

Justice

Patrick J. Mahoney III

Two sharp knocks. Then the sound of hard heels retreating rapidly away from the solid oak paneled door. Expectancy. Rising from the high-backed chair, Colt in hand, he walked slowly across the pitch black room to the door. Silence.

As eons lapsed the seventeen jeweled Benrus on his left wrist became strangely audible, pounding, pounding, pounding, bringing unexpected beads of perspiration to that high cultured forehead. Quietly he removed the chained lug from the night latch, slid back the bolt, and turned the knob counter-clockwise. After two inches of inward motion, the door halted, and he peered hungrily out into the dark night. Nothingness.

With the darkness of the room behind him, he stepped aside and flung the door open. No Tommy-gun blast from across the street: no bomb thrown through the open door. Anxiety.

Gazing out into the three A. M. darkness, he saw nothing save an obsolete gas lamp, which cast weird shadows on the tenement houses, and made a poor attempt to illuminate the wet, cobblestoned street.

A prowling cat knocked the lid off a garbage can a few doors away, and the round metal lid gave him a start as it rolled down the tenement steps and out into the street.

Perplexed, he turned to close the door; a downward glance, a gasp of breath. Tom-toms, bongos, cymbals, all the brassy, screeching clamor of a Faustian opera and the weird, drunken horrors of Poe drove savagely through his tortured brain as he stared wildly down. For there, at his feet, on a dainty, blue-white pillow, was a HUMAN EAR!

Oxygen and the other seven gases came now in geysers, as sweat and tears mingled in their downward path over flushed cheeks. With the arrival of composure, he looked at the hideous talisman. Reason returned slowly to him, and his powers of observation told him that this now inanimate object once belonged to Harbison. Harbison, his companion in culture, his cohort in crime. Would he now be his companion in death?

Shuddering savagely, he re-closed and re-bolted the door, then started pacing the floor like a newly caged Bengal. Hesitantly, then heavily, he dropped into the big chair, and the Colt hung limp and wet-handled over the arm.

He was a lonely man; he was a lost man. He knew the exhibition of carving out there on his front stoop was the work of Angelo Vantucci or one of his able associates. That suave, debonair Ginny, well dressed and with that sickening, stoic smile spread generously over a dark olive face; Vantucci, the problem child of a wealthy Genoese merchant; little Angelo, who, with an eye for fine art and the knowledge of where to peddle any "borrowed" masterpieces he should "come upon," to say nothing of his agility with the double-edge Sicilian stiletto, afforded himself a very comfortable living indeed.

It would have been better, much better, to have split the "take" three ways, but no, he had to let Harbison talk him into cutting Vantucci out of the deal entirely. Greed. Remember? They had contacted the fence that Angelo had arranged, and ignoring the meeting at his apartment, the two of them had split the hundred grand two ways. Harbison left Grand Central for Washington, and he had caught the midnight Greyhound for Bangor. Since then he had lived in constant fear. Was it worth it all?

Remember what Harbison had said when they had parted? "I'd like to see the Ginny's face when he finds out he's been crossed." It seemed like a big joke at the time; they both had laughed, but now he failed to see any humor. Out there on the front stoop was all that remained of Harbison; that small, pointed, anemic ear. The rest of him was probably feeding the conger eels in the Potomac.

Walking to the mantle, he put the Colt down and poured himself two swollen fingers of rye. The fiery liquid hit bottom, and he strode to the side window as an automobile came to a halt next door. As he pulled the cord on the venetian blinds, the light from Kleeber's Dairy truck streamed into the room, forming a barred pattern on the door to the kitchen.

"Lucetti," he thought, "making his morning run."

Suddenly the dull swish of a swing door told him he was not alone. Whirling, his mouth dropped open, color was drained from his face, and sweat immediately formed on his brow. For standing there, back to the kitchen door, illuminated by the ribbed effect of light through the venetian blinds, and pistol in hand, stood Angelo Vantucci.

A hard knot formed in his throat as he realized his hopelessness. The Colt, which he had carried for three long years for just such a meeting, was fifteen feet away on the mantle. He just stood there, hands overhead, and the Ginny did the talking.

"Itsa been a long time, eh Cholly? You'n' Harbison were pretty shrewd boys, huh Cholly? Well Cholly, I've got news for ya; you're gonna join Harbison. Tell Diablo Vantucci say hello."

Tell Diablo Cantucci say hello."

The Gabretta roared three times in it's 7.9 falsetto, and he was dead before he hit the floor. As he pitched forward on his face, the Ginny made his exit through the kitchen.

The pounding on the door increased in intensity.

"Mr. Farnsworth!

"Mr. Farnsworth, it's me, Lucetti. What's happened in there?

"Mr. Farnsworth!

"Mr. Farnsworth"

Up and down the once darkened street, lights began popping on, and curious heads began appearing out of opened windows. Across town a siren began to scream in the night.

The Marigold

Cyrus Pierson Jordan

What is life that we should care,
Whether we did or did not dare?
Who is to say whether we be good or bad,
When this may happen to an evil lad?

He died in the glade as the posse sought
The fortune in his hand, so dearly bought.
The vultures on his carrion feed,
His rotting flesh, so fertile to seed.

Marigolds grow upon his chest.
Verdant grass is his crest.
With pine boughs strewn at his feet,
The fog at night is his ghostly sheet.

With spring the grass grows fresh.
What portion once was human flesh?
How much of him so still and cold,
What part of him, the marigold?
