

“Great Guy”

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THE cold seeped through Officer Moriarity's greatcoat and numbed his body. Steam spiraled from his nostrils in dragon-like patterns, and the far reaches of the street light at the mouth of the alley fell upon him and ricocheted off his badge and buttons as he lumbered toward the street. With cold-numbed fingers he tugged a ponderous watch from beneath his coat and paused to examine its scarred face beneath the light . . . eleven-thirty, half-an-hour until call-in time.

Great gusts of strong winter wind tore frantically at his clothing as he began his march down Connor's Block, and silent curses sparked from his streaming eyes. God, how he hated this nightly farce.

Officer Moriarity was sick of being a cop. He was sick of being called Moriarity and having greasy mothers beam at him and offer pathetic excuses for the misdemeanors of their snot-nosed brats. He was tired and disgusted with the world that bordered on Connor's Block, the thirty-five dollar a month walk-up and the endless procession of gray mornings when he lay abed and listened to Ella moving about the kitchen, and the sounds of living around him, and he cringed beneath the covers to escape the smells of gas and garlic that permeated the building. He wrinkled his nose at the cold, and wondered what it would be like to do something different; to face the world with a chip on his shoulder, perhaps . . . perhaps like Humphrey Bogart in "Behind Bars." There was a man who stood up and shook

his fist at the stupid world.

Down the block a young girl's laughter tumbled from a dark doorway and was carried to him on the wind; and far away where the streets came together, the lights of an automobile went out. He paused for a moment to try the door of Jennings' hardware store, then walked on to stop at the next doorway, leaving a weird, lace-like pattern of footprints to fade in the swirling snow.

Moriarity wondered why he bothered to punctuate his nightly rounds thus; the haggling little men whose lives revolved around their shops never forgot to lock their doors. It was to kill time, that was the reason, to kill time until midnight when he unlocked the little box on the corner and assured the drowsy desk sergeant that all was quiet on Connor's Block. He longed for midnight to come, so that the call could be made and the biting cold forgotten in the warmth of Jenny Flak's apartment. A glow of warmth accompanied the thought of her; it was nice to have a home away from home, he reflected.

The clock in Kaplan's window read a quarter 'til twelve. Beneath the night light the jeweler's window sparkled like a miniature carnival; displays of rings and necklaces cast rainbows of light upon their velvet pedestals, and Moriarity, his breath clouding the brilliance of the window, stood for a moment on feelingless feet, building dream-castles with the wealth behind the glass.

It began to snow again, and the flakes blew in beneath his visor and melted on his brow. A steeple clock, not in time with the one in the window, tolled a hollow, distant chime somewhere in the

dark distance. Officer Moriarity took a final longing look at the contents of the window and wrenched at the jeweler's door. It opened!

The door spring, seeking release, weighed heavy in his hand. A torrent of thoughts besieged him—snow flakes buzzed about him like a swarm of bees; then Officer Moriarity stepped into the darkness, leaving Connor's Block deserted.

He stood for awhile just inside the door; then a surge of power enveloped him, his senses sharpened, and he began deliberately picking objects from the shelves and cases and stuffing them into his cap. He chose a watch here, a ring there, moving silently, swiftly between the shadowy fixtures. A necklace of pearls for Jenny, from the case; a collection of rings from the centerpiece of a display . . . Moriarity was rich! He began to hurry, tearing frantically at the wrappings of unopened boxes while outside the wind died away, and the snow became lazy and reluctant to fall.

A lone figure bent and muffled in a greatcoat plodded by the front window,

and Moriarity moved toward the door of the back room. There he paused momentarily in the doorway—in time to see the shadow that crept silently through the skylight and dropped to the center of the room. There was no time for him to think, for the wild, staccato clang of the burglar alarm assailed his ears.

The shriek of a siren sounded above the bell, and outside the window beyond the curtain of snow flakes Moriarity saw the cruiser arrive and the uniformed figures emerge.

Jim Garrity drove cautiously over the fresh-fallen snow. He shifted to second and flipped the switch on the squad car radio while his companion lit a cigarette.

"Yeah," he said, "when Moriarity didn't call in, the sergeant got worried and sent me over to pick you up. Can ya imagine . . . the guy wasn't even nervous . . . just standin' there over the body like as if he was waitin' on something. That's what'cha call a good cop."

"Yeah," said his companion, "he sure is a great guy."

Purple Patch

The sun, which has all those planets
revolving around it and dependent upon
it, can ripen a bunch of grapes as if it had
nothing else in the world to do.

Galileo.