

SUBLIMATION

by Gorden Schweers

I spoke her name with words that made the heart bleed.

Khalil Gibran

Barrens and Dufferin slipped through the residential night streets without noticing any suspicious activity. An hour earlier they had summoned a pair of teenage males to the side of their police cruiser, asking for identification and intention. Neither of the black youths had a criminal record as indicated by the request via satellite link to the homeland security data base for a background check. The lighter skinned boy was an honor student who played trumpet in the school band – which indicated he was off limits for a charge of loitering. With nothing substantial to go on the constables reluctantly allow the pair to continue with their walk back to their own homes from a grad party at a friend’s house. Preferring to toss them in the back cage of his cruiser, Barrens was in no small way ticked as he watched the graduates walk away in to the night as free as you please. He hadn’t made an arrest in over a week; not forced a J-walker to stand with his arms and legs spread open against a wall while he patted down his pockets looking for a reefer as his backup buddy (Dufferin) stood at a safe distance with his hand on his holster. Policing was at its best when it involved *direct physical contact* (force) with a random target in a dark lane who might be just foolish enough to offer resistance to the suspension of his inalienable rights as a citizen.

“Did you catch which street the shorter of the two said where the party was?” Barrens asked his co-worker whose features were speckled by the lights from the dash cams.

“Too polite for his own damn good,” noted Dufferin.

“Yeah, I caught that too. Well spoken, lots of confidence, and a real pain in the ass.”

“No B & E’s reported tonight,” Dufferin cautioned.

Barrens had a different take on the situation.

“We shouldn’t have accepted their word for an alibi so easily. Next time write down the address of the party they say they left.”

Dufferin knew what Barrens was getting at without any further comment. More than once they had been able to replenish their liquor cabinets by breaking up parties with underage teens in attendance. It wasn’t a problem either that fights would break out when law enforcement arrived like gate crashers. Barrens’ military background included a black belt in martial arts. If any one in the police force could handle drunks at parties it was Barrens. Ever so often a young female high

on methamphetamines would be spoiling to settle the score with any father figure. Standing at six feet plus four inches, Barrens savored the opportunity to face down an intoxicated teenager incensed with Freudian rage. But other than those few diversions, evening patrols around the south river were for the most part exercises in monotony. A cul-de-sac adjacent an empty field provided a secure parking spot where they could catnap away the last hour or so of their night shift.

“Hold it a second,” said Dufferin. The cruiser stopped in the street, flanked on both sides by parked cars. “Go back,” he continued. “I think I saw something in the alleyway.”

Barrens backed up to the point where the squad car was perpendicular to the dark tunnel of an alley. Both men peered through the darkness searching for any movement in the shadows. The inner city had been on edge for months now with a serial killer assaulting young women as they slept in their homes. Such a fiend just might be lurking behind one of the telephone poles carrying the power lines to the back porches of a neighborhood of neglected homes. From his side in the cruiser Dufferin flicked on the beam of a spotlight. Like a luminous finger, the beam preformed braille over each object it contacted. The eyes of an animal shone back at them momentarily from one side of the alleyway, followed by several racoons startled by the light as they scurried across the gravel lane.

“At least they have the honesty to wear masks,” Barrens noted.

“I guess that’s the movement I saw,” Dufferin conceded, indicating with his hand they should continue with their patrol. The spot light retracted from the alleyway and folded back in to its own lens. Yet something about the image of the deserted alleyway left Dufferin uneasy, as if by looking at an over exposed photograph of the past he had a premonition of the future.

“Have they got any more leads on the psycho who killed the exchange student last Friday; and that redhead a month earlier?”

“No,” said Barrens, “but we’ll get him. You can bet on that. De Silva is heading up the team that’s sifting through the forensics. Sickos like that act with the meticulous premeditation. But every time they leave some clue behind as if they want to get caught. Or they’ll say something to the wrong person. Sooner or later he’ll come to our attention and we can match his DNA to the crime scene.”

The cruiser stopped at the intersection of two streets laid out at ninety degrees like a giant cross of asphalt. Dufferin hesitated to comment that even if they caught the predator with blood on his hands, they’d never be able to bring back the victims he had already targeted at random.

