

1987

## Death is a Many Splendored Thing

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### Recommended Citation

Kosloski, Jeff (1987) "Death is a Many Splendored Thing," *Calliope (1954-2001)*: Vol. 1987 , Article 29.  
Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/calliope/vol1987/iss1/29>

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## DEATH IS A MANY SPLENDORED THING

### I

"Would you like some more champagne, my dear?" Eric Huntley asked his wife, Marge.

"Oh please, Eric. You're so romantic. The hot tub, the champagne, the moose head on the wall. It makes me, well, you know..."

"That was the idea, my little love pot." He stepped out of the hot tub and wrapped a towel around his waist. "I won't be a moment, my little cream puff, my little sex kitten, my little slam dunk."

Eric flipped on the light in the kitchen and walked to the liqueur cabinet. He filled the glasses with champagne and set them on the counter.

"How about some music, my little jello mold?"

"That would be wonderful, Eric. And hurry please, I'm really, well, you know..."

"Here I come, my little love tulip. Something romantic for you, dear. How about Heavy Metal Sonata Number Two?"

"Oh Eric, please!"

"Of course, my little slingshot."

The music played lightly from the speakers as he walked into the room.

"Your champagne, my little lamb chop," he said, standing above her.

### II

Skip Dujack drove his silver Porsche 930 Turbo down Castle Road. He wore an unconstructed black sports jacket over a white muscle shirt. His face was stubby and unshaven--some people claimed Don Johnson looked just like him. He also had incredible insight.

"I wonder why they are called 'sports jackets'?" he thought aloud. "You don't play sports in them. If I tried to play football in one of these, people would laugh. And how about football. You don't use your feet except on a kick off, or a punt. You usually use your hands, but it's not called handball. And all handball is is racquetball without racquet. And all racquetball is is tennis in a small room with a smaller racquet. And how about polo?"

He drove on, contemplating the reasoning behind the names of almost every sport in existence. Just before coming to Jai Alai, his mobile videophone flicked on, revealing the face of his friend and trusted employer, D. Thomas Diehard.

"Skip. Skip hello!"

"D.T. What's up?" he replied.

"I just got a call from Eric Huntley. Says his wife was killed, and he doesn't know who or why. You got to go to 711 Sandburg Lane. I thought I'd better put our best man on the case, and we all know who that is."

"Who? Stanton? No, It's gotta be Wilson. Or maybe...."

"No Skip. You. You're the best man we've got."

"No. Really?"

"I don't lie, Skip."

"Well, then how do you sleep?"

"I hang from my feet, but that's not important right now."

"Goodbye Skip. And good luck."

Skip then slammed on his brakes, turned around, and headed in the other direction--to Eric Huntley's estate.

### III

Eric Huntley slumped into his lounge chair. His face was emotionless, but his hands were trembling. His mother sat smoking a cigar on the couch, his sister Janet shot paperclips at his cat with a rubberband, and his nephew Jonathon, or Zodiak Mindwarp as he preferred to be called, was piercing his nose in the bathroom. Just then the doorbell rang.

"Mother, could you get that for me?" he asked meekly.

"Go to Hell!" she growled while opening a bottle of Schiltz Malt Liqueur.

"Thank you." He slowly walked to the door.

Looking through the peep hole, he saw an eye looking back at him.

"Who is it?" he asked.

"Detective Skip Dujack from the Diehard Detective Agency."

He quickly opened the door and allowed Skip to enter.

"You gotta get a big window in that door," said Skip. "Couldn't see a damn thing. Where's the stiff?"

Eric lead him to the family room. There was a woman floating in the hot tub. The frayed end of the radio plug floated beside her. Skip ran to the tub.

"My God," he said, "This woman's dead too."

"Well, that's Marge."

"You know this woman?"

"Of course. She's my wife."

"But your wife's dead."

"So she is. She is my wife. She is dead."

"Was she dead when you married her?"

"Of course not. She died, or was killed rather, this afternoon."

"Ahh..." Skip pulled out a notebook and jotted down a few things.

"Perhaps we should sit down and go over the events leading to the death."

They walked back into the living room. Eric's mother was passed out on the couch, his sister Janet was stuffing the cat in the garbage disposal, and his nephew Zodiak was braiding the hairs in his armpits.

"Would you like something to drink, Mr. Dujack?" asked Eric.

"Some club soda would be nice. And please, make it Skip."

