

SWEET STEPS TO SORROW

By Dr. Adi Adins

Dedicated to My Daughter Andrea

Author's Note

I hope you enjoy this short story. I was the only person to experience the scenes in Hawaii. The characters and events in this story are fictitious. Any similarity to an actual living or dead person is purely co-incidental.

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Dr. Jimmy Collins Prepares

He lay on his back, on his bed, for the last time, all dressed and ready to go, staring at the ceiling, following those grey and brown specks floating in his sight. Some were long strings, and others just dots. He made them move at his will simply by shifting his gaze in different directions. He was to see them float away and then come back when he steadied his eyes.

"Muscae Volitantes" or "Fleeting Flies": They were getting bigger now.

When he first saw them years ago there were only a few of them and they were much smaller. He thought he made an important discovery. He wrote out in detail what he saw and took his findings to his ocular anatomy professor. He was told mockingly by his professor that everyone had them and that they were already identified scientifically years ago.

The ceiling fan blades whirred right through those strings and dots. They would not bother those moving gnats as they were in a different visual area. Soon he will leave from this house and all

it held forever. He will make a new start, as he had done many times previously. His ability to successfully adapt in different places brought him pride and joy. Each time he faced adversity, he simply left and start again in a new place. He did this without looking back. This is how he was always get on with his life. With his license to practice optometry, he could make it work again. He looked upon all of this as part of his own personal life cycle, and as another new, and interesting challenge to resolve.

He looked at his watch again. *When will they come?*

He looked at his bags one more time. They were packed. Did he forget something? It did not matter one way or the other, if something was not packed. *That Bitch will keep whatever she finds. He wished he would never see her again. He also wished he had never met her. Maybe this time a truck will hit her. Oh, that would be nice. Maybe it would not be such a good idea. She would go back to court and the judge would make him pay her even more. That Bloody Bitch, she really planned it all. Right from the first day they met, so he thought.*

It was easier to live with Candy. Even at her worst moment, she was not like this *Bitch*. Candy was also not as smart or as calculating. She was his first wife. He should have never married her. Candy wanted to have sex with him in her apartment on their first date. This sexual encounter with Candy occurred after he had lived in the USA for only three years, as a non-citizen. He did have regrets the next morning for what he had done the night before with Candy, especially after he found condoms in her bathroom. She was not a virgin like him, and this really bothered him. He was naïve. Now, he felt a personal obligation to marry her. She told him she loved him. After they were married, then came Mary, and later, Christie, in their lives. They were a family now. Jimmy and Candy loved playing with Mary and Christie.

Candy was a devoted mother to Mary and Christie. But, their mother's past - strong and uncontrolled sexual desires and multiple affairs with other men - kept creeping up in their

interactions as a family. When they argued, Jimmy would call her names he was ashamed of later. His mother would have never approved of Candy. Jimmy's mother wanted her son to marry a virgin with social standing, someone with "class."

It was obvious to everyone that Candy did not have a proper upbringing. Her stepfather worked in a Ford assembly plant, and her mother was a clerk. They lived in a broken-down house on the wrong side of town. Candy decided at an early age to leave her abusing step-father by moving out of the house and into her own apartment. To her credit, Candy moved to Berkeley to meet eligible college students who wanted to marry her - I was the first sucker who fell for her and she married.

Candy's parents were addicted gamblers and traveled to Reno every weekend. The first time Jimmy met them was at Harrah's. "Look honey, a new bride...EEK...that is my daughter." Both of Candy's parents did not like him because he took away their daughter. Actually - Candy wanted it this way all the time.

Candy had horrible manners. When she ate, food dribbled from her lips. She had to wipe away crumbs from her mouth with a wrinkled tissue which seemed to always make its way towards him. Food caked around Candy's lips. "If it was not today's soup around her mouth, then it was yesterday's egg." Her room was always a mess. Panties, bras and everything else were stacked in different piles of wrinkled and unwashed clothes, and other piles of clean clothes. Her toilet had several empty toilet paper rolls on the floor. The floor around the sink in her bathroom looked like a sidewalk sale outside of a London Tube station.

Candy had a secretarial job, working from the afternoon until late in the evening. In the evening he was home studying after attending classes during the day. On weekends and during holidays they often took trips with their two daughters. These weekend trips were always a lot of fun. To her credit, Candy was a gentle person with their children, and had exceptionally good

taste in clothes. Candy knew that after he got his Doctorate in Optometry she could stop working, and the family would be on *easy street*.

