

TALES OF THE CRYPT

A collection of short stories and poems inspired by an empty crypt in the Ballston Spa Village Cemetery and the late Eliza Hoffman Walsh, whose body was once entombed therein and now isn't.

The Directors of the Ballston Spa Cemetery Association, Inc.

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PREFACE

The following works were submitted in response to a challenge made by the Ballston Spa Cemetery Association. As a resort for those seeking health in the early 1800s, Ballston Spa did not have a cemetery. It was bad for business. The Baptists began burying congregants by their church. After they moved their place of worship closer to the cemetery, the problem was solved.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Poor, Pitiful Me

In the dark, those that wander,
I can't help but ponder.
Of those that bide,
in the dark they hide,
waiting on the one,
so they can have some fun.
Here lies poor Eliza Hoffman,
the one with the short lifespan.
She just disappeared,
and she should be feared.
For how would it be to feel,
as though you were no big deal.
Now she schemes,
and so it seems,
She wants all to pay,
till their last day.

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Eliza, Where Are You?

Eliza Walsh should lie in a vault

But instead nothing is there.

Who or what could have taken her?

And who even would dare?

An empty box, lid pushed to the side,

And clothing inside the dark tomb.

How did this woman disappear?

Someone? Something? But whom?

There is a hole in the back of the vault.

Could that be a clue?

What about the briefcase

That is sitting there too?

This may forever remain a mystery

Unless you know some more.

But maybe this story is just

Good ole Ballston Spa lore

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"The Grave"

Do not stand on my grave and weep.

I am the mystery that your grandparents could not solve.

My grave is the haunted house that is empty.

My body may be gone but my spirit prances around this town,

Like a little girl dancing around in a brand new dress.

You could never kill my soul.

I think I killed my mother.

She died in my name.

My sister was only ten

when she was put in the ground next to our mom.

My whole family is resting in their grave together

Except me.

My soul is made for the freedom.

I will forever run free.

-Eliza Hoffman

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Seduction

Vaporous ether floating
within, without,
above, below,
free to pass through stone,
metal doors and solid lids.

Dress dinner party
of vacuous spirits
light the inside
luminous air
of departed souls.

Living, yet he sees
each day, each night
upon visitation,

light that floats

free from

solid walls.

Leave me alone.

Leave me be

he pleads. Each night

they come,

haunting his waking

and sleeping.

Move her he thinks.

Take her away.

Drown her,

the river, the lake.

Weigh her down

with stones.

But they come
visiting her, still
in the tomb,
gown waiting,
soul at rest eternally,
not his.

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Disapproval

Mr. Walsh now lies here.

Money was all he held dear.

Around the crypt he roams,
all the while he moans.

For a new life he would trade,
all his money he would pay.

A chance to fix his great mistakes,
for this his heart aches.

However, his crazy wife
disapproved his life.

She formed a plan,

and hired a hit man,
to end her husband and his addiction.
To be freed is her conviction.
The night of the deed,
she cried to him of his greed.
He left after they fought,
to never see him again she thought,
Although outside was his friend
who knew of Walsh's end.
His friend he tried to protect,
instead all lives were wreaked.
The friends will die
and there's a missing bride.

So listen closely on this night,
just before there is light.
You shall hear all them cry,
right before the sunrise.
The wife seeking revenge,
the friend to avenge,
and the husband wanting another shot,
trying to prevent the deadly plot.

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Ghostly figures appear in the dead of night

Haunting the quiet cemetery.

Moving slowly, smoothly

Not making a noise

With an intentional path they stride

Stiffly in posture,

Towards the enigmatic vault.

A deliberate plan

To dine with the inhabitant.

These daily trips are a mystery

But occur ceaselessly.

Approaching the vault they can be seen

A few minutes past two each night.

Silently they pass through

The solid stone walls

Bearing the carving "E. L. Walsh".

The supernatural disappear into the chamber

Not to be seen again til morrow.

No sound arises from the grave

Or any surrounding it.

The cemetery is noiseless.

The night remains uninterrupted

Until the door swings open suddenly

Revealing a sight that has remained unseen

Since burial.

Stepping inside one can see

The decomposing structure,

The corpse stolen

From her grave.

Only a wrinkled linen scrap and iron rod

Left behind.

The wife of a gambler

Plucked from her eternal slumber

Taking all her secrets with her

© Molly Shea 2017



“Empty”

Among the faded stones

And the worn away words

Within the grass

Beyond the trees

And the iron wrought gate

Rests something more than a tombstone

But holds less than one

For tombstones have dirt underneath them

And coffins

And bodies

The skeletons of the dead

Still hold the face of their life

But this something more

That holds something less

Has concrete

And dirt

And a coffin

And that's it

The strong wood is broken

And the velvet inside is exposed

To the dirt and the bugs and the death and the ghosts

The soft red is now encrusted with brown

The soft glint of the light is gone

Even though dusted rays shine through the door

And the cracks

And the bent rusted bars

Sometimes there are sounds in the crypt

Like the soft wail of a child

Calling for her mother

Buried beyond the wall in which it is enclosed

But there is no one there

Save for the rats and the bugs

But they do not make a sound

© Grace Costa 2017



The Warmth of the Cold

It is so cold.

I am woken by warm hands, yet I don't remember falling asleep.

Their fingertips burn me, my skin screaming.

Something is wrong;

I am cold, too cold,

the ice inside me is too content, happily wrapped around my heart.

It is so cold.

I cannot move.

My lungs fill with panic, my mind with fear.

I am being pulled, dragged.

My eyes will not open and my arms will not obey.

I cannot remember before.

I am tired, and I am so cold.

The unfamiliar hands are not gentle

Tugging my clothes, pulling my hair.

They search, and search, and search.

I am unable to resist, to cry out.

Finally, they stop. They whisper and groan.

The touch is gone, and I miss the warmth.

I am carried away, away from my family.

I just want to rest, I scream. It is silent.

The smell of fire, wakes my other senses.

I swear I can almost move.

Then, suddenly, I am warm all over.

Heat licks my body, and I am warm.

©Sophia Russo 2017

Restless Whispers

Hush-sh-sh-sh, hush-sh-sh, hush-sh-sh-sh

A peaceful wind gently rustles through the grass,

Bringing whispers on the blades.

Darkness encompasses the tall stones

Resting on the smaller stones.

Shadows restless waiting for dust linger,

Baiting the spirits.

Eliza wakes and roams, reaching for Edward,

Bathing in the moonlight,

Roaming in the grounds.

Her white dress drapes over the blades of grass

Leading spectators away,

Hiding from the wandering eyes of infrared light and

flickering shutters,

Pouting and wailing, while searching

Searching for peace

Longing for eternity

Gazing upon the waters, drenched in reflections

Of trees and sky, and the brilliant moon.

Darkness casts the light as she moves along the tips of

the water.

Desires to rest

Desires for eternal peace

Giveth O' Lord eternal peace

Eternal harmony

Eternal spirituality

Sh-sh-sh-sh

© Amy Shannon 2017

Mrs. Walsh's New Home

When I was a new principal of the Ballston Spa High School in the late 1970s, I occasionally received calls from residents living on Ballston Ave. complaining about the behavior of some students who walked home at dismissal time. They chiefly complained about the noise and sometimes the language the students used as they strolled down the street. Although I knew that teenagers had a lot of pent up energy to release at the end of a school day, I sympathized with the residents and talked to the kids about being good citizens and respecting our neighbors.

One woman, a Mrs. Walsh, got to be a regular caller. She said she lived on Ballston Ave. and that by the time the crowd got to her place they had forgotten anything I might have said. She told me she often stayed awake all night and napped in the afternoon. And although she lived in a substantial dwelling, the talking and laughing

awoke her each afternoon. Often when she called, I was unavailable but she never left a telephone number, preferring instead to call numerous times until I was able to speak with her.

As the calls became more numerous, I felt I had to do something to help her, so I decided to walk down Ballston Ave. at dismissal time with the students and stop in to speak with Mrs. Walsh. Needless to say, all was pretty quiet on Ballston Ave. that afternoon, but when I arrived at the address she had given, I was surprised to see that it was the Ballston Spa Village Cemetery. Thinking that I had copied down the wrong address, I returned to my office only to learn that Mrs. Walsh called once again and left a message. She said that she had lost all patience with my promises of relief and decided to move in with a close friend who lived in a quitter neighborhood. I never heard from her again so I presume she is at rest.

Have you looked in Section F?
peaceful area.

It seems a very

©Paul Perreault 2017

Premonition

Eliza Hoffman was a young eighteen-year old girl who was curious and adventurous. Her mother died in childbirth. Her mom's sister, Sarah Burtis LaDew and her husband John C.F. LaDew took care of Eliza when her mom died. Their house was located in the village of Ballston Spa. She had lived there all her life. She lived mostly a normal life, but one night changed everything.

After school, on the day September 15th, 1870, Eliza would regret her biggest decision. She had just finished school and had nothing to do. Her friends asked her if she wanted to go to the Ballston Spa cemetery with them. After thinking about it for a minute she agreed to go with them. It was 7:00 PM, and her doorbell rang. It was her friends wearing casual clothing. They were entering fall so it got cooler at night but on this night it was cooler than usual. Her friends wanted to do something scary at the cemetery, something like spawning a ghost or seeing something creepy. As soon as they walked in the cemetery gate, Eliza wasn't getting a very good vibe. She remembered this was where her mother was buried in this

cemetery, so she decided to check it out. She found it and looked at it while her friends were fooling around and not really caring about the fact that Eliza's Mom passed away all that time. In the corner of her eye she saw a bright light shine down on the grave as if it wanted her to walk towards it and see it. She was curious so she ended up walking over. As she was walking over, her friends yelled to her saying "Where are you going?" Eliza didn't want to cause attention so she simply replied that she was just going to the bathroom. When Eliza walked over to the grave tomb, she was completely disturbed instantly. There was a grave tomb that read Eliza Hoffman. There was also a giant coffin that was put into the ground

because someone dug a hole in the ground. There was a shovel next to the spot it was dug in, so she thought it was recent. Once again, in the corner of her eye she saw a man who was tall and skinny dressed in all black looking at her about 100 yards away. At this point Eliza wanted to crawl out of her skin. She screamed a piercing sound and it echoed across the cemetery leaving her friends as still as statues looking at her, wondering what was happening. The man started walking closer, she couldn't tell if he had a weapon in his hand but she started running away. She didn't know what to think about. She didn't care about her friends or what happened to them. She just wanted to get home safely. She was paranoid about

the man following her. She would always look back every couple minutes to see if he was following her.

It has been a week since the incident happened and she hasn't left her room to go to school. She told her aunt and uncle she was sick with strep throat so that she didn't have to go to school and see her friends. She doesn't know how and why that man knew who she was or how he got her information. All she knew is that her friends maybe had something to do with this.

Ballston Spa Missing Corpse Theory

Eliza Walsh, born Eliza Hoffman, lived an eventful and luxurious life. When she passed away, we are lead to believe that she was buried in the E.L. Walsh family crypt. One of only three vaults in the Ballston Spa Cemetery, it is surrounded by curiosity and questions. Legend has it that certain people used to dine...yes, dine...in the vault. For what purpose? While this is a legend, one mysterious fact remains clear, the box that once presumably contained Eliza's coffin was opened and her coffin (and Eliza herself) are gone! All that remain are a metal bar, perhaps used to pry open the box, and a piece of material resting on the side of the open box. Where did Eliza go? Did someone take her? But, why?

