want to get out of here Scooter-One," Iggy asked. "You know, escape?"

"Escape? Take me with you?" The little dachshund chuckled. "Why would I want to do that? Why would I want to leave. I like it here. I have friends back there in the dorms. They let me run around the place. I'd have no one to talk to. Dogs don't talk in the outside world. They'd treat me like a freak. Here, we k9s talk to each other."

Scooter came over and stared into Iggy's eyes. Iggy ruffled the dog's head.

"Hey, you're warm, they gave you natural body temperature too."

Scooter looked at Iggy in miscomprehension. "I get it. You thought I was a mechanical. A poochbot. I'm all dog mister, 100% canine."

They shared a long moment of silence as Iggy took it in.

Scooter shrugged: "That's bioengineering, biogenetic animation, call it what you will. get the voice box right; I still sound a bit squeaky but it's early days yet. "In human years I'm only fifteen myself. But Poopadoopala is sixteen. She is a real dog though" Scooter and the three-legged little poodle looked at each other lovingly. "Oh Poopadoopala."

No, I'm

"How did you know.

"I know this horse called Roger, he is a mindreader."

"I don't believe that," Scooter said. "The technology isn't ready yet."

"I wasn't being serious.

"My grasp of humor is pretty rudimentary. Mindreading is just the showbiz element of telepathy. It's a fascinating subject. Telepathy technology is still under wraps in early days.

"Is that right?" Iggy thought in for a cent, in for a dollar;

"What do you know about extra-terrestrials Scooter."

"They're okay for the most part, there aren't too many of 'em in Los Angeles I believe. Tend to keep to themselves. Harmless and benevolent for the most part,"

"Oh really?" Iggy said, struggling with disbelief. "How about ghosts, spirits from the past?"

"Gods, immortals, that sort of thing. They're here in LA too. LA attracts all manner of immigrants; legal, illegal, human or not; you must know that. It's like a magnet for xxxxxx Where are you from?"

"Well, I'm not sure." Iggy said. "It might seem strange, but try as I may, I haven't been able to find out."

The little dachshund said, coming over, thoroughly sniffing Iggy then sitting down. "I believe you. "

"You do?" Iggy said.

"Yes. But you smell okay and are sort of an innocent. Yet to be corrupted by life."

"Sounds high fallutin' coming from a dog. How would you know that?"

"Exactly because I'm a dog. We intuit stuff about humans. And I'm a very intelligent dog. I process my canine instincts with superior brainpower. As a human you have a much bigger brain than me, but only operate on a very small portion of brain capacity, whereas I have a smaller brain operate on full brainsize capacity; other than vast general knowledge they downloaded a whole bunch of psychology stuff, I can incorporate stuff. But I'm still a dog. Allegedly mans best friend, but really we see you as providers. Despite all the sentimental stuff, we are pragmatist survivors."

"Amazing," Iggy said. "The facts of life from a talking dog."

"Hey, people like talking dogs. We've been tops in popular culture for centuries. Newspaper strips, movie cartoons, toys. Humans love us. We'll be on the market soon. Talking pets. Nothing too scary to start with. Limited vocabulary models. Like parrots. You teach us a Give it ten years. Easy to houstrain. Who are you?"

"I'm a private investigator, sort of."

"Not what, who. You hardly seem average. Fast reactions, calm

"I think I might have been a soldier. Or an assassin. I have these skills.

"No, you don't seem the type. You don't have the instinct. Trust me, I know instinct."

"Guess I'm just a cipher," Iggy said, and smiled at the little dog. "My role seems to be decode myself."

"Cool, a cipher; you're deep!"

"So are you Scooter. Deep."

"No, I'm just a dog. Hey look, maybe you're yourself, you know, decoded."

Iggy thought about it.

"You seem well-adjusted. Hardly a guilt and doubt-ridden neurotic type, like the humans who work here, always worrying; here, they're all serious and worry rit forget I'm a dog." Poopadoopala "Dogs were

They talked. Poopadoopala Scooter reminded him he had three minutes before the securiy

We work something out. Dogs can be cunning. Cunning dog you know.

"Take care," Scooter said.

Iggy Thanking red truck reassued Iggy promised a bobus

Avoiding the Hollywood Freeway fastback coupe (in sedate pale grey) alone. Cauenga Hollywood Bowl

Iggy left the two little dogs sitting side by side, a happy couple, happy to be reunited and slipped, out into the night safely past the armed guards leaving The Happiest Place on Earth.

Night weakening, Iggy's sleep faded along with his delicious waking dream.

Miss Merryberry gasped and Iggy groaned as they shared the mutual, not-unpleasant pain of unrequited desire; their clinch shuddering, their control about to snap, their need to consume each other overpowering but hard slivers daylight the final curtain of reality.

Iggy pulled himself out of bed grumbling:

Nocturnal intrusions into the mysterious realms of his obsession for his beloved Miss Merryberry's dark privacy had become a sleepless nuisance of late; he had a bold plan for release, but that would come later.

Today was the big day: he wasn't sure whether to chuckle or yawn.

Childheart was releasing Roger back into the wild.