But, Jimmy had different plans. He was getting tired of Candy. Like his mother, he felt he had married below his station. Candy, with her faults, could never act as a proper doctor's wife.

Jimmy started to plan a way out of his marriage. He was methodical. But, for now, he needed her to pay the bills. After graduation, he would work in his practice for a couple of years, keep his earnings low, and then divorce her. Yes, he would be well prepared when that time came.

It was in his nature to be fully prepared. He had made plans to leave London. After spending two years in a London business college, he set his sights on America. He had learned as much as he could about America. His impression was that American women were fun loving. He had seen many American movies and read autobiographies of famous Americans. Even during military parades, the Americans were the ones with the best bands and marched with a little swag. He admired these truly American attributes. Unlike Americans, the British, French and the Germans always seemed to be too stiff. If you missed a word or made simple mistake in conversation, a non-American would immediately correct you. Americans were understanding, tolerant and knew how to compromise. America was a newer country and a mobile society. He was certain America was the right place for a young professional starting his career. It offered many opportunities for a successful career and a happy life.

He wanted to be an optometrist like his uncle. His uncle had advised him that the University of California in Berkeley had one of the *best* programs in this field. Besides, he liked the idea of being in the same state where movie stars lived. He applied to UC Berkeley, was accepted, received a partial scholarship and subsequently arrived in the US on a temporary student visa.

He was James until then. In America, he wanted to be called Jimmy by his friends. He liked his new status as a graduate student in optometry at UC Berkeley which will end up giving him a DR. title. The first day on campus, standing in front of his full-length mirror in his dormitory room, he was pleased with what he saw. He was physically fit from playing tennis. He was just over six feet tall. He parted his medium wavy, reddish blond hair slightly to the left of the midline. A thin mustache across his upper lip gave him an air of royalty shared by other British university students who were admitted to the best schools – Oxford and Cambridge. He had his flings, and kept a nearly-perfect grade point average. He danced better than most American males and his British accent and refined social manners made it easy for him to have as many dates as he wanted with the most eligible girls living off and on campus. The Berkeley coeds giggled when he opened the car door for them.

On the day he graduated, he was proud to see his photograph with his square hat and gown holding his "University of California Doctor of Optometry diploma." He took pride in his new professional title and status. He also liked the sound of "Dr. James Collins" instead of the sound of "James." His mother would have been proud of her son who now had a Doctorate degree from a world recognized university and could now practice optometry and see patients in the US.

From the start, he was completely involved with the heavy work demands of starting a new practice. Candy stopped working. Now Jimmy's relentless tirades and criticisms began to depress her. She called him a pompous ass. He called her names that made her recoil. She was bored and got involved with the women's movements with her neighbor, Shirley, who was known as the neighborhood alcoholic. Shirley had married a much older man because she wanted economic and emotional security. The two of them became close friends: Candy spent most of her days with Shirley. They often went to dances put on by military clubs at Mather Airbase and often arrived home after midnight, with

each woman providing a sound cover story for the other.

In time they got involved with other men. On some mornings after Mary and Christie were in school, Jimmy would see Candy and Shirley going for a bike ride with their tennis rackets, while he drove to work. In the evenings he would come home to an empty house. He always found a note from Candy that instructed him to heat the leftovers. But, Jimmy's preference was to eat out instead.

He felt that things were still going according to his previously worked out plan. Now, Candy was giving him a perfect excuse for an uncontested divorce. He could see what was coming. He was ready for whatever she would do during the divorce proceedings. Give her *plenty* of rope now. She will *trip* later. He must be prepared. Never wait for surprises. Trust no one. Always meticulously plan. "There is always the unexpected," his mother had drummed into his head when he was growing up. Jimmy now believed that by planning and being prepared he could always change the way things were going to turn out in the end. His goal was to change the outcome - if necessary - so it always worked out in his favor.

One morning, after a silly argument, Candy looked him straight in the eyes and told him "I am leaving you - I don't love you anymore." A chill went down his spine. But, he was ready for whatever was going to happen. He knew she would ask him for everything he had. He knew Mary and Christi could not understand what was going to happen to mommy and daddy. He would miss his two daughters very much. *He made sure all the photographs of Mary and Christi he had taken over the years in the suitcase he had already packed.*

During one of their fights Candy had boasted, "I will take your house, your practice and you will never see your daughters again." He knew that the legal system in California would let her do that. "Better get prepared," he told himself again. He had to show lower income from his practice or the divorce settlement

would be very costly.

