



# **The Godwulf Manuscript**

**Robert B. Parker**

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# WHO'S THE MOST EXCITING PRIVATE EYE AROUND TODAY? THE CRITICS AGREE—ROBERT B. PARKER'S SPENSER

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“Crackling dialogue, plenty of action, and expert writing.... Tough, wisecracking, unafraid, and unexpectedly literate—in many respects the very exemplar of the species.”

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—*The New Republic*

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Spenser is “as tough as they come and spiked with a touch of real class.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

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# Chapter 1

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The office of the university president looked like the front parlor of a successful Victorian whorehouse. It was paneled in big squares of dark walnut, with ornately figured maroon drapes at the long windows. There was maroon carpeting and the furniture was black leather with brass studs. The office was much nicer than the classrooms; maybe I should have worn a tie.

Bradford W. Forbes, the president, was prosperously heavy—reddish face; thick, longish, white hair; heavy white eyebrows. He was wearing a brown pin-striped custom-tailored three-piece suit with a gold Phi Beta Kappa key on a gold watch chain stretched across his successful middle. His shirt was yellow broadcloth and his blue and yellow striped red tie spilled out over the top of his vest.

As he talked, Forbes swiveled his chair around and stared at his reflection in the window. Flakes of the season's first snow flattened out against it, dissolved and trickled down onto the white brick sill. The day was very gray out, a November grayness that is peculiar to Boston in late fall, and Forbes's office seemed cheerier than it should have because of that.

He was telling me about the sensitive nature of a college president's job, and there was apparently a lot to say about it. I'd been there twenty minutes and my eyes were beginning to cross. I wondered if I should tell him his office looked like a whorehouse. I decided not to.

"Do you see my position, Mr. Spenser," he said, and swiveled back toward me, leaning forward and putting both his hands palms down on the top of his desk. His nails were manicured.

"Yes, sir," I said. "We detectives know how to read people."

Forbes frowned and went on.

"It is a matter of the utmost delicacy, Mr. Spenser"—he was looking at himself in the glass again—"requiring restraint, sensitivity, circumspection, and a high degree of professionalism. I don't know the kind of people who usually employ you, but ..."

I interrupted him.

"Look, Dr. Forbes, I went to college once, I don't wear my hat indoors. And if a clue comes along and bites me on the ankle, I grab it. I am not, however, an Oxford don. I am a private detective. Is there something you'd like me to detect, or are you just polishing up your elocution for next year's commencement?"

Forbes inhaled deeply and let the air out slowly through his nose.

"District Attorney Frale told us you were somewhat overfond of your own wit. Tell him, Mr. Spenser, that's all. Tower."

Tower stepped away from the wall where he had been leaning and opened a manila file folder. He was tall and thin, with a Prince Valiant haircut, long sideburns, buckle boots, and a tan gabardine suit. He put one foot on a straight chair and flipped open the folder, no nonsense.

"Carl Tower," he said, "head of campus security. Four days ago a valuable fourteenth-century illuminated manuscript was stolen from our library."

"What is an illuminated manuscript?"

Forbes answered, "A handwritten book, done by monks usually, with illustrations in color, often red and gold in the margins. This particular one is in Latin, and contains an allusion to Richard Rolle, the fourteenth-century English mystic. It was discovered forty years ago behind an ornamental façade

Godwulf Abbey, where it is thought to have been secreted during the pillage of the monasteries that followed Henry the Eighth's break with Rome."

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"Oh," I said, "that illuminated manuscript."

"Right," Tower said briskly. "I can fill you in with description and pictures later. Right now we want to sketch out the general picture. This morning President Forbes received a phone call from someone purporting to represent a campus organization, unnamed. The caller said they had a manuscript and would return it if we would give a hundred thousand dollars to a free school run by an off-campus group."

"So why not do so?"

Again Forbes answered. "We don't have one hundred thousand dollars, Mr. Spenser."

I looked around. "Perhaps you could rent out the south end of your office for off-street parking," I said.

Forbes closed his eyes for perhaps ten seconds, inhaled audibly, and then went on.

"All universities lose money. This one, large, urban, in some ways undistinguished, loses more than most. We have little alumni support, and that which we do have is often from the less affluent segments of our culture. We do not have one hundred thousand dollars."

I looked at Tower. "Can the thing be fenced?"

"No, its value is historical and literary. The only market would be another university, and they would recognize it at once."

"There is another problem, Mr. Spenser. The manuscript script must be kept in a controlled environment. Air-conditioned, proper humidity, that sort of thing. Should it be kept out of its case too long, it will fall apart. The loss to scholarship would be tragic." Forbes's voice sank at the last sentence. He examined a fleck of cigar ash on his lapel, then brought his eyes up level with mine and stared at me steadily.

"Can we count on you, Mr. Spenser? Can you get it back?"

"Win this one for the Gipper," I said.

Behind me Tower gave a kind of snort, and Forbes looked as if he'd found half a worm in his apple.

"I beg your pardon?" he said.

"I'm thirty-seven years old and short on rah-rah, Dr. Forbes. If you'll pay me, and do your Paddy O'Brien impressions somewhere else, I'll see if I can find the manuscript."

"This gets us nowhere," Tower said. "Let me take him down to my office, Dr. Forbes, and lay it all out for him. I know the situation and I'm used to dealing with people like him."

Forbes nodded without speaking. As we left the office he was standing at his window, hands clasped behind his back, looking at the snow.

The administration building was cinder block, with vinyl tile, frosted glass partitions, two tones of green on the corridor walls. Tower's office was six doors down from Forbes's and not much bigger than Forbes's desk. It was done in beige metal. Tower got seated behind his desk and tapped his teeth with a pencil.

"It's really slick how you can charm a client, Spenser."

I sat across from him in the other chair. I didn't say anything.

"Sure," he said, "the old man's kind of a ham, but he's a damn good administrator, and a damn fine person."

"Okay," I said, "he's terrific. When I grow up I want to be just like him. What about the Godwulf Manuscript?"