That's how Childheart saw it. Iggy thought it was cute. Retirement or freedom wasn't enough. Roger had never been a wild horse in the first place. He had always been an Aristocratic Equine Gentleman, albeit a stallion, born and bred with excellent social skills yet doubtlessly feisty tempered in battle. Staggering to the bathroom Iggy wondered if his plan would go wrong. Childheart might see it coming.

He would find out soon enough. Miss Summerdew had been accommodation.

The rich aroma of French Roast and caffeine nudging Iggy into coherent thought.

He opened the blinds. Dawn nudging sunlight up over the horizon; the endless planting of palm trees popping up through the cracks of the urban sprawl right across to the beach cities of Los Angeles bordering the ocean. He could just see the smudge of Catalina sitting on the horizon just visible through the cloud layers of morning mist; he had enough gas to get out to Malibu to the north.

Traffic was fractionally lighter on Saturday mornings. It would take an hour at most.

Childheart would be gone and Roger would be waiting probably taking his long-promised paddle in the surf. True to his word keeping his promise. Roger would be at mortal peace out to grass in the Santa Monica mountains with no more ceaseless riding the ether with all the other ghost riders in the sky. Childheart had paid penance for whatever drove him; now he would face eternity alone, or *so he thought*.

He had no idea Iggy had made other arrangements.

He had time for another cup of coffee.

Roger would be free and so would he. This would be payment for Childheart

101

Eternal Foal

Geraldine Summerdew had thought of everything.

And it was going to be perfect.

She was going to take back her foal: her stallion.

It was a glorious Saturday morning and the day was on, beaming magnanimously; Geraldine's sleek limousine skimming along out to the ocean under soft baby-blue sky, fresh green trees basking in the sunshine promising days of pretty blossom;

passing the old 20th Century Fox lot on Pico/Olympic Geraldine remembering:

golden times shooting golden scenes famous

regret she was certain Los Angeles pausing to sniff the roses and smell the coffee celebration starting the weekend with eggs sunny-side up endless rashers of sizzling bacon gales of fresh bagels what could go wrong?

Darkness in seconds; gloom descending; day shrouded by heavy clouds of thick ocean mist; promising drama colors flattened monochromatic silence cars riding slo-mo slowing in caution Geraldine drew back nervous, what could go wrong?

She had agreed to meet him; time hadn't healed him.

Her heart yearned for her foal.

The surf boomed, echoing in the mist, sky hanging low, luminous, white:

Man and Horse motionless at waters edge.

"Well old friend, the time has come **to say goodbye.**" Childheart murmured rubbing the horse's neck. Roger reciprocated, nuzzled Childheart affectionately. "Farewell and **goodbye old horse.** At least for the time being."

Childheart grateful he could see the horizon; he felt woozy, weak at the knees.

He hadn't expected parting would be traumatic. Nervously, he slapped Roger across the haunches. Roger gave him a bewildered horsy frown. *You want me to run away? You've been watching too many Hollywood Westerns old friend.* Childheart wiped an eye, laughed; cowboy hero releases wild mustang hero into the wild watches it disappear into the sunset in a long fade out. He laughed again and gave Roger a big, teary hug.

91

Eternal Heartstrings

Ocean mist glowing with the rising sun.

Geraldine's sleek limousine cautiously pulling off of Pacific Coast Highway.

This was the spot, had to be; Geraldine nervous; she could see nothing in the swirling whiteness, except, distantly, man and horse at water's edge watching sandpipers too fast to get caught by the breaking waves:

She drew closer, stopped; the darting little birds hypnotic on the shiny, wet sand.

Geraldine checked her makeup; her famous green eyes stared back, questioning; her mouth soft, questioning with a cupid pink kiss on pale, perfect skin; she knew she was beautiful, a Goddess, quite literally, in the flesh; but how would he feel about her?

Was she making a mistake?

He just didn't want to know. He would have recognized her immediately years ago; recognized her in movies, magazines, movie posters; she had been around long enough, years and years, decades; yet he had never made a move to meet her, never called her.

Finally her patience had ran out. Then his message. She had called him. And oh how she wanted to see her foal again. But why meet here?

Geraldine knew she looked good: good enough to eat; she knew it was the way she was made; deliciously; a sumptuous taste of glowing mortality:

Ahh, sweet life; with the slightest touch of sun on her skin her color come up glowing; she had paid special attention for her date this morning; she reclined in the deep cushions of her limousine, quietly excited, enjoying the soft silky velour against her cheek, watching, waiting; the morning mist pulsing, her patience a hard fought-for virtue; she had been waiting for so long. Geraldine had spent extra time and care with her makeup and wardrobe choosing, for this was a special occasion; she could wait no longer a opened her window "Foal!"

Man and horse

She shouted again, louder. "Foal!"

Roger's ears spinning, dancing a fandango, eyes sparkling ancient recognition:

Joy!

Geraldine's shout feint; distant, echoing on the mist:

"Foal!"

Excited, the big horse gently pulled free from Childheart; hoofbeats shaking the sand, charged across the beach in full gallop.

Childheart, aghast, watching Geraldine get out of her limousine.

Roger giant puppy; leaping, dancing around her, reunited with his mistress; the girl who had taken him from his mother and given him to her boy; his new master for life.