“That’s the tough part of this job, you know,” he volunteered. “After getting in close to these cases, I go home and tell my kids not to go out alone at night. And Mary not to order in pizza just in case the guy doing the delivery is sizing up the situation; what with me out on patrol ten days of each month.”

“What does she say?” asked Barrens.

“That I’m paranoid. She says she’s not going to live in fear.”

“My stint in Iraq got rid of that for me,” Barrens divulged. “When you end up in a hole like that place where everyone and everything is willing to kill you, you learn quickly that life is only worth the next minute you have in front of you, nothing more, nothing less.”

“You kill any kids over there?” Dufferin asked.

“Depends on what you define as a kid. If they are old enough to carry a weapon, we shoot to kill. Raids at night had the same outcome. Lots of times we shot up cars that were suspicious only to find they had kids inside. Too bad but that’s war for you: its us or them.”

“Think you’ll ever get over it?”

“Like it or not,” Barrens said with determination, “*War* is here to stay.”

“Granpa Duffy was seventeen when he fought in *the war that was to end all wars*.”

Barrens laughed with the cynicism of hard core experience.

“Gawd,” he said, “the nonsense they feed to people to get them out there like rats in trenches. We’ve been fighting one another since the days of the cave dwellers. Its part of our genetic heritage. *Ipsa facto* - old boy.”

“Sure. But we owe it to our kids to leave them a better world than the one they are going to inherit.” In the moment that followed Dufferin reflected on his visceral hunch – the one that had distracted him in the first place to the dark alleyway when there was little indication to that effect. But before the thought formed that would insist they go back for a slow cruise down the alleyway, the radio in the squad car intervened with the description of a man brandishing a knife on the 300 block of 51st Avenue. In an instant Barrens spun the car in a tight circle and with his siren wailing through the residential district raced to the crime scene. At the same moment Dufferin was on the radio with the microphone to his mouth informing the dispatcher that they were on their way to deal with the suspect. The male in question was high on crystal meth and disorientated enough to refuse any command to drop his knife. Within minutes of arriving at the scene both police officers would discharge their Glocks in self defense. Bang. Bang-Bang. Bang. The dead man had a history of petty convictions along with a persecution complex fueled by his refusal to take the sedatives prescribed to him by the court appointed doctors. Barrens stood by the body reloading his pistol just in case the dead man on the street had friends with similar intentions. Dufferin rolled the man face down in his own blood to look for identification in a back wallet.

Back in the alleyway, the scenario with the police cruiser was a close call for Olaf Slinkosky (aka *Slink*). Even as the search light from the squad car sifted through the shadows, his heart was pounding loud enough to be heard from a long distance. In an attempt to become invisible, he

crouched his body against one corner of an open garage with his hands behind his head while the search light passed over his hiding place like some angel of death. The one door out of the deserted garage was locked or wedged shut. They'd catch him for sure if they turned down the alley, following their beam of light, looking for those who prowl in the night. *Slink* remained frozen with fear until the siren from the speeding cruiser waned in the distance. *Okay* (he re-assured himself) *the coast is clear. Take a deep breath. Its time to strike back at that big creep. He'll learn once and for all he can't mess up our lives.* The boy's baggy trousers were soiled with grease from his hiding place but he could not see that in the darkness. He stepped cautiously out of the darkness and walked across the lane to the nearest fence, glancing in both directions. In his left hand he held a flash light taken from the glove compartment of the family's sedan. Resting it between the pickets, he bounced the beam against the cracked stucco of an old house. The beam focused on the flat surface before locating its target. *Slink* flashed his light three times at the window to the left on the floor of the house above the basement. He waited. His subordinate – Billy Preston – had better not have fallen sleep. They were on a serious mission. A feat that only the bravest could execute. *Slink* flashed again. Three more flashes sent as a signal from their rendezvous point. *Get the hell up Preston!* For all of his boasting and smoking cigarettes he pilfered from his older brother, Preston was nothing more than a head strong spineless wimp. If he backed out on their planned raid, *Slink* would be forced to abort the whole escapade for another time. Then like some miracle a light flashed back at him from inside the house. *Awesome!* That little bugger Preston had kept his word for once.