"Right." He took an eight-by-ten color print from his manila folder and handed it to me. It showed

an elegantly handwritten book lying open on a table. The words were in Latin and around the margins in bright red and gold were drawn knights and ladies and lions on their hind legs, and vines and stars, and a serpentine dragon being lanced by an armor-clad hero on a plump and feminine horse. The first letter at the top left on each page was elaborately drawn and incorporated into the design of the margins.

“It was taken three nights ago from its case in the library’s rare book room. The watchman punched in there at two and again at four. At four he found the case open and the manuscript gone. He can’t say positively that it wasn’t there at two, but he assumes he would have noticed. It’s hard to prove you didn’t see something. You want to talk to him?”

“No,” I answered. “That’s routine stuff. You or the cops can do that as well as I could. Have you got a suspect?”

“SCACE.”

“SCACE?”

“Student Committee Against Capitalist Exploitation. Revolution at the far-left fringe of the spectrum. I don’t know it the way courts want it known; I know it the way you know things like that you’re in my line of work.”

“Informer?”

“Not really, though I’ve got some contacts. Mostly, though, it’s a gut guess. It’s the kind of thing they’d do. I’ve been here for five years. Before that I was with the Bureau for ten. I’ve spent a lot of time on radicals, and I’ve developed a feel for them.”

“Like the late director developed a feel for them?”

“Hoover? No, he’s one reason I quit the Bureau. He was a hell of a cop once, but his time came and went before he died. I got enough feel about the radical kids not to classify them. The worst of them have the same things wrong that zealots always have, but you can’t blame them for getting rigid about some of the things that go on. That ain’t Walt Disney World out there.” He nodded out his window at the blacktop quadrangle where the slush was beginning to collect in semi-fluid patterns as the kids sloshed through it. A thin and leafless sapling leaned against its support stake. It was a long way from home.

“Where do I find SCACE? Do they have a clubhouse with college pennants on the wall and old P. Boone records playing day and night?”

“Not hardly,” Tower said. “Your best bet would be to talk to the secretary, Terry Orchard. She’s the least unpleasant of them, and the least unreasonable.”

“Where do I find her?”

Tower pressed down an intercom button and asked someone to bring him in the SCACE file.

“We keep a file on all college organizations. Just routine. We’re not singling SCACE out.”

“I bet you’ve got a thick one on the Newman club,” I said.

“Okay, we don’t pay as much attention to some as others, granted. But we’re not persecuting anybody.”

Tower’s door opened and a post-coed blonde in high white boots came in. She was wearing something in purple suede that was too short for a skirt and too long for a belt. Above that was a scarlet satin long-collared shirt with puffed sleeves and a deep neck. Her thighs were a little heavy—but perhaps she thought the same of me. She laid a thick brown file folder on Tower’s desk, looked me over like the weight guesser at a fair, and left.

“Who was that,” I asked, “the dean of women?”

Tower was thumbing through the file. He extracted a typewritten sheet.



“Here,” he said, and handed it across. It was a file on Terry Orchard: home address: Newton, Massachusetts; college address: none. Transient.

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“Transient?” I said.

“Yeah, she drifts. Mostly she lives with a guy named Dennis Powell, who’s some kind of SCAC official. She also used to live sometimes with a girl over on Hemenway Street. Connelly, Catherine Connelly. It’s all there in the file.”

“Yeah, and the file is a year old.”

“I don’t have the staff. The kids come and go. They’re only here four years, if that. The romantic radicals like to think of themselves as free floaters, street people. They sleep around on floors and sofas and Christ knows where else. Your best bet would be to get her after class.”

Again the intercom, again the purple skirt.

“See if you can get Terry Orchard’s schedule from the registrar’s office for me, Brenda.” A business. Competent. Professional. No hanky-panky. No wonder he lasted ten years with the Feds.

She was back in about five minutes with a Xerox copy of an IBM printout of Terry Orchard’s schedule. She had a class in the psychology of repression that ended at three in Hardin Hall, fourth floor. It was 2:35.

“Picture?” I asked Tower.

“Right here,” he said. He looked at the massive watch on the broad, snakeskin band that he wore. It was the kind they call a chronometer, which will tell you not only the time but the atmospheric pressure and the lunar cycle.

“Three o’clock,” he said. “Plenty of time; Hardin Hall is two buildings away across the quad. Take the elevator to the fourth floor. Room four-o-nine is to your left, about two doors down the corridor.”

I looked at the picture. It wasn’t good. Obviously an ID shot. Square face, rather thick lips, and hair pulled tight back away from her face. She looked older than the twenty her file had said she was. But most people do in ID shots. I reserved judgment.

“Okay,” I said. “I’ll go see her. How about a retainer? Forbes telling me how indigent you all were has me nervous.”

“One will come to you in the mail from the comptroller. A week’s worth in advance.”

“Sold,” I said. I gave him back the file and the picture.

“Don’t you want it?”

“I’ll remember,” I said. We shook hands. I left.

The corridors were beginning to fill with students changing classes. I pushed through into the quadrangle. The thin elm sapling I’d seen from Forbes’s window wasn’t as lonely as I thought. Five cousins, no less spindly, were geometrically spaced about the hot top quadrangle. Three sides of the quadrangle were bordered with gray-white brick buildings. Each had wide stairs leading up to multiple glass-door banks. The buildings were perfectly square, four stories high, with gray painted casement windows. It looked like corporate headquarters for White Tower Hamburgers. The fourth side opened onto the street, where MBTA trains rumbled.

Under one of the saplings a boy and girl sat close together. He was wearing black sneakers and brown socks, flared dungarees, a blue denim shirt and a fatigue jacket with staff sergeant’s stripes, Seventh Division patch, and the name tag Gagliano. His thick black hair blossomed out from his head in a Caucasian afro and the snow streaked the rose-colored lenses of his gold-rimmed glasses. The girl had on bib overalls and a quilted ski parka. On her feet were blue suede hiking boots with thick corrugated soles and silver lacing studs. Her blond hair was perfectly straight and halfway to her waist. She wore a woven leather headband to keep it out of her eyes. I wondered if it was a mark

advancing years when you no longer wanted to neck in the snow.