Warhorse dwarfing Geraldine but she matched his exuberance, throwing arms around his neck lifting her clear off of her feet swinging her around ecstatically; laughter ringing; young girl at play with her foal. Childheart watched in awe; fearful; beware; dangers of love, heartbreak, cowardice and death. Death. And more death.

A curtain in time lifted:

Childheart faced the happiest days of his life.

Hours of innocence, tenderness; memories in millennia long past; a sunny afternoon; springy turf underfoot; out walking with his girl, hills green, trees plush with early summer; they had taken their foal, her gift to him, the baby horse they shared along with them.

They quarreled, about nothing in particular; a heated, harmless spat they knew would soon pass; they sat separated by yards in the long grass, waiting for their tempers to cool; waiting for sweet reconciliation, foal standing by her side.

She was stroking the foal affectionately, his foal; he had called out, commanding the baby horse to come to him.

The happy little colt obeyed.

She retaliated calling the foal back to her side.

Loyalty torn he was soon running back-and-forth between them, boy, girl and foal in a game of three; Roger circling, long gangly legs ablur in full baby-horse gallop; he was funny: - their laughter eternal.

Childheart could hear it now; her voice cajoling the little colt back to her side; their happiness would never end; foal eternal.

Childheart looked at Roger standing beside him on the beach; great war horse eternal, but he was tired, tired of riding with the gods; he just wanted out to grass in mortality.

Childheart looked at Geraldine.

He had been so happy that day so long ago it hurt his chest to recall.

Recall his girl long lost; lost in millenia to a modern world of cynicism and science.

So soon after childhood, those moments haunted Childheart; the picture of her sitting in the grass with the foal, smiling at him for eternity; his happiest time in living memory; the girl who had become his wife; and then darkness, it had taken him so long to realize she had never been his: falling through time inseparable from her haunting green eyes. He knew he could never go back, but he knew he could no longer go on, and he heard her voice again. He was in a trance. [He walked over to her towncar](#). She watched him approach.

He stopped at the car [door](#), solemn; taking her in.

Now he looked into the radiant face his girl long-lost; his wife.

"I am called Geraldine now," she said.

"Yes. And our foal is called Roger. He recognized your voice immediately."

"He has grown. He looks as if he has been through the wars."

"He has. He is old. He is going to retire."

He knew she had never been his, or anyone's except but JWFD

He knew she had never been his but that didn't stop him

Childheart affectionately linked his arm around Roger's neck, pulling his head down to touch his own; Roger knew all

91

"Women look; women decide.

Men must learn that; men just show up."

Chance to be a Man

Fighting the impulse to touch, Childheart and Geraldine stared at each other.

"Mortality suits you," she said playfully, mustering courage. "You look good. Why have we never met this latest side of life? Have you been hiding from me?"

Childheart was lost for words.

She got back into the limosine, putting the car door between them: "You could have easily found me in Los Angeles?"

In the silence gulls cried, puffs of wind lifting them on luminous drifts of mist.

"Well, have you been hiding from me?" Geraldine asked, looking up through the tinted glass, she lowered the window waiting for an answer; he weighed her question watching the gulls in the mist:

Childheart the wise; he had learned too late never to look for women.

Chasing women a youthful sport; carousing with the ladies, tumbling them fun; the myth of seduction, the myth of male hunter; the myth of finding 'the one' when all along, *women do the looking*.

Now he knew women look; *women decide*.

Men must learn that; *men just show up*.

"Why have you been hiding from me?" Geraldine repeated.

"Hiding from you, really?" Childheart said with an impertinent grin. "I showed up my love. I'm right here right now."

"You took your time. I've missed you."

"Is that right?" He said. "I wanted to see you again too."

"But you *waited* long enough." She laughed. "You *have* changed."

Roger pensive, watching: no longer funny frisky foal, intently watching, slowly moving his head from one to the other following their conversation. It was Roger's doing that Iggy had found out their secret, planting a seed in Iggy mind that he could help.

Geraldine opened the car door for Childheart, would he get in?

But Childheart **stood watching her, his curiosity gentle, kindness.**

Geraldine at a loss. She relied on her magnetic beauty; yet he was impervious.

She didn't know what to say. This was hopeless. He had called. Left a message. Wanted to see her.

"You called me," Geraldine said. "Left a message."

"No, you called me," Childheart said. "Left a message. Time and place. Here I am."

Staring at her. Instinctively, as if from habit, they both turned to Roger:

Roger nodded *I cannot lie*.

Their conclusion immediate, mutual; Iggy.

This meeting his doing; he had set them up, got them together; Roger had helped.

"You never told anyone about us, but Roger knew." Geraldine said.

"Yes, and in his own special way he let his friend Iggy know." Childheart chuckled.

Geraldine looked up at the old horse: could he really know what they were thinking?

His big horsie eyes twinkled with amusement; he knew; knew she'd had eons, to consider, to remember, their shared times together, their shared years doing a million small things; walking, talking, always laughing; they had been young, happy. Then she met another man, doing *big* things: *her lover*; it had been real she told herself, knowing she was fooling herself, *but she didn't want to hurt her poor boy husband with the truth.*

Roger coughed, *now that is horseshit!*

Lover in your mind, flash in the pan in his, laughter teasing the depth of her secret only in your mind told him and diffused it

And it came to her. She knew the words Childheart wanted to hear.

