

7 THE GUN

Friday morning Lohman was in his office reading a legal memorandum prepared by one of the associates. Tete rang him and said she was coming in. She did. "Get this, Hon. They found the gun."

"What gun?" asked Lohman.

"The gun that killed the Saint's little playmate," said Tete.

Lohman asked, "She was killed with a gun?"

"Well, I'll bet she was and that this is it," said Tete. "You know where they found it?"

"No," said Lohman.

"In his cat box," she said. "The box is cleaned every night by the cleaning crew, but it isn't until Thursday night that they change the whole thing. They did it last night and found the gun. I just heard. It's a little gun and they say it looks like it has a silencer on it."

"Who says?" asked Lohman.

The head of the cleaning crew. She's here during the day. She says the cleaning person assigned to the Saint's office called her today and told her about it. She said the cleaning lady left the whole thing there in his office. She just dropped the whole thing where it was when she saw the gun. It's sitting on the floor in his office. Then he calls and starts complaining to me about it. I told him not to touch anything and wait till he hears from you. He said, 'Where will my Pussy go?' To Hell I hope. You think he did it?"

Lohman didn't know and said so. "Get the police and tell them about this."

Tete said, "The cleaning crew also found some fingerprints in the 55th floor men's room. On the wall. She told me they look like finger prints made with blood. They're on some of the wall tiles."

Lohman said, "I'll go up there. And get me somebody who can watch the place until the cops come. See if Wiggy can do it. Anybody. Get some of the associates if you have to." Then he took off for the 55th floor.

Wiggy was Wiggy Rodriguez, head investigator for the firm. Wiggy was not his real name, but described his obvious wig of which he was supremely proud.

Lohman got up to 55 and went into St. Charles' office. "Good morning Graybourne," he said.

"Not to me," said St. Charles. "Look at this mess they've made. Where will Pussy go?"

Lohman asked, "Did you touch anything? Whatever this is, the police will probably want to see just how it was found and take fingerprints."

"Of course I did not touch anything!" exclaimed St. Charles. "Who do you think I am?"

By this St. Charles did not mean to suggest that Lohman might consider him a murderer or someone who might tamper with evidence. He meant that no one in their right mind could possibly think he would stoop to manual labor, much less stoop to clean up the kitty poo.

Lohman looked at the litter box. It still had a little of the granular material in it with some lumps which he took to be the litter. The gun was lying on the bottom of the box in plain sight. It was a shiny silver automatic pistol and it appeared to have a silencer on it. The handle looked very fancy and had what appeared to be distinctively colored plastic sides. Lohman knew St. Charles well enough to suspect that what he took at first glance to be plastic was more probably pearl. He looked at St. Charles. "Did you ever see this before?" he asked.

"It looks like mine," said St. Charles. "I used to have such a weapon and it had a silencer. I kept it over there." He motioned to a cabinet with a series of drawers in it. "It was in the top drawer. It's not there now. It's been gone for some time."

Lohman asked, "Why did you keep a gun in the office? How long has it been gone?"

"Oh," said St. Charles, "I looked for it last week. It was gone then. I thought I misplaced it. In any event, I got it because I was robbed once. Some infernal hooligan robbed me as I was going over to the Pullman Club for lunch. It was in bad weather so I had my chauffeur drive me and it happened just after I got out of the car. Fortunately he was carrying my coat and my wallet was in there when it happened. It was extremely demeaning and I vowed that it should never happen again."

Lohman looked at him for a while without speaking. He wanted to ask if St. Charles knew how to use it or if he ever had used it, but he knew better. He would ask, St. Charles would say he did know how, even though he didn't and he would be annoyed with Lohman for having asked. Why ask questions when you already know the answer.

St. Charles took the pause to indicate that Lohman was thinking something else. "Don't be surprised. Lots of the partners have guns here. I know. We have talked about them.

“With silencers?” asked Lohman. He couldn’t help it.