He always come up with fool-proof methods for everything he did. At Blackjack he practiced many hours by playing cards alone, and constantly switching from being a dealer to a player. He learned the correct way to play without incurring personal risk and bet with the house's money. He was gratified when he was told by several casinos to stop playing and leave after they saw him win by using his own personal style of gambling. Jimmy knew there were just as many chances of a long run occurring against a patron, as against the house. For the former you place minimum bets, but when the run is against the house, you increase those bets. It could take several hours or days of continuous playing before a long run against the house occurs. When Casinos got smart they put limits on the amount of maximum play. That was when he gave up playing Blackjack. Jimmy figured out he could make more money in his practice as an optometrist.

A lot of money was coming into the practice. He had to show fewer annual earnings. He knew he could do that. He was paid for examining patients and he could earn more from the sale of materials like high-end glasses and fine contact lenses. If he stayed within reasonable boundaries, the IRS would not ask questions. He assumed the IRS would only monitor gross income and expense categories and not bother with a thorough analysis of his earnings and deductions. If he did not live lavishly he could hide some of his earned income. Double bookkeeping and cashing of unreported refunds he received from returns on equipment were some of the many ploys that businesses use, and the IRS never gets to know about them. Inflate all deductible office expenses and push them into the year that will reduce gross earnings and taxes the most. During the Great Depression U.S. President Calvin Coolidge said, "The business of America is business." Many loopholes were created by the U.S. Congress to make businesses prosper and increase employment. Make sure to keep proper books and feign oversight. He was prepared to take calculated business risks in his practice, and pay the IRS, only

when it was necessary.

In 1977 the California divorce courts gave physical custody to mothers and legal custody to both parents. The system was not kind to fathers. At least it was still a "No Fault" divorce process. Just say "irreconcilable differences" and divorce was granted. There was no need for obtaining solid evidence in your favor, as was required in previous years, when it was necessary to prove *adultery*, by hiring private investigators to take incriminating pictures - usually of the man in bed with another woman. Nevertheless, when it came to the question of which parent the children should live with, the courts regularly made their primary residence with the mother. It was the norm to make the father pay child support and see the children as a visitor - these were called "Visitation Rights" - usually every other weekend. Candy ended up with sole physical custody of the children and all Jimmy could do was to visit them on alternate weekends, with her permission.

Jimmy was anxious to have his own personal life. Not seeing Mary and Christi regularly was a hard pill to swallow for him. As time went on, his visits with his two daughters became infrequent. Candy always had excuses why he could not see them: They were sick, or had an important function to attend or she blamed him for something he said or did during his last visit. Besides, he did not like to hear from Mary and Christi what their mother was doing with other men. Soon he too was making excuses not to see them. They became strangers; but he was sure that despite of their differences Candy was still a good person and mother. *She was not like this bitch.*

Jimmy figured his daughters got closer to their mother as time went on. If he had a son, things might have been different. Anyway, he gloated over how he had shifted his investment accounts to pay the least amount possible in child support that was permitted under the divorce agreement. Jimmy now gave Candy a choice: Take cash in exchange for the house, or the house without the cash. At that time home values had hit

rock bottom. The government had even introduced a new word, "Rebate", the amount the government paid someone to buy a house. Candy wanted cash to rent a house close by. She did not want a house that someone else wanted to buy. Two years later the housing market turned around and Candy, who was never thrifty, had spent all the cash. The value of the house skyrocketed and was now worth fifteen times its original purchase price. Jimmy was proud of himself and especially how badly things turned out for Candy.

Jimmy had to continue his low profile and keep reporting low income. In a few years, when his youngest daughter would turn eighteen years old, there will be no more child support payments, which she reminded him every month - just to make him mad. No more worry of Candy going back to court. He would be free of her, and move into a larger house, buy a new Mercedes, regularly go on cruises and welcome all those single females who were eagerly hunting for a sugar daddy. If they got serious, his plan would be to *dump* them. Marry only a rich woman who can support herself and him. He still had hopes of finding the *perfect* woman - someone his mother would approve.

Lover's Lies

Jimmy always enjoyed going to conventions and attending seminars. These professional meetings were held in exotic destinations and in the best hotels. The other added benefit for Jimmy was that professional expenses were tax deductible.

This time it was the American Optometric Convention at the Hilton Hawaiian Village. Professional luminaries paraded around the convention hotel by showing off their ribbons, pinned to their coats. The ribbons represented offices held, committee membership, main speaker status, and more. Jimmy found it amusing that there were ribbons for everything and anything. The human instinct to proclaim, "I am superior to

you," was in its full swing at the Convention.