Slinkosky moved back in to the open garage for his own safety. It would take Preston at least 5 minutes to slip out of the house, tip toeing his way past his parents' bedroom, and then down the stairs to the basement; thence out of the house by the basement door. In the garage *Slink* adjusted his knee and elbow pads pilfered from Mr. Armstrong's wrestling club. Armstrong was another moron that Olaf *Slinkosky* had a score to settle with sooner or later. The pads were tightly in place. The small headlamp on his head checked out. Footwear consisted of *Black Wing* runners. They were the best choice of shoes for their secret mission. If need be, he could sprint over long distances in the worst case scenario. His upper body was covered in a dark hoodie. But his fashionable baggies left his legs exposed below the knee. In true commando fashion, *Slink* had rubbed black shoe polish on his face and white calves.

Preston's voice whispered from across the alleyway:

"SssssSlink? Captain Slink?"

Slinkosky flashed the light three times from the depth of his hideout. In a moment Preston was breathing heavily at his side. *Slink* found his friend's shoulder in the darkness and with his hand resting firmly in place said:

“Well done, comrade!”

“Did you hear that siren?” Preston asked. “It scared me shitless. I thought they were chasing you for sure!”

“It was close, real close,” Slink replied. “But we can’t let close calls deter us. We have *Mission Impossible* ahead of ourselves before first light.”

“What time would that be?”

“According to the paper, sun rises at 5:17.”

“What’s the time now?” asked Preston.

“Three ten,” responded Slink, glancing at the watch he had borrowed from his mother’s jewelry box and whose florescent arms glowed in the dark.

“Will that be enough time – I mean to get there and get out – I mean to get back safely? Don’t you think?” Preston failed to conceal his anxiety. He didn’t have the courage it took to be counted as one of the mutant ninja.

“For sure,” Slink said with the utmost confidence. “I have it timed down to the last minute. I’ve done the same run every day for weeks now.”

“But that was during the day,” Preston cautioned. “What if the police stop us and ask what we are doing out at night on our bikes?”

“Just you let me do the talking, okay? I tell them we are on our way to our morning paper delivery. I’m the guy with the paper route and you are along to learn the route so you can do it while I am on vacation.”

Slink tried to get his second-in-command repeat his instructions but they were interrupted by the screech of cats fighting with each other; or a cat and a raccoon squabbling over turf. Preston jumped at the sound and clenched Slink even harder than before. They both laughed nervously.

“Lets go. No time to waste,” Slink whispered.

Preston lead the way over the lane to his father’s garage. He fumbled around the frame for the spare key to the locked door. He was sure his mother was watching their every move from the kitchen window, standing in her house coat looking like a *Zombie Alien* with her hair done up in bobby pins. Inside the dark pit of the garage, their flash lights found the outline of two bicycles. Slink’s bike with a metal cage for a carrier held the canvas bags they’d sling over their shoulders for their booty. Rope was coiled in each bag. Pushing the bicycles along one side of the lane, they mounted their metal steeds under a street lamp; then raced like Tour de France competitors down Fraser Street to the bottom of S.E. Marine Drive. Just short of the end of Fraser, Slink stood on his pedals and with the wind in his hair made a classic detour to the first street off of Marine. The race through an abandoned night city exhilarated Olaf Slinkosky. He had an appointment with destiny. Behind him on his bicycle, Preston also took to his pedals and sailed behind his commander to the

end of the street. The young men were conscripts, child soldiers slipping undetected through a naked city.

At the end of the avenue Slink dismounted near a field of tall yellow grasses.

The interior of the field was as dark as an African savannah. Directing Preston to one area of reeds and cat tails, he assured his accomplice their bikes would be safe for the next few hours. Each boy slipped the canvas strap of an empty bag over one shoulder such that the strap crossed their upper bodies.

“No, no,” admonished Slink, “the other shoulder.”

