

The Elbow Within

(or, How the Lady Got Her Skirts)

Contents:

The Elbow Within (or, How the Lady Got Her Skirts)	1
Part I: ...And the Bear said “Roar”	3
Chapter 1: “Baroque? No!”	4
Chapter 2: “Don’t... Let Me Down... and Down and Down”	13
Chapter 3: “The In/Un”	22
Part II: The Geometry of All Four Seasons	24
Chapter 4: “I’m a–Superball”	25
Chapter 5: “Um-Time”	34
Chapter 6: “Hello, My Name is Dave Gorman”	46
Part III: When the Facts Change, I Change My Mind	60
Chapter 7: “Ah Good, the Sea”	61
Chapter 8: “Fuzzy Dunlop”	70
Chapter 9: “Sometimes You Just Stand There, Hip-deep in Pie”	81
Chapter 10: “A Verse, then a Verse, and Refrain”	93

Part I: ...And the Bear said “Roar”

Chapter 1: “Baroque? No!”

Something has happened, a crime has occurred; the shape of all things ripped apart and the insides—white and clumped—spilled out. The scene of events is already cordoned off: with flags and poles and ribbon-tape jabbed into the felt, thrust through the fur, of the material surroundings; as if this were an archeological dig through a corpse. Crowds of onlookers, drawn to the spectacle of lights and sirens, press up against the road-blocks and parked police vehicles.

This is not New York, or LA; not Chicago—not even Baltimore. This is the City of Murder, where the number of red names on the homicide tally is in triple digits for the year. Historically it is bureaucracy and inept government that plague the city with its name, as if you have to squeeze the life out of someone in order to get things done. Here, the metropolitan skyline is dominated by a central lighting tower—Philips tests light bulbs there. And so the central business district, at ground level, is cast entirely into shadow.

The first thing the fuzz do as they survey the scene is cock their heads to the side and scratch. The patrol that called it in had been struck by a vague sense of unease, as they state in their official report: “*it felt like some spooky shit was going down.*” The detectives now on the scene can sense, deep in the soft core of their beings, that something is not right. Perhaps it’s the chalk marks that no one in authority is responsible for. Maybe because what you expect at the

center of chalk marks is a body and here there isn't one. Off to one side, the uniformed officers put their heads together and talk quietly amongst themselves. Best they can figure, some deranged criminal genius is toying with them—shoving them to the brink of bawling their eyes out. The psycho hasn't even the decency to let crime scene investigators circumscribe our beautiful corpse. Instead that crazed, murdering son-of-a-bitch has drawn an outline of his own around nothing. Nothing but the knife, sticking out of the asphalt, jabbed upright in the center of the body-shape—fake fur and excess new material arranged in a caricature around the slit incision. Our cackling maniac has decided that this will all be funny. It must have taken careful attention to detail for that heinous motherfucker to accurately reproduce, using chalk, the texture of fur as he traced those long, sinewy ears—sprung from the top of the absent (only represented) body.

And so the fat detective waddles towards the short detective and into the focus of the tripod lights. Unflinching illumination brightens, for the moment, shadows cast by surrounding buildings. The fat one continues scratching at his seams beneath the long trench coat, before flicking tobacco off the expansive white patch on his tufty, protruding belly. As he hops the last few steps forward on his haunches, his elongated snout seems to nod or bounce—the mass of his body below expanding and contracting,

“Another bunny stabbing?”

“Yeah.”

“What is it with these damned rodents? Always the fucking knives.”

The short detective is still, his face impassive and pointed like a rat's. Arms outstretched to the side, palms open like they are constantly wearing oven mitts, he stares—until he snaps back,

“Hey—bunnies are people too you know.”

“Put a sock in it. And anyway, this is a bear neighborhood—teddy bear country—I'll talk about bunnies the way I talk about bunnies.”

“You think the Feds'll get interested in this crazy bastard now?”

“If they stop stroking and hugging one another. I hope we get the hot one this time.”

“What we gonna do now?”

“I'm gonna go look on the roof. There's always something to see from the roof. It gives me a new perspective on things.”

“Yeah. Sure.”

“Fuck, though.”

“Yeah, fuck.”

These two, the best detectives in the city (on short notice), begin to analyze the scene. They are careful not to disturb the markings already there; ensuring, out of respect for the families—and the enormity of the crime—that absolutely nothing is disturbed. And so the detectives fall out of the narrative and we hear of them no more.

She, who is the central figure of our story, brandishes her .38. Light glances off the barrel—warning reflections from the broad side of a sword. For a

moment she looks haggard and old, and I see her as a flawless knight. Stepping forward, she is engulfed by the mystical glow of blue flames—vestments of holy purpose wrapped around her naked form. She understands what has to be done. This place will be set to rights; it will be transformed once again. She will come to know herself the way we know her now: as the angel of beating wings, a beacon of virtue—harbinger of cataclysm.

Oh and she's made of plastic, a blonde. Her legs go all the way down to the ground, though her thighs do not meet and she wears black, bureau approved pants-suits. Of course it's an anomaly, what do you expect? I know most people, like you and I are made of batting and fur; we have plastic circles, sometimes buttons, for eyes; but she's special, don't you understand? Just as the Maker made all of us, so created was she—an avatar and a savior—a courtly warrior lady.

