

"Poor Kid"

I grimaced, trying to squint through the heavy rain and make out some more details of the crime scene. It was useless. I had to get closer. I took a deep breath and approached the body. Mud sucked at the bottoms of my loafers, as if pleading with me to go no further. But duty called, and I trudged forward to join the other detectives at the scene.

I took a long draw on my cigarette and ashed it on the ground. I glanced up at the sergeant and motioned to the body.

"So they killed the broad right in the middle of the park? And no one saw anything?"

"Oh, we got witnesses," the sarge replied. "We got plenty of witnesses. The problem is, this rain's been messin' with their recollections, see? I need you and your boys to get to the bottom of it."

Questioning witnesses is the only thing I live for anymore. When I'm in that interrogation room, free of the bureaucracy and corruption infecting the department, I can really put in some work. I know how to make witnesses sing like songbirds, and my accomplices ain't half bad at it either.

"You got it, boss."

I turned heel and headed back to the street. The whole cab ride back to the office, I couldn't shake the feeling that something wasn't quite right with that body. She was a doll. She'd be a real looker if she was, well, alive. What was she even doing in this part of town? She couldn't have been a moonshiner or gangster. Things didn't add up.

I shivered. The cold rain had penetrated all the way down to my bones. I rubbed my hands together and let the cab driver know that my stop was at the next intersection. Upon entering the station, I lit me up a new cigarette and yelled to the office girl to put on a fresh pot of coffee. It was going to be a long night.

"The Glimpse"

The asphalt glistened in the light from street lamps and car headlights. Every once in awhile, the camera would flash, as if competing with the gleaming flashlights for attention. Everywhere I looked I saw dark coats, hats, and umbrellas. Under these umbrellas smoke wafted from cigarettes carefully shielded from the misty rain that trickled from the black night sky.

Two figures stood out in this dark atmosphere; a dame who leaned, shivering, against a car, and the body that lay, unmoving, a few feet away. The dame had a coat but no umbrella, and none of the lads had bothered to offer her one. Yet, based on her wide, glassy eyes, furrowed brow, and gently parted lips, she was trembling from terror as much as from the cold rain.

The body, which captivated the dame's gaze, was crumpled in an impossible position. Body parts bent ways that they weren't supposed to. I could tell, even in the dim lighting, that the car was busted up real bad.

I found my buddy Dennis's eyes in the dark. "What's the story with the broad? She witness the hit and run?"

"Nah, buddy. She may have done it."

My eyes shot back to the woman. She was slim and petite, with dampened blond hair that lay in wisps against her moist, delicate cheeks. "That pretty doll? No way."

Dennis shrugged. "That's how it's lookin'."

Just as I was about to turn to the body and investigation, the dame's eyes flitted up to meet mine. That same moment, one of the lads walked between us. In the split second before she vanished behind his umbrella, I swear I saw her ruby red lips curl upward and her eyes lose their glassy sheen. I can't be sure, though, because the next instant she was just as before.

"Ringing Suspicion"

The moon sat low in the sky. My watch read 4a.m. The streets around me were lit up like daytime in New York City. Blue and red lights flashed against buildings that loomed over the people in the street. Neon signs reflected bright colors against the wet bricks of The Apollo. I looked to the nearest officer.

"Tell it to me straight."

He started, eyes wide. A rookie. "W-w-well, we got the call around 3 and when we got here, it was a mess."

I gave him the side eye. "And?"

His hands shook. "The body was found in the drain. The call came from the businessman that lives across that street." He pointed to a thin, brown-haired man in a tweed suit.

I made my way to the businessman. Next to The Apollo was a long alley that ended in a single street light. I pulled out my pencil and made a quick sketch in my memo book. I tucked them away and approached the man.

"You called this in?" I looked him in the eyes.

He looked me right back. "Yeah. I did. I came outta the theatre to do some business. Saw the neons shining off her ring."

I glanced into the drain. The body laid face down in the wet mud, rats skittering over her back and tangling themselves in her hair. "How'd you see a tiny ring from all the way up here?"

The man bristled. "I got good eyes. You hinting at something?"

"Maybe I am. You got something to be guilty about?"

The man grumbled. "The name's Jerry. Jerry Moonsey. You know where I live."

I watched him stalk back to his apartment and took my pen and pad out of my pocket. I sketched his face and a wedding ring. His wedding ring.

Haley Willits

"The Bagpiper's Big Sleep"

It was a dark and stormy night; twilight had fallen on the theatre department. The Wells quiet; the Fusion silent. The game afoot. I heard the sound of thunder above my head. In the distance, I could faintly make out the sound of classic rock echoing off the hard, concrete surface of our stadium. A reedy sound danced through the air, bringing back memories of haggis and highland.

I shook my head, clearing it of distracting thoughts. I had a mystery to solve and it wasn't going to be easy.

36 hours ago I sat in my chair, sipping a sweet liquor from a short, thick glass. It burned as it went down, just how I like it. I heard a door slam down the hall and footsteps quickly approaching.

I calmly placed my glass on my desk and prepared my favorite pen. I took a pad of paper out of a drawer as my door slammed open and into the wall. A young woman entered. Twenty. Tall. Strawberry blonde hair and a look of panic in her clear blue eyes.

I motioned to a chair and she sat. There she told me a story of murder and heartbreak. With eyes tinged red, she described the scene. A man, 5'7, red hair, and a beard found lying in a pool of his own blood in Stockdale. He wore a red kilt and a glengarry hat lay a few feet away. His arms were carefully arranged as if he were carrying an instrument.

Under his left hand, a bullet hole gaped. The woman started crying again. I passed her another tissue and told her to continue. He had been carrying something valuable. Something only he would know how to use.

"Five Mistakes"

I knew something was going to happen when I saw the dame in the window. Pretty, like all the others. She had short blonde hair and eyes dark as the drink she held in her hand. She was batting her eyelashes at all the other men in the bar.

My first mistake was walking in. I took off my hat and coat, passing it to the large man at coat check. He looked at me and looked at the girl. He chuckled a gravelly sound, like a car tire over rocks.

"That's Leslie. Good luck figuring her out." He carried my things into the back room, still grinning.

I slowly made my way over to her table. Men flocked to her and I didn't want to show my cards yet. I had a gut feeling about this girl and I was going to know why. Her eyes flickered to me and back to the dope in front of her. She smiled real slow.

I slid closer, still avoiding most of the place. On the wall behind the bar was a sign that read "City Dionysia" in grand letters. Another bar that tried to be classy. I leaned on the bar and gave a quick order to the bartender.

My second mistake was looking back to Leslie and hanging out my ear.

"Lez you gotta tell us how you did it. We can't stand the suspense!"

The jane giggled. "It's easy once you do it a few times. You hook them in with a quick glance, a bit of eyelashes, and a

real slow smile. They like to think they're the only one you're lookin at." She scanned my face and winked.

My third mistake was falling for the paper flower.

Haley Willits