Even in the subdued light he could sense the annoyance in his companion’s face: *What difference does it make which shoulder the bag hangs from?*

“Its so you can pick with your right hand ~ hold on with your left. They go in to the bag on your left side.”

He waited until Preston had complied, sliding the strap from his left shoulder to the right. Now they were ready to function as a crack assault team. In five minutes, after a fast run along the pathway traversing the empty field, they’d be over Blackmoor’s back fence and up the huge tree that spread its canopy across the back yard of the property. Along the way, Slink almost broke out in laughter when he imagined the look on Blackmoor’s bloated face when he looked out his back window in the morning only to find there wasn’t a single cherry left on his tree! The ruse was perfect. The boys would carry their booty back to their bicycles and be home again before anyone even noticed they were absent. But how would they explain to their families where *thirty pounds of fresh cherries* had materialized from when the neighborhood kids used them for a cherry war? Slink had that one covered too. On the other side of Marine Drive hundreds of condominiums were being built over the acreage of an old farm. Each boy would swear to any questions that the cherries came from a tree on the defunct farm. It wasn’t true in several ways, especially since the developers had bull dozed the land clear weeks earlier. But it could be considered a plausible alibi. Even more to the point, Olaf intended to package a portion of the cherries in a zip lock bag and present them to Katrina Blackmoor. He’d show his princess once and for all that *Olaf Slinkosky* couldn’t be intimidated, not even by someone as overbearing as her father: *“Would you like some cherries to share with your family?” he’d ask when offering a full bag to her on her way home from Little Blossom Academy. “Oh no,” Karina would say. “We have a huge tree in our back yard. It’s loaded with cherries.” “Not any more, it isn’t,” he’d say with a wink that would leave them both in hysterics.*

Olaf and Preston stood in silence outside the tall fence surrounding the back yard of the Blackmoor property. The chartreuse canopy of the tree fanned open against the stars in the night sky like a solid insurmountable wall. It would take most of the morning to reach the zillions of ripe

cherries hanging from the branches. Though flummoxed, Olaf was determined that nothing would get in his way of getting revenge. To his discredit, Olaf hadn't had the backbone tell anyone (not even Preston) about the episode with Blackmoor that threatened to leave him feeling crushed (inadequate) for the rest of his life. The expression of true love was fraught with mortal risk in the New World Order. The consummation of love with a kiss the only effective antidote against the venom of a bite from an omnivorous spider. To this end, Blackmoor had spun an intricate web around his daughter's pheromones, intending to envenomate any young males foolish enough to get snared in his trap. The persistence of his paper boy placed Olaf Slinkosky at the top of Blackmoor's list of potential victims:

For the first time, at the end of the month, Olaf went door-to-door collecting payment from each of his seventy-three customers on his new paper route. Late one afternoon, Olaf pressed the doorbell at the Blackmoor residence. The curtains were sealed tight against the glare of the evening sun. Mr. Blackmoor appeared at the door looking like an obese bear. Olaf curtly informed his customer that he owed the newspaper \$6 for a month's delivery of the paper to his doorstep. For dramatic effect, the news boy flipped open the aluminum covers on his collection tablet at the place where Blackmoor's name and address were printed at the top of his receipt stubs. His customer huffed in contempt and told him to wait. The door was left open. A hallway of polished hardwood glistened inside a house filled with the suggestion of a woman's gentle touch and the fragrance of spring flowers. With no warning - like a bolt of lightning from an abyss - Katrina Blackmoor stood at the end of the hallway, staring at Olaf as he stood alone on the porch. A voltage of desire passed between the young boy and the nymph in the hallway. A moment later Blackmoor was back with the money, blocking the doorway, deflecting the electrical discharge passing between the two young lovers ~ from the daughter he kept as a Miranda in his household to the Caliban he had for a paper carrier. "Make sure you give that money to the newspaper," he insisted, "rather than keep it for yourself." Then the door was shut in Olaf's face.