Eric walked into the kitchen, and soon walked out with a glass in each hand. He skipped one off the table into Dujack's hand, and began drinking his own.

"So Mr. Huntley," began Skip.

"Eric, please."

"So, Mr. Eric, let's start by finding out why you killed your wife."

"But I didn't kill her!" said Eric, startled.

"You said you did."

"I said someone killed her. Certainly I didn't."

"Was anyone in the house then this happened?"

"Why, no one that I know of. But someone could have snuck past the guards."

"Where was she when this happened?"

"In the hot tub, where she is now. I haven't touched her. All I did was unplug that cord."

"Where were you when this happened?"

Suddenly there was a loud grinding noise, a cat's final yelp, and then a neurotic laugh.

"Where were you when this happened?" he asked again.

"I was in the kitchen pouring us a drink. I had just put on a record when I walked in to find her electrocuted."

"Wait," said Skip, "what record did you play?"

"Why, Heavy Metal Sonata Number Two, of course."

"There you are," stated Skip. "She killed herself. H.M.S. Number Two sucks. You should have played...."

"I don't think she killed herself because of the music, sir. I don't think the music has to do with her death at all."

"That's why you're not a detective. Had your wife been threatened in any way before the incident?"

"No, not that I know of. She did get into quite a squabble with our neighbor Emily, though. Emily threatened to sue her."

"Sue?"

"No, Marge. Seems Emily had loaned her Twenty Gauge to Marge to go moose hunting. Marge lost the gun somewhere in Australia, and refused to pay Emily back. I don't believe Emily would kill her though, not for that."

"Well," said Skip, "seems your neighbor was killed in Beirut hunting wild camels with bottle rockets. She couldn't have done it."

"Oh. Well, other than that, I really don't know. She did have a lot of enemies in her business, though. She was in a very competitive field."

"And what was that?" asked Skip, still writing in his notebook.

"Why, boxing, of course."

"She made boxes?"

"No, the sport boxing," said Eric.

"I wonder why they call it 'boxing'," asked Skip. "What do they call it when you make boxes?"

"I'm not sure."

"Oh."

#### IV

"The reason I have you all here today," said Skip, "is because you all are suspected in the murder of Marge Huntley."

Standing or sitting in the living room were Eric Huntley, his mother, his sister Janet and her son Zodiak, Sugar Ray Leonard, an Amway Representative, and an Orkin Bug Exterminator.

"I have gone over the evidence long and hard, and did much research on my own. I found that all of you had motives to kill Marge. Mrs. Huntley, for winning your combat boots in a game of poker; Sugar Ray, for knocking you out in the third round of your seventh comeback. The list goes on and on. But I have found the true killer."

"The person who performed the act was very sly indeed, but did not realize that the greatest detective who ever lived would be on the case."

"Who?" asked Zodiak.

"Me, of course," retorted Skip.

"Oh."

"I will now announce the killer of Margaret 'The Bull' Huntley. Drum roll, please."

Everyone in the room pounded the table.

"The killer is the Orkin Bug Exterminator!"

Everyone in the room gasped.

"Yes, it was me!" the exterminator yelled, suddenly holding a can of Raid to Eric's head.

Everyone screamed and dove behind the furniture.

"Oh God!" screamed Eric in panic. "Don't let him exterminate me!"

"Shut up!" the exterminator yelled, increasing his grip on Eric's neck.

"Marge was having an affair with me. When I refused to search her house for termites, she said she'll kill my pet platypus and feed it to her mother-in-law for dinner. I had to kill her."

"You killed her to save your platypus?" asked Skip.

"Of course. It was the only one of its kind. It had ears. But none of that matters now. He was playing in the street and was hit by a bus."

Suddenly the Amway Representative jumped from behind the couch wielding a bowl of toilet cleaner. He quickly sprayed it into the eyes of the exterminator, causing him to drop the Raid. Skip ran and cuffed the exterminator.

V

"We really appreciate your help in this case," Skip was saying to Forest, the Amway Representative.

"Well I'm glad I could help. They say I'm quickest draw in the business."

"Well, then you've certainly got what it takes to be a detective. How'd you like to work with me?"

"Sounds great. When do we start?"

"Monday. How'd you like to go to the Red Wings game tonight?"

"Love to."

They began walking to his car.

"Say," asked Skip. "Do you know why they call it 'hockey'?"

Jeff Kosloski