

Wise Guys Get Lenited

by the Hard-Boiled Members of the College of Arms

Wise Guys Get Lenited, Daniel de Lincoln et al.'s contribution to the simultaneous downfall of Welsh onomastics and detective writing, appears for the first time in its entirety in this KWHS Proceedings.

CHAPTER 1–[Daniel de Lincoln, Bordure Herald]– From Bryn Gwlad's internal commentary on the March 1997 internal LoI.

Myfanwy ferch Eifion (New Name);

(New Device) Proposed Blazon: Gules an iris bendwise between two bowen knots argent.

Excerpts from a new hard-boiled detective novel, *Wise Guys Get Lenited*:¹

As usual, she walked into my office as businesslike as a bandsaw. She's not my partner. She has her own business, the It's My Asterisk Detective Agency. I have mine, Bordure²Private Dick. We respect each other's turf. She sends cases my way a couple of times a month. This wasn't her usual kind of case.

"Weird one here. Welsh woman, allows no changes."

"First, I don't like Celtic cases. I remember how they took down Donny³. The coroner said they mutated his genitives. Second, I really don't like Welsh. The Harpy's⁴ gang on the coast have that action nailed down tight. Third, I *really* don't like 'allows no changes' on Celtic names: "Why doesn't she just paint a target on her tuchis and scream 'Harpy! Shoot me now!'"

"The Harpy says she'll cover the play."

"Huh?"

"Great repartee you have. The Harpy supported it on the SCAHeralds' mailing list, second week in March. Get an index of the archives by e-mailing a message body of 'indexscahrlds' to listserv@listserv.aol.com –"

I was already typing. "And then get that week's via 'getSCAHRDLS LOG9703B' – 'B' for the second week. I know. "We chatted for a couple of minutes, waiting.

"Son of a gun. The Harpy says the name elements are all attested in period. These're Modern Welsh forms, meaning '15-16th c. and later'. She has no examples of 'Eifion' by the medieval period. But 'the 5th century citation is sufficient for SCA registration.' The Harpy's the great Welsh expert, but it still smells fishy somehow."

"Yeah. Now check out the proposed blazon."

"Bowen' is a proper noun, so it should be capitalized."

"That's not the funny thing. Look in her iris."

"Xeroxed the Pict Dict ... oh, hell. She slipped and leaved without telling anyone."⁵

"Bingo, brother. Think you can find where she vanished to and get her registered safely?"

I sighed and reached for a train schedule. I knew when I was out of my depth. I had to get an expert, and I wasn't going to cross the Harpy's gang. Had to be Cleveland, then. Looked like I was going to see the Talan⁶ again.

CHAPTER 2–[Daniel de Lincoln, Bordure Herald]– From the May 1997 Ansteorran Letter of Intent.

Myfanwy ferch Eifion (New Name);

(New Device) Proposed Blazon: Gules an iris slipped and leaved bendwise between two Bowen knots argent.

An excerpt from a new hard-boiled detective novel: it really wasn't strange that I was walking down the dark, rainy Cleftlands street. It was a Welsh case, and I knew I was over my head. The ap Morgan⁷ gang had the West Coast onomastics game sewn up, but I'd never go to them for help.

Donny had been my friend, and he'd gone west, and the coroner said that they'd mutated his genitives.

I trusted the Talan, though. Looked like a math professor⁸ or something, but he had a piece of all the onomastics action. Sure, he sometimes took guys down. A laughing boy one day, and the next day the submissions herald is dredging the body out of the river with a hole blown in his documentation and a heavy cite from Ekwall tied to his feet.

¹ All these violent sounding terms are actually onomastic jargon. Really. Trust me.

² Currently in Ansteorra, Asterisk Herald handles submissions internally through the kingdom meeting, and Bordure Herald handles them thereafter.

³ There never was a "Donny". Bordure wanted some reason to be leery of Tangwystl to justify bringing in Talan. Eventually he thought of "Donny" as a generic modern name that might mutate into Dhohmhnhalh and collapse under the weight of the "h"s.

⁴ Harpy Herald, Mistress Tangwystyl verch Morgant Glasvryn, is a great Welsh expert and lives in the West Kingdom. It's a hard-boiled detective story. Bordure needed a femme fatale. He didn't know the client. He daren't piss off Asterisk here in Ansteorra. Had to be Tangwystyl ferch Morgant Glasvryn, Harpy Herald, the only other woman involved.

