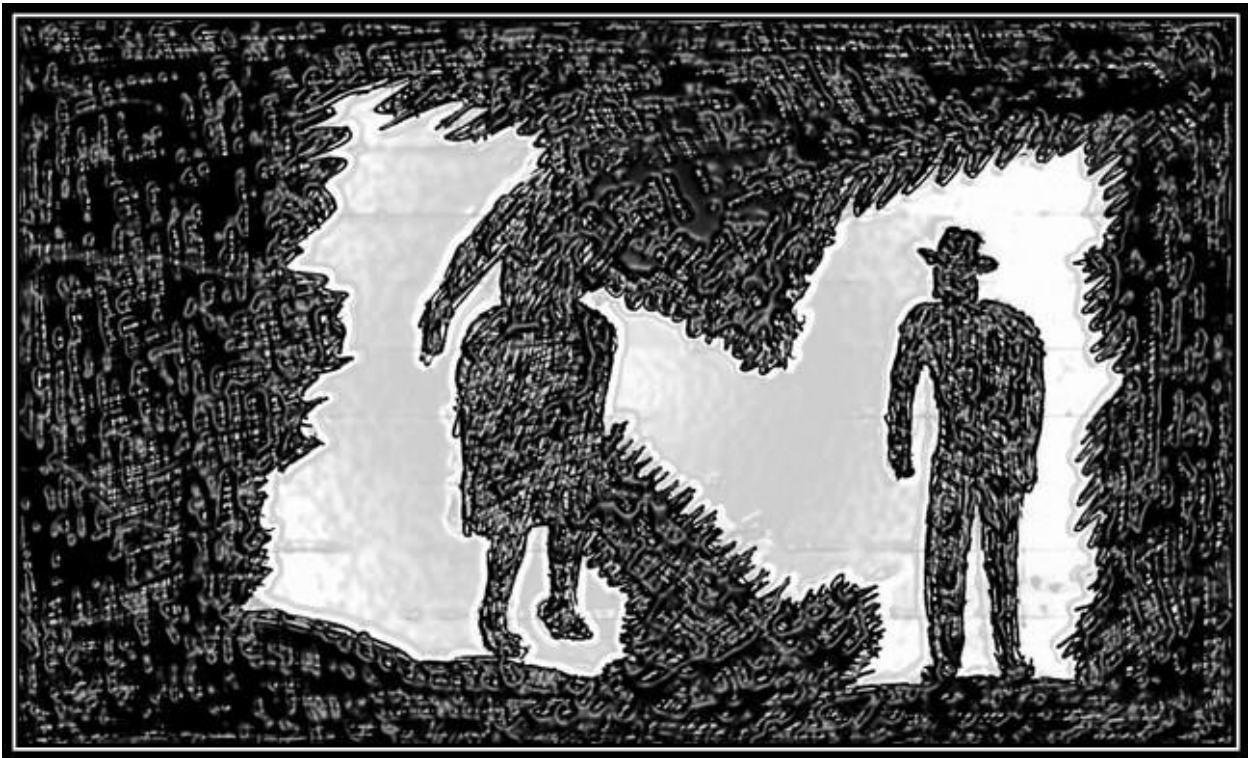


FAMILY PRACTICE



EDWARD DROBINSKI

Family Practice



"The Approximate Significance of a Sneeze"