"You wanted me to give you a chance."

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Chance to be a Man

"Chance; to be man enough to take me back, no matter what I had done?"

"But you walked out and told me I would never trust you again."

"Yes, I did. That was just a ploy. So I wouldn't have to tell you the truth."

My *mother ordered me. the queen* to try to patch things up.

I knew you weren't trying to shame me. I knew you would have taken me back, whatever I had done." she said. " You deserved a chance. You deserved to hear the truth. Whether I wanted to come back or not."

"Thanks." Childheart said awkwardly. *"That's what I most wanted most in the whole wide world. A chance at the truth."*

But my pride stopped me telling you. His words, and hers, in chous, together.

They both looked at Roger; their voices distant, unspoken, heard only in their minds: it was as if the old horse was channelling their thoughts; a benvelolent intermediary, the truth, inhibited by regret, pride and shame, revealed at last:

I could never have told you the truth. How could I tell you I constantly dreamt on him, even when I was with you. I was in love with him. I was married to you. But you knew that, which is why you let me go to- find out if he had feelings for me; he didn't; but he gladly took my gifts.

She paused; morning tide rushing up the sand a distraction:

... after I had lost you, all I could think about was you. By then it was too late. I was wrong but could never have admitted it.

"Pride had hardened my heart." She said aloud, finishing.

"I've often thought I should have taken you back, and waited; you would have told all in your own time," Childheart said.

"No," She said. "We had our pact. There could only be truth between us. You couldn't, I couldn't live on a lie, so I walked out on you. I will tell you everything. The explanation you demanded. The explanation you deserved. The truth."

"I needed to hear it back then." Childheart said. "There is no need now. It's been long enough. I think I already know."

"I have to tell you." Reached to touch his arm. "In my own words."

Childheart laughed: "Why the remorse. I took you from life."

"And then we were both dead but not together, we should have been together."

Tears welled, her lip trembled. It is all my fault."

Childheart smiled, he had seen this before: her crocodile tears.

"It's true." she said. "I wanted us to be together, Please believe me."

Childheart wondered if he believed her or not.

"There was was time when I believed it impossible for a lie to exist between us," he said. "We were very young."

Beach, surf, ocean, birds, mist; held in silenct abeyance; wind low. gentle, lifting her hair, opening her cloak, a thin chiffon blouse covering her bosom.

"I passed over into the ethereal place denied by my people to exist." Garaldine said, staring out to sea. "And the spirits mocked me; mocked my words; mocked my self-pity for allowing myself being taken so young."

Childheart laughed. "Eternal life can be cruel."

"Yes. Time drifted by in my new life-after-death; where your lance pieced began to heal; I was cursed with this scar, this abomination."

She pulled aside fine chiffon. Childheart stared at the finegolden down in awe, as if an aparition; he stopped himself touching the soft, delicate opening between her breasts.

"It is beautiful," he said. "Exactly as I remember."

"No, that was real; my real life, real wife cunnie you recall between my legs; my mystery you could never solve, never satisfy; that I would never let you satisfy, for fear of losing my self; or lose control of you."

Childheart hearing suspicions held since ancient times put to truth in her words:

"This, this is a curse," her fingers traced between her cleavage.

She took his chin, guiding his gaze back into her eyes.

"My eternal curse. Men wanted me out of macabre curiosity, to see it. I exist as a freak, a sex deviant for perverse amusement. I came to believe it an incarnation of my lie to you; cute pretty cunnie carved into my chest, a talisman; my lie brought this travesty on myself."

"No, you can't blame yourself. I murdered you. In black rage. In hatred. I killed you."

Rolling surf crashed, splashing up the beach around their feet.

"My cunnie isn't attached to my heart," she laughed. "What a crock, a mockery."

Another wave broke loudly.

"That was my proud lie. My damnation," she continued. "I wanted you to believe he was a dalliance of passing, mere lust, but I loved him. Deeply." She brought her fists up between her thighs in contempt.

"You were only a girl, whatever you did you didn't deserve to die." Childheart said.

"I couldn't stop myself wanting him. I didn't want to stop myself wanting him."

Geraldine touched his cheek. "You *have* changed," she said. "You have forgiven me," and she laughed, "but you still don't know the truth. Exactly what you have forgiven me for."

Childheart staring; remembering black rage:

She had stood proud before him and killed their love.

Taken him down with her bold confession; her words echoed: "My cunt isn't attached to my heart."

He had never believed her words:

It was her cruelty that killed telling him she loved him but had greater needs he could never fulfill; her cunt; powerful dark word; her cunnie-cun-cunt used as casually as nose; her cute button nose; cutting him down, cutting her boy husband down to a cuckold.

This gave great pleasure, fed her hatred; he knew she loved another knew she had been spurned. She burned with spite telling him their marriage a worthless contact, their vows of truth hollow words, weak puffs of foul breath blown off by wind.

Rage swept over him; he leapt onto his horse wheeled took her down with one thrust.

Backing away staring in disbelief at his lance, blooded.

Roger tried to make him miss stumbling, faltering, but failed; death born with a fast passing stab; she was falling, he was dismounting, kneeling at her side taking her hands as life drained from her eyes in their last moments together.