Eliza's husband, Edward, was tied into the Saratoga gambling scene and was a definite high-roller. Since high-rollers place large bets, this means they can both win and

loose huge amounts of money in short periods of time. Being the wife of a prominent high-roller, Eliza was likely lavished with expensive gifts: furs, dresses and jewels. Perhaps the jewels are the answer to this mystery.

Eliza would likely have been buried with the most sentimental and valuable of her jewels. Perhaps she had rings on every finger! Chances are, the people who came to “dine” in this family crypt wanted more than that. Perhaps they were looking for something of value..something they could steal from the dead. Maybe Edward won a massive bet and because of that someone else lost all of that money that Edward won. Maybe that person came to the crypt to steal back in jewels what he lost in his money! Or, the opposite could have happened. Perhaps Edward lost a huge bet and had to borrow money and when the time came to repay the money he borrowed he was unable to. In that case, maybe Eliza and her jewels were taken as a form of payment.

We may never know what happened to Eliza or happened inside of that crypt. Eliza's soul may never rest in peace until the truth is told...or maybe, just maybe.....someday Eliza's Ghost will return to tell us!

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ELIZA'S STORY

C. F
THE STORY WAS TOLD IN 1870

G. G. C
OF A FAMILY IN BALLSTON SPA

F
THEY FOUND A CRYPT THAT WAS EMPTY

G. C
SOMETHING WENT TOO FAR

CHORUS:

C. F
ELIZA WASN'T PLAYING ANY GAMES

G. C
EDWARD KEPT GAMBLING AND PUT HER TO SHAME

C. F. G
POOR ELIZA WAS HER NAME POOR ELIZA

C
WHAT HAPPEN TO ELIZA

C. F
ELIZA MET A MERCHANT SHE FELL IN LOVE

G. C
OLD EDWARD WORRIED WHEN PUSH COME TO SHOVE

F. G. C
SO LET'S NOT PARTAKE OF THE GAMBLERS GRUDGE

CHORUS

C. F
ELIZA WASN'T PLAYING ANY GAMES

G. C

EDWARD KEPT GAMBLING AND PUT HER TO SHAME

C. F. G
POOR ELIZA WAS HER NAME POOR ELIZA

C
WHAT HAPPENED TO ELIZA

C. F. G. C
THE MERCHANT WOULD COME NIGHTLY TO DINE WITH HIS LOVE

C. F. G. C
THERE ON THE FLOOR LIE AN IRON BAR IN THE MIDDLE OF THE MUD

C. F. G. C
WHAT HAPPENED TO ELIZA 'S TRUE LOVE

CHORUS

C. F
ELIZA WASN'T PLAYING ANY GAMES

G. F
EDWARD KEPT GAMBLING AND PUT HER TO SHAME

C. F. G. C
POOR ELIZA WAS HER NAME POOR ELIZA WHAT HAPPENED TO ELIZA

C. F. C
HAPPY EVER AFTER

Herbert, H. B. Massey was a Ballston Spa local. Massey opened the Herbert House Hotel on June 19, 1886 at #68 Milton Ave (#62 in 1886). This three story building was a working class hotel, however, it was extremely clean and well appointed. The hotel and entire block burned March 1, 1901. In 1895 Herbert is “not guilty” in charge of liquor sales.

1887 “Ballston Blaze” indicated in The Saratogian, a 5th attempt made to burn the closed San Souci Hotel.

1897 Fred Young shot himself in a bathroom at the St. Charles for reasons unknown.

The 1900 NY state census reports that Edward Walsh had a wife, Maggie age 48 to his 82. In

1905, Mr. Walsh has given his age as 87, Maggie remains age 48. No children.

In 1910 Massey’s Restaurant & Bowling opened.

The Hawley Home for Children was established in 1904 through 1965 by Bostwick Hawley. It was located at #64-66 Ludlow Street. In 1891, the family members were charged by the facility that preceded the Hawley Home, \$1.50 per week.

H.B. Massey died on April 23, 1917. He was buried at St. Mary’s Cemetery in Ballston Spa.

BURNING SECRETS

A secret, by definition, is “Not to be known or seen by others”. Secrets come in all shapes and sizes. A secret can be the saucer of milk Lottie, the house maid, slips to the calico cat who winds her long tail around the porch spindle when Mrs. Walsh is away from home. Or perhaps the unmannerly comments Mr. Walsh whispers to the well-heeled ladies who linger to see the damask furniture and polished décor at Mr. Morrissey’s new casino. A secret could include young Mr. Massey's clandestine trips to bring fruit and sweets to the thin orphaned children at the Hawley Home. Perhaps, a secret is a hushed story that Mrs. Walsh's husband has a weakness for gambling and liquor.

The Walshes were prominent, wealthy, and beautiful. They owned a residence in New York City but preferred the charming village of Ballston Spa during the summer months. As a renowned family, Mr. and Mrs. Walsh grew accustomed to being the subject of local gossip. Eliza had lost her parents, a

young sister and most recently her brother, John. Eliza was childless and it seemed that her husband was slipping away as well.

Sometimes a secret is a dark and precarious thing and one would think it highly unlikely for someone as mousey and dull as E. J. Gilbourne, a local undertaker and furniture store owner in Ballston Spa, to possess. People assume that an undertaker is accustomed to carrying the secrets of others—what they died wearing, what trinket lay pinned in their silk petticoat or burning letter in their pocket. The biggest problem with a secret is, of course, keeping it and Mr. Gilbourne had a sizable one.

H. B. Massey, Herbert to his father, was a handsome young man with an old soul and a brilliant mind. Black hair and blue-eyed, Massey, the coarse and charming criminal navigated the underground and the back alley with ease and grace. Samuel O. Massey taught his son Herbert everything he knew about the hotel business: tidiness, food service, illegal liquor sales, tax evasion and arson. Herbert flourished and understood that his success often may stem from the loss and misfortune of others.

Sometimes philanthropy was deemed necessary and the Sr. Massey donated funds to entities reaping the largest reward, such as the Saint James Episcopal Church on Main Street, Milton Center. A generous gift would buy land, build the church foundation and a rosy relationship with the pious citizens and legitimize the name "Massey". Unfortunately, working with his father in the small hotel of Milton Center couldn't hold an ambitious man like young Herbert, for he had a taste for that which was just out of reach. In the late summer of 1869 that which was unobtainable included the fame his idol, "Old Smoke" Morrissey, had achieved. Morrissey, having conquered the fighting world, entertained the glamorous people of Saratoga Springs. John Morrissey was a clever man. He discovered ways to separate the resources from the patron with horse racing by day and high stakes gambling by night. Morrissey dazzled his patrons with statues, brass and beautifully carved wood in his famous Saratoga casino, The Club House. Morrissey was the people's horseman, a class act and he served as a role model to H.B.

H.B. worked for Mr. Walsh during these years primarily in his smoky pool halls but also assisting him in any capacity he required. H.B. could be seen accompanying him on the railways or delivering whiskey. Walsh was a demanding man, calculating and brusque. He found relationships cumbersome. Massey was optimistic, eager to advance.

Like wealth and notoriety, Mrs. Eliza Walsh was another one of those things known to him but just out of reach. Herbert found excuses to call on the Walsh residence, particularly when Mr. Walsh was working in New York. During one such visit, wind and hail overtook the grand home and servants scattered in every direction fearing the deluge. Running from the rain with skirts in hand, laughing and chasing her dog, Maggie, Eliza cast off her proper countenance and experienced exuberant joy. Massey scooped up the muddy, squirming terrier pup and tucked her under his arm. He dried her with his handkerchief and presented her like a prize. Eliza clapped her hands, her bright eyes and lovely mouth smiled and H. B. was caught by a storm in every sense. Elusive no longer, locked eyes ultimately led to a surreptitious engagement. Ten

miles away, a disheveled E.L. Walsh sat alone in his tidy, dank office watching the rain drops chase each other down the pane. His large hand cupped a tumbler of whiskey. Closing his eyes, he remembered his father's angry face and mocking words, his mother's disappointed eyes. He finished the burning libation and hurled the glass at the silent gaping mouth of the fireplace.

Eliza Walsh struggled to fabricate a plausible excuse to go to town and the servants exchanged worried glances. Doctor Baker had attended to Mrs. Walsh some days before and she appeared more distant and weak each day. Steadying herself she smoothed her hair and chose a charming silk bonnet of green. Feigning a late morning breakfast with her husband, Mrs. Walsh requested the driver, a small professional man who strived for excellence and excelled at loyalty, to deliver her to the St. Charles. The St. Charles was a middle-class hotel owned by the assistant H.B. Massey's uncle and the driver, Mr. Harris, felt ill at ease. Arriving at the hotel, Eliza accepted the assistance, smiled weakly and sent the driver on for another errand. Stepping away from the carriage provided a reprieve from the pain of jostling

and the imploring eyes of her servants. Stubbornly, Eliza trudged uphill toward the cemetery stopping often, crying softly much of the way. It was a cool and cloudy September morning and a risky outing for a woman physically ill with the "problems of women" to embark on. Concealing a white rose under her shawl, Eliza carefully stepped around the stones of the dead. Kneeling at a small fresh grave and impersonal stone, Eliza Walsh lay the rose for the lost angel feeling deep remorse and anguish. The bells of St. Mary's tolled and a few crows scattered. Fever and pain gripped Eliza as she made her way back toward town to find her carriage and driver. Eliza admonished herself for her lack of gratitude--H.B. had confidentially arranged for the tiny one's burial and she was tremendously indebted.

E. J. Gilbourne delighted in fires, precisely those he set. Careful notations were made in his pinched hand writing about these curiosities. Dates, locations, losses and sometimes names or special notations were included on this paper trophy he held close at all times, nearly. Fate can be a peculiar thing and timing crucial. How can it otherwise be

explained how such a personal possession could be carelessly discarded in a moment of distraction on an ordinary day and happened upon by the devil who could decipher its meaning. Watching from a few yards away, H. B. delighted in the frustration and panic on the mime's face as the puny undertaker realized his mistake, repeatedly checking his pockets and taking off his hat, cursing his error. Astute people pay attention and Massey gleaned that this seemingly winged paper held great value to the flustered man in the tweed coat. He ducked into his Uncle Arthur's tailor shop to examine the document. There were lists and dates and numbers--a hideous register! Some recent fires Herbert recognized; the materials he found familiar. He wasn't opposed to the occasional torch, sometimes events needed to transpire, he reasoned. Samuel O. taught his son the incendiary skills he possessed. The Milton Hotel blaze was not a perfect fire as they nearly killed Herbert's sleeping sister. However, the competition was eliminated and his father's new hotel opened days later. "Ironic", the newspaper said. The piece of paper the frantic man lost indicated a bowling alley owned by E.L. Walsh

(how rich!) was burned Sept. 1, 1851, no insurance. Five unsuccessful attempts to burn the San Souci, now vacant, with "rags, wood and kerosene" "Floor too wet". The list included notations, "Burned quickly, too windy", "Loss of life unavoidable, family known to be excellent customers".

A person of experience recognizes that the true purpose of an unexpected opportunity often takes time to discern, therefore, Herbert Massey placed the fate of the undertaker in his wallet for safekeeping.

