

Right Here on Our Stage...Tonight

by David James

When Madeline became beset with a malady diagnosed as Harlequin's Syndrome she had to learn to overlook the muffled, but audible, guffaws about her excessive perspiration and slightly stooped posture on stage. She was a trooper and said she knew they came from those who didn't know about her disease.

Every show night, she'd drift out on stage to the haunting sounds of Ravel's "Bolero" in her bent, pokey way with her blood-red nail polish flashing, her shiny, fishnet-featured legs shimmering. She'd begin her loose, exotic, undulating routine with her pet python, Raoul. It was easy to dismiss her rare affliction. She would pretend to drink from a silver flask as Raoul was sort of ravishing her. Done, her mostly male audience applauded, whooping and hollering for an encore. Madeline always met their requests.

As her manager and, by the way, her husband, I'd get angry when guys would reach out to try to touch my Madeline as she made her way down an aisle to the dressing room to get out of costume. It got so I could pick out these creeps in the audience during her performance.

Sometimes I'd wait for these assholes walking to their cars in the parking lot. I'd pick out the most egregious one and walk up with my Louisville Slugger bat and smash his goddamned windshield.