By Edward Drobinski

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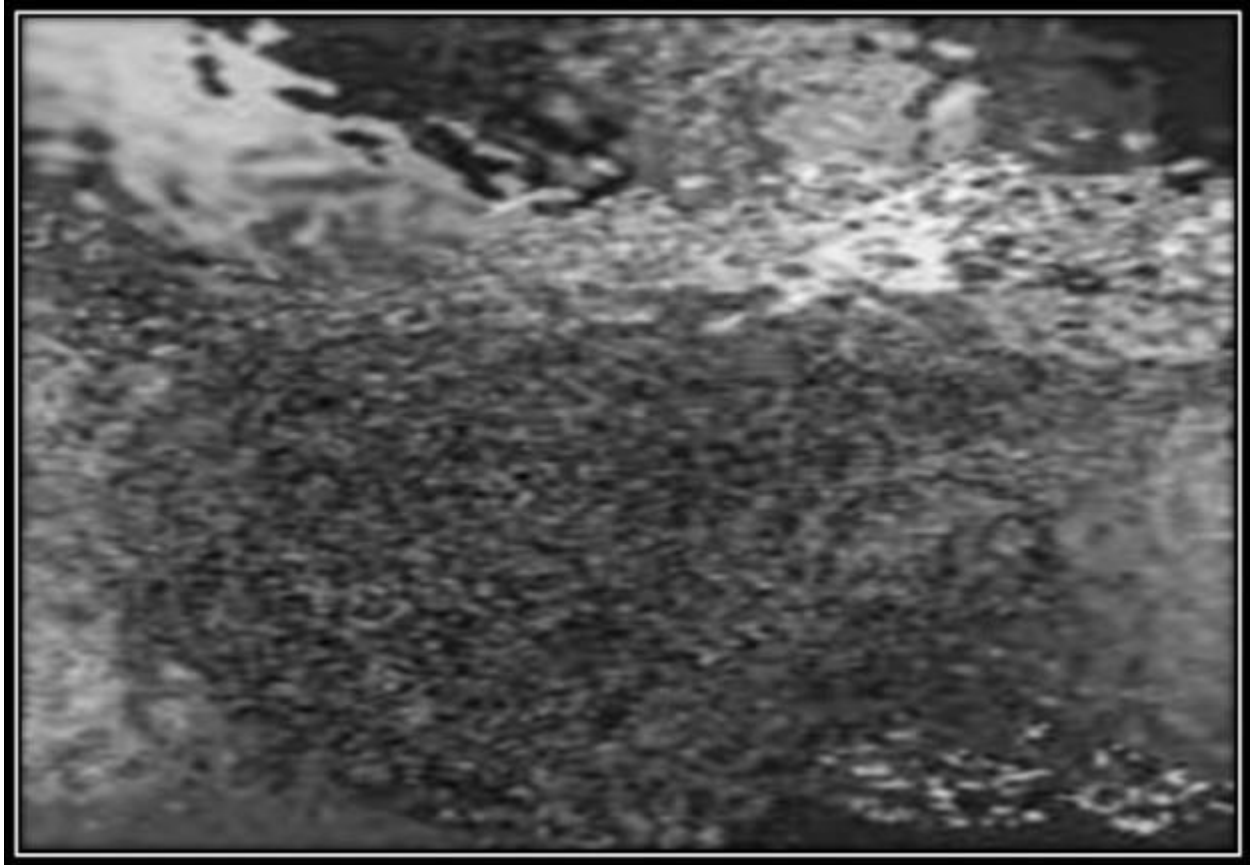


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Preface

History consistently depicts the story of mankind as being one group's enslavement to another, sometimes the result of force, sometimes due to supposed free will and sometimes somewhere in between.

Claims have been made of all types of materials, non-materials and obsessions, the latter manifestation defined as a persistent preoccupation with an often unreasonable idea or feeling; broadly, compelling motivation.

This is a story of obsession and its resultant chains; some of iron, some of leather, some of gold, some non-material and some in-between.

CHAPTER 1

She was sitting on the desk as he entered his office, leaning back on her left hand, her right removing the cigarette from her bright red lips. Her uncrossed legs were covered with gray opaque seamed nylons held up by black garter belts. He fumbled attempting to put the keys back in his pocket and dropped them. As he stooped in a retrieval attempt, his right hand felt the ground while his eyes remained elevated enough to see that it was too hot a day for underwear. She calmly laughed, exhaling smoke and said; "Like the air down there?"

Temporarily oblivious to the peeling light green or yellow paint on the wall and brown carpeted floor, Mark Cinchapport said; "Air's fine. View is even better." She got off the desk and walked a few steps to a framed lithograph of a yellow sailboat sinking near port, her short loose red skirt brushing the face of the crouching man as she passed. Her back to him she said; "I'm Constance Roe and I think you provide the type of service I want."

He stood up, walked to the desk and pushed a button and said; "Do you like art?"

"Certain types. Boating scenes don't do a thing for me."

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He looked at the long blond hair parted in the middle of her head and knew it was a bleach job and said; "Call me Mark. What kind of thing can I do for you?"