Jimmy had arrived in Oahu the day before. At night he had gone to the Hilton bar, to check out the joint and maybe dance with someone. He was a very good ballroom dancer. After only one or two dances he could instinctively determine if he should spend more time with a dance partner or find someone else.

Jimmy had been on the Hilton dance floor in his previous visits to Oahu. As usual, Don Ho was the star at the Hilton Luau with his same old songs and jokes. "If I became president I would call it the *Ho House*," Jimmy would often say to himself in jest.

In Hawaii the Luaus are a must for most tourists. Hilton had its own with Don Ho's show. To properly cook the entire pig, it had to be left in the red-hot coal pit all day. After it was fully cooked, the cooked pig was wheeled into the large dining area to the grand Hilton Bowl on a cart by half-naked Hawaiians. Behind the cart, with the ready-to-eat pig secured on top of the food cart, there was always a long line of lip-licking tourists running behind like vultures at a kill. Most of them came from the Mainland dressed in bright colored shirts and muumuus.

At the Hilton Jimmy did not dance with anyone. There were too many colleagues with their wives; some of them knew Candy and the kids. They would gossip about him dancing too close with another woman. Besides he preferred the Grand Hyatt for dancing. He was there only twice before with Candy. He planned to go there the next day. That night Jimmy drank two glasses of Red Label scotch and soda and went to bed.

Ah, Jimmy said to himself, "Tonight will be the night of the hunter." He moved his eyes over the tourists who had come to the Grand Hyatt. Many considered the Grand Hyatt the most *luxurious* hotel in Oahu. It was certainly the most expensive: Two over forty-story skyscrapers right on Waikiki Beach, connected with a large open area filled with huge tropical trees; the trees blocked the view of the night sky. There were all kinds

of tropical plants with blazing flowers. That is where people danced to the music. That night the band played very late. Just behind the dance floor there was a three-story waterfall – it emptied into a pool. The bar servers wore white togas and sarongs as they delivered tall Mai Tais, topped with tiny colored paper umbrellas, to the thirsty patrons sitting at bamboo tables.

Jimmy had spent all day attending lectures. Most meeting expenses were deductible. He could claim travel costs, hotel room, meals, beverages and business-related incidental expenses. On this business trip Jimmy even shared a room with another colleague who offered to pay his share. Jimmy hoped this colleague would probably forget to include his part of the hotel bill as a business expense on next year's tax return.

That night Jimmy did not order a Mai Tai or any other fancy rum drink. When it came to alcohol, he was totally *British*. Red Label scotch and soda was all he ever wanted. He could give the appearance of having a stiff-upper-lip with that drink in his hand. Jimmy always told himself that *his Queen's English* would always wow the single American women, especially those his mother would approve.

She was sitting all by herself at a table next to an empty chair. The distinctive looking stranger had a low-shoulder white dress and she was drinking a red beverage in a tall glass. This woman, who immediately caught Jimmy's eye, had refused several previous offers to dance. Jimmy thought, "This woman is choosy. I like that." He looked around for someone younger and prettier than she. There were a few, but they were giggling noisily with others. He would have a better chance of success with this one who was alone. Jimmy's impression was that when women sit alone it implies they want male company.

The band was playing "Yellow Bird" - this was his favorite piece. He walked up to her and said, "Would you care to rumba with me?"

She slowly turned her head toward him, looked at him - from his head down to his waist - then she coyly smiled, and then said, "Oh yes, Dr. James Collins!" Jimmy was surprised by her response. Jimmy answered by saying, "Have we met before?" "Oh no, Dr. Collins, we have not been introduced. I saw your name on your convention badge." Next, she touched the name badge with the tips of her three longest fingers. "Oh, how clumsy of me. I should have removed my name tag," Jimmy responded. "I am here attending seminars. I decided to pop in before going back to my room."

Next, they were both on the dance floor. "You rumba beautifully," she said to Jimmy, as he raised his arm, so she could twirl under it. "I'm not that fancy", was his modest response.

"Just keep up your beats as you turn, no matter what I do. You have good sense of rhythm."

"You lead very well."

"And you, my dear stranger, follow marvelously!"

The music ended. It started again with a fierce Argentine number.

"Shall we Samba? I'll try."