"My cunnie isn't attached to my heart. I loved you," she laughed, her lie on her dying breath; leaving him to live with it, knowing it would destroy him slowly; what had he done: it had taken a half-moment and she was gone, dead.

He had killed his wife.

"I killed you," he said.

"Yes," Geraldine said. "You killed me, and I killed us."

Her lie echoed as it had a thousand times before: *My cunnie isn't attached to my heart. I loved you.* The first time she told him he had seen sorrow in her green eyes, known it a lie. Now her words came without guile; her regret real. Childheart stared at her **Radiance truth** **Radiance truth whene never a lie between them the very spot where you plunged your lance reached made men sojourns into life** The years passed. I could never rest. My lie to you. my cunnie *is* attached to my heart touches my very core but it was a flash for him that passed in hours. I couldn't admit that. I was just another notch on his cock, a number on his list of conquests. For me, I thought of him as my lover but he saw me as no more more than an occasional tumble in the hay. His people were my people, worldlywise, with riches, fortunes; I had thrown away my husband. She forced herself (Loved you more)

"I knew all this," Childheart said. "Or, suspected.

She took a step backward, making distance between them,

"I knew I could forgive you if I knew the truth." He said. "We could start again, build on it together."

"But I wasn't prepared to give you chance."

Nothing had changed; Geraldine worldlywise, her pride mystery her finerie 21st Century uous movie star; back then he did not care she was a Princess, he didn't care; he saw her just another rich local kings daughter, but not just another conquest in the procession of trysts and adventures, *which is what he had her believe*. She was different because but she had captured his heart; her mother the queen take her away, he would provide in a world where princesses are ten a penny

"I took away your pride. I stood before your compatriots, your fellows, your friends, with him by my side, flaunted him, making it obvious they all knew he was laying with me."

Childheart remembered, that was a time when he was yet to encounter life but she wasn't finished: "I cuckolded you and threw your love in your face. I taunted you, I tormented you; accused you of self-pity when it was grief; Can you forgive me for all that?"

"I can't kill you twice."

And there it stood

Childheart the boy;

Her boy, her foal. He became a stallion and took her. Always greedy for her

What does a boy do when he kills his girl?

I had had with you I killed you and you killed me.*he had been more than her husband, he had been her boy, her first love, her innocence; her foal.*

*Childheard finally spoke: "I remember what you told me," he asked. as mortals\ *

"I blamed you, my foolish boy husband. I blamed you. I lied. He as my yearning for him faded. His memory ordinary man. *All I was left with was this abomination.*"

"It is very beautiful." Childheart took her shoulders and stared at it; it was exactly as he remembered it from their bed, their limbs tangled her warmth; her depths, where she had taken him "My mind kept coming back to you. We had not run our course, started even we had out life in front of us.

"Do not look at it with such longing, it is a mockery. I hate it. It grew a reminder *"Kiss me" she said, remembering his tenderness. "As mortals agai we could just have one kiss."*

"So this is to be our sloppy sentimental ending?" Childheart said softly staring out into the white misty morning.

Geraldine gently touched his cheek. "Kiss me," she said, drawing closer, knowing her lips tantalizing; remembering how much he had loved kissing his wife.

"No." He said. "That would be too easy."

Childheart thrust his face into her bare chest breathing her in.

Energetic surf applauded driving him on, losing himself between her breasts feeling their familiarity lightly brushing against his cheeks, her perfume an innocent breeze in a meadow of spring flowers but no disguise for her own subtle fragrances; clean, dark, female; powerful, deep; secret scents unlocking reminiscence of endless hours of half-sleep in their shared bed, talk unfiltered by delicious fatigue; the taste of salt on her skin. He had forgotten that. Now he dare not touch her hard girl breasts. And how he wanted to. He wanted it all. This, in the middle, the split peach nestling in soft down. Feel their arousal against the palms of his cupped hands. her pride blinding men her eyes a grain of past gentle dark past lingering passion; Childheart; timid, broken seeking, tasting inside halved fruit; becoming intoxicated; fizzing and popping spinning familiarity succulence exploded into his mouth; Geraldine's protests clawed deep and they were in their marriage bed again, deep blues of night he was taken her to the special place and possessed her completely; "You are now not broken!" peach he bit deep. red and gold flesh giving up consumed her Secret light gratitude Mind lit up with Lisette's eyes overflowing mischief looking up over his belly Lisette laughed Christ came back as a call girl. All forgiving men; he remembered her kiss, her womb, her heart, beating, wet inches away from his tongue been his cock collapsing into the sand; something shifted, and he heard Lisette laugh. The earth stopped in its axis. It forced him out. Persuasion

100

Sloppy Sentimental kissing Ending

Roger stood guard; watchfully:

Beach deserted, mist curling softly around the couple; sun breaking through, burning off patches of mist, snatches of blue sky, white tops bobbing across glittering bright water.

Childheart Her cunnie, her sex, she had give in she had been fooled vanity pride It always was. Tears at his hair, pulling his their eyes locked

"Stop, stop, you could never stop."

"The thing you could have never known is your pride and jealousy could never match mine." Geraldine said.

"You were jealous of me? No. I was the fool. I had been true to you." Childheart said in disbelief.