She pierces layer after layer of the crime scene, waving her badge like a symbol—her knightly credentials. Standing now at the center of things with jacket open, her stance reveals the A-framed cleavage of a white dress shirt, hands resting lightly on trousered hips. On her left breast, as per new directives, is stuck a cheerful, pink, flower-edged tag:

“Hi! I'm a Special Agent with the FBI. *We're here to help.*”

She's heard of the lieutenant in charge—all eyes, they say. But just as you don't shoot a duck for quacking, you forgive the looky-lou nature of potatoes,

“Ma'am, you'll get all the cooperation you need for justice to be served. No one's getting territorial, we just want the bastard caught.”

“You have a suspect?”

“Not so’s I can say, or lay my finger on, but I’ve been keeping my eyes peeled for anything relevant–this isn’t the first bunny we’ve found in this condition.”

“What bunny?”

“Why, the bunny that was stabbed here.”

“I don’t see a bunny, do you?”

The chalk marks gape, like a mouth going “ah.”

“Of course ma’am. Not to be obtuse, but what else is there?”

“Something more sinister, my spudly friend.”

“Lady, I may just be a county potato, but I know serial pathology when I see it.”

She returns to the Federal Building. Security cameras catch her walking in an absent haze, holding a file up against her chest as she weaves through the lobby. The tapes show her passing the security checkpoint and riding up to the 6th floor. Later you see her walking slowly down a brightly lit corridor and through her department’s bullpen, before getting to the corner office of her immediate superior. Still hugging the file, she notices where she is, looks up at her boss and gives him her report. As he opens the file, you can imagine a giant moth flying out and cobwebs filling the space meant for metrics, analysis, documentation. Had the file been a novelty birthday card, there would have been the sound of crickets.

“Shouldn’t you be working up the scene?”

“Of what crime?”

“Young lady, sweetheart, have you fallen on your head?”

However hard he tries, the agent in charge of the Violent Crimes Unit never overcomes the first impression he makes on others. Put politely: his suits do not, in any bonafide sense, fit him. And how could they? With his culled-together limbs and the bolt through his neck; then the flatness of his head, suggestive of a metal plate and lightning. The name stenciled on the door reads: Supervisory Special Agent Frank N. Stein, Federal Bureau of Investigation. Her response to his question,

“You’re asking if I’ve fallen on my head.” Pause. “Yeah, I’m not sure you want me to answer that.”

“You’re going to be funny right now?”

“Would there be a better time, sir? For me to be funny? Because I can come back.”

He keeps talking—“You’re suspended,” “Say hello to those cunts on *The View*.” But in between the shouting, the hoops and the fire—her attention is being drawn far away from where she is. In the distance, beyond the room, past the edge of the city into the wilderness around, beside some trees on the edge of the clearing green—she sees something startling. There is a tiny man, a midget, stamping his feet. For a moment she can feel his little beard trembling, his lips about to burst, his foot—thumping and thumping. And then the earth coming open so as to swallow him whole. For a long while after, that pounding sound will remind her of porn. What she has uncovered does not surprise her—she did not

close her eyes and put her left foot in. The pattern of events, of visionary happenings, these are what's next: Nemesis, Oracle, Sandalwood Box. And in between, darkness.

She's running. Relieved of duty, literally (if you will) suspended—if only in time—she runs; reaching out for exhaustion and the absence of loss; perhaps just to get the sight out of her head. To end, bent over, panting the will from her body. You don't imagine women running in quite that way—just short of fleeing in terror (in Juicy Couture tracksuits)—with face and feature held rigidly in place, shivering as it keeps still.

She stops running.

There's a golden-haired unicorn, standing stately and commanding on all fours. He looks at her as if he has his chin in his hoof and is nodding his head upwards. Recognizing the expectant tilt of her head, he visibly sighs. If elegant majesty did such things, you might have suspected him of rolling his eyes before addressing her,

"Waddup, shorty?"

"Excuse me?"

"And to answer your question, no, I am not purely mythical."

"Oh."

"And the horn's real."

"But..."

She keeps staring at him, with her striking grey and blue irises that belong to pilot season in Hollywood, making demographics swoon. And she stands there, not really steely and squinting in a way that doesn't blink, but regardless—making it work for her. In context, his long pause and hesitant response is not a surprise. "You're not—Diana, are you? You know, come here to hunt?" He's suddenly nervous, abruptly like a skittish colt with a party favor horn and a bad golden dye-job. "That bitch crazy."

How do we get from one point to the next? We turn and tilt, lift our shoulders to our ears and palms to the sky. And then clouds deliver unto us creatures: leaping from trees with claws in place of soft paws, crouched and screeching. They are a pair of hairless, jammy-colored enforcers, stood ready to descend upon her. But so what if these minions of the Unicorn hide beneath their skinned anonymity? With uncovered flesh stretching lewdly over muscle and bone? She is unperturbed. There will just be uncoiling and riposte. The Unicorn lunges at her, flanked by his minions.

She gently rolls his horn with her palms, drawing his eyes with the vaulting spectacle of her; her right foot tapping the left enforcer where the chin just has that groove, fit for sharp-toed shoes; the right enforcer, at the end of the dismount, left heel in the teeth, ball in the nose. At the end of that one movement, punctuated by muzzled ringing double-flash—one clutches a limp jaw; another, its dripping face; the leapt golden equine frog, his front left kneecap.

So there he is, shot—white heat no longer held back by the thin gauze between inside and outside. "My fucking Little Pony, huh?" She stands, and

steps forward, looking down at him lying there holding himself, even as he meets her gaze and imperceptibly nods. No more petty talk. Life is inimical to life itself. They know, she knows, what has been uncovered. She will go beyond the oaths she has sworn—she will begin the quest that calls—into wilderness outside.