Soon they were dancing at full speed with flaying arms taking over the small dance floor; they were pushing other couples on the small dance floor out of their way, as they danced together. To the other couples who were in their way Jimmy would say, "So Sorry for bumping into the both of you" or "Beg your pardon."

"That was frightfully exhilarating," Jimmy said to her. He wiped his brow with his handkerchief, as he escorted her back to her chair. He pulled the chair out for her to sit in it.

"You have an accent. What kind of accent is it?"

"It is English, Madam," Jimmy answered. "I speak the Queen's English," he said proudly. Jimmy wondered why she had to ask about his accent. He concluded she must be an uneducated colonist. "She will be easy," Jimmy said to himself.

After a break, when the music started again, he asked her to dance. Hawaiians play popular songs with their ukuleles and guitars. These native musical pieces tend to have lingering sounds that flow from one octave to another. There are no harsh brass instruments - like the way the French speak - mostly with vowels and the use of infrequent consonants. This kind of Hawaiian music is romantic, especially to persons from the Mainland. It was a natural outcome for the couple to dance closer. Jimmy could feel the softness of her breasts next to him and the soft skin of her fingers around his neck, as she started to run her fingers in his hair. Jimmy became excited: "She wants what I want, and she will be easy."

Jimmy's plan was to sweep her off her feet by showing her his hotel room on the twelfth floor. He also wondered if she would ask for money in exchange for sex - if they got that far before the evening ended. He had never paid for sex before, and he would not pay for it now, no matter what was going to happen later in the evening. He continued to bring her drinks - which she sipped slowly without ever stopping.

Jimmy asked, "How long will you be staying?"

"I have six days left," she replied.

"Where are you staying?"

"Right here," she said to him while avoiding eye contact, and looking at another couple awkwardly dancing on the small dance platform.

"You mean in this Hyatt?" He thought she was joking. "How are

the rooms?"

"They are expensive but nice," she said. She paused, while she looked at him with a pleasant smile. "Would you like to see my hotel room?" Jimmy said, "I am looking forward to seeing your hotel room."

He was speechless when she pressed the elevator's button to the top floor. His eyes were wide open when he saw she was staying in the PRESIDENTAL SUITE.

She gave him the key to open the door to her hotel suite. The key had a distinctive large brass carved handle. She did not turn on the lights after they entered her hotel suite. From the window of the living room, the moonlit Diamond Head, the most photographed site in all Hawaiian brochures, shimmered in its breathtaking majesty. From the wide verandah on the suite's balcony the huge Pacific waves were lapping with white crests rushing to gobble up the vast beach. They would pounce with a roar, retreat and rush forward again, to bite off more sand. This idyllic moment seemed to last forever while the three-quarter moon stood smirking at the couple. Cars and people below appeared very small and very far away. The Ala Moana and the Sheraton also seemed undersized in the distance. Far away from the couple, also in the distance, there were the Hilton Rainbow Towers where he stayed.

For the first time in his adult life, after becoming single again, Jimmy was in awe of this woman who he had recently met. This was no ordinary lady. She must be rich to pay for all this! He had better play his cards right. This will not be a one-night stand. With full British pomp and charm he said: "It was jolly nice of you to show me all of this. May I have your permission to take pictures from here tomorrow evening before we have dinner together?"

She giggled and then said: "Of course you can take as many pictures as you like, and I will be delighted to have dinner with

you. Make certain to come at about six. At that time the sun will be setting, and together, we can watch a *real* Hawaiian sunset."

He whispered to her, good night, and softly kissed her lips. Just a peck and Jimmy went to the door. She followed close behind him. The elevator took its own sweet time to come up. As he stepped in the elevator, he babbled another jolly English phrase, "Ta-Ta, see you tomorrow night," as the elevator door closed. She walked back and entered her hotel suite by herself, with an obvious gleam in her eyes. A soft smile came to her lips.

It was a whirlwind encounter the following evening. The sunset appeared to be especially romantic. In the tropics the air is always moist. You are in a cloud. During the day you do not notice its presence. It is hot and. The sun shines brightly. However, as the sun sets the mist cools the night air. Clouds start to appear, and they seem to rush towards the horizon as if to bid the sun goodnight. As the sun gets closer to the horizon, it radiates all its glorious light. Different colors from bluish in the east to bright pink and reds in the west spray for miles in all directions through cracks in the clouds as they are constantly changing their shape.