A black kid in a Borsalino hat came out of the library across the quadrangle. He had on a red sleeveless jumpsuit, black shirt with bell sleeves, high-heeled black patent leather boots with black laces. A full-length black leather trench coat hung open. A Fu Manchu mustache swept to the chin on each side of his mouth. Two kids in football jackets exchanged looks as he went by. They had neckties like pilot whales. A slim black girl in an Angela Davis haircut and huge pendant earrings trailed a gentle scent of imported bath soap past me as I went into Hardin Hall, the third building on the quadrangle.

The elevator that took me to the fourth floor was covered with obscene graffiti that some censorious soul had tried to doctor into acceptability, so that phrases like "buck you" mingled with the more traditional expletives. It was a losing cause, but that didn't make it a bad one.

Room 409 had a blond oak door with a window in it, just like the other six classrooms that lined the corridor on each side. Inside I could see about forty kids facing a woman seated up front at a table. She wore a dark maroon silk granny dress with a low scooped neckline. The dress was covered with a faded off-white floral design that looked like hydrangea. Her long black hair was caught back with a gold barrette. She wore large round horn-rimmed glasses, and was smoking a corncob pipe with a curved amber stem. She was speaking with great animation and her hands flashed with large rings as she spoke and gestured. A number of students were taking notes, some watched her closely, some had their heads down on the desk and were apparently asleep. Terry Orchard was there, back row, looking out the window at the snow. She looked like kids I'd seen before, the real goods, faded Levi jacket and pants, faded and unironed denim shirt, hair pulled back tight in a pigtail like an eighteenth-century British sailor. No make-up, no jewelry. On her feet were yellow leather work shoes that laced up over the ankle. She wasn't built so you could tell from where I was, but I would have bet my retainer that she wouldn't be wearing a bra. There are kids that get their anti-establishment milkman's overalls at the Marsha Jordan Shop with their own charge card. But Terry wasn't one of them. Her clothes proclaimed their origin in Jerry's Army-Navy Store. She was better-looking than her picture, but still looked older than twenty.

## Chapter 2

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The bell rang and the teacher stopped—apparently in midsentence—put her corn-cob pipe in her mouth, folded up her notes, and started out. The kids followed. Terry Orchard was one of the first out the door. I fell in beside her.

“Excuse me,” I said, “Miss Orchard?”

“Yes?” No hostility, but very little warmth either.

“My name is Spenser and I’d like to buy you lunch.”

“Why?”

“How about, I’m a Hollywood producer casting for a new movie?”

“Get lost,” she said without looking at me.

“How about, if you don’t come to lunch with me I’ll break both your thumbs and you’ll never play pool again?”

She stopped and looked at me. “Look,” she said, “what the hell do you want anyway? Why don’t you go hang around down at the convent school with a bag of candy bars?”

We were down one flight of stairs now and turning toward the next flight. I took a card out of the breast pocket of my jacket and handed it to her. She read it.

“Oh, for crissake,” she said. “A private eye? Jesus. Is that corny! Are you going to pull a gat on me? Did my old man send you?”

“Miss Orchard, look at it this way, you get a free lunch and half a million laughs afterward talking to the gang back at the malt shop. I get a chance to ask some questions, and if you answer them I’ll let you play with my handcuffs. If you don’t answer them, you still get the lunch. Who else has been out with a private eye lately?”

“A pig is a pig,” she said. “Whether he’s public or private, he works for the same people.”

“Next time you’re in trouble,” I said, “call a hippie.”

“Oh, crap, you know damn well ...”

I stopped her. “I know damn well that it would be easier to argue over lunch. My fingernails are clean and I promise to use silverware. I’m paying with establishment expense money. It’s a chance to exploit them.”

She almost smiled. “Okay,” she said. “We’ll go to the Pub. They’ll let me in dressed this way. And this is the only way I dress.”

We had reached the ground level and headed out into the quadrangle. We then turned left out onto the avenue. The buildings around the university were old red brick. Many of the windows were boarded, and few of the rest had curtains. Along the avenue was some of the detritus that gathers at the exterior edge of a big university: used-book shops, cut-rate clothing stores featuring this year’s freaky fashions, a porno shop, a school of astrology-reading in a store-front, a term-paper mill, three sushi joints, hamburger, pizza, fried chicken joints, and a place selling soft ice cream. The porno shop was bigger than the bookstore.

The Pub was probably once a gas station. It had been painted entirely antique green, glass windows and all. The word Pub was gold-leafed on the door. Inside were a juke box, a color TV, dark wooden tables and high-backed booths, a bar along one side. The ceiling was low and most of the light came

from a big Budweiser sign in the rear. The bar was mostly empty in midafternoon; a group in one booth was playing cards. In the back a boy and girl were talking very softly to one another. Terry Orchard and I took the second booth from the door. The table top was covered with initials scratched with penknife and pencil point over a long period of time. The upholstery of the booth was torn in places and cracked in others.

“Do you recommend anything?” I asked.

“The corned beef is okay,” she said.

A fat, tough, tired-looking waitress wearing sneakers came for our order. I ordered us both a corned beef sandwich and a beer. Terry Orchard lit a cigarette and blew smoke through her nostrils.

“If I drink that beer you’re an accomplice. I’m under twenty-one,” she said.

“That’s okay, it gives me a chance to show contempt for the establishment.”

The waitress set down two large schooners of draft beer. “Your sandwiches will be out in a minute,” she said, and shuffled off. Terry took a sip.

I said, “You’re under arrest.” Her eyes flared open, and then she smiled, grudgingly, over the glasses.

“You’re nowhere near as funny as you think you are, Mr. Spenser, but you’re a hell of a lot better than I figured. What do you want?”

“I’m looking for the Godwulf Manuscript. The university president himself called me in, showed me his profile, dazzled me with his elocution, and assigned me to get it back. Tower, the campus cop, suggested you might help me.”

“What is a Godwulf Manuscript?”

“It’s an illuminated manuscript from the fourteenth century. It was in the rare book room at your library; now it isn’t. It’s being held for ransom by an unidentified campus group.”

“Why did Super Swine think I could help?”

“Super Swine—you must be an English major—he thought you could help because he thinks SCACE took it, and you are the secretary of that organization.”

“Why does he think SCACE took it?”