Eliza had her own secrets. After abruptly discontinuing the affair with H.B. Massey, Eliza considered ingesting Pennyroyal, Rue and Tansy tea to end the potentially scandalous pregnancy. Ultimately, it was not the pernicious beverage but Eliza's husband's violent hands that cast the die and altered many lives. Eliza survived only a few weeks after the premature birth. The Walsh's physician, Dr. Baker, understood the private matters of women -- rules and social norms mattered little to him. "Bright's disease" would be listed as the official cause of death. Eliza Walsh was dead at the age of thirty-eight unaware of Massey's true feelings.

E. L. Walsh arrived late for the rainy funeral, his speech was slurred and his eyes were bloodshot. Pushing open the heavy, painted door worn from many hands of heavy grief, the weight just right for the burdens he and others carried into Mr. E. J. Gilbourne's Funeral Home, H.B. Massey entered silently. With a mix of trepidation and curiosity, Mr. Gilbourne stood but did not move toward his guest. Without introduction, H.B. held up a worn, folded piece of paper. The glint of recognition, the eyes widening just for an instant, Herbert watched the synapses of the tired, trapped man connect. Sinking into a plush red chintz chair typically reserved for those contemplating great loss, Guilbourne considered his precarious position. Mr. Massey would request a favor. Mrs. Walsh, a Catholic woman, however misguided, was to be buried in the Catholic Cemetery with her (their) child. The flustered funeral director retorted with scathing words; a refusal, citing propriety and duty, logistics. H. B. Massey, a petty criminal and fellow arsonist, was also a grieving father and lover, and a man accustomed to using violent means to achieve a desired outcome.

The slightly yellowed, treasure or "inventory and register" would arrive by post some weeks later addressed to its owner-- E.J.G., no return address. The arsonist, undertaker (and furniture salesman) would cautiously open the letter, humming to himself, a habit he employed when he was quite nervous. The logistics of properly weighting the bodiless casket was left to Fred Young, a sleazy and unskilled middle-aged man with a serious drinking problem and a great deal of debt. The only skill required in this instance was strength and the entire matter was settled. When Mr. Massey arrived for his precious package at the late hour of half past midnight, Mr. Gilbourne did not turn in his chair but acknowledged the sound of the door and soft steps on the rich carpet with a tilt of his head. Mr. Gilbourne promised himself that he would not set any future fires, knowing that he was already fingering the matches in his pocket.

The first weak rays of autumn sun filtered through the trees onto the paper shades of the sleepy citizens of Ballston Spa, casting macabre shadows. In town, the clang of a fire alarm disrupted any peace of the morning. A mentally and physically

depleted man brushed back a lock of hair and patted down the last of the earth on a freshly dug grave, H.B. traced his fingers over a recently whittled cross. A bottle of expensive whiskey lay unopened, a shovel and pick lay nearby. Anger and grief were the only witnesses.

Years later, before the looters pried open the empty casket of Eliza Walsh, Mr. Gilbourne would burn his own furniture store, collecting a tidy sum of \$4,000.00. "Old Smoke" would return to the Adelphi and breathe his last ragged breath. Still later it would be reported that Dr. Clarence Baker falsely certified to the Board of Health, patient Victoria Connors, died of consumption rather than abortion, ending Dr. Baker's covenant with his desperate patients. On the same day, renowned undertaker E.J. Guilbourne, would be "found dead in a water tank, unable to withdraw himself". Later still H. B. Massey would lose his own hotel to fire on a cold March morning but go on to purchase "Pleasure Grove", his own pool hall, then a restaurant and bowling alley. Overwhelmed by guilt for his role in casket tinkering, Mr. Young, would take his own life in a St. Charles Hotel bathroom. E. L. Walsh, or "Charlie" or "Ed",

depending on the acquaintance, would be noticed picnicking with a rotating lists of fawning socialites and pretty house maids just outside the lovely, empty limestone crypt to convene with a woman he never knew. Each of these carrying their own burning secrets.

© Susan Hansen 2017



Gambler's Vengeance

Under the sweltering sun, three men labored at their task. All were used to the heavy work that was a stonemason's lot in life. They were strong: strong backs, strong hands, strong opinions. Today should be the last day of the unwelcome project they worked on. The burial vault was almost complete. George Dunn, the leader of the crew, was over by the wagon, in the shade, chiseling the final touches on the face stone that would be placed over the door to the vault: "1870". Lying in the back of the wagon was the other carved stone, which said, simply "E. L. Walsh". The old mule was still in her traces, head low and eyes closed. She knew from long experience that as long as the hammers were ringing on stone, she wasn't going anywhere. The wagon was parked in the deep shade of a huge maple in the corner of the cemetery. It would keep her cool for the rest of the afternoon.

The two stonemasons in the sun were less content. They were right in the direct, relentless sunshine. All that was left to do was hang the heavy metal door on the vault and attach the two carved stones to the top ledge. All week they had labored in the freak heat spell that was torturing the town in the brutal summer of 1870. The anger that seethed just below the surface in each of the men didn't help. Hammering the chisels to create the holes that would hold the large hasp hinges was a way to release some of their tension. Both understood that this project, the ornate burial vault, represented something to their father. Something that was eating away at him that the two men were not privy to.

Roy and Ike Dunn didn't have the option of voicing their dissatisfaction or asking for answers. George, the man carving in the shade, was their father, the owner and operator of the quarry where the stone for this vault came from. Rowland Hollow Quarry, in the nearby town of the same name, was well known for the fine quality of the limestone and the skill of the men who quarried it. Barn

foundations, houses, grave stones and burial vaults made of Rowland Hollow Limestone were spread far and wide. The quarry had been in the family for generations. Roy and Ike grew up knowing they would be carrying on the tradition after their father George was no longer able to manage the business.

Sometimes, that day seemed closer than the sons liked to admit. George had recently done a lot of work for Mr. Walsh, whose name he had carved into the limestone so recently. And they knew Walsh was not the most respectable character in the area. He owned gambling houses in both New York City and Saratoga and came by his fortune through the financial losses of his clientele. George had been doing a lot of work for Walsh lately but the sons had not seen much money recorded in the books. That was part of the source of their anger.

Walsh had many wealthy customers come to his gambling houses. If they maintained control of their gaming, they could survive some losses. But there were a lot of common folk that visited the gambling

houses too. Some were desperate people hoping to win enough money with their meager savings to pay a debt or repair a wagon or buy medicine for a sick child. These weren't the fancy well-dressed socialites that walked through the front doors of the grand building. No, these gamblers weren't welcome in the restaurants, salons or parlors. They went in the side entrance and were restricted to the casino floor only.

That was the door George Dunn started walking through on a regular basis about a year ago. At first, he was simply curious about the gambling house. On his initial visit, he lost about \$20 but had the sense to stop before he lost more. A few days later, though, George wanted to try again. When he received the final payment for a job, he took \$20 and went into Saratoga to try and recoup his losses. Soon, he was a regular visitor. Sometimes he would win, and the excitement brought him back. More often, he would lose. Gradually, George bet away most of his savings, the money in the sugar bowl, and a good portion of each payment he received from customers. George was spending more time at

the gambling house and less at the quarry, managing his business. Ike and Roy thought their father was giving them more rein to let them demonstrate their readiness for taking over. They had no idea of the real reason for their father's absence.

The day came when George was gambling on credit from the house, and losing. He fell deeper and deeper into debt to E.L. Walsh, the owner of the casino. When Walsh planned to build an addition to the gambling house, George made a deal to provide the stone as payment of his debt. But when the stone was delivered, Walsh claimed it would only cover half the debt. George thought he had his figures right but delivered more stone two days later. Walsh gave him a receipt claiming the debt was down to just under \$300. George knew he was in no position to argue, especially since he was still frequenting the casino on credit. Every night when he lost a little more, George became further embittered about the bad turn his life was taking. And he became angry at Walsh who he had begun to see as a greedy robber making money off the

backs of the struggling locals. Like many gamers, he couldn't see that his gambling problem was his alone. If George stayed out of the gambling house, Walsh couldn't take his money.

The problem began to affect all aspects of George's life. His business, once a thriving enterprise, was showing the signs of poor management. George was absent more and more and when he did show up he was angry and short-tempered. Ike and Roy weren't prepared to take over but were forced to manage the business as best they could. Jobs were not getting done in a timely manner and sales were down. And much of the money that did come in went right to the gambling house. No one knew the demons George was fighting.

And then Eliza Walsh became very ill and wasn't expected to live out the summer. Mr. Walsh came to George demanding an extravagant tomb for his young wife made from the very highest quality stone that could be found in the quarry. The design was complex, with a long arched roof and a heavy steel

door, a hundred words of praise to be carved in an ornate script, and two shelves to support coffins: one shelf for Eliza, and presumably one for E.L. himself. And the time frame was impossibly short. Walsh told George that completion of the tomb would wipe out all his debt. And then, in almost the same breath, Walsh declared that George was no longer welcome in his gambling house. His staff was under orders not to allow George in ever again, even if he had a fistful of dollars. After stating his business, Walsh turned on his heel and returned to his fine carriage for the drive back to Saratoga.

George should have been relieved at this opportunity to end his spiral downward into gamblers hell. But instead, he was irate. How dare Walsh make such demands. Demand a tomb far more expensive than the value of his debt. Demand that he never step foot in the casino again. Demand the finest stone and the shortest time frame. Resentfully, he stomped around the office, slamming drawers and even hitting the wall with his fist. His sons quickly found an excuse to get out of the office until their

father calmed down. They left as George sat down once again with the impossible contract in front of him. He pored over every sentence, every word.

And then, a deep calm fell over him. George had a plan. He would build the tomb for Eliza and he would build it just the way Walsh stated in the contract. He and his sons would do their very best to complete the job in the short amount of time allotted. He would never, ever, go to the gambling house and let Walsh steal his money again. Finally, he would take his revenge on Walsh in his completion of the task he was ordered to do.

For the next week, George, his two sons, and several hired men labored where the finest limestone was found. This stone was harder to remove and in the farthest part of the quarry from the road so it took a long time to transport it to the cutting yard. Once there, George himself did the final cutting and fitting of the stones and numbered them for easy assembly at the cemetery. The plans provided by Walsh were very detailed in matters of the design of

the tomb itself. And they clearly stated what words were supposed to be carved and that they were to be in script. But, the plans did not specify where on the tomb the words should appear, or how large they should be. George painstakingly made two rows of tiny, curvy lines that were not at all legible as script. He'd tell Walsh those were the loving phrases he had been told to carve. Those lines were carved on one of the stone slabs on the inside of the tomb, where no one but Eliza would ever see them. George was secretly delighted in his own treachery, feeling like he was besting Walsh at his own game. The quarry master knew there would be repercussions, never a good thing from a powerful man like Walsh. But George didn't care. He knew his debt to the casino was more than paid off and he was going to get the best of Walsh if it was the last thing he did.

Yes, the vault would have the long arched roof specified in the contract. But it would be made of the regular limestone, not the high quality, smooth stone specified. After all, it would be impossible to

see the roof so Walsh would never know. And it would be too dim to tell from the inside. The walls of the vault were constructed cheaply too. The contract said “foot-thick walls” without specifying any details. George and his sons were skilled enough to construct the walls so they gave the appearance of being a solid foot thick by using thin double walls filled with rubble.

The final, and possibly the most devious treachery of all involved the shelves that were to support the coffins. The contract described the shelves as “feminine and dainty, like Eliza.” And so these were constructed of fairly thin slabs of stone. George hoped they were fragile enough that when Eliza’s coffin was placed upon it, the shelf would break. George pictured it in his mind with glee, the mourners gathered outside the tomb, the bereaved husband crying as the coffin is placed on the shelf by the pall bearers, the sudden shocked screams as the shelf breaks, and Eliza’s coffin tumbles to the floor. George hoped it would break open and spill the body out onto the stone floor at Walsh’s feet.