⁵ The device is OK; the blazon needed work.

⁶ Fause Losenge Herald, Baron Talan Gwynek, is another names expert in the College of Arms and lives in Cleveland, the Barony of the Cleftlands.

⁷ "ap Morgan": Mistress Tangwystyl, Harpy Herald, has two brothers who are also heralds, Baron Owen ap Morgan, Leveret Herald, and Lord Maxen Dawel ap Morgan, Matins Herald.

⁸ Mundanely, Talan is one.

But just as often he'd take in a guy without a prayer, dust off some obscure source like "Registers of the United Parishes", and the guy'd go free⁹.

"Tell him it's Daniel de Lincoln, from the Bordure Private Dick agency." The hallway was short, and ended in the Talan's office.

"Good evening. You have the usual price?" I don't know why he wants cut diamonds¹⁰, but I handed them over. You humor the experts. "What is the difficulty?"

"There's this *dame* submitting a new name and new armory--"

"It's good to see a peer¹¹ finally registering."

Like I said, you humor the experts. "This *woman*. Welsh name, will accept no changes. She cites Myfanwy and Eifion from Heini Gruffudd's *Welsh Names for Children*, from 1350 and the 5th century, respectively."

"'No changes' is a bit risky, yes. However, I see no insuperable difficulty. The name is certainly registerable, though the spellings are standard modern throughout. I haven't any instance of Eifion even as late as the Middle Ages, so I don't know what a plausible mediæval form would be; the best might be, c. 1300, Meuanou verch--"

My mistake was in turning toward the door and not watching the Talan. I heard the footsteps too, but it came to me too late that the research assistant hadn't used the intercom. That's when I heard the scrape of the Talan using the trapdoor, and I knew I couldn't find the secret control in time.

She lounged against the doorframe, the neon from the pawnshop across the street flashing on her silk strapless evening gown. She should have had music¹², sultry and sad.

I couldn't out-tough her alone, and Owen was with her anyway.

"Hello, Harpy. Come to take down Myfanwy?"

She laughed low and throatily. "You naive boy. I'm backing the play. 'Myfanwy' is the standard modern spelling of the name and would be reasonable to find in 15-16th c. Welsh-language contexts (although I can't cite any specific examples off-hand). I've got a 16th c. Anglicized example of 'Mevanwy'. You'd expect the spelling 'ferch', again, ca. 15-16th c. and later."

"Although the bearer of the name cited in Gruffudd dates to the 5th century, the actual form 'Eifion' follows Modern Welsh practice. If I were counselling someone on choosing a historically authentic name, I'd point out that 'Eifion' seems to have fallen out of use by the medieval period—we have no later examples of it. However, the 5th century citation is sufficient for SCA registration."

She laughed again. "You know you're in over your head. You don't even know that 'Modern Welsh' is the technical term referring to the language from the 15th century on—not implying 20th c.-modern. Take my advice. Drop the case. Wise guys—", and she took a long drag from her cigar¹³, "get lenited."

Then she was gone with her bullyboy, and after a couple of minutes, I left too. I walked back to the railway station. I knew only two things. The whole stank, and I had to take it to the big cheese in DC¹⁴.

(From Bordure: OK, I get bored ... My apologies to the College for inflicting amateur fiction on them, and to Mistress Tangwystyl and Baron Owen ap Morgan for making them baddies.)

CHAPTER 3—[Talan Gwynek, Fause Lozenge Herald, Letter of Comment 6/11/97]—Further commentary on this letter seems largely superfluous. Still...Myfanwy ferch Eifion:

I knew it was a bad day as soon as he came through the door. It'd been a few years, but he was the same rabbit little geek, and you could still see where they'd operated on his ears back in 94¹⁵. Understand, he's not a bad sort, and he's good at his job; but he's the kind of bloke who could fall into a vat of rosewater and come up smelling like...well, never mind. But dictionaries are expensive; I don't turn up my nose at paying clients without a damn good reason. I took his case, but I kept an eye on the door, too.

After the formalities were disposed of, I let him state his problem.

It was elementary, but I had to check a citation, and when I looked up she was coming through the door. Who? The Harpy, of course. She calls herself Tangwystyl verch Morgant Glasvryn, but I know better: she was born Tangwystyl verch Moriarty, and she runs the West Coast onomastics rackets. And there she was in my doorway, smoking a cigar—handmade, of course¹⁶—and looking very dangerous. I'm a consultant, not a damn-fool hero; I wasted no time leaving, by the back way.

