

It was a Stark and Dormy Night (OT?)

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.archaeology/2004-12/1123.html>

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Date: 12/22/04

Date: 22 Dec 2004 12:24:24 -0800

<bogart.lloy@uwlax.edu> wrote in message
news:1103562407.298465.309610@f14g2000cwb.googlegroups.com...

This morning I found the following prose in my mailbox. Naturally I will honor the request that the remainder of the message be kept confidential.

—

I revised the format very slightly, as the email copy I received was a bit difficult to read. I am, of course, unworthy to be included in the company of such as are mentioned in the introduction.

—

Lloyd

I thank the author for a good effort and for the Christmas greetings. The same to you and everyone else here.

Lots of copies of my "Raiders of the Lost Archive" are still available to anyone who requests one either here or by private e-mail, address R_Supward <at> hotmail.com.

Here's what satisfied readers have said:

Funny fantasy tale. Always good to know you haven't lost your sense of humor. IEJ

Bullshit. What the fuck has [this] to do with medieval history or archaeology for that matter? SIR

Astounding!! Astonishing! Absolutely admirable in every aspect! It is absolutely brilliant! And easier to read in pdf as well! MO

A notable read. Well done. The story in itself is a work of art and will be on my page at some stage. G

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It's so elegant I may even print it out on nice vellum-style paper! DB

Splendid stuff. I particularly liked Ivar Hardon and Paul Kuntson. MR

Now, I like that. ES

Thank you for this wonderful story of the triumph of the will. TM

"The da Vinci Code" really pales in comparison with this. KH

Sheer genius. Brava! DN

Beautiful typography, and quite funny. PK

Very infotaining. GB

The saga of Britta and Pukko will be be required reading in all Nordic Studies programs by 2019. DH

This isn't fun anymore. IEJ

R Supward

(Forwarded, from an anonymous donor.)

—

.....Christmas Carolsinger.....

—

This story is my Christmas present to you all, and especially a token of my gratitude to R. Supward, Martin Reboul and Lloyd Bogart for their estimable work. The story requires a little effort of the reader. To avoid any trouble with libel laws, the name of a certain person has to be disguised. The letters in the surname are replaced by plus signs. The five letters of the Christian name are replaced by asterisks, not just in that name but also in other contexts. So, the ordinary word for a digit is spelled f***** and Fred Astaire's dancing partner becomes G*****. Sometimes the five characters are interrupted by a space or other intervening letters (or interven*** lett**s). You can work it out.

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Monday

—

My last week as a private detective. Five working days until retirement. I didn't exactly expect a lot of business, what with

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it being the week before Christmas, but I went to the office as usual, thinking I might start clearing out my stuff.

—

I had only just sat down behind the desk when there was a knock on the door. In walked a dame in her mid-fifties. She produced her calling card. It said

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"***** E. ++++++. Forskare och författare."

—

"Is that ** **man?" I asked.

—

"No, more like Geme*****manisch.

Actually, I'm Swedish," she said.

—

Now I must admit to be*** **otically attracted to Swedish women, so I was prepared to give this doll the benefit of the doubt, but in this case there was a lot of doubt. She wasn't what you would call good-looking but she did have an authoritative, self-assured presence. And at my age I can't be choosy.

—

Maybe she was a sw*****? I tried to imagine her in sexy l*****ie. I fantasized about a dolphin tattooed on her shoulder. I tried everyth*** **ogenous my lurid mind was capable of, but still without feel*** **ective tissue stirring. This was not exactly ***rid B**gman sitting across from me. I figured I'd better put such thoughts out of my mind.

—

"How can I help you, ma'am?"

—

"I've come to you because the police won't help me.

There's someone stalking me," she said.

—

"Tell me what he looks like."

—

"I don't know what he looks like, I've never seen him."

—

"So how do you know he's stalking you?"

—

"He does it via the Internet."

—

"Sorry, lady, I can't help you there. I'm pre-Internet."

—

"But I heard you were very good."

—

"I'm the detective who put the dick in dictionary," I said.

"I'm the best – at good old-fashioned Sam Spadework.

None of this high-tech stuff. Sorry."

—

She must have been really disappointed, judging by the time it took for the message to sink in. After a while she got up slowly and went to the door, where she l*****ed for

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a while, as if hop*** desp**ately I would change my mind.

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I didn't.

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Tuesday

—

I had just sat down, think*** of r**eading Sal*****'s Catcher in the Rye in the morning, and maybe spending the afternoon runn*** **rands, when an ominously familiar knock came. The woman who entered was a dead r***** for the broad the day before. In fact, it was her again.

—

"Someone is send*** **otic mail to me anonymously. My mailbox is full of such pornographic abuse every day," she said.