He hoped it would give Walsh nightmares for the rest of his life or maybe even drive him mad!

These were George's thoughts as he completed the final touches on Eliza's tomb on that sweltering day. As Ike and Roy hung the steel doors on their heavy hasp hinges, George finished attaching the two face stones he had just finished carving, "E.L. Walsh" on one and "1870" on the other. As he climbed off the ladder, a young boy in dirty overalls came running across the cemetery.

"Mr. Dunn, Mr. Dunn", he was shouting. "Miss Eliza died yesterday morning and the funeral procession is coming down the road now. Mr. Walsh wanted me to warn you that her tomb better be ready 'cuz she's on her way!"

George thanked the boy and tossed him a coin or two from his pocket. His revenge was about to be realized. Quickly, the quarry master and his sons gathered their tools and threw them into the wagon. They brushed away as much of the stone debris as

they could. Then they led the mule with the wagon to the back of the cemetery and waited to see Mr. Walsh's reaction when he first espied the tomb.

They didn't have long to wait. The large group of family and mourners was in sight. The funeral carriage had black wreaths hung on either side and was drawn by a pair of black horses. The driver deftly drove right up to the front of the tomb. Immediately, eight men stepped up and carefully lifted the coffin off the carriage. They stepped into the doorway of the tomb and stood there while the preacher made some final comments. The rich, beautiful people in the crowd dabbed their eyes and cried quietly. E.L. Walsh stared at the newly completed tomb. The clean, smooth limestone glowed in the sun. He walked all around, smiling with pleasure at the beauty of it. But then he realized the carved sentiments were missing. Where was the script declaring endless love for his beautiful darling Eliza? The loving words describing her gentleness and grace? As Walsh looked again, he saw George Dunn standing off in the distance. Despite the fact that he

was there for his wife's funeral, Walsh strode over to the quarry master and asked where the script was. George calmly explained it was inside, where Eliza could see it. He gently took Walsh's arm and led him to the tomb. They stepped inside, brushing past the men still holding the coffin.

“There are your loving words, in fancy script just as you ordered”, George said slyly, pointing to the carved curvy lines on the wall. Walsh was furious. Despite the solemnity of the occasion he pulled his arm back preparing to swing at George. But just then, the pall bearers lifted the coffin onto the shelf and slid it into place.

It happened exactly as George had imagined it. The frail shelf cracked and the supporting leg shifted violently. The heavy coffin fell to the floor. The mourners outside gasped in unison as the box sprang open and Eliza tumbled out. Walsh's face was twisted in horror as he witnessed the dreadful scene. He turned to George and took a swing at the stonemason. George went down immediately and

Walsh fell upon him, pummeling George into unconsciousness. Finally, someone pulled Walsh up and dragged him out the door.

“You’ll pay for this, Dunn”, Walsh screamed. He ran over to the carriage and pulled out a large, ornate padlock. Then he ran to the tomb, slammed the door and slipped the lock over the hasp with a solid *click*. George was still inside.

“You can rot in there for all I care.” Walsh continued yelling as he was helped into the carriage and driven off. Shocked onlookers hurried from the cemetery. Ike and Roy watched from afar, out of sight.

Inside, George slowly came to. He knew immediately where he was. When his eyes adjusted to the dimness he saw Eliza’s body awkwardly splayed on the floor, the broken coffin beside her. A shaft of light shone through the small hole high on the rear wall, and directly illuminated her face. The staring eyes, the wide-open jaw, the ruined visage of

the dead were all George could focus on. A scream escaped from his throat. Piercing the darkness with the frightening sound, he screamed and screamed until he was hoarse and could scream no more. As the light faded, he tried to push the dead woman back into the coffin, to cover the awful face, but he couldn't do it. In his terror he was too inept.

All night long George screamed and thrashed and tried to rid himself of the gruesome vision. The thought that he was locked in a tomb with a dead body was more than he could bear. He pounded the walls and pulled his hair and alternately screamed and moaned. By midnight he had lost all semblance of sanity. By sunrise he was dead.

What he wished would happen to Walsh had been his fate instead.

Epilogue

Hiding in the back of the cemetery, Ike and Roy watched as Walsh locked their father in the tomb and drove off. They waited until the last of the mourners was gone. But as they walked up to the tomb, they heard George's ungodly scream of terror. The two sons waited hours for the terrible wails to stop. Once it was quiet, late in the night, they removed the door from its hinge and went inside. There was Eliza on the floor and beside her lay their lifeless father. Enraged, they quickly picked him up and brought him to the wagon. In a last-second thought, they also took Eliza's body and placed it in the wagon before replacing the locked door on the hinges. The next day at home, Ike and Roy dug two graves. One was later marked with an elaborate stone of Rowland Hollow limestone. The other never received a marker of any kind.

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What's In A Name

October 27, 1913

Next to the glasses, a folded copy of that day's *Journal*. Next to the *Journal*, a stack of banknotes. Next to the notes, a lit candle. He had placed each with care and leaned back in his chair, remembering something in the foggiest of ways, from the earliest of days. *It had been long ago*. Few had the amount of money it would take to buy the type of satisfaction that came in those printed words, adding insult to such grave injury.

"Sir, is everything alright?"

"Ah! What is it, Rosie?"

"Your face, sir."

"Have you never seen a grin?" he bared his yellowed stumps of teeth.

"Ah, yes, sir. You've received a few more letters since this morning."

"Yes, just leave them. And leave me."

"Yes, sir. Supper in your chambers, sir?"

"Leave me!"

"Yes, sir." She left out the only door to the room, yet he did not see her when she had first disturbed him from his musings. He watched her go. She had left the letters atop a ledger. *Too many ledgers*. He thumbed through them, all addressed to different personas.

“What’s in a name?” he thought aloud and laughed again, this time descending into a coughing fit. He pulled a napkin from his pocket, stained pink with use, and tried to muffle the sound.

“Bah!” He threw the napkin down on his desk and went to the window behind him, coughing all the while.

“Sir!” Rosie burst through the door again.

“What the Devil do you want?” he turned toward her with a gasp.

“I heard you from the hall and thought you might be sickly. Please, let me get the window for you.”

He watched her shuffle all the way to the window and once she opened it, he stood, staring out and down onto the street. His cough had subsided for the moment. Rosie poked her head around the window frame.

“Sir... What troubles you?”

“The girl.”

Rosie looked again.

“There-there’s no one, sir. A cold autumn has turned the strollers indoors.”

“Yes... I suppose you’re right.”

“She was never really there at all. Perhaps a ghost.”

He turned and grabbed her before she could shrink away.

“What did you say?”

She opened her mouth and shook her head.

“What did you say?” he repeated, shaking her violently.

“Ah! Never there! A ghost!”

He pushed her to the ground.

“Never there? Ghosts are a fool’s creation. They don’t exist! The only true monsters are man and his master, the coin!” Then, he shouted unintelligibly at her and she screamed in retaliation, scrambled to her feet, and ran from the room.

After she left, the shouting was overtaken by coughing and the coughing was overtaken by wheezing , dry and harsh.

He stumbled toward his desk and reached for his napkin, his letters, his ledger, anything. Falling backward, he pulled them to the floor with him, tipping the candle over onto the crisp, dry banknotes as he fell, slaying the monster.

October 1, 1868

“Apologies for the lateness. Now, Mr. Morrissey, I have the absolute pleasure of introducing you to my young friend, Miss *Hoffman*. She is the daughter of my old friend, John Hoffman, the famous physician who served and studied with William Beaumont during the Battle of Platts-”

“Yeah, yeah, Walsh, Ye’ve said much about Miss *Hoffman*, yes. All good things,” she felt his gaze crawl over

her. “‘n’ now I can see fer meself. Pretty ‘n’ fair. The pleasure is mine.”

Neither his gaze nor his words felt new, perhaps speaking to his character. Truly, everything felt false. *Ah, blazes, what was my line again?*

She was silent a moment. And then, “My, my, Mr. Morrissey. Your reputation as a bare-knuckle champion precedes you. Do tell the story of how you received such an alias as *Old Smoke!*”

At her remark, she felt Mr. Walsh’s hand on her arm.

“Miss Hoffman, let us not forget-”

“Well, if ye insist,” Morrissey acquiesced, appearing to revel in the opportunity. *Politicians*. “I can see it jus’ like yesterday. There I was,” he began, “Surrounded. I ‘ad been in the shootin’ gallery o’ the St. James. ‘Twas the dead o’ win’er, ‘n’ tha’s why the coal stove was a’burnin’. But I’ll get to tha’ later. I’d made me way down to The City for a bit o’ this ‘n’ tha’, durin’ which time I took up comp’ny wi’ the lovely Katey Ridgely.

“Now, this big ol’ fella’ called Tom McCann didn’ like tha’ too much. ‘His girl,’ he called ‘er. Well, ‘e walked into the gallery out o’ the snow, saw me, ‘n’ came a’ me a’swingin’...”

She smiled and nodded and vocalized at all of the right places but soon her mind wandered over the crowd. It was full of men shinning around but with no proper place to go, just being loud and raucous in general. The gambling hall at 233 Matilda was on the northern end of

the street where the neighbors weren't quite so close. *And a good thing it was.* It was like a factory but with fewer women. Come to think of it, she was the only woman in the place.

“An’ tha’s when I beat ‘im senseless, the skin o’ me back a’smokin’ ‘n’ a’smolderin’ from the coals!” Morrissey finished his story with a proud look.

“Yes, yes, very good, Mr. Morrissey,” Mr. Walsh patronized. “Now, where is Mr. Hoffman?”

“Oh, we can find him later,” Eliza cut in. “Mr. Morrissey, how did you raise such a fine establishment?”

Mr. Walsh threw his hands up in frustration and walked off, presumably to find Mr. Hoffman.

“Fine? Miss, ye do me too kin’ly. This ol’ house won’ be much to look at once we’ve got the Gamin’ House up and runnin’.”

“Gaming House?” she was incredulous.

“Tha’s the name o’ it,” he answered uncertainly. “You don’ like the name?”

“You should call it the Club House. It sounds... sweeter.”

“Ah, wha’s in a name, anyway?”

“Apparently quite a bit!” A young man intruded on their conversation. Eliza turned to him and was instantly taken aback by how similar he looked to her own image. Pale, light blue eyes, of a similar age and height, and even a heart-shaped face like hers. *Walsh said he had searched*

long hours for me. Now I see why. Most striking were the fiery freckles and hair. *Apparently to match his personality.*

“John, me *bes*’ customer!” Morrissey sneered. “Did ol’ Walsh find ye?”

“Who?” John’s eyes narrowed. Eliza couldn’t discern if his reaction was purely from suspicion or if it was just the drink clouding his mind.

“Ah, never ye min’. Wha’s all this business ‘bout names?”

He squinted at Morrissey a moment more, and then swayed to Eliza.

“Names must matter a bit for a dame to get into your gaming house, Morrissey.”

“You’re right, Mr. Hoffman.” Walsh had returned. Eliza felt as though her eyes were watching the shuttle of a power loom as these men came and went. “Names, indeed, are important. And this *dame*’s name happens to be Eliza Hoffman.”

The other Hoffman’s face puzzled at the words for a moment and his eyelids shuttered, perhaps trying to blink himself sober. Eventually, he went whiter than seemed possible.