Standing alone on the porch, the boy wanted to ring the black door bell again, using any implausible excuse to justify the intrusion. Unless he could get the door to stay open longer, he knew he'd not taste such sweet intoxication for another month. But Olaf Slinkosky was no fool and the remedy simple enough. When customers found their news papers missing or undelivered to their door steps, they would call their paper carrier at his home number for a late delivery. Olaf reasoned that if he avoided delivery to the Blackmoor residence, he'd have the excuse to ring the doorbell all over again to deliver a late news paper. Such a scheme seemed foolproof to a young boy in love with an illusion. If Eve truly loved him Katrina Blackmoor (and not her father) would come to the door for the missing news paper. Therein the following Wednesday Olaf omitted delivery to the Blackmoors and was titillated when the call came for him to return with the missing

news paper. The boy peddled furiously back down to 65th Avenue only to have Blackmoor snatch the newspaper from his hands and slam the door in his face. The following Friday, Blackmoor called his home again wanting to get his missing news paper delivered. This time Olaf searched the lace curtains on each window as he dallied up the steps to the front porch. After ringing the bell, he held the paper in both hands as if making an offering to Katrina when she opened the door. Blackmoor not his daughter opened the door and with a vile expression. Lacking the slightest trace of emotion, he snatched the news paper from his paper carrier with one hand and slapped the boy senseless across his face with the other. The door slammed closed leaving Olaf Slinkosky demoralized and in shock.

Blackmoor prided himself in the domination of human instinct. His daughter for instance was an honor role student at the all-girls school of Little Blossom Academy. Her awakening came after playing a lead part in the school production of Shakespeare's Twelfth Night. In the play, Katrina spoke the lines of *Viola* (a woman) disguised as *Cesario* (a man) speaking words of love to another female student (Becky Auchingloss) playing the part of *Olivia* (a woman). The play received a standing ovation even though all of the male parts including *Duke Orsino* (Mary Lynn Thompson) were played by young girls trying to speak with deep voices. Shakespeare however was laughing at all of them from his grave. Becky (*Olivia*) started pestering Katrina (*Viola*) with erotic love notes in their classes together. Mary Lynn (*Orsino*) began kissing the feet of the girl who had played the part of *Sebastian* (*Viola's* twin brother). Perhaps the nuns running Little Blossom Academy were engaged in some form of sadistic voyeurism, knowing more about their students' hormones than any of their parents could possibly imagine. In any case, the threat of becoming involved in a sleazy affair with Miss Auchingloss (*Olivia*) behind closed doors repulsed Katrina (*Viola*) to the very core of her being. The only cure entailed either getting herself the attention and protection of a boyfriend or getting a transfer out of the all-girls school to a co-ed school. Her father wouldn't hear of either proposal. They had a heated argument at the dinner table.

"Look," Blackmoor said to his daughter, taking up a package of cigarettes, "read what it says here: *The surgeon general warns that smoking can lead to lung cancer.*"

"You want me to not smoke when you do?" Katrina said. "Get real, will you!"

"Lead by example," Mrs. Blackmoor added.

"No, that's not my point. If you stick out the Academy and go on to Harvard on some hotshot scholarship, one day this package will say '*Katrina Blackmoor (surgeon general) warns that smoking can lead to lung cancer.*' You'll be the surgeon general. But you go to one of those dead beat public schools and you'll never go anywhere."

Katrina didn't believe a word her father was saying. She knew what went on in her parent's bedroom Saturday nights long after they assumed everyone else in the house was asleep.

"If I end up the surgeon general," she complained to her father, "it'll say 'the *celibate* surgeon general.'"

Blackmoor detested anyone under his roof questioning his authority and decisions.

"Perhaps you'd prefer to end up like that girl, Chin-Sun?" he snapped back.

"Who's Chin-Sun?" his daughter asked, taken aback by her father's lack of coherent logic.

"Yes, who's Chin-Sun?" his wife repeated.

"That pretty Korean girl who was murdered on 57th, that's who!"

"The exchange student? How did you know her name?" Katrina said, confused.

"It was in the paper," Blackmoor said. "Maybe if you stopped drooling all over every boy you see (like our crummy paper carrier) and read the paper instead, you'd know this stuff."