"Surveillance," she said, laughing.

He laughed, too, surveying her almond shaped green eyes, saying; "Of what?"

"My fifteen year old daughter, Candice. I think she's carrying on with a forty year old married man." She took note of the rumpled pants and sports jacket on the 28 year old, oval faced man with his mouth slightly open, adding, "Call me Connie."

Trying not to look disappointed at another low paying job, at the same time appreciating having one at all, he took an obvious look at the Jell-O cleavage protruding from the lacy lavender blouse, that she didn't bother to button very much. "Busy girl," he thought, not fully realizing the immense accuracy of his vision. Trying not to appear ungratified, he simply said; "Who?"

"Callie Majors."

"Sounds familiar."

"He's one of the owners of Majors' Chevrolet."

"Do you have any photos?"

She went back to the desk and opened her black fringed purse, produced two and handed them to him. In one he saw two

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young girls, sitting on backyard swings and in the other was a sturdy looking man of about forty with a blonde crew cut, reclining against a door of a new black Cadillac parked on a city street, appearing to be waiting or looking for someone. Small American flags on thin wooden sticks protruded from plastic holders on both edges of the windshield.

Mark said; "He probably won't be that hard to find. But tell me which of the girls is Candice?"

"Candy's on the left. The other is her nineteen year old sister, Shari. They do look somewhat similar at first, but Candy's got an innocence that just explodes out of her."

"When were these pictures taken?"

"Last month, May, 1972."

"Do both girls live with you?"

"Yes."

"Are there any other members of the household?"

"My husband, Warren."

"Is he also suspicious?"

"No, he pays little attention to them. He's not their father."

Mark looked at Connie, not wanting to ask a rude question, but wanting more information.

She surmised, laughed and said; "Oh, I see. Warren's my second husband of five years. We met during the 'Summer of

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Love," rolling her eyes and making a facial expression of neither delight nor sarcasm, perhaps suggesting some sort of captivation and continued; "My first husband is their biological father."

"I'll need your phone number and address."

"Calling me is a problem. I don't want anyone else in the house to know about this. The address is 694 Liberty Lane, Jersey City."

"How can I contact you in an emergency?"

She laughed; "What kind of emergency can possibly happen?" She again took a seat on the desk, hoping to distract him.

It worked, but he felt obliged to say something businesslike; "Isn't there something else you can tell me about Candy?"

She was still grinning, as she crossed her legs, exposing a stocking top and a bit of a garter strap. "Candy is sweet..... She's about 5'4", two inches shorter than her sister and about 110 pounds, ten lighter. She's got a small pink mole on her left cheek."

Mark's preoccupation continued, compelling him to absurdly grin and he said; "I suppose you're referring to her face."

Connie thought the answer was too obvious to warrant words. She blankly stared at him and the air was still a few seconds.

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She then excitedly said; "Oh, yeah. Candy tends to wear bright colors and Shari is the opposite."

Feeling that he had done his job as well as he could, he reached over to the desk and pushed the button, shutting off the tape recorder, pretending to be looking for a pen. Connie wasn't fooled and pushed another button, popping open the deck and took out the tape. As she hid it in her ample cleavage, she said; "Bad boy. I suggested that I want no record of our relationship."

"Fine with me. Now, about the money; I get \$20 an hour."

"You'll take ten." She retrieved a wallet from her fringed purse, counted out \$240 and dropped it near her red skirt. "This should cover about three days." She got off the desk, started to leave and said; "I'll be in touch."

Mark smiled widely and licked his dry lips. He said; "I was counting on that tape for information. I'm afraid we'll now have to go through the whole process again, with me taking notes." This time he really reached for his pen and searched for a piece of paper. After they ran through the routine a second time, Connie took a few of his business cards, glad to see both his home and business addresses and phone numbers. She wanted him when she wanted him.

As she exited, she closed the door behind her and saw Victoria Clyborne, Mark's "secretary" sitting lazily in the

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chair behind her wide desk. She had mounds of papers to file, but contented herself rubbing a file against her nails, her grinning, dreamy eyed black face looking down. The vestibule was too small and cluttered for Connie to pass through unobtrusively, so, though she didn't really want to communicate, she was compelled to say; "Good day" as she passed.