"I was jealous of your generosity." Geraldine said, "Your naivete. Your love. You gave me chance to find happiness," she said. "Freedom to find if I could win his heart as he had

won my desire, but I never gave you the same chance to be free to choose. I was greedy. Fearful you would never take me back after you knew the truth. I wanted you for my own. On my own terms. I was greedy. I forced you, pushed you, I was cruel, I twisted your love."

"But you didn't deserve to die for it. I fail
Joggers diverted Roger returned stood guard.

100

Kiss Me Better

Geraldine looked at Roger again.

breaking eyelines gaze curious, waiting but heavy freedom Childheart the price
Never been his her bosom It could have been a dalliance; she could have handled it
differently she knew what he liked.

"You asked me here." "No I didn't." Iggy.

A name came to their lips in the same moment;

Iggy was behind this, their remediation, their reconciliation.

Serendipity, fate conspired with coincidence; the silhouette of the 1949 fastback coupe
melted in and out of the mist in the distance. across the parking lot woodsmoke Iggy just
visible behind the wheel

Iggy come to see them off.

How could Childheart have known Geraldine was Iggy's long lost love?

How could Iggy have known Geraldine was Childheart's long lost love?

They turned to Roger and knew.

Now was the time for his goofy disarming horsie grin; innocent gossip overheard, it all
made sense, horse sense; turned laughter saves all sun breaking through high cloud burning
off snatches of blue sky, white tops the limousine was there and then it wasn't

Iggy could see Roger in the rolling mist and then he couldn't; her limousine there then it
wasn't; the couple a silhouette then wind shifting; Childheart with Geraldine swathed in his
arms, head bent into her bosom, her hands in his hair writhing in ecstasy, then the mist hid
them again. Roger turns cants off heads off distant joggers

turned her bosom brushed his hand. Ahh, life in the flesh, the joys of mortality; it was still
there, in the modern world they called it electricity. The thing that had bound them so long
ago. He had wanted her that very last moment he saw her, burning.

Sex had been their cure-all until a

All he had to do was reach out and take her in his arms

Then and now
She had felt tenderness helpless over her
He looked at Roger.

In the flesh they had a mind of their own burning hard he wanted her it came from her
The chance to win a game he had already won

Childheart yearning to take her in his arms; crush her into him, make them one.

fighting a scoop her up; creamy desert she looked good enough to eat But then he
knew she spent time to look that wat Au naturel no paint or powder,

a moment caught in time. engraved in his memory forever; her face radiant with mirth
and mischief; his wife leaning against a door taking down adverstary in humor with her wit;
how he hsd been proud:

her hand fell on his thigh, exploring.

"You are being very familiar

"You are still my husband, I was a married woman when -" I killed you

Childheat her were finally clear, truth as "All that matters is what you and I shared.
Our youth. Our innocence. I shared little with him. a brief flare, a flash bright light; gone, it
was special then it wasn'tAll that lasted was you. We even shared Roger."

Childheart said. Roger grew old, we didn't

Hearing his name the horse Roger knew he could leave them now.

The limo though the mist drowsy; enjoying his fatigue with a determination to savor
every sensation of his mortality to the full before drifting off into the heavenly ether
with Geraldine All that mattered was she had followed him.

"In my heart

She brought her hands up to her chest; eyes bright; jaw dropped; time froze as e fingers
traced the expanse of smooth, clear skin between her breasts. It had gone! Her emblem,
abonination gone; the inches of cleavage between her breasts naked, pure skin.

"It's gone!" her laughter rang across the morning, "Look, look; you've kissed me better.
It's gone. Look!"

All Childheart could see was emblem you did it

"They are beautiful," he said, eyes wide with the same sense of wonderment she remem-
bered from the first time he saw her breasts when she was hardly out of her teens; they were
till the same he Her hated insignia gone.reverted her boy, her foal, stallion. Unable to retrain
himself he gently His fingertips across the expanse between her breasts them was bare.
jiggling with her giggles Wrestling, laughing, Roger heard her protest as he had protests of
love to never stop. "Kiss me" she said, remembering his tenderness. as mortal we survived
this time "Kiss me better."

Roger reared high with a fond snuffle waving farewell with his front hooves;

he knew he could leave them now; knew he was free; knew they were free.

They knew he was saying goodbye and returned his wave watched him canter off into the mist, scattering sandpipers in the wet sand; he paused, looked back; the surf boomed waves crashed open with wild spray, white spume dusting the air with delicious mad molecules as the departing morning mist dropped a last curtain with deafening applause from the audience of screeching seagulls circling above; and, show over, they were gone.

98

The Fabulous Freeway Battle Stallion

Miss Merryberry's cab pulled off the coast highway; she looked around, horrified:

A few flimsy strands of mist hung low; there were few cars in the lot but no Roger's trailer; the cabby checked the address, his fare anxious.

This was the correct location. Miss Merryberry pointed. She could just pick out the horse trailer in the distance up the beach. The driver ventured as far as a slipway but could go no further. Miss Merryberry paid him off adding a handsome gratuity:

Removing her shoes, set off through the sand; spare ignition key where Childheart always left it, but no Roger. Miss Merryberry devastated, they had both gone:

Disappeared forever!

Forlorn she called out, and called again.

Fool! Follow the footprints in the sand. Roger had big feet! Easy.