"No," Katrina said, "her family in Korea asked not to have her name released until her extended family was notified. So how do you know her name when the rest of us don't?"

Blackmoor lit up a cigarette as his sedative.

"You ask too many questions," he said, blowing the smoke towards the ceiling.

"How do you know that poor child's name?" his wife insisted.

"What does it matter? One of the guys at work lived near her. He mentioned her name. Look, don't change the subject. You're not going to any mixed school with a bunch of punks high on testosterone and no goals in life. That's final."

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Standing on the other side of the fence in the dark, Olaf imagined himself moments away from the magic kiss that would awaken Katrina. In the same breath a life time of imaginary crimes left him castigating himself: *How could a girl as impeccable and smart as Katrina Blackmoor find anything of interest in a boy with a name as dumb sounding as Olaf?* Why hadn't his parents looked further ahead and given him a better name like *Anthony* or *Bobby*? Instead he was stuck with a name that meant things in English like *dolt* and *dumb head*. Right from the start of gym class with Mr. Armstrong (aka *Gorilla*) the gym teacher took to insulting him in front of his friends. At one point, the instructor stood over him while he was on the basket ball floor doing warm up pushups, shouting out *Oaf one / Oaf two / Oaf three /* until Slinkosky collapsed on his face on the hard floor even as *Gorilla* kept shouting down at him *Oaf ten / Oaf eleven / Oaf Twelve*. The city may have been filled with two million people asleep in their beds but it was pay-back-time. Slink and his second-in-command were about to pull off the heist of the century right under the nose of a world full of Blackmoors. Yet there was one small issue to address: Slink's hands shook slightly and his

throat had gone dry. Preston fidgeted beside him until he broke his silence in a volley of doubts.

“We can’t do this!” he whispered to the other boy, holding Slink back by one arm.

It’s too risky!”

“No! No, it’s not,” he whispered back, refusing to acknowledge the taste of fear on his own tongue.

“What if this guy wakes up and has a gun. He could shoot the both of us out of that tree like magpies.”

“Stop your whining, will you? He’s not going to wake up. People sleep deepest in the early morning. You could let out the loudest fart ever and still he’d never wake up.”

“You’re crazy,” said Preston.

“Trust me, just trust me. I know what I’m doing!”

“Yeah, and I know why you want to drag me in to this,” confessed Preston, his voice shaking. “You want to shag this guy’s daughter, that’s why!”

“He slapped me in the face!” Slink almost shouted, raising his voice with indignation.

“He’ll do more than that if he catches you!”

They stood facing each other within inches until Preston said:

“I’m out of here!”

Slink grabbed at Preston’s jerkin to stop him but the other boy slapped away his hand and ran in to the night, following the pathway back to their bicycles.

“Chicken shit,” Slink called after him. “Chicken shit.”

Slink now found himself alone facing the back fence. No lights had gone on in the house. Even if he doubted the dynamics of his plan (just as Preston had surmised) the resolve to get even with Blackmoor and Armstrong was his opiate. He took a deep breath and scaled the fence. On the other side, crouching down in a tense position, his rabbit heart was pounding against his rib cage. Directly ahead, the tree stood in the centre of the yard, its trunk planted like the leg of an elephant between the back porch and the back fence. His eyes adjusted to the objects in the open space. By some stroke of good timing, a step ladder had been left standing under one of the low hanging branches. Stealthy as a fox, he moved the ladder near to the trunk and scurried up in to the very heart of the tree. Finally: *A golden opportunity to retaliate!* No matter where he turned his head, the light from his headlamp picked out clusters of ripe cherries. Time was of the essence. *Captain Slink* had to work fast; twice as fast. But before he started to strip off the cherries and toss them in the bag slung over one shoulder, he paused to revel in his accomplishment. Taking one cherry, he turned it in the subdued light from his headlamp, delighted in the firm texture of its skin. A smooth depression down the centre divided the cherry in to two fleshy parts. Dangling by its stem, his tongue caressed the surface. Such a heavenly delight. His taste buds hemorrhaged with anticipation.