⁹ Ekwall: a standard English place-names source. Talan has lots of sources, some obscure. He may have more info on a name to show it was post-period, for example, but conversely he may be able to document a name that nobody else can.

¹⁰ Talan is Fause Lozenge Herald, "Fause Lozenge" is an early term for a "mascle", which is a diamond with a diamond-shaped hole in the center, hence "cut diamonds".

¹¹ "Dame" also is used for female knights.

¹² Harpy is a musician and composer, but not for sax, to my knowledge. All the family is quite musical.

¹³ Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar...

¹⁴ Mistress Jaille of Armida. Laurel Sovereign of Arms. She gets more nicknames than anyone else.

¹⁵ Daniel de Lincoln's badge, registered in 1994: Azure, four coney's rampant in saltire, head to center, conjoined by the ears in annulo argent, playing bagpipes Or. One hopes this is what Talan is referring to.

¹⁶ Mistress Tangwystyl is not only a big gun where the Heraldic Authorities are concerned, but has also been known to intimidate the Authenticity Police by the extremely high quality of her re-creations.

Later I played the tapes and heard the bad news: Wise guys get lenited, she said. The Harpy doesn't bluff; that could mean only one thing. If she can lenite a Private Dick, she must have a piece of the antaphrodisiac traffic.

CHAPTER 4—[Owen ap Morgan, Leveret Herald]— Myfanwy ferch Eifion. Re: Harpy (preprint) re: Fause Losenge (June 11, 1997).

Someone's stepping on my Midlands Welsh franchise; I have to see it fixed up properly. Maxen's got his local clients covered; can you make it, too? My sister doesn't usually need my brother and I —strong men cringe at that cold stare, and when she's testy, strange packages turn up in freezers¹⁷ — but I enjoy watching her work, and I can be handy when the heavy armory comes out. Besides, family is the important thing, right? I wrapped up my piece of Dutch Fred's¹⁸ action and joined her for the trip East.

Amid rising interest and rampant speculation, several salient points emerged: this Southern belle was trying to make a name for herself (we had one picture showing her packing arms like nothing I'd ever seen before) and some fringe player with serious intentions was talking to the Talan on her behalf. On arrival, Tangwystyl decked herself out for business. (The silk and cigar are for effect.) She lit up off some local punk and we headed up to Talan's office.

At the outer desk, Maxen urged the assistant to submit. Some signal must already have passed; through the inner door only a void marked Talan's departure. One day we may plant him, but not yet. I moved to bar the door as Danny-boy stood cross the room, looking pale. The Harpy came to the point quickly and relatively painlessly.

We had a pile of solid evidence, and could bend the Chief's ear to base decisive action on it. After one parting shot for him to fret over, we headed for the Ford and home. Hey, he chose to play on our field, and we can't be charged if he didn't know what he was getting into when he started all this.

CHAPTER 5—[Maxen Dawel ap Morgan, Matins Herald]

I've got a sweet little racket here, running names and armory. Things were just starting to settle down after the unpleasantness down in the Lone Mullet Kingdom, when I heard about the trouble through the grapevine. Oh well, there just isn't any rest for the Family.

Hey Owen, we got trouble out in the Far West. Looks like the Black Dragon syndicate is trying to cut themselves in on a piece of our action. Harpy's got a meet back East with Big S¹⁹ and I've gotta hold the fort here. Can you get out there and take care of it?

"I'm on my way."

CHAPTER 6—[Tangwystyl verch Morgant Glasvryn, Harpy Herald 7/30/97] 12. Myfanwy ferch Eifion — (also in response to Fause Losenge 6/11/97)

<ahem ... sound of knuckles cracking> You may guess what's coming ...

I'd heard the rumors. You can't be too careful in the onomastics business. Every Johnny-come-lately and pip-squeak thinks he can name names. There are some who might have said I was homing in on someone else's territory, showing up in that rainy alley. But I figured differently. Anywhere you get a whiff of something Brythonic — that is my territory. And if this Bordure chap was pushing high-grade Cambrian stuff, then I figured he'd get what was coming to him.

The boys were right behind me when I jimmed the locative and slipped through the door. If Bordure thought he could give me the slip in this back-alley maze, he had another think coming. I cut my teeth on Dwinelle Hall. I can find any academic office. Owen was carrying a violin case. As soon as we were through the door he opened it and pulled out a sweet little piece. Not a moment too soon -- I don't know where the research assistant had been, but he came out of nowhere and nearly integrated when Owen swung the business end in his direction.

