

DCL EPISODE 12

Her Majesty's Royal Narrative ...

The Queen was no typist, so she pecked and hunted the keyboard as an avid novice, stopping to think between hunts and pecks of how to unfold her diabolical plan for Mr. CedrosCM, muttering to herself, wishing she had one of those speak-easy computers that would type what one said.

No matter. This was fun.

She had made it all the way through the first line:

*CedrosCM, unable to defy the Queen's desire,
knocked eagerly and loudly at the Royal Bedchamber.*

Here the narrative stopped as she awaited the knock. She didn't really know how long it took for the narrative to take hold so she waited some more. The Queen's patience was legendary for its absence, and for this reason, it was no surprise that she pushed the Royal Button on the Royal Desk to summon her Royal Doorman. After three soft knocks, nothing eager about them, the door opened and Bentley the Doorman looked in, softly mouthing, "Yes, Ma'am?"

"Do you see CedrosCM anywhere about out there?"

"No Ma'am. Shall I mount a hunt?"

“Yes, please, and if he’s out there, bring him in at once.”

At last losing all vestiges of patience, she commanded her secretary through the Royal Intercom to get Sir Truffington on the line at once.

At once in this case proved to be twenty-three minutes and as many seconds, and the Queen’s temper was in full broil.

“Truff, when I call you I expect you to answer in the *now*. Do you know what ‘the now’ is Sir Truff? I don’t care what manner of wenchery was beguiling you. You take my call no matter what position you’re in. Now listen up. I’ve composed a bit of narrative regarding CedrosCM, but it has not come about. Why is that?”

The Queen listened, switching Royal ears as if she couldn’t believe what she was hearing.

“Well, plug me into the goddam All Go Rhythms or whatever they are and get me connected.”

Listening more, she exploded.

“I ruled against my own access? I don’t remember that at all. I won’t have it, Truff. Plug me in now or no more plug-ins for you, if you catch my drift. What do you mean it’s impossible? Only the winner has encrypted access? Listen, Truff, I want you to get together with Lord Brabazoom, and you two great minds figure out how to get me connected. That’s an order direct from your Queen, with a heads-off consequence if you don’t get me hooked up. Of course I mean to the Narrative Section, you fool! Get your mind out of the gutter, you twit. I want to narrate some special Royal Happenings to our subject CedrosCM. Do it, and do it before morning.”

Royal fumes are something to behold, and Tubs, the Royal feline, liked nothing better than his mistress in full rant. It meant there'd be plenty of human pelt to lay into with the old paw needles and oodles of the red stuff to sop up with the old choppers. Tubs smiled his best Cheshire grin at the Royal loftiness stomping about her chambers.

Truffington bestirs himself ...

“Now what is the old bag up to?” huffed Truffington, drawing buckets of indignation from the bituminous recesses of his voluminous lungs.

Casting his fishing-pole legs over the rippling satin bedcovers, he tilted himself upward and toward the computer terminal station in the green damask-papered alcove off the bedroom.

The sultry red light on the computer case slowly winked its stand-by frequency, like a street-walker coming on to drunken sailors. Truff pressed a concealed button behind the corner of a heavy gilt portrait frame, and the painting sprung outward to expose a hardened-steel door with a digital-keypad lock.

Sir Truffington didn't use this strongbox very often, so he consulted the small chit of paper hidden behind the painting, tucked between the frame and the canvas. He read the numbers and punched the buttons on the keypad.

The steel door opened to reveal the contents of the box: a small circuit-board mounted on a bare metal chassis, from whose ports dangled several color-coded wires. Carefully withdrawing the odd device, he attached the cables to their corresponding ports on the computer and flipped a simple toggle switch atop the mysterious assemblage.

At once his computer chirped and a message flashed onto the screen—a menacing alert in spiky Germanic script that blinked: “Warning: Highest Security Encryption.”

Carefully typing a complex 24-character code, also inscribed on the chit of paper, Truffington massaged the software program until it allowed for a slight emendation. In

the space designated “DCL Authorized User Only,” which currently read “CedrosCM,” he deleted the entire name, then typed in the top-secret code name for Her Majesty: “Boodles_Toodles.” And then the secret Royal Password: “TubsyWoo.”