“Because he has an instinct for it, and maybe because he knows something. He’s not just a storefront clotheshorse. When he’s not getting his nails manicured and his hair styled with a razor, he is probably a pretty shrewd cop. He didn’t tell me everything he knows.”

“Why not?”

“Sweetie, no one ever tells me everything he knows; it is the nature of the beast.”

“You must get a swell view of life looking at it through a keyhole half the time.”

“I see what’s there.”

The waitress brought our sandwiches, large, on dark bread, with pickles and chips. They were sweet pickles, though. I ordered two more beers.

“What about the manuscript?” I asked.

“I don’t know anything about it.”

“Okay,” I said, “tell me about SCACE then.”

Her face was less friendly now. “Why do you want to know about SCACE?”

“I won’t know till I’ve learned. That’s my line of work. I ask about things. And people don’t tell me anything, so I ask about more things, and so on. Now and then things fall into place.”

“Well, there’s nothing to fall into place here. We’re a revolutionary organization. We are trying to develop a new consciousness; we’re committed to social change, to redistribution of wealth, to real liberty for everyone, not just for the bosses and the rip-off artists.”

Her voice had become almost mechanical, like the people who do telephone canvassing for dance

studios. I wondered how long it had been since she'd actually thought about all those words and what they really meant.

"How you go about getting these things instituted?"

"By continuous social pressure. By pamphleteering, by marching, by demonstrating our support for all causes that crack the establishment's united front. By refusing to accede to anything that benefits the establishment. By opposing injustice whenever we find it."

"Making much progress?" I asked.

"You bet your life. We're growing every day. There were only three or four of us at first. Now there are five times that many."

"No, I meant injustice."

She was silent, looking at me.

"I haven't made much progress that way either," I said.

A tall, big-boned blond kid wearing a plaid shirt and Levi's came into the Pub and looked around. He was clean-shaven and wild-haired, and when his eyes got used to the dimness he headed over to me and slid in beside Terry Orchard. He picked up her half-filled glass, drained it, set it down, and said to her, "Who's this creep?"

"Dennis," she said, "be nice."

He squeezed her arm hard with one hand and repeated the question. I answered for her.

"My name's Spenser."

He turned his head toward me and looked very hard at me. "I'm talking to her, not you, Jack. She's not my friend."

"Dennis!" She said it with more emphasis this time. "Who the hell do you think you are? Let go of my arm."

I reached over and took hold of his wrist. "Listen, Goldilocks," I said, "I bought her a beer and you can't drink it. On my block that entitles you to get your upper lip fattened."

He yanked his hand away from me. "You think maybe the long hair makes me soft?"

"Dennis," Terry said, "he's a private detective."

"Freaking pig," he said, and swung at me. I pulled my head out of the way and slipped out of the booth. The punch rammed against the back of the booth; the kid swore and turned toward me. He was not planning to quit, so I figured it best to end it swiftly. I feinted toward his stomach with my left hand, then hooked it over his lowered guard and turned my whole shoulder into it as it connected on the side of his face. He sat down hard on the floor.

Terry Orchard went down on her knees beside him, her arms around his shoulders.

"Don't get up, Dennis. Stay there. He'll hurt you."

"She's right, kid," I said. "You're an amateur. I do this kind of thing for a living."

The big old tough waitress came around and said, "What the hell is going on? You want the cops in here? You want to fight, go outside."

"No more trouble," I said. "I'm a movie stunt man and I was just showing my friend how to slip a punch."

"And I'm Wonder Woman and if you do it again, I'm calling the blues." She stomped off.

"The beer offer still holds," I said. The kid got up, his jaw already beginning to puff. He wouldn't want to chew much tomorrow. He sat down in the booth beside Terry, who still held his arm protectively.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Spenser," she said. "He isn't really like that."

"What's he really like?" I asked.

His eyes, which had been a little out of focus, were sharpening. “I’m like I am,” he said. “And don’t like to see Terry sitting around boozing with some nosy goddamn gumshoe. What are you doing around here anyway?”

The left hook had taken some of the starch out of him. His voice was less assertive, more petulant. But it hadn’t made him any sweeter.

“I’m a private detective looking for a stolen rare book, the Godwulf Manuscript. Ever hear of it?”

“No.”

“How’d you know I was a private cop?”

“I didn’t till Terry said so, but you got the look. If your hair were much shorter it would be a crew cut. In the movement you learn to be suspicious. Besides, Terry’s my woman.”

“I’m not anybody’s woman, Dennis. That’s a sexist statement. I’m not a possession.”

“Oh, Christ,” I said. “Could we cut the polemics a minute. If you know of the manuscript, know the location also. It has to be kept in a climate-controlled atmosphere. Otherwise it will disintegrate. And then it will be worthless both to scholars and to you, or whoever the book-nappers may be. The university hasn’t got the money to ransom it.”

“They got the money to buy football players and build a hockey rink and pay goddamn professors to teach three hours a week and write books the rest of the time.”

“I’m not into educational reform this week. Do you have any thoughts on where the missing manuscript might be?”

“If I did I wouldn’t tell you. If I didn’t I could find out, and when I found out I wouldn’t tell you either. You aren’t peeking over the transom in some flophouse now, snoopy. You’re on a college campus and you stick out like a sore thumb. You will find out nothing at all because no one will tell you. You and the other dinosaurs can rut around all you want—we’re not buying it.”

“Buying what?”

“Whatever you’re selling. You are the other side, man.”

“We aren’t getting anywhere,” I said. “I’ll see you.”

I left a five on the table to cover the lunch and left. It was getting dark now and the commuter traffic was starting. I felt the beer a little, and I felt the sadness of kids like that who weren’t buying and weren’t quite sure what it was. I got my car from where I’d parked it by a hydrant. It had a parking ticket tied to the windshield wiper. Eternal vigilance, I thought, is the price of liberty. I tore the ticket up and drove home.

# Chapter 3

---

I was living that year on Marlborough Street, two blocks up from the Public Garden. I made myself hash and eggs for supper and read the morning's *New York Times* while I ate. I took my coffee with me into the living room and tried looking at television. It was awful, so I shut it off and got out in the yard carving. I'd been working on a block of hard pine for about six months now, trying to reproduce in wood the bronze statue of an Indian on horseback that stands in front of the Museum of Fine Arts. The wood was so hard that I had to sharpen the knives every time I worked. And I spent about half an hour this night with whetstone and file before I began on the pine. At eleven I turned on the news, watched it as I undressed, shut it off, and went to bed.