Without looking up Victoria's grinning lips said; "Bet it was. See ya' soon, honey."

"I beg your pardon?"

"New client?"

"Yes, as a matter of fact."

Victoria's head finally elevated as she said; "Good day."

Connie again echoed the thought and opened the next door just as a short, round, sweating and swarthy man tried to enter. They brushed by each other, both mumbling something that sounded like "'Scuse me." When he was triumphantly inside she shut the door.

As she saw Santo enter, Victoria sarcastically said; "My, my, what brings you here today?"

"Same old, baby. What brings you?"

"Paycheck, honey, you know how it is."

"Good luck," he said as he briskly walked by and passed through the open door. Mark saw him too late and moved quickly in an attempt to get the cash still sitting on the desk, but

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Santo beat him to it, picked it up and put it in his pants pocket.

Mark shrugged his shoulders and looked at the floor saying; "God damn it, Santo, you can smell it, can't ya?"

"Obviously, better than you." He took the money from his pocket and counted it, with his back to Mark. He shook his head disapprovingly, said; "Almost covers April," and put it back.

"Use that bald head of yours for once. If I don't have any money, I can't do my job and you don't get your rent."

Santo pulled out a twenty and flipped it on the desk.

Mark said; "That won't even cover my gas."

"Walk," said Santo and he turned to leave.

Mark said; "Hey, you know you're charging a lot of money for this little dump."

"I didn't force you to take it. I got plenty of customers."

"Yeah, maybe if you painted the fucking place. The rats are dying of lead poisoning."

"Prime location, my man. Keep giving me shit and I'll have you thrown out and not by the nice guys."

Mark thought, "Santo always likes to infer that he's connected with the mob and so he's not, but if I piss him off he can evict me." So, he said; "Sorry, man. I understand. It's

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just that things have been slow, you know what I mean and I'm getting frustrated. Thanks for putting up with me."

Santo said; "All right. But, things might be slow because you're paying too much attention to things other than work; you know what I'm saying." He smiled at Mark, gesturing underhanded with his right fist, then added; "You know, I was just like you when I was young, but I straightened out and started taking care of business."

Mark sheepishly nodded with a half-smile and Santo left. When Santo got to Victoria, she had her back to him and was bending over her desk arranging the unfiled papers, her short, tight, orange knit dress exposing most of her meaty black legs, supported by bare feet. She was about 45 years old, 5'6" tall and carried a well-proportioned 170 pounds. Santo gave her a playful slap and when she looked up, he said; "Don't get him started. He's got work to do," and continued out the door.

Victoria slurred; "I think he already has," and entered the dingy windowless office, put on the overhead fluorescents and seeing Mark solemnly holding the \$20 bill in two hands made a grab for it. Afraid that it would be torn, Mark let it go and she smiled, placing it between her 40DDs. He thought; "Twice already and the day has just begun." He reached his right hand out and felt soft chocolate, saying; "You know that's not going

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to stop me," mock chasing her as she screeched and ran around the desk.

"Come on, Victoria," he said, unable to get close to her, "I've got a job and I need gas."

"Payday, baby," she giggled as she made sure the bill was still in place.

"I'll get more. Give that back and I'll get you a hundred by the end of the week."

In a falsetto voice, she said; "That's what you're supposed to be doing anyway." She shook her head "no" and continued in a mock incredulous tone; "You white boys must still think you got some dumb black slaves around here. Well, I got some news for you." Knowing that it would end the money discussion, Victoria put one leg up on the chair and lifted her light blue dress, pretending a need to scratch her upper thigh. "It must be a hot day for everyone," he thought, as he admired her long Afro.

Connie's car was now on her home street, Liberty Lane, which was single-laned and lined with parked cars on both sides. The houses sat on 100 by 100 foot lots and sloped upward from the concrete sidewalk. Some were quite substantial, in the 4,000-5,000 sq. ft. range, often with three levels, mostly built in the 1880s and 1890s, hence evincing a Victorian feel. When she got to her driveway near the middle of the block, she was

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happy to see that a parked car wasn't blocking her entrance. She drove down the decline to the two car garage, the door open. She said; "I wonder what he's up to," when she saw her husband's car sitting there idly in the cavity.