Pausing first to hack more tar from his air passages, he then pressed the Enter button.

A series of buzzes and beeps immediately ensued, reminiscent of the old electronic “handshakes” from the obsolete dial-up days of the early Internet.

At last a computer voice merrily informed him that his authorization update was complete and the system was ready for narrative input.

Truffington slipped into his satin smoking jacket and opened the liquor cabinet against the far wall. Pouring himself a generosity of Lagavulin, he settled back into the Louis XVI wingback chair, lifted the telephone handset and speed-dialed Her Majesty.

After two rings he heard a click and a voice on the other end.

“Well?” said Her Majesty.

“You’re in,” said Truffington.

And they rang off.

Back at the Palace, Tubs watched with a gimbal eye as the Queen settled down at the Royal Computer Desk, stretched her knuckles, rubbed her hands, and let her fingers hover over the keyboard. Closing her eyes for a few moments, she looked for all the world like she was asleep and dreaming. Then she opened wide her eyes, and with a demonic leer attacked the keys.

“Now it’s your turn, Mr. CedrosCM,” she cackled.

Satisfied at last, Tubs fell asleep.

Thus had begun the narration of CedrosCM's demise. The Queen was appeased, and Truff awaited the regal arrival of the Royal Trollop.

Zane's bubble bath ...

Nurse Crossworthy's primary caregiving duties for her wealthy Arab employer, Abdul-Fattah el-Hashem—"the Crusher"—consisted in thoroughly bathing him several times a week. The bathtub in which these ritualistic ablutions took place was oval-shaped, carved out of an enormous, single block of onyx, polished to a mirror-finish, ten feet long, and adorned with gold-plated fixtures. How the contractors had managed to install the immense basin in the 12th-floor penthouse remained a mystery to all who had ever seen it.

For Nurse Crossworthy's cleansing efforts to be truly effective, it was only natural that she should enter the water with the *sheikh*, which is what he liked to be called. Every square inch of the *sheikh's* plump body required a gentle rubbing, sometimes repeatedly, as certain surface areas tended to change in volume more than others.

In truth, this was a dream occupation for Nurse Crossworthy. So long as she did not offend the *sheikh*, her salary of one thousand pounds sterling per week, for three hours' work on staggered days, was guaranteed as long as he was alive—a goal to which she was firmly committed. The job left her plenty of leisure time, plus spending money for her personal indulgences—stylish hats, expensive lotions, soaps and unguents, and quantities of the finest French cheesecake. The only danger to this ideal life was her penchant for betting on dog races, a habit which drove her credit card balances through periodic-but-wild fluctuations, as Arthur Compton had found out.

As luck—or better yet, the narrative thrust—would have it, it happened to be her

day off when Zane Sharp rang the buzzer to her flat in his vengeful quest to find and strangle Arthur Compton. And since there were no dog races scheduled at the local track that day, Nurse Crossworthy had all the time in the world.

When Sharp first saw Miss Crossworthy at the open door of her flat, armed with the pink towel and the sponge, he pulled up short, like a lame mule. He was a suspicious man by nature, and well-schooled in hardship; but he was also sharp, like his name, in a crafty sort of way. In effect, the nurse-towel-sponge vision before him activated a switch in his brain, and he instantly shifted his posture from murderous outrage and spiky suspicion to one of oily slickness and beady-eyed appraisal.

“Uh, yeah, uh, like ah said, I must be about six-four, six-five, you know, and ah sure could use a good cleanin’ and reamin’, like we say back home.”

“Well, you’ve certainly come to the right place then, haven’t you?”

“Yes, ma’am,” said Sharp, in his most pious and courteous choir-boy tones, wooden-paddled into existence during his childhood.

Ten minutes later Zane Sharp was up to his neck in fragrant soap bubbles, as Nurse Crossworthy’s hands expertly slipped back and forth across his body, finding every field and fissure, prominence and crown, exerting pressure wherever necessary.