At some much later time, in the dark, the phone rang. I spiraled slowly upward from sleep and answered it after it had rung for what seemed a long time. The girl's voice at the other end was thick and very slow, almost like a 45 record played at 33.

"Spenser?"

"Yeah."

"It's Terry ... help me."

"Where are you?"

"Eighty Hemenway Street, apartment three."

"Ten minutes," I said, and rolled out of bed.

It was 3:05 in the morning when I got into my car and headed for Hemenway Street. It wasn't till 3:15 when I got there. Three A.M. traffic in Boston is rarely a serious problem.

Hemenway Street, on the other hand, often is. It is a short street of shabby apartment buildings, near the university, and for no better reason than Haight-Ashbury had, or the East Village, it had become the place for street people. On the walls of the building Maoist slogans were scrawled in red paint. On a pillar at the entrance to the street was a proclamation of Gay Liberation. There were various recommendations about pigs being offed scrawled on the sidewalk. I left my car double-parked outside 80 Hemenway and tried the front door. It was locked. There were no doorbells to push. I took my gun out, reversed it, and broke the glass with the handle. Then I reached around and turned the dead lock and opened the door from the inside.

Number three was down the hall, right rear. There were bicycles with tire locks lining both walls and some indeterminate litter behind them. Terry's door was locked. I knocked; no answer. I knocked again and heard something faint, like the noise of a kitten. The corridor was narrow. I braced my back against the wall opposite the door and drove my heel, with 195 pounds behind it, against the door near to the knob. The inside jamb splintered, and the door tore open and banged violently against the wall as it opened.

Inside all the lights were on. The first thing I saw was Dennis Goldilocks lying on his back with his mouth open, his arms outspread, and a thick patch of tacky and blackening blood covering much of his chest. Near him on her hands and knees was Terry Orchard. Her hair was loose and falling forward as though she were trying to dry it in the sun. But it wasn't sunny in there. She wore only a pajama top with designs of Snoopy and the Red Baron on it, and it was from her that the faint kitten sounds were coming. She swayed almost rhythmically back and forth making no progress, moving in no direction.

just swaying and mewling. Between her and Dennis on the floor was a small white-handled gun. It was something that had been fired in the room; I could smell it.

I knelt beside the blond boy and felt for the big pulse in his neck. The minute I touched his skin I knew I'd never feel the pulse. He was cool already and getting colder. I turned to Terry. She still swayed, head down and sick. I could smell something vaguely medicinal on her breath. Her breath was heaving and her eyes were slits. I pulled her to her feet, and held her, one arm around her back. She was almost all the way under. I couldn't tell from what, but whatever it was, it was an o.d.

I walked her into the bathroom, got her pajama shirt off, and got her under the shower. I turned the water on warm and then slowly to full cold and held her under. She quivered and struggled faintly. The sleeves of my jacket were wet up past the elbows and my shirtfront was soaked through. She pushed one hand weakly at my face and began to cry instead of mew. I held her there some more. As I held her I kept listening for footsteps behind me. The door had made a hell of a lot of noise when I kicked it open, and the gunshot must have been a loud one long before that. But the neighborhood was not apparently, that kind of neighborhood. Not the kind to look into gunshots and doors splintering and such. The kind to pull the covers up over the head and burrow the face in the pillow and say screw it. Better him than me.

I got a hand up to her neck and felt her pulse. It was quicker—I guessed about sixty. I got her out of the shower and across to the bedroom. I didn't see a robe, so I pulled the blanket off the bed and wrapped it around her. Then we waltzed to the kitchen. I got water boiling and found some instant coffee and a cup. She was babbling now, nothing coherent, but the words were intelligible. I made coffee with her balanced half over one hip, my arm around her and the blanket caught in my fist to keep her warm. Then back to the living room to the day bed—there were no chairs in the kitchen—and I sat her down.

She pushed aside the coffee and spilled some on herself and cried out at the pain, but I got her to drink some. And again some. And one more time. Her eyes were open now and her breath was much less shallow. I could see her rib cage swell and settle regularly beneath the blanket. She finished the coffee.

I stood her up and we began to walk back and forth across the apartment, which wasn't much of a walk. There was the living room, a small bedroom, a bath, and a kitchenette, barely big enough to stand in. The living room, in which the quick and dead were joined, held only a card table, a steam trunk with a lamp on it, and the studio couch on whose bare mattress Terry Orchard had drunk her coffee. The blanket I had pulled off the bed had been its only adornment, and as I looked into the bedroom I could see a cheap deal bureau beside the bed. On it was a candle stuck in a Chianti bottle beneath a bare light bulb hanging from a ceiling.

I looked down at Terry Orchard. There were tears running down her cheeks, and less of her weight leaned on me.

“Sonova bitch,” she said. “Sonova bitch, sonova bitch, sonova bitch.”

“When you can talk to me, talk to me. Till then keep walking,” I said.

She just kept saying sonova bitch, in a dead singsong voice, and I found that as we walked we were keeping time to the curse, left, right, sonova bitch. I realized that the broken door was still wide open and as we sonova-bitched by on the next swing I kicked it shut with my heel. A few more turns around she fell silent, then she said, half question—

“Spenser?”

“Yeah.”

“Oh my God, Spenser.”



“Yeah.”

We stopped walking and she turned against me with her face hard against my chest. She clenched onto my shirt with both fists and seemed to be trying to blend into me. We stood motionless like that for a long time. Me with my arms around her. Both wet and dripping and the dead boy with his wide, sightless eyes not looking at us.

“Sit down,” I said after a while. “Drink some more coffee. We have to talk.”

She didn’t want to let go of me, but I pried her off and sat her on the day bed. She huddled inside the blanket, her wet hair plastered down around her small head, while I made some more coffee.

We sat together on the day bed, sipping coffee. I had the impulse to say, “What’s new?” but I squelched it. Instead I said, “Tell me about it now.”