"When someone asks me what is the purpose of living, I tell them to see one more sunset like this," he said. Jimmy was exuberant as he timidly put his arm around her small waist. She responded with sincere affection. He did not want to rush into anything. Jimmy sensed that she wanted him to move faster. But, Jimmy - on purpose - restrained himself. He did not want this wonderful relationship to end abruptly. This one was here to stay.

Earlier, she had requested room service to deliver dinner for two and a small bottle of red wine to her hotel suite. That night she was wearing a ring with a large emerald surrounded by diamonds. An elegant thin gold necklace and pearl earrings seemed to bring out her best facial features. Her table manners were flawless. She was soft spoken. Jimmy heard music when

she laughed. After dinner, they went down to the hotel ballroom and danced. They danced like lovers that night.

The next day they drove around the island. First, they stopped at Hanauma Bay to snorkel. This is a large area where the beautiful tropical colored fish made their home. The lake was previously an active volcano, but now it was under water - just enough to become a favorite site to snorkel.

She wore a blue one-piece swimsuit that emphasized her small waist. They had rented masks, snorkels, fins, and purchased two packets of green peas sealed in water proof plastic bags. They hid the packets in their suits as they swam towards the left center of the bay where the coral beds were most enticing. The waves were mild, bobbling them slowly up and down in the ocean. Gloriously colored fish were everywhere, going from one rock to another, completely ignoring the couple. This was an outdoor aquarium. Each swimmer pointed to a rare fish as it flipped by and then proceeded to swim into a crevice in the rocks.

It took only a moment, after they released several bright green peas in the water, for a newly formed school of tropical fish to suddenly and furiously approach the couple. The fish quickly gobbled all peas they had released in the ocean water. The fish appeared to come from all sides. They even wanted to bite the picture of the peas on the empty packet. When they held the peas in their palms they could feel their teeth as they swallowed each pea. He squeezed a few in her swimsuit top and she had to move out of the way when the fish went after the peas. Within a few minutes they opened the second packet. This time they rationed them, so it took longer for the fish to find and eat the peas. The fish kept hovering around them until the second packet was empty and, this time, they made sure to hide the two empty packets in their swimsuits.

They drove to the North shore and watched the experienced surfers maneuver the large breaking ocean waves. Jimmy, as usual, talked mostly about himself. But, when he wanted to

know her better she did tell him she was a recent widow, lonely, and lived with her Orthodox Jewish father in Atherton, California. "That is marvelous," Jimmy said. "It is just across the Bay from Berkeley, where I went to graduate school. I earned my Doctor's degree in Optometry from UC Berkeley." Together, they watched another blazing sunset. Regrettably, this wonderful trip would have to end the following day. Jimmy had to return home and to his patients.

Jimmy was optimistic about the future. She was well bred, had travelled extensively, and lived in Atherton where the houses were appraised in the millions of dollars. She was an only child, a recent widow and had business degrees from Stanford. She left law school after two years to marry.

Dr. Collins Falls in Love

It was over a month since they had kissed goodbye. He could not wait to see her again, but she was not enthusiastic when he called her. She was hesitant and kept giving him excuses for not seeing him right away. He started to become anxious. Later he called her and asked if he could come to her home. She said "yes," and gave him directions.

It was Sunday afternoon. They had agreed he would be there at two. In Atherton he was meandering from one street to another, even though she had given him good directions. Atherton has been the historical bedroom community of San Francisco's old-money families who had lived in that area since the gold rush. "They are not houses but palaces," Jimmy said to himself, as he approached his destination. As he drove up to the massive wrought iron gate, now in front of him, it slowly opened. He drove through to the imposing double front doors. Above the entrance was an arch with a large Star of David. This religious symbol was cast in silver. Beneath this Jewish icon was an even larger "BELMONT" sign in blazing golden colors. She quickly ran

towards him and said, "I missed you terribly," and she started to kiss him passionately.

They held hands as they walked up the stone steps, through the double doors, into a large room with a high ceiling. The room was decorated in an old European motif with hand-carved furniture everywhere. There were two pink marble Corinthian pillars holding up the ceiling, on either end of the large wall, behind a long table. In the center of the table there was a beautiful dried flower arrangement. At each end of the table there were two pewter candelabras. In the middle of two huge oil paintings on the wall there was a bronze statue of the goddess Diana. Many oriental carpets covered the shiny oak floors. Jimmy's first impression of her home was like entering a museum.