“No,” he frowned and shook his head. “No. No. My sister’s dead. She died with mom.”

“Oh, we’ve a legal consultant who can provide all of the necessary papers. It’s unfortunate your father never told you. Busy man. Never home. And you, always being

shipped off to aunty and uncle's. But now that he's gone..." Walsh walked around to face John. The latter's stance was less than friendly, and his fists had curled into bundles. "I'd suggested to him the idea of introducing you to your sister, and reuniting all of you. There's no denying your relation. Look at the two of you. Tragic, really. Perhaps this would have happened sooner had you not got yourself publicly disowned for being a drunkard. I suppose your father's money will go to-

That, apparently, was the last thread.

Hoffman's fist moved like a spring and made solid contact with Walsh's jaw, sending him tumbling over backward onto a table, cards flying. Eliza wasn't sure if even *Old Smoke* would have been able to block that swing but he was sure able to retaliate. Despite being a large man, he moved swiftly and was soon behind Hoffman, restraining him with arms like heavy chains.

Walsh struggled to get up amidst a fight that had broken out at the table he had fallen onto. He was sporting a split lip and, with his hands guarding his face, he looked as though he was hoping to avoid becoming more bloodied as he walked back.

"Sir," Walsh's index finger was in Hoffman's face, "I'll have you jailed for your outburst. This is no way to treat a friend of your father." And then he turned to Morrissey. Eliza thought she saw something else... *A smile?* "What type of riffraff do you let into your establishments, Morrissey?"

Shortly afterward a young constable from the City of Saratoga arrived. His name was Davis, or Dennis, or something to that effect. He took a statement from Morrissey, Walsh, Hoffman, and herself. Finally, when he asked for her name, she remembered her line.

“My name is Eliza Hoffman...”

October 30, 1871

“I can’t believe it,” he said to the headstones around him. Mrs. Eliza Hoffman Walsh had been dead a year. John Hoffman stood before the vault, the date etched in stone erasing any doubt of her death and the name etched below it enraging him beyond belief.

“E. L. Walsh,” he spat, and then took a drink from the bottle in his hand. He remembered that smug face the day of her funeral. He and Morrissey both. He felt an angry fire growing inside of him.

“They robbed me,” he said slowly, as he stumbled toward the door, “of her, and of my money.” He wasn’t even sure what she had died of. The day they put her in that stone tomb he was watching from the tree line. He had never gotten to say a proper goodbye.

He wrenched on the bar that held the door fast but it would not budge. In frustration, he kicked the door and, feeling like his toes were broken, he hobbled off back toward the trees. It was there, a year ago, that Walsh and Morrissey walked by him along the street, plotting out what

to do with his father's money. He had hid behind the fence to listen.

One hundred and ninety thousand, after the appropriate parties have been paid.

Yer sure tha's enough?

Quite. All thanks to the Hoffmans.

"All thanks to the Hoffmans!" Morrissey and Walsh had gone on to open the Saratoga Club House, using his father's money, no doubt, that passed to Walsh after Eliza died. Hoffman collapsed beneath an old, grizzled tree next to the cemetery fence and tried to remember how he had gotten there that night. He couldn't. He tried to smash his empty bottle on the ground. He couldn't. He tried to remember if his father's estate had been valued at one hundred and ninety, or two hundred thousand. He couldn't. He tried to remember what his sister's face looked like. He couldn't.

It was cold for October and the wind blew mightily. A particularly powerful gust shook free a large branch from the tree above. As it came crashing down, Hoffman cursed and rolled to dodge it. Instead, the limb landed on the fence, knocking free one of the iron cross bars from the wooden frame.

Wait a minute...

Before Hoffman could finish counting his blessings, he was thanking his lucky stars.

He hefted the bar upward, assessing its strength. He looked at the vault. A plan was forming. Making his way

over to the vault, he slipped the bar between it and the other bar, the one that held the door fast, and pulled.

The barricade gave way easily under the strength of a lever. Hoffman stood back as the door swung open slowly. He took a deep breath. And then another. Before long, he realized he had not exhaled but had just been standing, staring, holding in his air. He let go and stepped into the vault.

It was small on the inside and smelled stale but in the way a cellar might, not in the way he'd expect a house of the dead to smell. The air had a dreamlike quality. A wooden crate sat against the far wall, shelves on either side of the interior empty from all but dust. *It might not be so bad, being dead. It would be quiet. Maybe too quiet.*

As if he was under the influence of something other than alcohol, Hoffman stepped forward and pried the lid off of the wooden crate, to see the other Hoffman. Surprisingly, it was unfastened. But that wasn't the only surprise.

Empty!

He dropped the lid, dropped his bar, and leaned forward, slowly, almost involuntarily, into the box. A sensation of falling to his death overtook him, and he shouted and stumbled backward. His coat caught in a gap in the crate and peeled off of him as he fell into the shelves on the wall. The fabric hung there limply and seemed to call to him to crawl into the box and take his sister's place. If he felt as though he were in a dream

before, he was almost certain of it now. *No, not a dream - a nightmare!*

He tried to calm his breathing, and his pounding heart but it was no use. Though his view was limited, he could see no one through the vault opening. Not a soul. He rubbed his eyes, rubbed them so hard they began to hurt.

“No,” he frowned and shook his head. “No. No. My sister’s dead. She died a year ago.” He repeated his mantra as he backed out of the vault. A tombstone caught his feet and he fell to the ground with a deadened thud. “No. No. My sister’s - Ten thousand! Walsh! Morrissey! The Club House!” he cut himself off, shouting at the night. But the night wasn’t the only one listening.

“What’s going on here?!”

Hoffman ignored the sound and kept shouting until the owner of the voice began shaking him by the shoulders as he lay on the ground. It was a young constable.

“How’d you find me?” Hoffman asked, quickly, in a paranoid voice. He sat up and looked around, unsure of where he was once more.

“I was walking my beat when I heard you raving like a madman! What’s all this then?” The constable pointed to the open vault door.

“I don’t believe it, I don’t believe it. Ten. Thousand. Missing!” Hoffman shouted at the constable.

“If you don’t keep quiet, I’ll have to jail you. Now, let’s get you to a church, perhaps they can offer you some charity and take you in for the evening.” The constable

kept his eyes on Hoffman as he closed and sealed the vault. This only served to make Hoffman sink back to the ground.

“I can’t believe it. I *can’t!*” He shouted into the night sky.

October 27, 1913

Chief Inspector Daniels approached the scene to find the house nigh unrecognizable. *Shame.* It appeared as though the second floor was completely gutted; the jetty and gables above were black like steel. Before the once-white fence, now covered in grey debris, two members of the Saratoga Bucket Brigade were consoling a plump, sobbing servant. One of the volunteers held a leather water bucket, the other clutched a burned and tattered copy of the day’s *Journal* in his hand. *Curious.*

“Boys,” he greeted. They nodded in return, and walked off toward the brigade’s motor truck. “Ma’am.”

The woman nodded. This was always the hardest part. It helped that his deputies had briefed him on the incident before he arrived. Hoffman. The name rang a bell.

“I’m sorry for your loss, ma’am.” Truth be told, there were few words of praise to be said for the old man. As a youth, he was said to have lost his father’s fortune gambling. Naturally, coming into money in his advancing years had turned him into a miser.

“Yes, thank you, sir. Mr. Hoffman...” she struggled with the verb, “*was not the kindest of men to serve.*”

“How do you mean?”

“Mr. Hoffman was quite vengeful and calculating. And he was always more concerned with numbers than he was with people. He had made many successful business deals in his life. He always got letters... to different addressees. He had many interests in the Stock Exchange, down in the City.”

“Different addressees?”

“Yes,” she smiled woefully. “He would say, ‘what does a name matter?’ or something to that effect.”

“What’s in a name?” Daniels said quietly, but not too quietly.

“Maybe.”

The wind picked up and a piece of burned paper floated down toward them from the second story. Daniels snatched it out of the air and gave it a cursory glance.

“Can you tell me about his business deals?”

“I’m afraid not, sir. That part of his life was before my time, when he was married.”

“Mr. Hoffman was married?”

“He was. They met just after his sister died, or so he told me. I never met her, though. I’ve seen portraits. She was a pretty thing. Oddly enough, looked just like Mr. Hoffman, if you can imagine that.”

“I think I can,” he said quietly, looking back to the shred of newspaper in his hand. *There’s something here...*
“What became of Mrs. Hoffman?”

The servant woman shifted as she stood.

“What is it?”

“Well, to be honest, Inspector, I can’t say as though I know.” But he could tell there was more. Daniels was not sure why, but something about the names and the phrases seemed familiar.

“There must be stories?”

“There always are.”

“Sometimes the truth is more fantastic.”

The servant woman looked away and nodded.

“Some say that she died and Hoffman kept her body in his sitting room. But that’s not true. I’d’ve seen it. Others said that she stole his money and ran off to the tropics. Mayhaps. But by all accounts,” she looked up at Daniels, “she vanished like a ghost.”

“Hmm.” He didn’t buy it. “Well, thank you, ma’am. I’ll send a deputy to follow up.” Daniels stepped away and lit his pipe. He drew on it and in the light of a nearby streetlamp read the shred of paper he had caught.

“ED. WALSH” RETIRED GAMBLER, NOW IN WANT IN NEW YORK... suffering with paralysis at the age of 88 years... intimate friend of John Morrissey... His first wife was... a sister of John Hoffman, also well known in Saratoga green table circles. She died about thirty years ago and her remains lie in a vault that Mr. Walsh had erected in the Ballston Spa Village Cemetery...”

The pieces fell into place. He thought of the drunk man at the Walsh vault all those years ago, raving and ranting about Morrissey’s new gaming house and a

missing ten thousand dollars. He thought of Morrissey's old gaming house, and the fight that broke out there. And then, he thought of the young woman there. Eliza Hoffman.

“She vanished like a ghost,” he said aloud to himself, and looked up into the night sky.

Snyder 2017

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CAUGHT IN BETWEEN

The structure of her bones reminded him of the Chrysler building. The gentle slope of her shoulders contrasted against the sharp angles of her shoulder blades and her collar bones were angel's wings soaring beneath her neck. He loved the architecture of her and in that dress with the shimmying fringe and thin straps he could admire it perfectly. Her head turned and kohl lined eyes looked up at him. They sparkled and he could only think of the sun through stained glass windows, cascading down to grace those who marveled at its wonders. "I don't know how I let you talk me into this," he said.

"Carl," she replied, "I can talk you into anything with my mouth sewn shut." She shrugged a shawl up and over her shoulders to fight off the chill and he blinked. His gaze turned to the cemetery, row upon row of neat headstones like children waiting in line at school. Her fingertips brushed over one, cool and solid, reassuring.

“So,” Carl said when she stopped and he stepped beside her. “We’re here, but I don’t see your gal. Looks like she swindled you.”

“No,” she replied, “She’s here.” There was certainty in her voice, solid and confident. She was brazen, as if the whole of her being were carved from marble. Her eyes were fixed on a point in the shadows and Carl followed it. There in the dark he could make out the effervescent fabric of an ensemble before he could see the rest of the person there.

“Ruby?”

“That would be me,” his companion replied to the figure in the dark.