—

"I might be able to help you there," I said. "Have you kept the envelopes? Where's the stuff postmarked?"

—

"N o, not that kind of mail, I mean e-mail."

—

What's with this dame, I thought. Is she deaf or is she just hear*** **ratically? But I restrained myself. "Sorry, lady. Like I think I told you yesterday, I know nothing about computers."

"But I heard you wer e very good."

—

"I'm a real humd***** at some things, sure, but not that."

—

This time she took even longer leaving, but I figured she'd got the message at last.

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Wednesday

—

I started the day by tidying my desk, sort*** **asers and paper clips. I hadn't got far when the dreaded knock came and in she strode again. This broad sure was a cl*****.

—

I felt I was gett*** all**gic to her.

—

"You must help me," she pleaded. "Someone is forging my messages. They tamper with my lines and move my posts, distort my meaning and infr***** *ules of copyright. They quote lines from my private mails to that charm*** Spenc** Hines. They add mistakes to my messages before they are archived on Google."

—

I asked, rather g*****ly, "Is this on the Internet again?" When she nodded I said, "Lady, look around you. I got an ancient

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manual typewriter over there, looks more like a S***** sewing machine. My phone is the old-fashioned kind where you stick your f***** in a dial and rotate it. The most new-fangled thing I have is a fax machine, and even that is the prototype. I don't own a computer and I know nothing about the Internet.

How ** ***onimo's name do you think I can help you?"

—

"But I heard you were very good."

—

"Well, I heard that Henry Kiss***** was s ecretary of state, and that no longer applies either. You're wasting your time and mine. I'm sorry."

—

By the time she left, I felt I needed a couple of f*****s of whiskey. Any more clients like that and I would turn into a b*****.

—

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Thursday

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I was reluctant about going to the office, but I've never been a mal*****er. My sense of duty called me. I started the day by polishing my derr*****. I knew that the knock on the door was the br***** of bad news.

—

When she came in this time, she made me thi nk not so much of ***rid B**gman, more of *****ma* ++++++. I really wanted to punch her.

—

"You've got to help me," she said. "There's a man called R. Supward. He's been writing stories about me. He's been contact**** **stwhile friends of mine, sprea d**** **roneous details about my past, writ**** **udite satires about my theories, teas**** **ic and me, unit**** **ilar and all the other naysayers in a plot against me."

—

"Let me guess," I said, "He does this on the Internet?"

—

"Yes," she said, "And it really pains me to see my invention being abused for such purposes. You see, the Internet used to be called after me, the *****net. Can't you trace his postings? Contact his ISP and have him disconnected."

—

This was the last straw. I was sick of tell*** h**.

—

"What's the matter, lady? I yelled, more ** an*** than in sorrow. "Are you stupid? Are you deaf? Did you get your tit caught in the wr*****? Are you so demented you should be ** ***iatric care? What have I been telling you for the past four days? I know f-ck all about the Internet! I can't help you! Get out of my office!"

—

"But I heard you were very good!"

—
I lifted the derr***** and started f*****ing it as if I was contemplating shoot*** h**. She left, rather quickly this time.

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Friday

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My last day at work, the harb***** of a happy retirement. I started packing my few belongings into a box. When she knocked I was waiting. I forced her into the chair, and before she could say anything I gagged her and tied her firmly.

—
I had a syr***** *eady if she got hysterical.

—
"Now you are going to listen, lady, and you are going to listen properly," I said. "You heard that I was very good. You're damn right I was good, but I was good at old-fashioned mysteries, the things of history, not this modern stuff. If you'd asked me to find the Templars' gold I could have done it for you. I could have interpreted the Nasca lines or deciphered the Phaistos Disc. I could have tracked down the crew of the Marie Celeste or King Hakon's knarr if yo u'd asked me. I could have taken up Sir Thomas Browne's challenge to find out what name Achilles assumed when he hid himself among the women, or what it was that Billie Joe and the girl were throwing off the Tallahatchie Bridge in that famous Ode. I co uld have worked out who faked the Turin Shroud or the Kensington Runestone if you'd only given me the assignment. I could have found the Norwegian Falcon and his stupid map for you. But you're like Perceval, you could have learned the whole truth about the Holy Grail if you'd asked the right question at once, but you've been wast*** ev***ybody's time by asking the wrong questions. Now it's too late for you.

—
I'm quitting."

—
I then cut the ropes and removed her gag. Her crestfallen look gave me a quiet sense of satisfaction. I went back to my packing as ***** E. ++++++++ left my office for the last time ever.

—
The smell of her perfume l*****ed in the air, but after a good cigar not a t***** *emained.