"Devoice!" I hissed, "Or we're going to perform syncope on your intestines."

He didn't even let off a pharyngeal. Maxen gagged him and tied him up good and tight. I knew the ropes were sound — I grew the sisal myself. Maxen had come in carrying a euphonium case. You didn't want to know what was in that one. He up-ended it and sat down to keep an eye on the punk. Owen and I proceeded to the inner door.

I knew I'd missed my chance when I saw the Talan disappearing out the back. He must have gotten a whiff of my cigar. We'd have it out some other time. But the Bordure fellow was still there — staring like a deer in the headlights. I would have blamed it on the evening gown, but I knew better. A reputation will get you places that red silk won't. Even if you weave it yourself.

I pulled up a chair opposite him while Owen checked out the bookshelves. He knew I could take care of myself. Bordure was nervous -- too nervous. I figured he had more to hide than aps in his bosom, but that could wait. "Hello Harpy," he stammered. "Come to take down Myfanwy?"

I laughed. "You really don't know? Myfi's a plant. She's one of mine. I knew you couldn't resist the bait." He was still too nervous. I handed him one of my stogies. "Light up — it'll help you relax. No additives, I grow the stuff myself." He took a few puffs, but I could tell it was just to stay on my good side.

"Chances are it's a fictitious reanalyzed pseudo-eponym anyway," I said with no preamble.

¹⁷ This refers to Mistress Tangwystyl's former mundane career as a biochemical researcher.

¹⁸ Duke Frederick of Holland, Brachet Herald

¹⁹ Mistress Jaelle. Laurel: most of the following nicknames refer to her device: Gules, on a pale between four snails guardant argent another gules.

"What, Myfanwy?" he coughed.

Even Owen grinned at that one. "Eifion," I said with exaggerated patience. "The whole Cunedda mob's a bit dicey. There's just too damn many of them to be for real. They're mostly a medieval genealogist's version of retro-doc."

"So it's no go?" Bordure asked, with a little droop at the corners of his mouth that almost had me feeling sorry for him.

I sighed and stubbed the cigar out on a Hanks and Hodges²⁰ that was sitting on the corner of the desk. "If it were up to me ..." He was sweating. I shook my head. "Well, never mind. It'll do for the Feds²¹. You're lucky. You don't have to please me, you only have to please ... Her."

He turned the color of Wonder bread. Before it's been toasted. "You mean ..."

"Yeah, The Slug." I lifted him by the lapels and got in his face. The effect was marred by the fact that I had to stand on a chair to do it. "So I want to know what you were thinking of, trying your hand at the Welsh trade. Did you think the Talan could protect you when you got in over your head? You remember what we did to Donny's genitives?"

He gulped.

I nodded. "Nasalized 'em." I let go of his lapels and he handed me down off the chair. Damn evening gown. I snapped my fingers and Owen dropped the first edition copy of Newton's Principia he'd been about to tuck into his pocket. I turned from the doorway as we left.

"Next time, you check with me before you traffic in Brythonics. Remember – wise guys get lenited."

The rain was still misting down in the alley. I took a deep breath and smiled. You gotta love Celtic weather. Maxen shifted the euphonium case to his other hand and said, "So, we gonna go after the Talan?"

I shook my head. "Oh, we'll keep him on his toes, but I'm not ready to take him on just yet. It's one thing to catch him off guard, but on his home turf, he's still got a bit too much muscle."

CHAPTER 7–[Lord Evan do Collaureo, Kraken Herald] This chapter first appeared in the Kraken Letter of Comment, dated 3 October 1997, with the header note: "The following appeared on some sheets of parchment nailed to my front door. Make of it what you will."

It was Shanghai Pete's lady²², I think, who got the tip. In no time the minions' phone tree was lit up like it was Christmas. I picked up on my end and heard: "The guy from Bordure is on his way here." Click.

So what if it was my day off? This was too important. I tossed some coffee down my gullet, got dressed and headed downtown. All the way in I thought about what we might need to do. I'd heard the rumors, of course: this guy had tried to do an end run around the ap Morgan gang but had gotten tangled up, and he was bringing what remained of his case up to the Slug. There were conflicting reports, though, about just what had happened to the other participants in that little scene. It was up to us to make sure the whole thing stayed on the hush. The last thing we needed was another publicity flap, especially so soon after that botched hit job up in Thescorre²³.