Before he could take it all in he heard her say, "Dad, this is my Dr. Jimmy Collins." The father was well dressed in a brown bow tie and a grey vest. He was of medium build with bushy eyebrows. The two men exchanged trite pleasantries. The father soon left the couple alone, excusing himself by saying he could not stay longer. Jimmy was perplexed why her father left so soon. "Maybe it was because I am not a Jew," Jimmy said to himself. "Maybe to win over her father I may have to convert to Judaism," Jimmy said to himself.

She gave him a tour of the house, showing him everything, and telling him in detail where everything had come from. There were many rooms and in her personal bedroom suite, Jimmy saw pictures of her childhood and college days. He estimated that the home was worth, at a minimum, twenty million dollars. He was speechless. His mother would have been impressed!

They drove up to Half Moon Bay. She told him she was her father's only daughter, but she had to live her own life. "It took me a long time to even make him agree to meet you," she said. They had dinner at an Italian restaurant on the beach. They professed their love and decided that they could not live

without one another, even if it meant marriage without her father's consent.

Two weeks later Dr. and Mrs. Collins stepped out of the wedding chapel in Reno. During their honeymoon in the Cayman Islands she told him of a substantial trust that her mother had included in her will before she died. He introduced her to his Irish bank manager and trusted friend, and he showed her the financial details of his accounts. Later, when they were alone, he shared with her all his unpleasant experiences with his last divorce. He also revealed how he cleverly manipulated Candy before and after she asked for a divorce.

They snorkeled inside a sunken ship and swam and later made love – this time it was different. They sat for hours on the powdery white sands and watched a different sunset each evening. He poured his heart out to her. She did the same. They were now lovers and married.

They were inseparable. She wanted to be with him always. With Jimmy's approval, she replaced the two girls in his Sacramento, CA office, and she became his office manager. She had a *gift* for numbers and quickly mastered the intricacies associated with the running of a successful optometry practice. His patients also told him how wonderful she was and a great improvement over the two girls who previously worked in the office.

At times he became aware there were patient names on filed claims that he did not recognize. She had billed MediCal and Medicare for them. He trusted her completely and did not want to question her. He stayed away from the business side of his practice. She handled all the checks and paid all the bills, as he watched their bank accounts grow. She was his wife, lover, counselor and working partner in all his dealings. Jimmy could not be happier. He enjoyed fourteen months of uninterrupted marital bliss. She told him each time he asked, that her father would not welcome him in his home. But, Jimmy was certain her father would eventually accept him as a member of the family.

"Guess what honey, next weekend my father wants to see you. Maybe he has mellowed and wants to make amends and accept you, for what you are," she said to Jimmy.

She asked him to come to Atherton on Sunday afternoon. They had dinner together in a cozy room, not in the grand dining room. Jimmy had several glasses of his favorite scotch and was relaxed. "Honey, my father insists on including you on legal papers to make you a part owner of BELMONT. All you have to do is sign the papers and I will take them to our lawyer tomorrow." She said softly.

Jimmy was so excited to come into this sudden and unexpected wealth. Together they started planning the future: Live in BELMONT, attend parties, travel, and live a luxurious life. Just before he was ready to leave for Sacramento, she showed him the contract that would make him a one-third owner of BELMONT. He quickly scanned each page of the legal document. All pages appeared to be authentic. Her father and his wife had previously signed the legal document. All Jimmy had to do now is to also sign his name below their signatures.

After a long goodbye kiss, Jimmy left and drove home to Sacramento. He was pleased with the way everything was turning out. Mary and Christie will love playing in the large garden at BELMONT, when they visit him and their new step-mother.

THE BITCH

The Bitch had promised to come the next day after seeing her lawyer. She called the following morning and said that her father took ill and she wanted to stay at home and take care of him. Each night over the phone she would say repeatedly her father was not well. A few days later she also became ill and too

sick to work. Jimmy had to get temporary office help.

At the end of the second week, a Friday afternoon, Jimmy said goodbye to his last patient. He was ready to go home. A stranger approached him and asked, "Are you Dr. James Collins?" "Yes, I am Dr. Collins." The man then said to him, "I am giving you this subpoena." After Jimmy had the subpoena in his hands, the man walked away.

Jimmy was surprised receiving a subpoena. It must be from an upset patient. He quickly opened the envelope. He started to read: "In the marriage of Dr. James W. Collins and..." His first reaction was to say, "That Bloody, Bloody, Bitch." He screamed out loud as he continued to read the entire first page of the subpoena. He asked his office assistant to cancel his Monday appointments, and to inform his patients he had an unexpected personal emergency.