“Oh good.” The tone of voice took away some of the mystery of the woman who came from behind the mausoleum. She lacked the structural integrity of Ruby, the sturdy frame. She was softer, more delicate. “I’m Claire. You wanted to do a seance?” she asked. Her voice was pleasant and Carl thought of a school teacher, warm and inviting. She was so out of place in the graveyard. It seemed that Claire thought so too as she awkwardly stepped over

the rocks, her ankles wobbling. Carl worried she would sprain one, then he'd be responsible for carrying her out. He had nothing to worry about though, for despite her unsteadiness, she made it comfortably to a spot of flat ground before the tomb. A blanket had been folded on the rock. She shook it out before laying it down on the ground.

Claire slowly lowered herself, her knees folding to the side, collapsing in such a way as to preserve her modesty. Ruby was quick to join her, long legs graceful as they bent and descended to the ground. He was the reluctant third point of this triangle. He crossed his legs beneath him and Ruby rewarded him with a small smile, the cupid's bow of her mouth curving upwards. Those smiles were rare, bestowed upon him during moments when he was weak to provide him with succor and adhere him to her cause.

Claire took three candles from her bag, putting one between each of them. She was about to light them with a pack of matches when Ruby reached out and stayed her hand. "We'll only need one."

“But usually when I perform a. . . .”

“We don’t need you to perform anything,” Ruby interrupted, “I just need you as a conduit.”

Claire’s body stiffened and her face froze. “If you want me to do this, then we’re going to do it my way.”

“Like I said.” Ruby’s voice was sharp, cutting through the other woman as if she were made out of brie. “I don’t want you to do anything. I just need you here. You specifically.”

“I don’t--”

“Exactly. You don’t do anything unless I tell you. Don’t play dumb with me Claire,” Ruby’s eyes narrowed. “You know why you’re here. One candle will do.”

Claire looked as if she had been slapped, but she didn’t say anything more. Carl wondered how genuine of a medium she was. He’d heard the stories of the scams, the women spewing forth cheesecloth, claiming it was ectoplasm. They had levitating tables - but they only rose when a pedal was pushed. Was Claire like them, coming prepared with a bag of tricks? If so, perhaps Ruby was planning only

to embarrass her. She'd expose her for a fraud and send her home, chasing after her with mocking laughter. He wasn't sure if he was comfortable being a bystander to that slaughter.

Claire lit one of the candles with a match before handing it over to Ruby, who took it from her and placed it in the center of where they sat. Carl watched it flicker, casting their shadows dancing over the ground. The candle was the puppet master, and their dark outlines were the performers. In the flicker of its light, he could just see the name on the outside of the tomb.

E.L.WALSH

He didn't know what the draw was. She hadn't said, only that it had to be here. It had to be this tomb, this place, and this hour. Ruby had insisted. She had demanded it with her eyes and the curve of her mouth. What she had wanted hadn't mattered at the time, but now he was curious.

“Take my hand.”

Carl's gaze dropped down from the name, snapped to attention as he looked over to her. One of her hands was extended towards him. Usually gloved, it was currently bare. He was shocked by the nakedness of it. Her nails were dark burgundy, a contrast to her pale flesh. She snapped her fingers and he realized he had been staring at them. Fumbling, he took her hand in his own and she sighed, almost as if she were exasperated by the stupor she was guilty of putting him in.

Claire reached for his other hand and he took it without a word. She seemed reticent to speak. Perhaps she too was dumbstruck by the pure force of Ruby, the command she took of a situation that was supposed to be Claire's to control.

"Do you have a schtick you like to do before a ghost comes?" Ruby asked, "Something to get you in the mood?"

"Yes," Claire said, "It's not for me though. It's for my customers. It makes them feel like they're getting the full experience. If I don't

throw it in, they complain. Even when the spirit shows and I deliver.”

“Don’t bother with it,” Ruby said, “I don’t need a full experience.”

Claire took a deep breath, steadying herself. There was a pause and then she spoke. Her voice was crisp. It wasn’t as strong as Ruby’s, but there was a certain sternness to it.

“Say her name,” Claire commanded, “It will wake her.”

Carl was quietly watching the conversation between the two women and he could feel a tension in the air, settling about his shoulders heavy and full.

“Eliza,” Ruby said the name in a whisper, as if it were a holy summons.

Claire nodded and Carl’s eyes flickered up to the name on the tomb. Was the ‘E’ for this Eliza? A shudder rolled down his spine. Claire closed her eyes and her shoulders relaxed. When he looked over at Ruby, he saw her eyes were closed as well. He supposed he should follow suit.

It was unnerving to sit in the dark, the only sounds the chirping of the crickets and the rustling of the wind as it toyed with the remaining leaves clinging to the branches. Their dry husks curled in on themselves, the maple leaves like little hands trying to grasp onto the daylight before it slipped away into autumn twilight and the dark of night. Carl found himself listening to something more, a noise beyond the sounds of nature settling into the eventual slumber of winter. At first, he couldn't hear anything that struck him as odd, and then someone's breathing grew progressively louder. It was deep, and it sounded as if it came from someone who hadn't breathed in a while. They were hungry for air, drawing in until their lungs were full.

A rush of wind, cold and sharp pushed past him and he was left breathless and gasping. The temperature had dropped around him and Carl tried to withdraw his hands and bring them closer to himself for warmth but he couldn't. He was held fast between Ruby and Claire, their triangle cemented before the tomb with a name etched in of a family he didn't know. His teeth

began to chatter and he tried to will himself to feel warmer. It seemed to be working, for he felt warmth on the back of his neck. It caressed his skin and then dropped away. He was cold once more. Carl tried to think of the warmth of that brief flash of comfort but it didn't return.

Instead, he heard whispering and the sensation of someone breathing uncomfortably close to him. The whispers were inaudible but they were right next to his ear. He found himself trying to listen and with time it all became clear. It was a lullaby from a far off time. It was soothing and he relaxed. He felt as though his mother were alive again, wrapping him in a blanket. She was singing to him, her voice sweet as she tucked him into bed. Carl could feel her leaning in, taking him in her arms, embracing him.

Suddenly, he was being dragged to his feet. The embrace turned forceful and the whispers became a clear voice, solid and urgent. "Get up," it said, "Get up!" Carl opened his eyes. Their triangle was broken and there was a dark shadow looming in what had been the center of it. It was reaching out to him, tendrils of black

smoke creeping to his nose, his mouth, drifting away from his ears as he was pulled away from it. He jerked back, clambering to his feet, and he knocked over the person who had been pulling him.

“What--what is that?” he stammered, turning to find Claire on the ground. He helped her to her feet and the shadow turned to regard Ruby.

“We need to go,” Claire said flatly, “There is no time to explain. We have to leave before she goes for you again.”

“Who?” Carl said.

“Eliza,” Claire said, “Now go!”

“What about Ruby?” Carl asked but Claire had already turned and was running away from them. He was torn. He wanted to save Ruby, this divine shimmering goddess who sipped martinis like lightning. She held a beat with her hips as if she were born for it. Ruby was what men dreamed to have on their arm as the jazz cut through the air in a bar. She was perfect. He headed towards her but Claire had returned, tugging on his arm. Carl shook her off, looking down at her with a mild hatred.

“It’s either her or you,” she said, “It needs one, a sacrifice. What will it be?”

This brought Carl to pause. He was mesmerized by Ruby, her hypnosis could kill a man - but only to a figurative point. Self-preservation was key, especially when the thing he’d be giving himself to was terrifying enough to shake him to his core.

Now he ran with Claire but not before he caught one last glimpse of the shadow, reaching for Ruby, who was shaking her head in fear. He wanted to stop and save her but Claire had a firm hold of his hand. She was already running, faster than he had thought she could.

An hour later, he was sitting on Claire’s couch in the small back room, the majority of her apartment taken up by the parlor room where she saw her clients and conjured spirits. He had a glass of scotch in hand or what had been a glass of scotch a few moments ago. Now it was just a glass. Claire poured him another and she sat beside him with some of her own.

“What just happened?” he asked, “Where’s Ruby? We just left her there. We should go back and save her.”

“It’s too late for that now.”

“What do you mean?” he asked.

“That thing needed a sacrifice -- a body,” Claire said, “I shouldn’t have let her go that far. I shouldn’t have let her have her way in the beginning.”

“What was it?”

“Eliza.”

“Isn’t she dead?”

“Was, now she’s not anymore. She’s a spirit of some sort. I don’t really know. I’ve never seen anything like it.” Claire reached into her handbag and pulled out a cigarette. He knew he was supposed to light it for her but he couldn’t think of where he’d last seen his lighter. He wasn’t even sure his hands would work it well enough to make a spark. She seemed to be managing fine on her own, for when he looked again, it was lit and wisps of smoke were curling up in the air.

“Who was the sacrifice?” he asked but he felt he already knew the answer. He could feel his stomach sinking.

“Well, it was supposed to be you,” Claire said, “But. . . .”

“Me?!” He hadn’t been expecting to be the answer to his own question.

“Yes, you. What did you think you were there for? To be a big strong man because women always need one before they do anything serious? I pulled you out of there before it took you over.” Claire was looking directly at him now, he could see her eyes fixed on him in his periphery. “It took Ruby instead.”

Carl took a deep breath. “Took her where?”

“I don’t know,” she said, “I never do.”

“Why’d you save me?” he asked.

“I felt bad for you. You weren’t the one who wanted this. You were just being used, like me. She seems to have had that way with people.” Claire took a moment and they both thought about Ruby, the pure force of her. “Want a smoke?”

Carl shook his head no pressing the heels of his hands against his eyes. His mind couldn't smooth itself out into a reliable stream of thought. It jumped all over, burbling and babbling, caught on rocks that jarred it out of its pattern and away to something else. They sat together in silence. He had too many questions but he didn't know how to form them into words. They hung in his mind, just a large looming question mark.

"I'm going to try to get some shuteye," she said, standing. The cigarette was gracefully extinguished in an ashtray. "You're more than welcome to the couch." Her empty glass of bourbon was left beside the end of her cigarette, a tiny trail of smoke lingering. "The wash room is over here." Claire gestured to an empty doorway with her arm and then she was gone. There was the sound of a door and the click of a lock and he assumed she must be in her bedroom. She had left him to this room, to the tawdry trinkets she had collected to make the place feel like a cohesive home.

Carl didn't know how she could sleep but he supposed she dealt with things of this nature

more often than he did. Regardless, he knew he would not be able to. He didn't want to be here. All of it was a reminder of how the evening had gone horribly wrong. There were things he had felt out there and he had been so willing to fall captive to it all. He could have been lost to the sensations and consumed by whatever that thing was. Ruby had planned for that to happen and instead she had been the one to lose herself. Despite her betrayal, Carl still felt something, a sense of loyalty to Ruby. Perhaps because she was beautiful and mysterious. She had always just made his heart do things his mind would have never let him do on its own.

It was this loyalty that gave him the motivation to move, his feet taking on a life of their own, propelling him out into the cool night air. The moon was overhead, bright and large, illuminating his path. Carl knew where he was heading and a sense of dread welled up inside of him. He had to know though. Perhaps he could save her, perhaps she would still be there, bewildered but fine outside the tomb. He would swoop in and take her in his arms, bring

her home safely. It would be a secret between them, a night they wouldn't speak of in the years to come, a night that would keep them close. As he approached the cemetery, he felt a warm breeze, discordant with the chill in the air. He followed it and found himself heading back to the tomb.

Carl felt more comfortable with his decision as he approached the tomb. It was drawing him in, pulling him towards it. The door had been left open when it hadn't before. Part of him knew he shouldn't go closer but he felt lighter as he approached. His heart beat faster with excitement. Pressing a shoulder to the door, he widened the gap and moonlight spilled in.