“Of course,” said St. Charles. “Actually the silencer was the idea of the dealer. I told him I didn’t want a noisy gun. Nothing obtrusive. He was the one who suggested the silencer.”

“I see,” said Lohman. “Where did you get it? It looks sort of unique.”

“From Jon Won,” said St. Charles. “He sold it to me.”

Lohman said, “I don’t know anything about gun dealers. Is he downtown? Are there any gun dealers downtown?”

“I don’t know if there are any dealers downtown,” Said St. Charles. “He was a caddy at Olgosia. I was telling him about the attack on me one day while I was at golf and he suggested it. Quite a few of us at the club bought guns from him. Very convenient, don’t you know. And we did not have to register them.”

Lohman had thought all guns had to be registered. “How did you manage to avoid registration?” he asked.

St. Charles waived a hand at Lohman. “I don’t bother with that kind of thing. He knows about these things. He’s a dealer.”

Lohman’s silence was taken by St. Charles to mean Lohman accepted this.

Lohman asked, “How long ago was this?”

“Not long,” said St. Charles. “I got the gun last summer. I can’t remember exactly when.”

Lohman said, “Maybe your checking account records would tell us when.”

St. Charles straightened up at that. “My financial records are confidential,” he said. “Besides, I paid him in cash. He told me that all gun dealers operate that way.”

“Did you get a receipt?” asked Lohman.

“I don’t bother with things like that,” sniffed St. Charles.

“Where is he now, he’s still a caddy there?” asked Lohman.

St. Charles said, “Oh, he left a few months ago. I don’t keep track of people like that. You know Bumper, you really have to clear this up. The whole thing is very inconvenient. And think of the effect on my Pussy with these horrors going on in her presence.” Then he picked up his cat and fondled her. “Oh, if only my Pussy could talk!” Then he put Pussy back on her pedestal and said, “Now, if you will excuse me, I have to go over and see Swifty.”

As they were turning to leave the office Lohman said, "I'll just ask your secretary some things about these events if you don't mind."

"If you must," said St. Charles in a pained manner. He proceeded out of his office and past his secretary into the hall and headed for the elevators.

Lohman stopped by the secretary's desk. She was a well-mannered, even-tempered lady in her mid-fifties. Her name was Catherine McKeigan. She had been St. Charles' secretary for years. "Catherine," said Lohman. "I want to ask you some things if you don't mind."

"Of course, Mr. Lohman," she said.

"Catherine," asked Lohman, "you're aware of the gun in the cat box, are you?"

"Certainly," she said.

"Did you see it?" he asked.

She said she had. Then Lohman asked, "Did you know he had a gun?"

"Oh, yes," she said. "He showed it to me when he got it. And he told me where to find it in case that would be necessary. There were a few people in his office and I was coming in with some papers when he was telling everyone about it and he asked me to listen too. He was showing us the gun and showing us the drawer where he kept it. He was talking about the need to protect himself and he told us about the time he was robbed over by the Pullman Club."

"Who else was there?" asked Lohman.

Catherine thought. "Let me see. Mr. Stonegold. Then, Mr. Camelman. And Mr. Beale, Mr. Levin and some associates. Now let me see – Mr. LaRue, Mr. MacLeish and Mr. Nath. And the associates. Let me think. This was just a little while ago. They were all there in the conference room to start with and then he evidently took them into his office. The red dress – yes, Portilla Bush. Then Adronica Velez. She goes to my church. Then that Grant Germaine. He is up here lot. He's quite tall. And then that nice Sean Featherbottom. That's it. Those were the people."

As they were talking Zenon Cohenstein had walked in. He listened to them a while and then asked where St. Charles was. Catherine said she thought he went to see Mr. Swifton and Cohenstein said he would call over there after a while. Then he said, "So what is all this about the gun? He showed it to me once. Camelman was there too. He showed us both."