I met Mama Crab²⁴ coming out of the subway station. We greeted each other and walked down the hill. Around the corner there it was, looming above the row-house facades that surrounded it: the Federal Bureau of Armomastics²⁵. Shanghai Pete²⁶ was already there, lounging outside, seemingly innocuous.

"The Black Leather Baroness²⁷ is taking the phones. Counting my dame there's four of us so far for action. Anyone hear from Harv²⁸?"

Mama Crab answered, "Won't be here. He's busy cleaning up the fallout from another operation."

"Too bad. We could have used some of his equipment as well as himself. I do expect Squid²⁹ to show up though, so we'll make do with five." As if on cue, Squid came around the corner of the building, calling out to us.

"I got his travel info. One of Harv's contacts will let us know when Dan arrives in town and how he's getting here. Do we have the rooms prepared?"

"Just finished with 'em," Pete's lady said on her way out to join us. "What's the coverage plan?"

"One at each corner, Mama Crab at the front door just to make sure. "All of a sudden Pete's radio crackled; he grabbed it off his belt and we leaned in to listen. "He's left in a cab. I'll tail him," we heard, followed by the cab's description. It was time to take up our posts.

²⁰ Best thing to do with it. This book is not recommended for use in name documentation.

²¹ Mistress Jaelle, Laurel and the Laurel Office. She works in Washington D.C.

²² Devora bat Shimshon, Pedro's fiancée. Most of the people mentioned in this story are Laurel's minions, 'the Feds'.

²³ The "botched hit job up in Thescorre" refers to the incident at the 1997 KWHS in Aethelmearc involving Jaelle, Rouland, Black Dragon, various minions, and some squirt guns. Ask us about this at KWHS if you don't know the tale. But if we tell you we might have to kill you.

²⁴ Alanna Volchevo Lesa, Partan Herald (Barony of Lochmere).

²⁵ Jaelle, of course, works mundanely for a firm whose initials are FBA.

²⁶ Pedro de Alcazar, at the time a Pursuivant at large; now Storvik Pursuivant.

²⁷ Meleri ferch Iasper ap Dafydd, at the time my deputy in the then Shire of Stierbach. Now we are a barony and I have turned over that particular tabard to her: she is now Stierbach Pursuivant.

²⁸ Herveus d'Ormonde, former Triton, at the time Golden Dolphin.

²⁹ Evan da Collaureo, then Kraken Herald. The author. Of course, that leaves open the question of "who's the narrator?" since he can't be. Here he'll betray his math/C.S. background: The identity of the narrator is left as an exercise for the reader. In other words, s/he ain't telling; he *told* you he found it nailed to his door! :-)

Not long after I spotted a likely cab coming up the avenue. It slowed as it went by the front of the office; then it pulled over and our man stepped out. He was heading for the back entrance, so I signaled Mama Crab to go through the building and head him off while the rest of us closed in on him from the outside. It worked like a charm; the guy was so wrapped up in his attempt at stealth he never noticed us until he was thirty feet inside and saw Mama Crab coming down the hall. He tried to sprint down a side corridor but Squid was quick on his feet and leg-tackled him. The next thing, Danny-boy is noticing the business ends of five pieces all pointed at him.

"And they *are* loaded; we won't make that mistake again," I growled. "Now get up and get moving, there's work to be done." We marched him down to the rooms, sat him in a small wooden chair and began.

"Now you know as well as I do that the Slug plays it straight. The one thing we don't want is media coverage. No leaks, no hysterics, just let the Agency do its job in peace. The ap Morgans and the Talan will keep this under wraps, but what about you? You gonna keep quiet about it? `Cos if this gets blabbed to the press, you'll be sorry you ever even saw a baldric with crossed trumpets."

Just then a new voice³⁰ entered the picture. "I don't think that threat'll be necessary." It was one of the new folks; sort of mousy, and looked like a college sophomore or younger. "I smuggled a copy of this tape out of the Talan's office. I think our friend here will be quite willing to lie low knowing the Slug has it." She threw it into a tape deck and hit Play. We heard most of the exchange between our man and the Talan, and then with Harpy, right up to the parting shot: "Wise guys get lenited." Daniel heard that and fainted.

We packed him back to Ansteorra quickly, while Pete's lady was busy abstracting the tape³¹ and the rest of the Myfanwy file. She then took the whole shebang straight to the Slug's office. Squid and I headed out of the FBA building into the steaming August heat looking for some food. A job well done; I just wish it hadn't been on my day off.