She was there. Ruby, seated on the edge of a stone coffin in all her razzle dazzle. She glittered and gleamed in the darkness like from another world.

“Carl.”

She didn't need to say anything more. She outstretched her slender arms, and he sank to

his knees gratefully before her. Despite his betrayal, she had taken him back.

Claire wasn't surprised to find him gone in the morning. She assumed he had wandered off to a bar to have a drink, to stay awake while the night chewed him up and spit him back out into the light of day. She had been tired, drained from her contact with the spirit world. Sleep had come easier than expected but it had been a restless sleep. Voices had invaded her mind and none of the dreams had lingered long enough to catch.

As she brewed herself some coffee, she pressed her fingers to her temples, massaging them. She was trying to ease the pounding ache in her head. A thin robe was tied loosely about her waist, pale silver satin with lace trim. It had seen better days but that didn't bother her. It hadn't seen a man in longer.

Later that morning, Claire also went to the tomb of Eliza Walsh and there was no warm breeze to guide her. There was only her own gut telling her that she needed to go. She was

driven by caffeine and not from a good night's rest. The night before had been left unfinished. Eliza was still out there, somewhere.

She approached the tomb hesitantly, her feet picking their way over roots and rocks. It was easier in the light of day. The door of the tomb was propped open and inside was a burst of blue fabric spilling forth from the coffin. A smear of red stood out on the side, brilliant against the gray of the stone. Was it Ruby's? Her hesitant fingers trembled as they connected to the stone.

There, like a moving picture, the scenes of the night before played before her eyes. It was her own private cinema. Everything was from Carl's perspective. Ruby was the star, a glittering Hollywood goddess. His gaze lingered on her in the cemetery and Claire saw herself through his eyes. She was a meek little thing, a boring blip on his radar. Dull and lackluster the viewer lost interest in her within moments.

His desire for Ruby was endless and despite the fact that his life had been saved, it wasn't complete without her in it. He had to go

back. Despite her words of warning, Carl had no other choice. She felt the pull that he did, the thrill that ran through him when he pushed open the door of the tomb to see Ruby again. She was larger than life and she opened her arms to him. He went towards her, and then...

Claire withdrew her hand with a sharp gasp and a chill ran down her spine. She had to get out of this place, gather her army of wits and prepare. Eliza's burial gown was spilling from the coffin. Once a deeper blue, it had faded with time. The folds of fabric held traces of dust and dirt. Claire's nimble fingers withdrew a ribbon from the sleeve, quickly moving it to her pocket. In that brief moment of contact, she had seen a flash of something. Later, she would study it more. It would be her first weapon.

She had more work to do.

Elisabetta de la Mort:

Legend or Fact

The Funeral was a quiet affair,

attended by family members and the few remaining friends of the deceased and his wife, Mary. The Fall day was sunny, the bright colors of the turning leaves turned the cemetery grounds to a brilliant gold, with only a hint of the crisp coolness foretelling the winter to come. Mary and her granddaughter Ellen headed back to the waiting car after a few quiet moments alone at the graveside. The ride was a short one. Mary and her

granddaughter arrived at the quiet Victorian home where Mary and her husband had lived together since their marriage in 1908.

Mary's marriage to Matthew Philps was a very long one, forty six years, producing only one daughter, Eliza - Ellen's mother. Matthew's death left her with a feeling of utter loneliness, their union had been a loving and productive one. She would pick her way through her memories of their shared adventures and the highlights of their history together. But that would come later, when she was alone with her thoughts.

Ellen settled her grandmother into her favorite comfortable chair with a cup of tea. She was

concerned about her Grandmother's emotional state and decided to draw Mary into a conversation. She settled herself on the Victorian settee, trying to figure a way to draw Mary into conversation. Mary had been so quiet all day and had not shed a tear throughout the graveside services.

" What a beautiful day it is, Grammy. The service was just the right length of time and the flowers were beautiful. It was good to see the LaDews again. You and Grandpa were close friends with them forever. I was surprised to see Mrs. Monaco at the service. I didn't think she was well enough to come to the church. Did you hear them talking about some old Ballston Spa Cemetery legend?"

Mary faintly smiled, " When your Granddad was sick the LaDews visited him a few times. I wasn't surprised they came to his funeral. Good people. Good friends. I knew Kitty Monaco was coming- she called the other day and told me she'd be there."

Grandmother and Granddaughter sat quietly. Ellen was at a loss as to what to say next. She didn't want to dwell on her Grandfather's passing. She felt the need, though, to engage her Grandmother in conversation; if only to keep Mary's thoughts from getting darker and more depressed.

"So, Grammy, you never answered me about that old legend they were talking about at the cemetery. They were saying there was a story about how a

couple would go to the big old crypt every year and actually have dinner inside the crypt. You'd have to wonder how a story like that would get started. But I guess every small town has their stories. "

Mary looked at Ellen and seemed to be studying her for a moment. " What makes you think it's not true? "
“

" Well I think it's a little strange- don't you? Why would anyone do something like that? I mean, it's one thing to bring flowers but to actually have a candlelight dinner inside a crypt? I mean I think it's creepy and hard to believe or imagine."

" Maybe they had a very good reason to celebrate or commemorate something... You have to remember

long ago the times and practices were very different," Mary said.

" I don't know, I just think it's a story made up to scare people or keep children out of the cemetery. What other reason could there be?" asked Ellen.

"The gesture could have been made out of respect, remembrance, or a celebration of some event that you're not aware of," responded Mary.

Ellen remained quiet, thinking she'd somehow come back to the subject of death and remembrance. Just the notions she was trying to distract her Grandmother from thinking.

" Actually, if you have a little more time, I'd like to tell you," said Mary. " I think it's time. There's no one

alive anymore who would concern themselves with the facts. Now that your Grandfather's gone, I'm the only one who knows the truth and why there was a need to celebrate life, redemption and the triumph of strength. Make me another cup of tea and I'll tell you a true story."

The late afternoon sun deepened even more the golden color of the day as the two women settled in comfortably with their tea. Mary smiled faintly at her granddaughter and said softly, " I have loved your grandfather Matthew since I was seventeen. Times were different then, people loved and married earlier than they do today. He was my world and

the day we were married in 1908 was still the happiest I've ever had. I was eighteen, he was twenty-one. His parents, you know, were more well to do than mine. Two weeks before the wedding his father surprised us with the announcement he had made arrangements for us to sail to Europe for our honeymoon. Matthew was thrilled of course, though I found the prospect daunting to say the least. I had never been farther from Ballston Spa than Schenectady in my life and the idea of Europe in grand style, sailing across the Atlantic, surrounded by people who spoke other languages I couldn't understand was frankly off setting. Before you know it, it was the wedding day. It was the happiest time I can remember. That evening we boarded a

sleeper train in Albany to New York and then to sail to England. I remember thinking at least they speak English there. The voyage was uneventful, thank the Lord, good weather and smooth sailing all the way.

I loved London, the buildings, parks, even the train stations were luxurious by our standards. The grand hotel Claridge's was like a castle to me. It was like a dream. We were treated like royalty everywhere we went. We had a lovely time. Our next port to visit was Paris, though Matthew wanted to visit Cannes instead. You remember how he loved gambling. He particularly loved faro. At home he went to the casinos in Saratoga and sometimes New York. To my mind too frequently.

Matthew struck up a friendship with another young American at the hotel. He was from San Francisco. Their common interest was, of course, gaming. He recommended a small private establishment in Cannes. Seems he knew the proprietor and told Matthew it was an exclusive club - entry was given only after references were sent by other "members". He offered to write and refer Matthew and myself to gain entry and experience European gaming at its best. Matthew decided to shorten the stay in Paris to a week and made arrangements for two weeks in Cannes instead.

We sailed to France and spent the week in Paris as planned. Oh, it was beautiful all right. The city itself

is lovely, filled with history and wonderful shops. The Eiffel Tower was only about 20 years old at the time and was the tallest structure in the world. The Arc de Triumph was very imposing too. Remember I was young, untravelled, easily impressed. Though I believe I can say I would easily be as impressed today.

Well, back to my story. When we arrived in Cannes Matthew couldn't wait to visit the gaming tables. On our first night we arrived at a small but elegant casino. The gamers were all dressed splendidly. At the door we were greeted by richly dressed doormen who took our papers and information. They disappeared for a long while. When they came

back to us they informed us we had been accepted as guests. We entered the casino through a heavy wooden door. The huge room was flopped with red velvet wall covering and crystal chandeliers hung from the gilded ceiling. There were roulette wheels, tables of baccarat, faro and chemin de fer. Though the enormous room was very crowded, it was surprisingly quieter than the American clubs I had seen. Again, there was an air of elegance, wealth and power floating through the room.

While Matthew purchased notes, I was busily watching the gamers and the height of fashion swirling around the room. The ladies were dressed in beautiful silk gowns - every color you can

imagine. The gentlemen were all in evening wear, I'd never seen such elegance. I noticed one lady wearing a white silk dress drifting through the room, obviously alone, greeting gamers with smiles and that habit the French have of kissing each other on both cheeks. Everyone seemed to know her and held her in high esteem. She was not beautiful but striking looking, with reddish hair shot with silver strands. She was very lovely. While making her way through the crowded room she was getting closer and nearer to me. Matthew had his back to me, playing faro. I couldn't even draw his attention to this lady without being obvious. In a few moments she stood in front of me and smiled very politely.

" Good evening. My name is Elisabetta. I am the proprietor of this establishment. I understand you and your husband are from the United States, " she said. She had very little accent and spoke English perfectly well.

" Yes, we are", I replied, " from a small town in New York. And this is my husband Matthew", I gestured to his back.

" Lovely," she said. " Enjoy your stay. I wish you luck at the tables."

She moved along, still greeting other patrons. I was taken back by her perfect English and flattered that she had spoken to me. Matthew, of course, had missed the quick conversation, busily concentrating

on his gaming. After a while I felt comfortable enough to wander around the casino a bit, admiring the styles and jewels worn by the patrons. I was headed back to Matthew's table, picking my way through the crowd when I came face to face with the Elisabetta again. She smiled and said, " I would like to invite you and your husband for a glass of champagne in my office. "

I was surprised, of course, and accepted the invitation. I went back to Matthew and told him of the invite. He didn't want to leave the table but since he'd been unlucky so far, he grumbled a bit and followed me to the second floor to the proprietor's office. When we entered, Elisabetta was

standing at a small table with champagne flutes and an uncorked bottle on a tray. After I introduced them, she and Matthew talked about the games, the history of the casino, and how she had purchased it years ago when she arrived in Cannes. We had a lovely time and she invited us to return for a midnight supper the next evening. We accepted and returned to the tables for more of what Matthew had come for.