Lohman said, "Apparently the same gun has been found in his cat box. They clean it every day, but they do not change the whole contents. They do that weekly on Thursday night and in doing so the cleaning lady found it in the box. Sounds like his. He says he lost it a while ago."

Cohenstein just looked at Lohman for a while. Then he said, "So we'll see if our little lady was shot and if she was shot with his gun. Great. Well, at least we'll get a lot of publicity. Maybe we can say the cat did it." Cohenstein thought for a moment. Then he said, "I can see the tabloid headlines now. 'Pussy kills whore!' Whadda ya think?"

Lohman headed back to his own office suite. As he entered Tete told him that McDade had followed up on the phone calls on Monday night. The firm computer had no records of any calls to or from Stonegold, Beale, Levin or St. Charles after five. There were no records of calls to or from them with outside persons and no inter-firm calls involving them. Of course, the firm's system did not record cell phone calls so they couldn't be sure that there were no calls at all involving these people.

As Tete finished telling this to Lohman, she added that the police had already arrived and had been up on 55 for a while. She said that Bongwad and Gilbert were on the way down to see him. "Or Wilbert," she added.

Lohman moved towards his private office, but just then Sargent Gilbert came in. Or was it Wilbert. His mother probably couldn't remember so, dear reader, why should I?

He was followed closely by Bongwad. There were some chairs and a couch in the outer office with Tete and Bongwad pointed to one of the chairs and said, "May I," as he sat down. Gilbert remained standing rather stiffly. Lohman greeted them and asked if they wanted to come in to his office, but Bongwad said, "No thanks. This is fine here. And we can talk to both of you at once."

Lohman asked, "Did you go upstairs? Did you see the gun and the cat box?"

"Yes," said Bongwad. "We have secured the place and some officers are up there with the evidence techs. What do you two know about this?"

Tete and Lohman told them what they had heard and what they had seen about the gun, the cat box, the fingerprints on the 55th floor men's room wall and the copier waste baskets. Lohman also told them what he knew about who was on 55 Monday night and about the delivery to Levin.

"We'll check it out," said Bongwad. "Here's what we found so far. She was shot in the head. It was a small caliber weapon and the bullet didn't go all the way through, but it killed her. She was shot from the side. Right above the left ear. There is residue there that indicates the gun was right up against her head. The gun we saw upstairs is the type that would produce these effects. We'll see what the techs have to say, but I'll bet we have the murder weapon there. And we'll have to check out Mr. St. Charles and his story that his gun went missing."

Bongwad continued. "She was killed around midnight. The time of death was probably between 10 and 4 in the morning. We found some interesting fingerprints in Mr. St. Charles' private washroom too. Not only that, but one was in the same type of blood as the victim's. Guess who it belonged to?"

"I don't want to know, do I?" asked Lohman.

"Well, I don't know," said Bongwad. "Anyway, we already have prints on file from a lot of the people in the firm because of the prior murders here. Guess who it was?"

"Who?" asked Lohman. "It couldn't have been the dead woman, could it?"

"Nah," said Bongwad. "It's Mr. St. Charles. Of course more blood work has to be done. We don't know his blood type. It could be the same. Then there are some other tests that are being done. They can test blood for more things than the type you know."

Tete looked at Lohman with an "I told you so" look.

Bongwad then said, "We found other prints in his washroom too. There are a lot of his that are not in blood. There are some we can't identify. One set that we could identify belonged to that kid we thought killed that old guy in the wheel chair last year. What's his name?"

"O'Brien," Lohman volunteered.

"Nah. The kid. What's his name. You know that little blond kid."

Gilbert held out his arm and flapped his wrist. "That kid, Sir," he said.

"Sean Featherbottom," said Lohman.

"Yeah," said Bongwad. "His prints were there. We're going to have to get prints from a lot of other people too, not that that will necessarily clear anything up. A lot of the prints you get in these situations aren't good enough to do anything with or are just partial sets of prints that can't definitely be tied down to anyone."