Distantly, boys' laughter wafted through the final drifts of mist:

Bobbing black dots amongst whitetops; surfers waiting for a wave; amongst them, a bobbing horse's head; much relieved, Miss Merryberry ran forward:

"Roger, you bad, bad horse, come here at once!"

Roger ceased cavorting and began swimming back to shore, surfers in pursuit, laughing and shouting, scrambling on his back; crashing through the surf he reared up on his hind legs tossing his riders, threw his head back in a jubilant bellow of greeting; screaming with laughter the boys fell into the waves chasing him up the beach.

"Good morning to you too Roger, happy to be free?"

Roger bounced up showering her with spray and Miss Merryberry sensed Childheart was free too; she grabbed Roger affectionately as the 1947 Fastback Coupe (in sedate pale gray) arrived on the road across the beach: Iggy soon hugging Roger too.

The horse ranch people arrived to pick up Roger, surfers gathering around the old horse sad to see him go, but they knew he would be back; they didn't quite know how they knew, they just knew.

101

Rambla Pacifico

The 1949 Fastback Coupe (in sedate pale gray) effortlessly loped up Pacific Coast Highway overtaking the relaxed Saturday morning traffic with a low throaty hum.

"What's the hurry?" Miss Merryberry asked, daintily adjusting her derriere into the soft gray leather with a little wriggle she made certain Iggy caught from the corner of his eye.

"No hurry," Iggy said, turning for an instant to appraise her legs with a helpless grin. *his nocturnal intrusions into the mysterious dark realms of Miss Merryberry's soft privacy were becoming a nuisance of late; he would ever know about himself, wherever Childheart had gone with Geraldine Summerdew. he was there himself, behind the wheel the 1947 Fastback Coupe (in sedate pale gray) lost in Miss Merryberry's mystery heading south.*

Miss Merryberry quietly excited, pleased she had chosen her Carole Lombard; the clinging silk skirt the great star had worn in 1938's 'Too Hot to Handle' with Clark Gable. It had cost a fortune but was worth it; she sighed, the weekend was off to a fine start, ocean glittering an exquisite sea green this morning; entranced by the line of cormorants flying inches above the whitetops she wondering where they were going this far south...

"Where are *we* going Iggy?"

"Oh, just a little ride," Iggy said intently hanging a sharp right through a gap in the oncoming traffic gunning the 1949 Fastback Coupe (in sedate pale gray) up into a narrow canyon wheels spitting grit eyes fixed to the road deperately avoiding looking at her legs.

Miss Merryberry wriggling again pleasantly disturbed by Iggy's urgency.

Normally, he didn't feel so dangerous, but -

Iggy knew the mountain roads.

Whitewalls yipping through corners acending the heights above Malibu.

He was taking to his special place.

Higher and higher; Rambla Pacifico

Soon homes of the rich and famous way below.

Ocean green glass sharp line horizon beneath a transpatent blue dome of inifity.

Miss Merryberry shivers delicious fear but Iggy wasn't dangerous, was he?

She smiled tossing her soft long black hair around her shoulders.

Iggy trying not to look.

Road a narrow ledge on the mountain car cutting through bends.

huge fingers/hands of red clifts against blur up the mountain

Pacific Coast Highway a bright ribbon beneath their voyage to the sky.

The view staggering

He pulled over.

Parked in Twin peaks. A

t the top of Twin Peaks

through the mist Rambla Pacifico the mountain eddies of cloud caressing

below Los Angeles across the horizon it of

iggy turned the motor off
the wind blew melody whistle taking the edge of the silence

"Someone is watching us," Miss Merryberry said. "I'm sure of it."

Iggy looked around.

"A friendly cuckoo," he chuckled, smiling at the proud owner of the bold streaked plumage; Iggy rolled down the window, "howyadoin' ol' buddy?"

The roadrunner nodded in reply.

The bird had taken a commanding position on the road a safe distance from the car.

It cocked its head, hedging closer inquisitively. Iggy wondered if it was the same bird he seen years earlier when he first arrived in LA. Iggy had never seen a real, live roadrunner before; thought they were movie cartoons; the bird nodded again curiously. A clue?

Watching Iggy and the roadrunner have their silent little chat Miss Merryberry decided Iggy wasn't dangerous in a dangerous sort of way after all; she had noticed the tight cut of his pants; she was always noticing the cut of his pants of late she thought realizing the molecules were mad this morning, in crazy sort of way, their maker blowing a light breeze so delicious as to be completely impossible:

Night blooming jasmine wasn't to be found up here.

"Glorious," she sighed. You can feel it on your skin."

Iggy swallowed.

Santa Monica bay You can see Pacific Coast Highway: **traffic slowing for the lights at the start of Sunset Boulevard**. Iggy was; his eyes the while morning the **traffic thickening slowing for traffic signals at the start of Sunset**

"Can you imagine Sunset going on forever?" Iggy asked drowsily, fatigued by self control. Miss Merryberry's red cashmere sweater and matching lipstick were giving him vertigo. Head spinning he knew that sweater. Miss Merryberry had worn it to the office forcing him to leave for the day. Anouk Aimee had worn it in 'Une Homme et Femme' and Miss Merryberry had found it in Paris. the driving the mustang across America beating the plane to meet her LA. Iggy knew he had gone nuts.