The next evening we arrived again at the casino and joined Elisabetta for a late supper. Our conversation was natural. She confided to us that she too was from the States, which explained so much about her interest in us. It must have been a

treat for her to talk about the USA, hearing about the latest trends in fashion and of course gossip. When we told her we from Ballston Spa, New York, I noticed her eyebrows raised and she smiled faintly. We assumed she was being kind, especially when she asked about life in that small town. We talked about the casinos in Saratoga Springs and there was even talk of a future gaming house opening in Ballston Spa. Of course, those rumors had been circulating for years but no casino so far. She even asked who our parents and friends were. We talked like we had been friends for a long time. She never offered much about herself, other than she had also come from a small town in upstate New York as well. She never identified the town but just seemed

to enjoy hearing our accents and stories of our small community. We felt very affectionate toward her and for the next 12 days we had supper with her every night. We talked about everything and anything. She talked about her arrival in France when she was young, the struggle to learn the language, how she missed her family, the opening of her gaming house, and how the casino had become so successful because of its exclusiveness. The guests as she called them were carefully screened. She wanted no trouble makers admitted. She felt the players came to gamble and she wanted to offer that purpose without high drama or other distractions. Later we would learn that was her way of admitting only clientele she knew. Well, anyway,

on our last evening we arrived earlier and stayed later than usual as our new friend had decided to trust us with her deepest secret. Remember, we were very young, very sheltered by loving families, and this secret shocked us. If she hadn't told the secret in such a sincere tone, nonstop, and with deep emotion, I don't think we would have believed her. "

Now settle back, Ellen, I'm going to tell you the tale she shared with us that night. Maybe more tea? And how about a few of those shortbread cookies Mrs. Monaco sent over? "

"Eliza Hoffman was born in Ballston Spa, New

York. (Quite the coincidence, don't you think Ellen?) Her parents died when she was very young, so she and her brother were sent to live with her mother's sister, Sarah, and her husband John LaDew. (yes, the same name as our friends... you'll understand later) Sarah was Eliza's mother's youngest sister - only 12 years older than Eliza herself. Eliza enjoyed her childhood in Ballston Spa, loved her Aunt and Uncle who became as loving as parents to the two orphans. As a teenager, aged 16, Eliza had known Edward Lewis Walsh in the village, though he was a good ten years older than she was. He was handsome, well-to-do, and had financial interests in casinos in Saratoga and the City of New York. I think he actually owned them

with other family members.

Well, they were married. Eliza and Edward were happy in Edward's beautiful home on West High Street - or so she thought. Edward kept very late hours, you can imagine, because the gaming houses were open all night starting in the early evening. He frequently didn't arrive home until late mornings or when he was in the New York casino he would be gone for a few days at a time. Those days actually became Eliza's favorites. You see, when John did come home in the early morning hours he was usually drunk as a lord. In the beginning, he would come home and rail about the evenings "takes", or

about his disagreements with his partners, or sometimes, the patrons. Soon enough he would come home intoxicated and was verbally abusive to Eliza. Eventually he became physically abusive and would strike her. The longer the marriage went on the more violent he became. He was so violent that Eliza's Aunt Sarah noticed Eliza's bruising on her face or her sore limbs. Aunt Sarah was quite concerned and encouraged Eliza to talk about the beatings. Eliza believed that Edward would stop the beatings. She believed him when he swore to end his violent behavior. Sarah was beside herself. She constantly begged Eliza to come home and abandon Edward. Again, Eliza refused to listen to her Aunt's warnings.

Soon enough, they hadn't been married long, when one evening Edward arrived home early (I think around midnight. He had had a severe disagreement with a patron and his brother had told him to leave the casino and sober up.) Edward didn't go straight home, of course, and continued drinking in a tavern. By this time, he was in a drunken rage. He walked through the front door, climbed the stairs, and woke Eliza. In his rage he accused her of betraying him in all manner of ways. She was terrified and tried to break free and run from the house. He was a demon that night and beat her senselessly. Bruised and bleeding, Eliza tried to lock herself in a room.

He kicked the door in. He beat her so badly she thought she would die. Eventually, she became unconscious in a heap on the floor. No one knows where Edward disappeared to that night and fewer cared.

When Aunt Sarah and Uncle John found her the next day, Eliza was almost beyond recognition and had lain unconscious on the parlor floor for hours. Purely terrified, Sarah and John bundled her into their carriage and drove to a doctor in nearby Galway- they didn't want a doctor who knew the family. They told him she had been attacked and robbed by a drifter riding the railroad boxcars (a common excuse in those days for any unexplained

incident. Whether he accepted that excuse or not is unknown.) All that mattered was that who she really was and who beat her remained a mystery. Since he also had a convalescent room in his home, she spent weeks slowly recovering. She had no memory of the actual beating herself.

During Eliza's recovery time, Edward was frantic. He had no idea where his wife was or even if she was still alive. He assumed she had somehow left their home and made her way to her Aunt Sarah and Uncle John's house. When he arrived there, Sarah and John confronted him and told him Eliza had died from her injuries. They didn't have to play

act their contempt for him, their disgust for him was more than apparent. He was horrified to learn he had actually killed his wife but also terrified of the consequences he faced. Sarah LaDew leaned forward and told Edward he had a choice to make. Either he accepted his responsibilities for his actions, stand trial for murder, and probable hanging, or agree to their terms. The terms they presented to Edward were that he build a stone crypt for Eliza's battered body, he was not to attend the funeral or the burial and the last (and most crushing to him) was that he pay them \$ 30,000 for their silence. He agreed to their terms after a long while considering the options. When he left their home they began to make their plans. This

would take a lot of timing and especially coordination. They carefully laid out their ideas, sharing their daring proposal with Eliza. At first, Eliza was appalled at the idea of being declared dead but realized in those times it would be not only a hopeless situation but a dangerous one to remain with Edward Walsh. The three of them worked out the plan flawlessly.

After the very quiet funeral, with Eliza lying in the wooden coffin still swollen and battered, John and Sarah went back that evening to help Eliza out of the crypt and spirited her to a hotel in Schenectady.

The next morning Eliza left for New York from the Schenectady train station with her brother James.

He was also an avid gambler and was looking forward to a change of venue and hopefully a change of luck. They travelled under different names, hoping to leave no trail of their flight from Ballston Spa. They arrived in the City and made arrangements for their passage to France. James had always heard the famed European gaming establishments were elegant and high paying. Since their American money would be worth so much more in France, he felt they were financially able to build a new future and security for themselves.

When they arrived in Le Havre they made their way to Paris in order to arrange their visit and study the different gaming houses. Of course, the language

was a problem at first but they were both young and learned the basics fairly quickly. Eventually, of course, they learned that the best casinos and higher stakes were to be had in Cannes.

Cannes of course was fascinating and picturesque. Eliza and James fell in love with the city itself and noted the casinos were very elaborate and sometimes overwhelming. While James enjoyed the gaming tables, Eliza enjoyed exploring the city and learning to better speak the language. She found the French to be friendly and very accommodating. Imagine what it must have been like for this young woman from a small village in NY, still healing physically and emotionally from her husband's abuse

and beatings, trying to learn a new language and knowing no one. She must have been extraordinary.

Through her new acquaintances and ramblings in and outside the city Eliza learned of a long-abandoned chateau, set privately on a few acres. She fell in love with its setting and that's when the idea took hold. As you can guess, she and James made the arrangements to purchase the property, restored it and created their own elegant and private gaming house. She changed her name to Elisabetta de la Morte, which of course means "of the dead." Fitting, don't you think?

Within a short period of time the Chateau became a very exclusive and private success. Admittance was

only by limited membership or referral by trusted clientele. They stayed together until James met a brilliant young Parisienne woman and married her.

Since James' wife wanted to remain in Paris, that left Elisabetta, as she was now known, alone to manage the Chateau. When we met her, she had been on her own for many years. I can't tell you how we came to respect her strength and resolve. She was a true survivor. Our friendship was as deep as if we had known her all our lives. We loved her courage and spirit- so much so we named our daughter after her- your mother Eliza.

When we returned to Ballston Spa from France we,

of course, couldn't tell anyone of Eliza's new life-only Sarah and John LaDew. We had known the La Dews only in passing until then but on our return, we visited and told them of our meeting Eliza and what an extraordinary woman she had become. They're wonderful people and were grateful to hear Eliza had made friends of us and trusted us with her history. We have been close friends ever since. Every year, on Eliza's birthday, the four of us would gather at her empty crypt and toast her with champagne by candlelight. So, Ellen, my lovely granddaughter, you'll know that what seems strange to you may not be strange at all."

©



The Untold Fate of Eliza Walsh

Edward Walsh was a betting man, and his word wasn't worth the air he blew.

He went around with hat in hand, and owed money to everyone he knew.

There's not much good to say, about Walsh and his scallwagin' ways,

Except for his wife who tried to keep him true.

Eliza was a godly lady, and she tried all to make Walsh a better man.

But from the time that he was a baby, his mind bent on twisted plans.

"You're nothing!" he would say, as he tried to wear her away,

And make her feel every bit less than.

It would seem the years lay heavy, as quickly Eliza turned sick and died.

*At the service there came many, and the memories
surely made many cry.*

*Except for two, one skinny, one fat, for whom her
husband's word lay flat,
Plotting the plan they were to try.*

*You see Edward Walsh had a debt to pay and these
two men came to collect it.*

*Once he had no money to gamble away, and by them
he found credit*

*"On the Grave of my wife! I Swear her life!"
And on her body he would debit.*

*"It's the principal of thing!" said the fat one, as the
skinny one sat and conspired.*

*"His promises are overdone!" her corpse is what
they desired.*

*So they waited 'till night, and when the time was
right.*

They revealed the crow-bars they had acquired.

Smashing open the door, they could not see the floor, so a candle they lit with a match.

And there they saw, the box in awe, the coffin inside they could now snatch.

"I have my end!" the skinny one said, the fat one nodded that so did he.

And into the night they quickly stole Edward's guarantee.

So not to wake his spouse, at the fat man's house, they crept in ever so sneakily.

And there they placed in the living room space, her coffin lay quite eerily.

But the fat man's bride, had surely spied, for their ruckus had been too loud.

"A Coffin lays in my living room, your jokes are too much!

I want it gone before the dawn, and this room cleaned to the touch!"

“It is no joke.” the fat man croaked, “there is a body within.

It's Edward's wife, he bet her life and her body we did win!”

“That kind soul, you never stole, Eliza was a saint, a joke on me, but I can see, your pranks know no restraint!”

“I swear to you, we went to her tomb, and with crowbars we did break-in, and if you require to see the transpired, you only need look within.”

The fat man's wife, then got a knife, and wedged open the box.

And then Eliza rose, at first they saw her nose, their screams were heard for blocks.

“I need to feed!” Eliza said, the three ran out to the streets,

hand-in-hand, a motley band, they started scrambling for the police.

“Hey, you there! It's the doctor I say, what trouble are you in?”

I heard the screaming, it would be seaming, I could be of some help then?”

The skinny man stopped, and to his knees he dropped, “Such a problem you would not desire, Eliza Walsh... We stole her box...And now...She's become a vampire!”

The doctor un-phased, said “In my med school days, we learned of un-dead medicine.

Stay away from your home, for I will go alone, and I will make sure she is dead again.”

Arriving at the address, his luck he did bless, for no else seemed to be around.

“Eliza! My love those fools are gone, my love where can you be found!”

“Oh my dear, it's appears we are clear, and my husband will never know!”

Eliza cried, wiped happy tears aside, "We put on quite the show."

"But the elixir you gave me, had made me very hungry, and my energy is low."

"My doctor's case, has plenty of space, for which I brought you food,

to your tomb I was going, with my love overflowing, if not for grave robbing ineptitude.

But please eat fast, for if this is to last, we must leave this town for anew.

To keep your husband unknowing we must get going, and bid this place adieu."

"Yes my love, I will thank you for all the good that you have done.

Only falsely dead, to you I wed, and together we tricked everyone.

But once a year, back here we shall steer the horses to the tomb.

And dine with joyous choir, in the place where I was to expire, and watch the setting sun."