Lohman asked if they knew who the victim was. Bongwad said they weren't sure and were working on it. He said, "That messenger service you mention. Zoom Shot. I think I've heard about them before. I think I heard rumors they are running around like a transport service for illegal stuff. Like maybe drugs. We'll check them out."

done. They can test blood for more things than the type you know."

Tete looked at Lohman with an "I told you so" look.

Bongwad then said, "We found other prints in his washroom too. There are a lot of his that are not in blood. There are some we can't identify. One set that we could identify belonged to that kid we thought killed that old guy in the wheel chair last year. What's his name?"

"O'Brien," Lohman volunteered.

"Nah. The kid. What's his name. You know that little blond kid."

Gilbert held out his arm and flapped his wrist. "That kid, Sir," he said.

"Sean Featherbottom," said Lohman.

"Yeah," said Bongwad. "His prints were there. We're going to have to get prints from a lot of other people too, not that that will necessarily clear anything up. A lot of the prints you get in these situations aren't good enough to do anything with or are just partial sets of prints that can't definitely be tied down to anyone."

Lohman asked if they knew who the victim was. Bongwad said they weren't sure and were working on it. He said, "That messenger service you mention. Zoom Shot. I think I've heard about them before. I think I heard rumors they are running around like a transport service for illegal stuff. Like maybe drugs. We'll check them out."

done. They can test blood for more things than the type you know."

Tete looked at Lohman with an "I told you so" look.

Bongwad then said, "We found other prints in his washroom too. There are a lot of his that are not in blood. There are some we can't identify. One set that we could identify belonged to that kid we thought killed that old guy in the wheel chair last year. What's his name?"

"O'Brien," Lohman volunteered.

"Nah. The kid. What's his name. You know that little blond kid."

Gilbert held out his arm and flapped his wrist. "That kid, Sir," he said.

"Sean Featherbottom," said Lohman.

"Yeah," said Bongwad. "His prints were there. We're going to have to get prints from a lot of other people too, not that that will necessarily clear anything up. A lot of the prints you get in these situations aren't good enough to do anything with or are just partial sets of prints that can't definitely be tied down to anyone."

Lohman asked if they knew who the victim was. Bongwad said they weren't sure and were working on it. He said, "That messenger service you mention. Zoom Shot. I think I've heard about them before. I think I heard rumors they are running around like a transport service for illegal stuff. Like maybe drugs. We'll check them out."

24 THE PANTIES AND THE BITCH WHO MOANS

Wednesday morning Lohman no sooner got in than he was told by Tete that one of the partners was demanding to see him. It was Moira Weiner. Moira was one of the estate and trust lawyers who handled only the wealthy. Moira was in Lohman's office frequently complaining about one thing or another. When she wasn't there she was calling Tete with complaints. Her secretary was as big a complainer as she was. Her secretary is the one who had found the panties in the waste basket. Ms. Weiner loved to be offended. She loved to complain about the outrages that cursed her daily life. Oh how she would have loved Hell! She was not named Weiner for nothing. Actually her nickname within the firm was "The Weiner".

She stomped in to Lohman's office saying, "Bumper this has got to stop. The language I am exposed to on these premises is disgraceful. It is abhorrent. And if I am exposed to it, just think what our clients are exposed to. Many times they have told me how they have experienced disgraceful language in our halls."

Lohman knew what the answer would be, but just for the record he asked, "Who? Which client complained?"

"That's confidential," she said. "This time people have told me that they were going down the hall on 55. That, you know, is where our top people are. They were passing the men's room when someone had just gone in and the door was still open. It was disgraceful! The language!"

"What language?" asked Lohman.

"I'm not going to tell you a thing like that," she said indignantly. "Suffice it to say it was shocking!"

"In what way?" asked Lohman.

"Oh, it is stressful to even think of it," she said. "References to elimination and urgency."

"So who did you say complained about this?" asked Lohman. He well knew that she was the complainer, but like most such people she claimed that someone else had complained to buttress her case.

