

Lawyer Doctor

by Ann Bogle

Recently, Man #1 (who is in reality Man #3) consults with me late at night because his third wife (he married three times women who were 21 years old, the second time at the loss of an enormous fortune, and not only that, but ordered by a court to pay his heiress wife's Sarah Lawrence loans) is back to stripping. He lives in McAllen, Texas, at the front. She, his third wife, is not there. Her young sons say she is gone. Their father says she's hooking and driving drunk. I say, "Get her help," but he's too pissed after a four-day lapse in their telephone contact to consider it. That gives me a sense of the true value of telephone contact: immense. I've known him even longer. He once played trumpet with Chuck Mangione. He's published many hard covers, eight. The first call from him since shortly after T. died, he listed his assets so I could warm up to that security.

David Neves who moved to Alabama for a woman who disappointed him called tonight and rang up his assets. He used to work for the Post Office.

Beez who hired me at the Mathematics Library at U.W.-Madison on the last day that I was nineteen—many bad and good things happened in T.'s life on May 2, his birthday, and also in mine, the day before my birthday—scratches me for decency. Sometimes I erupt. Sometimes he is tempted to marry an Irishwoman or an Australian. I have little patience for it. I had asked him even before T. died and after his wife had died whether he would consider reuniting, and he said, "No. I paid my penance long ago." He is not someone to remind of spoken language. When we're near, there is a black cloud, such as Sylvia Plath described in her unabridged journal, that semi-appeared in the rental cottage where she and Ted Hughes lived in Cornwall. The cloud filled the center of their living room where she

sat alone while Ted Hughes took a walk in the neighborhood. At least Beez and I persist in good will.

The assets summed equal \$250K, payable after caregiving is over and the men have died. I cannot imagine telling any one of them that. I ought to settle for my inheritance from T. It's already mine, awaiting dispersal.

Or not. The void walks into the room, and the herd eases into its habitual calumny and so I hurt them. Unseen, unheard biases aimed toward court, where a single word spoken, a word such as "alcoholic," netted her \$10 million in 2003. This time the work is harder, and she welcomes hard work. This time she must prove that as the former wife of the departed, remarried to another man since 2004, that she accomplished T.'s further wealth by leveraging his contact with their sons.

So I called out "Put!" in my kitchen. Her mother is from Mexico. T. provided her mother's care when her mother developed Alzheimer's just after they accidentally struck down in their car an elderly woman who wandered across the street. Insurance gave, and nothing more came of it, knock on argyle. The elderly woman's family didn't guess at their money. T. said to lie low for a while. Her mother was her only passenger, and that was how the end began. Her mother had suffered bipolar disorder or temporal lobe epilepsy and her salesman husband had been alcoholic. They were from Ojai, a verbal oddity. A lot of Ohioans lived in Houston where writers and poets landed when we met.

I felt good and then bad for saying "Put!" to the kitchen cupboard window. Then I figured it would cost three pesos, a lot less than the Middle English "c" might have cost T. He attached the word "monkey" to it. In November 2008, while I sat in his office constructing an essay for the War issue of *Fiction International*, T. erupted in the living room where he sat in the ghetto chair that he

bought on the Bowery, a great wooden edifice, and barked out the "c" word off and on for sixteen hours. I left the desk occasionally and sat next to him and asked what was wrong, and he quieted until I returned to the office and he took up the "c" word again. I was surprised that Mrs. Levy didn't get the police.

I am not in it for domestic war. But I wonder if "she" is. She creeps my apartment like a brown cat then leaves after I shrew her and turns quiet.

Once standing outside at nine or so at night, a car passed on Kipling Avenue, and just as it did, a click or a sound like the word "key" ticked the brick front of my building over my head.

That was after T. had told me that his Russian escort had told him that she could have me eliminated. He said it twice. I had written about the threat to the Department of Justice. Eric Holder was Attorney General. No response came of it. My doctor asked if anyone at the DOJ had responded, and I said, "No."

