

"I don't expect you to be like me," the Roach continues, "but don't keep me from helping these people. In most cases, I'm all they've got."

He steps back. And suddenly, he's gone. Vanished. Damn!

A knock at my door snaps me back to reality. I know who it is.

"Come in, Jacks," I say.

The mousy assistant D.A. enters in a near-catatonic state.

"How did you know it was me?" he asks. I merely laugh.

I have more important things to deliberate than his surprise. The Roach is right. And even more importantly, I've been wrong. And yet he let me live—on two occasions. Why?

Nonetheless, I was contracted to do a job and I did it to the best of my ability. And it was done well. Hell, I'm the best in this town at what I do.

I have a dilemma.

"We're going to nail that low-life scum thanks to you, Rigby," Jacks says enthusiastically. "His time has come. We are better suited to deal with the under-privileged."

I don't like the way he said that.

"Here's your money," Jacks announces as he pulls an envelope from his pocket. "Now give me the report."

I pick up my matches but ignore my King Edwards.

The Roach hadn't made a mistake Thursday night—nor tonight.

"Here it is," I reply, dangling it over the edge of my desk—above my trash can. Jacks eyes it greedily. And maliciously.

I strike a match against the sole of my shoe and apply the flame to my brand new folder—and the report.

Jacks freezes for a moment. Then he puts the money back into his pocket and leaves. Fuck him.

I'm a pro—the best in the Windy City. I can always get another job.

Samson and Delilah at Night

by S. J. Sutherland

When we tie ourselves into the knot of night
 Exhalation of mystery and repose,
 You scarcely feel the cut and pull of the scissors,
 The smile of the blades lying in the sheath.
 You ask will we never leave this temple?
 The vessels have been drained and contain only fetid wine.
 Your frankish curls tighten around your head.
 Samson, together we will weave a bright wreath of hair.
 Birch ladders are thrown against heaven to balance your weight,
 Our footfalls ascending like topaz coils on an Egyptian neck.
 Each night I walk in the backs of stars
 You follow me to the place we will never leave.