CHAPTER 8 THE LAST– [Mistress Jaelle of Armida, Laurel Queen of Arms–in the Sept 97 LoAR]
Myfanwy's name and device were registered.

The Slug, sitting in her chair in her office, sipped at her bottle of Jae juice³² and grinned evilly to herself as she read through the report on the Myfanwy case. She rang the bell and the duty-minion leapt to her side groveling at her feet. "Here, file this report! It is obvious that the master plan is working. If the top players in the onomastic action are kept busy duking it out, they won't have time to bother me!" As the minion hurried off to do the Slug's bidding, she grabbed the next file from the stack on her desk and started reviewing it, a red pen in her hand.

³⁰ Alina Silverthorne, sometimes known as "Mouse." Cornet or PE at large, former seneschal of Saint Johns Marsh.

³¹ Pete's lady does abstractions of government documents in her mundane job. She got a kick out of seeing the reference thereto in the story.

³² Diet Coke. We hope think.

Name Search Form

There are [other search forms](#) available. For help using this form, please refer to the [hints page](#).

Enter the exact name for which you are searching ->

Actions:

Results:

3 items matched name="Myfanwy ferch Eifion".

- [Myfanwy ferch Eifion](#)
 - This name was registered [in September of 1997 \(via Ansteorra\)](#).
Call me The Bit. I edit a rag here in the City of Arms. There are a hundred stories a month on this beat, and I get 'em all, thanks to an arrangement I have with The Slug.
 - The following device associated with this name was registered [in September of 1997 \(via Ansteorra\)](#):
Gules, an iris bendwise slipped and leaved between two Bowen knots argent.
I figured I'd slip the name in between two other Myfanwys where no one would read it. There was armory, too, but The Slug never sends pix. I had to reconstruct it from her blazon. When I did, I let out a low whistle. Nothing sells papers like knotty arms...
 - The following badge associated with this name was registered [in December of 2018 \(via Ansteorra\)](#):
Argent, a mushroom gules, cap spotted argent, within a serpent in annulo vorant its own tail vert.

End of Results

[Convert to complex search.](#)

config.web version 2021-10-18 (1:127+)

From Laurel Clerk: The Big Step

(The final chapter from the *Wise Guys Get Lenited* trilogy, a hard-boiled noir herald series.)

As they led me into the room, Lady Luck gave me one last hickey. Something went wrong with a rod, and guys were muttering and banging all over the platform. I looked around the room and spotted a reporter friend smoking his trademark Camel. Someone had a shred of pity and let me call him over.

"Whatcha doin' here, Dave? I thought your paper just had you doing movie reviews."

"Well, I never could resist a medieval spectacle. - Sorry to see ya go, man."

"Yeah, but it was a really fun ride, let me tell you. I had a blast while I was on top. But you know the real pity?" I paused to slow down, project, and enunciate so everyone could hear. "I was just the guy they fingered. The real players are getting away without notice."

The room went quiet, but I wasn't worried any more about the Organization giving a hit man a "blanket permission to conflict" with me. Sure, the Harpy was over by the wall, a wall that had never before seen a red strapless silk evening gown, but even *she* wasn't ballsy enough to try anything in front of these witnesses. I could rat out the Organization in public.

"I needed back office people pushing packets, like Hillary Rose Greenslade, Katerine Rowley, and Stefan li Rous - you know his legit front, the Florilegium. His moll, Alina Mitchell, was a demon for filing and pulling files. Rondinella le tyrolesa cooked for us."

I bulled on. "But Kathri, Cross Fleury ... she ran up from Houston every month. She was the real brains of the back room, keeping track of everything in her pretty head and cracking the whip on everyone. I was pretty much a front man for her there."

"On the electronic side, Elsbeth, the Clarion, she was a big help getting me started. And the one task that made my eyes glaze, marking up LoIs and LoCs for merging, 'Markup Maggie' did it fast and did it right. You know her as ... Margaret MacDubshithe." Dave's eyes went wide. "Yeah, the Pelican. But with the international warrant out on her now, I give her three years, tops."

I could have ratted out more, but the mechanics were done. The warden came over to help me up the stairs, up to the platform. The guy wearing the black hood fitted me with the hemp necktie. I looked down at the expectant eyes in the execution chamber. I was ready for the last Big Step.

THE END.