He screwed his eyes closed.

"Why shouldn't it, legends never die?" She said. "It is the boulevard of legends."

"Ah, but think practically, physically," Iggy said beginning to enjoy the luxury of half-sleep; 'imagine if it were to just hang a left downtown and then meander up to Pasadena, then Acadia, **pick the nto the sunset up sunset when he awoke he would they were both so old they had gone full circle**.

"Iggy, you can't seriously believe you can leave LA?"

"Nobody leaves LA. LA goes on forever. They merely check out. You know that. He'll be back..."

Conversataion he couldn't stop himself and she didn't want him to
at the top of Twin Peaks

laughed, sublime serendipity soft red sweater,
she was wearing her Authentic Jane Russel, allegedly the same garment Howard Hughes
designed

The nice thing about this is the bench seat and she slipped over to
Iggy knew Miss Merryberry favoured slipping his hand up her skirt

"Iggy! How dare you!" Miss Merryberry indignant, or trying to be, slapped him, hard.
"That is my best Grace Kelly lingerie -" but it was too late.

She screamed half-heartedly for a half-moment sending the roadrunner running like a
miniature ostrich,

Iggy hand diving past stocking tops cheek stinging, burning hot against cool bare thigh;
ah magic balm. inhaling

"Stop that at once and I might let you kiss me." Miss Merryberry protested helplessly as
her resistance failed, weakness and resolve lost to her beloved, burrowing boy:

Iggy inhaled her lost himself nuzzling chin wrestling her strong equestrian legs open his
recurring dream coming true finding his way into the depths mulberry and boysenberry
blackberries ripe dark juices autumnal sharp thorns sharp tang of spring deep in delight
welcome the perfection of Merryberry.

by unstoppable teeth and tongue; he thought of Lisette. Not out of desire, he
immediately thought apologetically, but gratitude. Lisette had made this possible.

Almost apologetically for intruding in his mind he waved to her up in her flying saucer
or whatever angels used to get about in the heavens; her blue eyes full of joyful misbehavior
peeking up at him over his belly. Celestial. Feeling Miss Merryberry's long fingers in his hair
telling him not to believe her protests, begging him to stop.

He had dreamed of this a thousand times, taking his darling Miss Merryberry; smoother,
better, than he had ever dreamed it would be he had practiced it a thousand times in his
mind. The seat folded back and as if choreographed Miss Merryberry's Grace Kelly's
descended with a will of their own sailing down past her knees and released from her ankles
sailed his death release his belt her mystery enveloped him

1949 Fastback Special (in sedate pale gray) hidden in deep shadow of the overhang of
rocks overhang a Saturday morning in heaven Cadillac all those years earlier bathed in a
secret light. She had chosen for him a roomy luxury A head popped up across the Santa
Monica Bay downtown Los Angeles haze joined by Iggy's magic wand she embraced him
reaching in her purse for her lace handkerchief (Vivien Leigh in the 'Gone with the Wind')
to dabbed his cheeks dry, straightened his hair

"My precious naughty boy, what have you been eating?"

"I didn't want to muss up your lipstick Miss Merryberry," Iggy said, finally kissing her.

Roger is rich. He lives on an exclusive horse ranch in Malibu. In fact, he owns it. It is all held in a special horsie trust. Sometimes, if you drive up Pacific Coast Highway you might see him frolicking in the waves. Sometimes he plays with the local surfer kids. They all know him and try to catch him and ride him bareback. Sometimes, occasionally, when he is in the right mood, he lets them; they all love him and know he is a good horse. Originally, when he first started showing up on the beach, the Malibu sheriffs tried to catch him, but Iggy found out and used his special 202 phone number. Now they leave Roger alone. Iggy and Miss Merryberry are regular visitors. They both ride him and bring him special treats. When she was very young Miss Merryberry could be seen riding her arabian along the waterline past Malibu Colony hoping to be discovered, now she rides Roger just for fun. When he doesn't go to the beach he is to be found roaming the State Park in the Santa Monica mountains. If you drive Mulholland at night north of Malibu Canyon Road, don't be surprised to see the silhouette of a mighty stallion on a rocky peak against the bright stars roaring and snorting at invisible demons in the sky (though now a mere mortal, old friends and acquaintances still visit from the ether). Or standing statuelike for hours high above Dekker Canyon watching pods of dolphins and families of whales heading south. Nobody bothers him. Even running around in the canyons visiting corralls of lady horses. rumor tried to steal him. at night of course horse sleep standing up tried to steal him rumor is he is gaurded by a gang of rattlesnakes (he met up again with old friend Coyle on a day trip down to to Topanga Canyon). If you ever go to Malibu and follow extremely large hoofprints in the sand that always turn round at the LA County line, you'll know it's Roger. He knows he is safe in LA.

The End

PS:

And the years went by.

And Sunset Boulevard did make it all the way to the Atlantic Ocean,
ending at the Florida Panhandle.

And the State of California rode along too, just for protection.

And, of course, Lisette came back to town, to star in the third instalment
of her great moviemaking saga *The Los Angeles Mysterium Trilogy*:

'*Rocket Bob plays Sunset Boulevard*', coming soon to your local bookstore.