"That's confidential," she said.

Lohman said, "I see. Well that certainly is shocking. I'll bring it up at the next Management Committee meeting."

"See that you do," said The Weiner. "And one more thing. We have a young associate around here named John Sweeney. Do you know him?"

Lohman almost cringed. "I know who he is."

"Well," said The Weiner, "he was there passing by at the same time. I - the client - I was with the client - we were shocked and we exclaimed so. He just said - I can't believe he would address me - the client - this way. He said, 'Cool it Doll. It's just,' --- I cannot tell you what he said. More words about elimination. Well, I would not put up with that. I said, 'You're crazy'. Then do you know what he said?"

Lohman did cringe this time. He asked tentatively, "What?"

She said, "He said, 'Could be, I'm talking to you.' What outrage! I want him disciplined."

The Weiner never demanded that her offenders be fired. She wanted to keep them around. You don't want to lose a good offender.

"I'll see to it," said Lohman.

When Ms. Weiner left Lohman called Sweeney and told him about it and told him to stay away from her for a while.

Sweeney said, "There wasn't any client there, Dude. Just her. The door was still open and someone said, 'Gotta shit man.' That's all. Then she started in so I just said, 'That's what we talk about in the crapper.' She was like, 'I'm gonna die.'"

"So just stay away from her," said Lohman.

"Sure will Bumpy," said Sweeney. "I don't wanna go anywhere near something that ugly anyway."

Lohman hung up and spent the rest of the day working on his own clients.

Thursday morning Lohman took Louie for his morning walk. Lohman loved the walks. Louie was the friendliest dog in the neighborhood and he got to meet and greet a lot of the neighbors this way. No sooner did they hit the sidewalk than they ran into The Rev. Pratton Cuthbert and his little poodle. The dogs headed straight for each other dragging their owners with them.

The Rev. Cuthbert was the pastor of St. Tom's of Christ, the Gold Coast's fashionable Episcopal church. He and Lohman were friends and The Rev. Cuthbert was often out to convert Lohman, even though he knew Lohman was a Presbyterian. Lohman had been raised a Presbyterian and thus knew that all other religions were composed of people on the down road to Hell. On the other hand he knew that people who put out that crap were leading the charge on the same road. He maintained his connection to the church for social reasons. Cuthbert knew this and he knew most of the people in the neighborhood were like this so he was always out trying to bring them into his fold.

In fact, the neighborhood people were often in all the local churches besides the ones they belonged to because of their connections to each other so Lohman was often found at St. Tom's.

They greeted each other and got to talking while the dogs slowly lost interest in each other. Cuthbert said, "I'm so sorry to hear all the furor about your recent misfortune. I'm sure it must be very stressful, you being the Managing Partner and all."

"Yes," said Lohman, "it's quite a distraction."

"Did they find out who did it?" asked Cuthbert.

"Not yet," said Lohman. "I suppose you know the sordid details, or some of it. The police are still working on it."

"Any suspects?" asked Cuthbert.

"I don't know," said Lohman. "They just ask us things. They don't tell us much."

"Well," said Cuthbert, "I hope none of your top people are involved. I was talking to the Cardinal recently and he said that vast sins occur in high places." At this he paused and looked significantly South and East towards a 2500 foot high tower called the Aspire that housed The Prophet and ECOTAG.

Lohman skirted the subject. He asked, "Are you going to the ASPS fundraiser Saturday night?"

"Oh yes, I'll be there," said the Reverend. "We can use the money. We all get a small percentage of the receipts, so we all go there. But you know it is really run by Cardinal Sammy and The Prophet. They get most of the receipts and everything is oriented towards them. Are you going?"

"Of course," said Lohman. "Probably for one of the same reasons you go. It's a party and a place to meet and mingle."

They pledged to see each other there and they went on in separate directions with their dogs. Lohman finished the walk, took Louie home and headed for the office where he spent the day on his own clients' matters.