“Oh, God, I can’t.”

“You have to.”

“I want to get out of here. I want to run.”

“Nope. You have to sit here and tell me what happened. From the very first thing that happened to the very last thing that happened. And you have to do it now, because you are in very big trouble and you have to know exactly how big.”

“Trouble? Jesus, you think I shot him, don’t you?”

“The thought occurred to me.”

“I didn’t shoot him. They shot him. The ones that made me take the dope. The ones that made me shoot the gun.”

“Okay, but start with the first thing. Whose apartment is this?”

“Ours, Dennis’s and mine.” She nodded at the floor and then started and looked away quickly.

“Dennis is Dennis Powell, right?”

“Yes.”

“And you live together and are not married, right?”

“Yes.”

“When did the people come who did this?”

“I don’t know exactly—it was late, about two thirty maybe.”

“Who were they?”

“I don’t know. Two men. Dennis seemed to know them.”

“What did they do?”

“They knocked on the door. Dennis got up—we weren’t asleep, we never go to sleep till very late—and asked, ‘Who is it?’ I couldn’t hear what they said. But he let them in. That’s why I think he knew them. When he opened the door they came in very fast. One of them pushed him against the wall and the other one came into the bedroom and dragged me out of bed. Neither one said anything. Dennis said something like, ‘Hey, what’s the idea?’ Or ‘Hey, what’s going on?’ One of them had a gun and he held it on both of us. He never said anything. Neither one. It was spooky. The other guy reached in his coat pocket and came out with my gun.”

“Is that your gun on the floor?” I asked.

She wouldn’t look but nodded.

“Okay, then what?” I asked.

“He handed my gun to the first man, the man with the gun, and then he grabbed me and turned me around and put his hand over my mouth and bent my arm up behind me and the other man shot Dennis twice.”

“With your gun?”

“Yes.”

“Then what?”

“Then—” She paused and closed her eyes and shook her head.

“Go on,” I said.

“Then the man that shot Dennis made me hold the gun in my hand and shoot it into Dennis. He held my wrist and squeezed my finger on the trigger.” She said it in a rush and the words nearly ran together.

“Did he have on gloves?”

She thought a minute. “Yes, yellow ones. I think they might have been rubber or plastic.”

“Then what?”

“Then the one who was holding me made me lie down on the bed. I didn’t have anything on but my top. And the other one poured some kind of dope in my mouth and forced it shut and held my nose tight. I swallowed it. Then they just held me there with a hand over my mouth for a little while. Then they left.”

I didn’t say anything. If she’d invented that story coming out of a narcotic coma, she was some kind of special species and nothing I could handle. She might have hallucinated the whole thing, depending on what she had taken. Or the story might be true.

“Why did they make me shoot him after he was dead?” she asked.

I discovered as I answered that I believed her. “To hook you on a paraffin test. When you fire a handgun cordite particles impregnate your skin. A lab man puts paraffin over it, lets it dry, peels it off, and tests it. The particles show up in the wax.”

It took a minute to register. “A lab man, you mean the police?”

“Yes, honey, the police.”

“No, can’t we get out of here? I’ll go home. You won’t say anything. My father will pay you. He has money. I know he can give you some ...”

“Your boyfriend, dead in your apartment, killed with your gun, you gone? They’d come and get you and bring you back. Do you know a lawyer?”

“A lawyer, how the hell would I know a freaking lawyer?” She looked desperately toward the door. “I’m splitting, screw this scene.” Her voice had gotten harsh and tough with fright, and I noticed her lapse into the jargon of her peer group as her fright increased. When she’d been clinging to me she talked like a young girl in college. When she wanted to get away from me her voice and language changed. I held her against me with my arm around her shoulder.

“Listen,” I said. “You are in trouble enough to pull up over your head and tie a knot in. But you’re not in it alone. I’ll help you. It’s my line of work. I’ll get you a lawyer in a bit. Then I’ll call the cops. Before I do, though—” She started to speak and I squeezed her. “Listen,” I said, “When the cops come don’t say anything, don’t talk to them, don’t argue with them, don’t be hostile, don’t be smart. Do not say anything to anybody till you talk to the lawyer. His name is Vincent Haller. He’ll see you soon after you go downtown. Talk only with him present and say only what he says you should. Have you ever been busted?”

“No.”

“Okay. It’s not anywhere near as bad as you think it is. No one will hurt you. No one will grab you under a bright light and hit you with a hose. You’ll be okay, and you won’t be in long. Haller will take care of you.”

She nodded. I went on.

“Before I make my call—do you have any idea why the men did this?”

“No.”

“Do you use drugs?”

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“Yes.”

“Do you know what they gave you?”

“No. It tasted like paregoric and smelled like ether. It wasn't anything I'd tried. Whatever it was was a downer though.”

“Okay. Get dressed. I'm going to call.”

# Chapter 4

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The first of Boston's finest to arrive were two bulls from a radio car. They came in, told us not to touch anything, got our names, frisked me, took my gun, and looked closely at us till the homicide people came. They came, as they always do, in large numbers: technicians, photographers, someone from the medical examiner's. Two guys in white coats to carry out the corpse and some dicks to investigate the crime and question the suspects. In this case the crew was led by the commander of the homicide bureau, Lieutenant Martin Quirk. I'm six foot one and he was taller than I was, taller and thicker. His hands and fingers were thick and his lips were thick and his nose was broad. His thick black hair was cut close. He was clean-shaven at four A.M. and his shoes gleamed with dark polish. His shirt was freshly ironed and his tie neatly knotted. His suit was immaculate and sharply creased. He wore a Tyrolean hat with a feather in it and a white raincoat, which he never took off. His face was pockmarked and there was a short scar at one corner of his mouth.

He stood now looking at me with his raincoat open and his hands in his hip pockets. "This is sure a lucky break for us, Spenser, having you on this to help us out. We need slick professionals like yourself to straighten us out and all. Keep us from forgetting to look for fingerprints, missing clues, and stuff."

"I didn't plan to get into this, Lieutenant. The kid called me for help, and I came over and found her. And him. She was badly drugged. I got her sobered up a little and called you."