That evening he did not go home, but drove directly to BELMONT. Once at the front gate, he rang the bell. A woman's voice asked what he wanted. Jimmy replied by saying, "You damned well know what I want." Two mastiffs showed up inside the front yard barking, with their large jaws wide open. Now he was the intruder. He did not care about his safety. He would let them bark all night if that is what it took to speak with her and resolve this legal misunderstanding. He even thought of letting the vicious dogs bite him on his arms and legs. He would surely have a good legal reason to sue the hell out of that Bitch!

A police car drove up. Jimmy informed the two police officers inside the squad car why he was there. One police officer checked his license and then used the telephone at the front gate to speak with the woman inside the home. The gates opened. He was told to drive to the front entrance, with the police car following. A well-dressed woman came to the door. One policeman said to the woman, "This is a family affair. We cannot get involved. He says he is your husband." Dr. James Collins explained to the stranger what had happened and

why he was there. The lady of the manor asked him to come in. The officers said they would wait in the car.

"I am afraid you have been taken, Dr. Collins." Those words made him sick to his stomach. She went on to say the father of his wife was their caretaker. He lived in the back cottage with his daughter. She, at times, helped to clean the house and cook meals. The daughter indeed was a recent widow. She had received insurance money and wanted to spend it all. "She wanted to experience how the rich lived - at least once in her life," the lady explained. The lady said she let her borrow her expensive clothes and jewelry because she felt sorry for the recent widow. After she returned from Hawaii the lady and her husband left for Europe for a month. "It was unfortunate," the lady said, "last week my husband and I had to let her father go because of his non-stop, rambling of anti-Semitic statements." She left with her father. The lady of the manor said to him that the father and daughter did not leave an address or telephone number.

"It is going to be expensive. You don't have much of a choice," his lawyer said to him. Mr. Bolden, his lawyer, was as tactful as a porcupine. He had previously represented Jimmy in his divorce with Candy. "Your wife wants everything you own - and more - if she can get it out of you. Either you give it to her voluntarily or she will expose you. You know what that means. The IRS will be ruthless. They will pile on large penalties for unpaid back taxes, and maybe also put you in jail. You will lose your license to practice as an optometrist. She also wants your house and everything in it. She has no mercy. I have tried to convince her to demand less from you. Her emphatic response was always, *no.*"

The attorney took a drink of water as Jimmy stared in space. Jimmy did not understand what was happening. That BITCH beat him at his own game. "You have no choice. She covered her tracks well, emptied your joint bank accounts and will expose you. Give her what she wants. You are not that old; you have

enough time to bounce back," the lawyer said to Jimmy.

THE FINAL PUNCH

Jimmy did not understand why that BITCH wanted him to personally give her the keys to his house. Maybe she wanted to see him for the last time or maybe she was sorry for him. Jimmy was inside his Sacramento home. The bell to his front door rang. He quickly jumped up. He took his two packed suitcases with him, one in each hand, and went to the front door. When he opened the front door, it was not that BITCH as he had expected, but instead it was her father. Even though Jimmy was surprised, he did not say a word to him, and gave her father the keys to his home, and then walked out of his house for the last time.

On his way out, he saw his two daughters. "Hi Daddy," Mary and Christi said at the same time. His daughters were glad to see him. He asked, "What are you doing here?" "We are going to live here with mommy." Although Jimmy was still confused, he could not stop from crying as he hugged his children. He loved them and missed them very much.

When he looked through the mist, he could not believe what he saw. That BITCH and Candy were passionately kissing each other. They had staged this final goodbye for his benefit.

"Never trust anyone." He mumbled to himself as he turned his back on the scene.

THE END

A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

Being born in Bombay during the British rule my early education in English was in schools with rules that were slightly different than those of my American English instructors when I came in

1954.

I moved to Rossmoor, Walnut Creek, CA, and a retirement community of approximately ten thousand seniors in 2014 and over 100 clubs. One of those was the Professional Writers of Rossmoor (PWR) that met regularly each month with lecturers by speakers who were experts on various subjects dealing with writing and publishing. PWR also has its own website and encouraged new writers to publish on it.

My heartfelt gratitude to the PWR and past website coordinator John Gilbert who encouraged me to publish my first short story, "HER MAJESTY", on the club's website.

My special thanks to Dr. John T. Braggio, the present website coordinator of PWR, with several literary accomplishments of his own, who not only encouraged but also helped to make the necessary changes to help me finish this fictional short story.

Adi D. Adins, O.D. Summer 2017