“Ohhh, mama,” moaned Zane. “You sure do know how to clean an ol’ boy up, doncha?”

“Well now, Mr. Sharp, I feel you’ve raised a good point ... here.” Nurse Crossworthy, schooled in biofeedback techniques from the wily old *sheikh*, also possessed a gift for subtle flirtation, outwardly concealed by her proper English

demeanor. The combination of biofeedback and flirtation enabled her to spur both the *sheikh* and Zane Sharp alike to feats of which they previously thought themselves incapable.

It was at one of these inspiring moments, just as Nurse Crossworthy was reaching into the thick suds for a fresh grip, when she heard a metallic tickling of the entry lockset. Then the latch gave way and the door to her flat swung open. After some initial scuffling sounds and the crackling of paper and plastic bags, there followed the rat-tat-tat percussion of high heels striking the oak floor between entry and kitchen. Confused at first, Nurse Crossworthy assumed it was her sister stopping by for a surprise visit. Engrossed in administering to Mr. Sharp's needs, she had forgotten all about Arthur Compton, the beast who threw her into the dumpster and stole her purse.

"Janice? Is that you?"

Silence.

"Janice? Make yourself at home, honey, I'll just be a minute."

More silence.

A whisper emanated from the foamy tub.

"Who the hay'el's that?"

"Shhhhh, it's probably my sister." Then calling out again, "Janice, honey, if that's you, this is *not funny!*"

Before she could muster any more indignation, however, the bathroom door slammed open, the knob hitting the wall so hard it bashed a crater in the plaster wall.

"Eeeeekkkkk!" shrieked Nurse Crossworthy, as the looming figure of Arthur

Compton slowly rat-tatted toward her, seething in his usual state of rage.

Softening the shock of Compton's menacing presence, however, was the fact that he had selected a rather tasteful outfit from Nurse Crossworthy's closet as the "disguise" for his outing that day: Today he had chosen a well-cut turquoise-linen suit with padded shoulders and white lapels. For accessories, he picked the black alligator-skin handbag with mother-of-pearl snaps—his favorite, by the way—as well as the hand-stitched white velvet gloves and a stunning, combination white-bowler-style-hat-with-veil, the veil so fine as to be nearly invisible.

From the day he had first gained entry to the flat, Compton had also spent considerable time going through Nurse Crossworthy's cosmetics closet, testing, making notes, learning about the layered look required for a proper woman's face—foundations, highlights, blushes, mascara, lipstick, accents, etc. And considering that he was the former CEO of Reticular Medicinals, more accustomed to firing entire floors of people and dismantling and shipping factories overseas than applying blush, Arthur really had done a superb and convincing job on his well-shaved face. You see, "Bulldog" Compton was nothing if not a quick study.

And, as with a lady's make-up, so with the humid, soapy, lubricious scene he beheld. It only took one glance at Nurse Crossworthy, kneeling beside the tub with her hand in the water, and at Zane Sharp sunken in the suds with his knees sticking out like bent saplings—a bony scarecrow of a hill-billy if Compton had ever seen one—to send Compton still deeper into his rage.

"What the fuck is this?" he squeaked, not having yet slipped out of his feminine-

princess-disguise-persona voice. Quickly recovering his equilibrium, he repeated the challenge in a deeper, more masculine, bulldog-like register: “What the fuck is this?”

At that moment, Nurse Crossworthy experienced a near-epiphany. It consisted of an unusual high-frequency excitation, super-sonic and bat-like, coupled with a slower, sub-sonic shudder of underlying desire. On one level she was frightened; but on another level she was more deeply aroused than ever. And it all started when Compton first crashed in on her and her lovely Zane, interrupting their bath, and she was overtaken by a sudden *frisson*, triggered by the gender-confusion-energy Compton brought into the small hot bathroom. “*And he looks so beautiful, wearing my very own turquoise suit and high heels with alligator purse!*” she thought to herself.

The good nurse stammered for a moment, then said in her most professional voice, “What can I do for you, my good ... man?”