"How did she know you?" Quirk asked.

"I'm on a case that she's involved in."

"What case?"

"Looking for a missing rare manuscript stolen from a university."

"What university?"

"If it seems pertinent, I'll tell you."

"If I want to know, you'll tell me." Quirk's voice squeezed out sharp and flat like sheet metal.

"I'll tell you if you need to know it. I don't make a living telling cops everything they want to know about clients."

"I don't make a living taking crap from hole-in-the-wall shysters like you, Spenser."

A thin, blue-jowled sergeant named Belson drifted in between Quirk and me.

"Come on, Lieutenant, this don't get us far. Both the girl and the victim are university students, and there's a fair bet that it's the same university that hired Spenser."

Quirk looked at me, then Belson. "Do you know him?" he asked, nodding at me.

"Yeah, he used to work out of the Suffolk County D.A.'s office about five years ago. I hear he got canned."

"Okay, get his story." He turned to me. "You're not working for the D.A. now, boy, you're working on my side of the street, and if you get in my way I'll kick your ass right into the gutter. Got that?"

"Can I feel your muscle?" I said.

Quirk looked at me without saying anything, then turned away and walked over to the girl.

Belson shook his head and pulled out a notebook.

"Start up with the lieutenant, Spenser, and you'll end up looking like you went through a pepp

mill.”

“I won’t be able to sleep without a night light,” I said.

Belson shrugged. “Okay. Start from the beginning. You’re in the business. I don’t have to lead you

I told him, omitting, mostly from stubbornness, the name of my client, but including, because it was sure to come out anyway, the incident in the Pub that afternoon, when I had knocked the kid down.

Belson shook his head again. “How could anyone get mad at a sweetheart like you? I would have thought he’d have been hypnotized with the way you’re so agreeable.”

I let that go.

“You’re sure you might not have been hustling his chick just a little, Spenser? And maybe you went over here hustling her again and he came home and caught you, and an argument developed?”

“Yeah, and I pulled out my fourteen-dollar Saturday night special and let fly at him. Come off it, Belson. You’re just talking for the hell of it. You know I didn’t do it. You know I wouldn’t use a piece of cheap tin like that gun. If I had, you know I would have covered it better than this.”

“Okay, maybe I don’t like you for it. I’ve known you a long time, and it’s not your style. But it could happen. You got nothing against girls, I can recall. It could be his gun and you had to take it away from him and it went off. Lotta people get killed by people in a way that ain’t their style.”

“And I shot him four times in the chest getting it away from him?”

“Could be to cover it up, make it look different.”

“You’re fishing, Frank,” I said.

“Maybe.”

“Have you heard the girl’s story yet?”

“Nope, lieutenant’s getting that now.”

“He’s going to love it,” I said.

“Of course you got it before you called us,” Belson said.

“She was way under from something. I had to bring her out.”

“And then you had to ask her what happened and then she had to tell you. And then you had to fudge up a story maybe.”

“Wait till you hear the story. You don’t think I’m smart enough to work up something like that. You cops are cops, not priests. Calling you isn’t a ritual act. I called you as soon as my judgment told me it was both feasible and prudent.”

Belson set fire to a half-smoked cigar before he said anything. Then he said, “You talk good for a dumb slug; feasible and prudent, my, my.”

From the other side of the room Quirk spoke over his shoulder without turning his head. “Belson, bring the private license over here.”

Belson nodded me toward Quirk and I walked over. Quirk was straddling the only straight chair in the room, with his forearms crossed on the back. Before him Terry Orchard was on the couch. She had on a denim shirt and Levi’s again, but her hair was still wet and tight on her skull. She looked awful small.

“Spenser,” he said without looking up. “She says she won’t say anything unless you say it’s all right. She says you told her not to talk to us without a lawyer.”

“Right enough, Lieutenant. I knew you wouldn’t want to take advantage of her when she was confused, or perhaps in a state of shock.”

“We’re going to take her in.”

“I thought you might.”

“We’d like you to come along, too,” Quirk said.

"I wouldn't miss it," I said.

Terry looked at me with her eyes very wide and dark. I said to her, "Haller will be there. Just do as I said."

The assistant M.E., a small man with thick glasses and gray curly hair, came over to Quirk.

"I'm through," he said. "If you are too, we'll haul him off."

"Any opinions, Manny?" Quirk asked.

"Yeah, I'd guess he was shot in the chest."

"That med school training really gives you insight," Quirk said. "Anything that I need to know that you can tell me now?"

"Shot sometime within the last five or six hours, cause of death presumable gunshot. I don't see any other signs. Got any corroborative testimony?"

Quirk looked at Belson.

"Spenser says the kid was dead when he arrived at three fifteen and that the blood had gotten tacky and the skin was cool," Belson said.

The assistant M.E. said, "That seems about right, but it could be a couple hours earlier for all I can prove here."

Quirk nodded. "Okay, thanks, Manny." And then to the two white-coated interns, "Take him away."

They bundled Dennis Powell onto the stretcher. He'd already started to stiffen and he was getting awkward to handle. They straightened his arms out down by his side, put his ankles together, wrapped the tarp around him, and strapped him into the stretcher. Then they dollied him out. They had to stand him up to get him out the apartment door, and when they did the top of him lolled against the straps. Terry made a noise and looked away. The stretcher bumped down the stairs and out to the ambulance. A few curious early risers stood around staring. The two harness bulls who'd showed up first kept them away from the door. A little fat dick in a long blue overcoat with a button missing came in after letting the stretcher out.

"Nothing, Lieutenant. Nobody heard nothing, nobody saw nothing, nobody knows nothing. Half of them are goddamn faggots, anyway."

"Jesus Christ," Quirk said. "Just give me information; don't review the witnesses' sex life for me."

"Okay, Lieutenant. I mean I figured that being as they was faggots you might not want to take the word. You know how these goddamn perverts are."

"No, I don't know, and I don't want you to tell me. Stay around, ask questions. See what you can find out about these two. Try to remember you're on the homicide squad, not the vice squad. When I want a fag count, I'll let you know."

The dick hustled out. Quirk shook his head. Belson was looking up at the ceiling, puffing the cigarette butt that was barely clearing his lips by now.

