

Introduction

I'm a dick. You know, a detective. Although there are those who might apply a different meaning to that word in regard to me, I'm not here to talk about them.

I used to be a good one – detective that is. Maybe I still am. I don't know. I do know that time and circumstance have a way of changing things, even distorting them. That's what happened to me. World War II and the years surrounding it were the times and contained the circumstances that changed my life. I was considered smart and tough, able to handle about anything – I guess you'd say good at my job – before the war. I had plenty of work, could ask just about whatever fee I cared to for a case and get it. I was living a pretty good life.

The name by the way is Hathaway, Halo Hathaway. I only use the last name. Wouldn't you if your parents stuck a moniker like that on you? No one close to me calls me anything other than Hathaway, and not many since grade school have taken it upon themselves to try.

I've been making Baltimore my home since I left the Midwest in the spring of '38. With a reputation as a dick who could solve people's problems and be counted on to keep my mouth shut if that problem was a delicate one, the demand for my services ran high. I also got along well with the cops in Baltimore and the surrounding area because I didn't butt in where or when I wasn't wanted, and because they knew I had spent several years as a police detective in Lincoln, Nebraska before moving east.

When I arrived here, I didn't spend a lot of time thinking about, or worrying about, what was going on in Europe. That changed with the German invasion of Poland in September of '39 and increased dramatically with the assault on France the following May. You'll learn why later. Within a week of the attack on Pearl Harbor I joined the Army. I thought it would give me the chance to resolve some personal issues and I knew it was what I needed to do for the country. My best friend, Randy Marlowe, joined the Navy and became a part of the Pacific by the end of the war. Uncle Sam pushed me in a different direction. By the time my military service was over my outlook on life had changed, especially the way I looked upon my fellow human beings. Experiences in North Africa, Sicily, Italy, Belgium and particularly Germany, made me cynical about most of the people on this planet, made me paint them in dark colors and spend little time looking for the good in them.

It was almost two years after the end of the war in Europe that my transformation took place. The near loss of my life to the lingering evil, and enormous demonstrations of courage from a couple of close friends forced me to reexamine my outlook on life. If education is indeed, as my mother told me years ago, a continuing process, then my graduate school in life was held from 1940 through 1947.

I'm not capable of telling the story. My talents aren't channeled in that direction. I'm not a storyteller. I sat down with a reporter friend of mine and went over the entire thing with him. His name is Roscoe Font. Sounds like a reporter's name, doesn't it? Seems his grandparents shortened the last name after arriving from Wales sometime toward the end of last century. I don't generally

like reporters, but I've started to look for the positives in people since my transformation. Besides, unlike the majority of his peers, Font's a straight shooter who actually makes an effort to get the facts right and look for the truth in a story. I know he's helped me find some of the truth in my life. I owe him a lot. He's about the only person I know who has the skills to write this and one of the few I would trust to do it.

Anyway, he's going to tell you my story. The facts are all here, and within them somewhere is the truth.

Prologue

Everything of importance in life, the defining moments and events, seem to take place in springtime. Perhaps because spring is the period of new life and of renewal – at least that is how we find it presented so often in literature – it only makes sense that so many of the events which determine our character, our personality, how we go about living our lives, occur in springtime. Throughout history, it has followed that pattern.

These were strange thoughts for Hathaway to be contemplating at the moment. Realistically, he should have been dead. Acceptance of that fact less than ten minutes earlier had steeled him to keep his wits, composure and courage in the face of death. Instead, here he was leaning back against a half-shattered crate of oranges – arm broken and with his face and leg bleeding, but with no sense of pain. Maybe he was dead and this was merely a surreal interlude as he traveled to his next destination. Hathaway's brain left the realm of the metaphysical and returned to the conscious reality around him, which included Cathy clutched against his chest, shaking uncontrollably and bouncing up and down off his body, her tears soaking his shirt.

His lips reassured, "It's okay," as he kissed her forehead.

Had she really been a part of it all? Had she shared in this strange dream spread out before him? Two men lay motionless less than 25 feet away, a third rolling back and forth so slowly on his side that it appeared some hidden and silent puppeteer must be controlling him with invisible strings. The man's eyes were closed and his mouth open, though no sound emanated from it. How had they put an end to what had been a continually escalating nightmare?

Professional instinct bolted Hathaway back to attention. He scanned the cavernous warehouse, looking for any additional peril lurking in its dark corners and corridors. Although his view was partially obstructed in all directions by the crates and boxes that filled the bleak chamber, his instincts told him the danger had passed. Still, hadn't there been five of them at the start? Where were the other two?

Luther. Where was Luther? They had entered together, then separated as they prepared to face the evil they knew lived in the old warehouse. Hathaway stopped himself as soon as he opened his mouth to call out for his friend. If two other opponents lurked somewhere in the rising mountains of crates around him, he did not want to attract their attention with a cry for help. He took a deep breath and through blurry eyes looked up at the ceiling. Bringing his good arm up around Cathy he gently kissed the soft blonde hair on the top of her head, beautiful hair like none he had known before knowing her. He pulled her in closer to him and the shaking that had overcome her minutes earlier began to subside with the gentle act of assurance and with the strength and warmth of his embrace.

"We're okay."

They remained on the floor in each other's arms as the low moan of police sirens began to rise in the distance. Their wailing song grew louder and more comforting as he realized that more than one squad car was racing toward them through the heavy quiet of the night. He wondered how it could be so quiet when moments earlier the clamor of death was shattering every fiber of his body. As

the tremors in Cathy's body settled and his senses relaxed Hathaway allowed his mind to drift back through the events of so many springtimes past, springtimes that had directed and determined his life. He remembered that as a child his mother would tell anyone who would listen, and many who would not, that her angelic baby boy had been born on the most beautiful spring day she had ever witnessed.