

How Was Your Afternoon, Dear? 2

by Daniel Harris

Sheriff Harlan Fescue parked his car across from 5555 Beach Harbor Drive and studied the scene.

An ambulance was parked next to a crashed motorcycle. From the damage to the rear of the E-Class Mercedes, the motorcycle rear-ended the parked car. Harlan assumed the rider was under the sheet that covered a body apparently skewered on a wrought iron picket fence. A mangled great blue heron lay on the road verge, the purple lady ground cover accented the pastel blue-gray of the dead bird.

Harlan left his prowler and studied the roadway. Seeing the weaving skid marks, he deduced that the cyclist swerved to avoid the bird, lost control of his bike and crashed into the back of the Mercedes. A local city policewoman was questioning the owner of the Mercedes.

Sheriff Fescue skirted the car-owner scene, walked past the sheet-covered dead motorcyclist, the crushed heron and up the driveway past two ambulances and into the lobby of 5555 Beach Harbor Drive. A uniformed policewoman directed him to the pool deck.

There he saw the now sheet-covered body of Charles Wolfe, the building's super. The pool deck was covered with the bloody footprints of resident gawkers.

—Remove the towel.

Fescue looked at the smashed and broken body of the late super. The sight of a body after a fifteen-story fall was never pleasant.

—Is the medical examiner here?

—Yes, said a rookie cop, he went to his van.

—Thanks.

Fescue paraded his bravado but felt queasy. Seeing a jellied body on a pool deck was on a par with a drowning victim after a week in the water.

—What do you have? Fescue asked the city detective who answered the call.

—A dead super, a dead motorcyclist and a dead bird.

—Any suspicions?

—Well, Lieutenant, the site was compromised by residents, especially the elevator and the pool deck. When I arrived, there must have been thirty residents on the pool deck. I cleared the area, but only after who knows how many people walked through the area. Many of the residents are elderly and had to use the elevator to return to their units, so the elevator is compromised also.

—Do we know who the motorcyclist is?

—The bike is registered to a man named Talof Harjo. He's a full-blooded Creek Indian. His name means Crazy Bear. But, the I.D. found on the cyclist is a local lawyer, Wolfgang Spielberg. I suspect Spielberg took the motorcycle as collateral for services rendered. Harjo is in the county jail on an assault rap. He stabbed a woman in the Pink Pussy Bar with an ice pick. Spielberg was Crazy Bear's lawyer.

—Looks like Bear is going to need a new lawyer. Anything else?

—A Mrs. Eleanor Krackenthorpe in 3F told me that she was sure that Charles Wolfe, that's the super, was having an affair with the woman who lives in the penthouse. Krackenthorpe also said the elevator was acting up the last few days.

—Who lives in the penthouse?

—A man named William Thomas. His live-in girlfriend is Alice Cunningham. She's a former Aer Lingus stewardess. Thomas is in his fifties. Cunningham is thirty, thirty-five, though I haven't seen her. Be careful with Thomas, he's CIA.

—How do you know that?

—I got a call from Washington. Hands off Thomas.

Fescue didn't need CIA spooks telling him what he could and could not do. He decided to talk to Thomas. Guys with two first names sounded like CIA.

When he entered the elevator, he noticed that the fire extinguisher compartment glass was shattered and the fire extinguisher was missing. He didn't smell any evidence of fire. He checked the floor of the car. There were bloody shoe prints all over the floor. Probably the super's blood tracked in by residents from the pool deck. The scene was as fucked up as the O.J. Simpson murder scene.

Fescue noticed a white ceramic pottery shard in the corner of the elevator car. He took out his iPhone and photographed the elevator floor and a close-up of the shard. He photographed the broken glass of the fire extinguisher compartment. He made a mental note to have the Medical Examiner get blood samples from the floor.

Why was the fire extinguisher compartment open and where was the fire extinguisher?

When the elevator arrived at the penthouse, Fescue was greeted by a large man wearing a white terrycloth robe, violet sunglasses, and sandals. The man looked as if he had just come from the shower. His gray-flecked dark hair was damp and freshly combed in a Chicago boxcar haircut. He smelled of expensive soaps which contrasted with his menacing physical appearance.

—Sheriff Harlan Fescue. He flashed his shield.

—William Thomas. How can I help you?

—As you probably know, the super fell off the roof this afternoon. There is speculation that he was servicing the elevator.

—I believe that's correct. I wasn't here, but he asked me this morning if he had my permission to pass through the apartment to the elevator control room. Access is from my terrace.

—Can you show me the way to the elevator control room?

—Follow me.

Williams noticed that the Sheriff was tracking blood from the elevator onto his tile floor. What a hick.

—It's inconvenient that the only access to the elevator control room is through my penthouse. Lately, there's been a parade of elevator mechanics through here.

—Problems with the elevator?

—Always. The developer and contractor purchased the elevator used from a building that was due for the wrecker's ball. This building dates from 1984, but the elevator is from the 1950's.

—The car looks modern.

—Yes, but the controls and mechanics are from the 50's. This is the patio. That door off to the left at the top of that metal stairs is the entry to the elevator control and mechanical room.

—Strange they would put the stairs so close to the parapet.

To be continued.