"Take 'em downtown, Frank," Quirk said to Belson. "I'll clean up here and be along."

As we started out I said to Belson, "I'm still double-parked out there. Let me get it off the street before some zealous meter maid gets it hauled off."

Belson said, "Why don't you follow me downtown. Then we won't have to drive you back later."

I nodded and grinned. "See? I told you you didn't think I did it."

"I don't think anything," Belson said. "But you'll be down to look out for the little girl."

Belson took Terry into the squad car and they drove off. I got my car out from behind another white and blue police car with the seal of the city on the side, and followed Belson's car up Hemenway to Boylston, down Boylston to Clarendon, right on Clarendon, then up the Stanhope Street Alley and behind headquarters.

# Chapter 5

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We went in the back door, off Stanhope Street by the parking area that says RESERVED FOR PRESS. There were no cars there. You only go in the front door if you're newsfilm material. If they put the arm on you in a disadvantaged neighborhood you go in past the empty press lot.

The Homicide Division was third floor rear, with a view of the Fryalator vent from the coffee shop in the alley and the soft perfume of griddle and grease mixing with the indigenous smell of cigar smoke and sweat and something else, maybe generations of scared people. Vince Haller was leaning against one of the desks outside Quirk's frosted glass cubicle. He was wearing a white double-breasted suit, and over one shoulder he carried a camel's-hair coat with big leather buttons. His gray hair was long and modish and he had a big Teddy Roosevelt mustache. He was a couple of inches taller than I was, but not as heavy.

"Gentlemen?" he said in his big actorish voice.

I gave him a wave and Belson said, "Hello, Vince."

"I'd like a chance to talk to my client."

Belson looked at Terry Orchard. "Is this man your attorney?"

She looked at me and I nodded. She said, "Yes."

"You can talk with her at my desk there." Belson nodded at a scarred and cluttered desk outside Quirk's enclosed cubicle. "We'll stay out of earshot."

"Has she been charged, Frank?" Haller asked.

"Not yet."

"Will she be?"

"I don't know. The lieutenant will be along in a minute. He takes care of that stuff. We'll want to talk with her a lot, though, either way."

"Has she been advised of her rights?"

Belson snorted. "Are you kidding. If she were shooting at me with a flame thrower I'd have advise her of her rights before I shot back. Yes, she's been advised."

"Have you, Miss Orchard?"

"Yes, sir." She was numb and scared, and entirely submissive.

"Okay, come over here and we'll talk." She did and Belson and I stood silently watching them. I suddenly realized how tired I was. I'd slept about three hours. As we stood there, Quirk came in with two other dicks. He looked over at Haller and Terry Orchard, said nothing, and walked into his cubicle. Belson went in after him.

"Stick around," he said. And closed the door. The two dicks sat down at desks, and looked at nothing.

At the other end of the office a black cop with thick hands and a broken nose was talking into a telephone receiver cradled on one shoulder. An old guy in green coveralls came through dragging a cardboard carton with a rope handle and emptying the ashtrays and wastebaskets into it. Haller was still talking to Terry. And I thought about all the times I'd spent in shabby squad rooms like this. Sometimes it felt like all the rooms I was ever in looked out onto alleys. And I thought about how I must feel to be twenty and alone and be in one at 5:30 A.M. and not sure you'd get out. The steam pipe

hissed. I wanted to hiss back.

~~More than that I wanted to run. The room was hot and stuffy. The air was bad. I wanted to get out to get in my car and drive north. In my mind I could see the route, over the Mystic Bridge up Route One, north, maybe to Ipswich or Newburyport where the houses were stately and old and the air was clean and cold and full of the sea. Where there's a kind of mellowness and a memory of another time and another America. Probably never was another America though. And if I headed out that way I'd probably be sitting around the police station in Ipswich, smelling the steam pipes and the disinfectant and wondering if some poor slob deserved what he was getting.~~

Quirk came out of his office. And looked at Haller. Then turned to me.

"Come in and talk."

I did. I told the same story to Quirk that I had to Belson. Exactly the same way. Quirk listened without a word. Looking straight at me all the time I talked. When I was through he said, "Okay, walk outside."

I did. He called Terry Orchard in. Haller went with her. The door closed. I sat some more. The detective at the end of the room still talked into the phone. The two that had come in with Quirk continued to stare and look elaborately at nothing. The sun had come up and shone into one corner of the room. Dust motes drifted in languidly.

"I can't stand it anymore," I said. "I'll confess, just don't give me the silent treatment anymore."

The two detectives looked at me blankly. "Confess what?" one of them said. He had long curly sideburns.

"Anything you want, just no more of the cold shoulder."

Sideburns said to his partner, "Hey, Al, ain't he a funny guy? Right before you go off duty after working all night it's really great to have a funny guy like him around so you can go home happy. Don't you feel that way, Al?"

Al said, "Aw, screw him."

More silence. I got up and walked to the window. There was a heavy wire mesh across it so suspects wouldn't jump out, drop three stories to the ground, and run off. The windows were grimy, with a kind of ancient grime that seemed to have sunk into the glass. Three floors below a thin Puerto Rican kid with pointed shoes came out of the back of the coffee shop with a bucket and poured hot dirty water into the street. It steamed in the cold briefly. I looked at my watch. 6:40. The kid had got up awfully early to come in and mop the floor. I wondered how late tonight he'd be there.

Belson came out of Quirk's office with Terry, through the squad room, and out. Haller came out too, and walked over to me.

"They've gone down to the lab. I think they'll book her," he said. I didn't say anything.

He said, "Quickly, I wanted to check her story with you. She was asleep with her boyfriend in the apartment. Two men apparently known to Powell entered. Shot Powell, forced her to shoot Powell in the body, drugged her, and left. She called you. You came. Sobered her up, got her story. Called the cops."

"That's it," I said.

"She knows you because the university employed you to find a missing rare book."

"Manuscript," I said.

"Okay, manuscript.... You got in touch with her because the campus security man suggested that a certain organization she was part of might have taken it. She had your card. In trouble, she called you."

"Right again," I said.

"As stories go it's not a winner," Haller said.

"I know," I said.



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