She had one of the grandest abodes in Jersey City; three living levels approximating 6,000 sq. ft. and a garage constructed underneath through the gouging of truckloads of dirt many years prior to Connie's residing there. Externally, the three floors were covered in yellow painted clapboard, with irregularly placed fretwork trim stained a bright red, giving it the appearance of a "painted lady," but this was mere cosmetics. The first floor, the only level made in a regular square pattern, was surrounded by a covered porch supported by purple and white painted posts. The second and third level celebrated irregularity in that it was devoid of straight lines, each room containing one or two jutting areas. The severely sloped roof covering most of the third floor was proud of its unique design with seven gables covered with black slate. Above the third floor master bedroom was a small observation tower, suitable for only a bench or two, above the trees affording the grandest view in the vicinity, with its own slate turreted cap, topped by an iron modified cross finial. Similar finials were placed atop four of the lower gables. The grounds were enclosed in a three foot, black, rusting iron decorative fence, once expensively

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more for show than security. The overall feel was tall, heady, eccentric, declining and generous with easy access. The structure suited Connie very well, the purchase of which was demanded of Warren five years prior, as a "condition" of marriage. She could get anything she wanted from the older man and was proud to show that to her friends. Its maintenance was a constant act of love, relegated to Warren in its entirety. The house's age, detail, colors and irregularity proved an excellent source of income for local craftsmen, not always supervised by, but at least somewhat watched by her husband. His early retirement as Senior Vice President of a Wall Street stock brokerage firm gave him the time and opportunity to do something "real," and he enjoyed his new work.

After she parked her 1972 light blue Camaro, she walked up the simple wooden stairs to a utility room and then entered the high ceilinged kitchen, where Warren was seated at the ten chaired, lavishly carved, rococo revival table made of rosewood, its red mahogany stain, further developing the natural hue. When the silver haired gentleman saw her, his gaze fixed on her loose, short red skirt, as he implored; "I'm famished. What did you bring me for lunch?"

She said; "Oh, poor baby didn't have anything to eat yet? Let's see what I can find in the breadbox. Are the girls out?"

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"Yes. Candy's at her drumming lesson and Shari went to the pool. They should be gone all afternoon."

She smiled, put some lunchmeat, lettuce, tomatoes and some sauce between a sliced bun, brought it to the table and watched as famished Warren closed his eyes and gorged himself.

Mark located his local map, courtesy of his favorite gas station and found Liberty Lane to be only ten blocks away from his Journal Square office. He planned on commencing his surveillance this evening, but wanted to first view it in the daylight. He opened his closet door and pulled out a well-used pair of blue jeans with holes in the knees, a white Bob Marley T-shirt, sunglasses, kerchief and bad sneakers. He stripped from his current attire, looking in a cheval mirror, slowly tying the blue kerchief around his head, hoping Victoria might have some reason to enter the room. Dejectedly, he donned the rest of his new apparel and decided to take Santo's advice. As he walked out he saw the chocolate one still playing with papers on her desk. He wondered if they had anything to do with her job here, as he didn't think that the amount of business he was doing could have resulted in the volumes displayed. He decided not to be contentious and planned to peruse them sometime when she was not around. He said; "I'll be gone the rest of the afternoon. You might as well take the rest of the day off."

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Victoria said; "Ah, ah. I need the bread, honey and you can see I've got a lot of work here. By the way, I can show you how to tie up that blue kerchief a lot faster than you know how."

She and he both laughed. He said; "Next time," and went through the door.

The first floor location was a convenience to coming and going. He at least had to think that way, as Santo was collecting a "prime" rent presumably because the first floor of the fifteen story plain white stucco over something office building was supposed to generate traffic with its restaurant and "gift shops." Even if it did, how many people do you think just happen to be taking a stroll and suddenly say to themselves; "Oh, yeah. I forgot. I have to get a private detective, too."

He watched his feet descending the ten step path to the street. The stairs were rather ostentatious for the plain building, as they aped an important government building in their wide, gently circling pattern. It also precluded anyone above the age of seventy from climbing them. One of his supposed markets when he first decided to be a private eye was the geriatric set. People are always trying to scam them out of money. Usually relatives. However, this expectation was to be one of his worst miscalculations as not one of the clients in

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