Teasing himself with eroticism, imaging he was caressing Katrina's moist lips with his own, he sucked on the cherry only to have his tongue push it back to the manipulative touch of his fingers. The *Aroma of Eden* infused his nervous system as his teeth gently tore aside the soft texture of the outer skin. *Impeccable true love!* Juice ran down the side of his lips like nectar from heaven.

It was time to get to work in earnest. His hands were soon stained purple as they followed the lead of the lamp towards bundles of cherries. It seemed impossible to strip the tree bare from the inside (and out to the narrowest of limbs) but he worked with the agility of a chimpanzee. Having soon lost track of time, the approach of dawn infused more light inside his grotto of leaves. The sack was nearly full. Slink told himself he'd pick for another half hour, hoist the full bag over the fence and pedal home safely. That Preston was such a wimp. Then something caught the peripheral edge of his vision on the ground where the ladder should have been waiting for his escape. Slink's hand froze when he looked down twenty feet below his perch on a stout limb. Someone in a housecoat had just moved the ladder away from the base of the tree! Suddenly (to his utter dismay) Mr. Blackmoor was standing in place of the ladder, looking up at him with the same pathological expression as when he had slapped his face.

"Well, well," Blackmoor said, "look what I have here. A chipmunk picking my cherries for me. Isn't that sweet?"

Slink was too paralyzed to say anything. With his eyes focused upward, Blackmoor made his pitch:

"That's a really nice bag of cherries you have beside you. Lets make a deal, shall we? You pass those cherries down to me on the end of that rope you have dangling from your belt and I'll not have you arrested for *Trespassing*."

Slink complied in an instant. The bag was lowered slowly with the rope looped over a limb. On the ground Blackmoor admired the quantity of fresh cherries that would have spoiled had not his paper boy spent most of the night picking the upper reaches of the tree limbs.

"You've done well, laddy," Blackmoor shouted back to his captive fly in his web of branches. "Now this is the game we'll play next. I'm going to take these cherries in to the house" (he indicated the screen door with his hand) "and by the time I come back, you'd better be down from that tree *and* out of my property if you know what's good for you."

Blackmoor waited for some sign of compliance. It came as a slight nod. Slink watched through the leaves as his customer in his housecoat carried the full bag up the stairs and into the house. The screen door closed behind him. Slink scrambled down from the tree and landed like a paratrooper on the grass surrounding the trunk. No sooner had he made impact than the door swung open again and Blackmoor's pit bull charged down the stairs towards the boy sprinting towards the back fence as fast as possible. In three leaps he was bailing over the fence after using the lids of

several garbage cans for stair treads but not before the dog's fangs sank in to the back of his baggies, ripping them down the centre. Slink landed on the other side of the fence and continued running, heading back to where he had stashed his bicycle on the other side of the open field.

Back in the house, using the phone in the basement so as not to wake up the rest of the family, Blackmoor makes a frantic call to the police department. Holding the speaker close to his mouth, he rants to the dispatcher:

“This is John Blackmoor / 772 65<sup>th</sup> Avenue East: Just got up early to let my dog out // caught this guy in a green hoodie / legs & face painted black / trying to enter my daughter's bedroom // dog went beserk after him and he bails out over the back yard fence // he's out there / running across the field behind my house // its him! / its him! / the serial killer!”

The dispatcher tries to calm down the caller but to no avail. Acting on an impulse, she re-routes the call *live* to every squad car radio on the lower mainland. Constables Barrens and Dufferin are waking up from their naps in the cul-de-sac when the *all-points-alert* comes blaring across on their radio. They listen to the description of the thwarted rapist in breathless suspense. Then to their utmost amazement, the same suspect comes racing out of the thicket to their right, frantically pushing a bicycle while trying to hold his torn baggies together with the other hand. It is none other than the serial killer caught red handed! Without a second's pause, the officers pile out of their cruiser and using the car doors as their shields empty their clips at the fleeing assailant. When the smoke clears, they cannot not believe their own good fortune – not one but two fatal enforcements on the same shift. What are the odds?

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