

CONTENTS

IN THE CITY OF THE NIGHT	1
WHAT IMMORTAL HAND OR EYE	12
COULD FRAME THY FEARFUL SYMMETRY?	24
IN WHAT DISTANT DEEPS OR SKIES	32
BURNT THE FIRE OF THINE EYES?	49
ON WHAT WINGS DARE HE ASPIRE?	60
WHAT THE HAND DARE SEIZE THE FIRE?	75
AND WHAT SHOULDER AND WHAT ART	89
COULD TWIST THE SINEWS OF THY HEART?	93
AND, WHEN THY HEART BEGAN TO BEAT	111
WHAT DREAD HAND AND WHAT DREAD FEET?	132
WHAT THE HAMMER? WHAT THE CHAIN?	149
IN WHAT FURNACE WAS THY BRAIN?	159
WHAT THE ANVIL? WHAT DREAD GRASP	174
DARE ITS DEADLY TERRORS CLASP?	184
WHEN THE STARS THREW DOWN THEIR SPEARS,	201
AND WATER'D HEAVEN WITH THEIR TEARS,	215
DID HE SMILE HIS WORK TO SEE?	237
DID HE WHO MADE THE LAMB MAKE THEE?	256
TIGER, TIGER, BURNING BRIGHT	262
IN THE FORESTS OF THE NIGHT,	279
WHAT IMMORTAL HAND OR EYE	292
DARE FRAME THEY FEARFUL SYMMETRY?	340

T I G E R T I G E R

TIGER

TIGER

RICHARD MILLERSHIP

CHAPTER 1
IN THE CITY OF THE
NIGHT

9:28 p.m., Tuesday 22 October, 2019. New
Street. Financial District. Downtown
Manhattan. New-York City

The corridor was dark. But not, somehow - just shadowy. He didn't know dark any more. It just wasn't something he understood.

A tune was humming away in his mind - discordant and harsh, thudding between his temples.

Slowly, hunched forward slightly, he covered the corridor's length, his hands outstretched, fingers splayed before him like slow villi as he searched for signs of body heat. He felt gentle eddies - they were all about him - but these were old, cooling. Not what he wanted.

He caught it after a moment, like a faint smell on a gentle breeze. He closed with one of the walls, hugging it, his hands up to the panelling, gliding over the stained wood, the peeling lacquer, and the minute shards of splintering, crystalline timber.

He stopped.

It was there.

Frozen, his body blue-steel tense, he swallowed - a long, slow, gullet-clicking gulp.

He began gliding forward. Ahead, the door stood out like a beacon, bright, searing. The tune in his head was loud now, buzzing, raucous. He sped up, sprinting, the panels a blur of brown/black, the smell of ancient shellac in his nostrils. The door appeared, a flash, a moment, before it vanished in a sudden roar of tearing, splintering wood.

His hands were like twin battering rams as he pounded it with open palmed strikes, laughing as he watched the stuff come apart like so much dried, rotten, bug eaten -

Then he was through, wood dust and splinters flying with him, little mote-like companions to his storm.

He heard her as he came through: her exclamation, her sudden intake of breath and her quiet blasphemy. His eyes narrowing to slits, he could almost see her through the second door as she rose, as she lifted the gun from the drawer -

He flew, the second door vanishing as he went through it, his hands up again, smashing through the solid oak like it was paper. He laughed again, shrieking as he felt the power, as he tore the timber into fragments.

“My God!” he exalted as he finally came into the room, his voice booming, reverberating to his own ears as though he were speaking into a forty gallon drum. He could almost see it: colours of sound travelling around the room.

No words for me, he thought? No sudden exclamation of surprise, no recognition, no pleading, no begging, no grovelling -

“Gooooood evening, Tyrone!” he exploded.

But the woman didn't reply. From stunned paralysis, she finally began to act, her hand coming up as she took aim.

Not fast enough.

She got off one shot as he came over the desk, hands waving, reaching for her. Point blank, she still missed.

He had her then, clutched her to him in a quick, paralysing grip. Her upper arms held in his hands, he lifted her from the floor, the gun clattering to the ground as he shook it from her grasp.

Hollow, sponge-like, she felt strange to him - not human - but like a toy, a fine china doll. She hung there limply, her arms useless as she stared into raging, red-rimmed, exophthalmic eyes, the vessels bulging on his face, pulsing hypnotically at his temples - as the breath stopped in her throat.

He began to squeeze.

Her voice came to her then as her clavicle suddenly snapped with a loud crack, as her humeri shattered like two dry twigs, as her rib cage began to collapse, the sternum's abrupt splintering sounding like a gun shot, as through bloodied teeth and blinding pain - she screamed and screamed and screamed -

10:10 p.m., Tuesday 22 October. The Shanghai
Dragon Sidewalk Diner. Pell Street.
Chinatown

IT Deloit Callard cleaned off the poorly washed chop sticks with a quick, jerking motion, smoothing the rough wooden edges. He eyed the job, revolving them slowly in his fingers as his gaze drifted down to a bowl of egg noodle, as he slowly swirled the fluid's surface, watching the patterns within it play.

He shuddered, a cold gust making his napkin flutter, and peered up at the stall's short order. The man eyed him back, his lip curling faintly as he went for something. Callard went back to his soup.

He shrugged inwardly as he looked up again and began searching the half darkness toward the Bowery. Neon lit the sidewalk. Old, ghost-like, the signs flickered badly, shorting and sputtering in the chill autumn air.

Chatham Square was busy tonight. He watched the people walking, heading downtown along Bowery, and heard the dim row of a crowd. He made a face, carefully lifting the bowl of egg noodle to his lips and in several, huge, warbling gulps, tipped its contents down his throat.

He caught the cook's look of distaste as he finally came up for air, and flipped a few bills onto the counter top, hesitated, then left without the meagre change. He began pushing through the other would-be patrons then, all of them waiting for a spot at the diner's bar, when he heard

his cell phone. He waited until he had cleared the throno before he answered it.

“Accept,” he said as he lifted the phone to his face.

“Ah, hello. Would that be IT Callard?” a distinct southern drawl queried.

“Yeah.”

“IT Callard, I’ve been told to give you a line here.”

Callard frowned, looking vaguely bemused. What the hell was a line? “Go ahead,” he said.

“There’s something you should come take a look at, IT Callard.”

“Says who?”

“Oh,” the voice stammered. “Sorry, Callard,” the voice went on with an embarrassed half laugh. “That’d be Inspectorate Captain Hall Stamet.”

“Fine,” he said. “Post the address to my reader. Tell Stamet I’m there.”



Callard made the New Street address reasonably quickly. Less than a mile away, he’d walked most of it before he managed to catch a cab. Short distance, the driver had chewed him out and dumped him for having wasted his time, then tried to charge him a hundred bucks for the slightly less than sixty seconds he’d been in his cab. Callard had thought about it, then dropped an official IT chit into the shithead’s lap.

“Bill me,” he’d chimed with a grin, and walked off, the cab driver’s screams of abuse eventually vanishing into the heavy night air.

He’d thrust his hands into his pockets and walked the rest of the way.

New Street was lit up like a sideshow alley when he rounded Exchange. Spots had been rigged up and down it, squad transports everywhere, uniforms blocking access to it at the corner and down by Beaver. An entire city block. He paused, watching the scene for a moment. It was like a carnival had come to town. He laughed inwardly. What was the difference? Whole place was a damn circus anyway.

He moved up to the uniform at the barrier, and flashed his ID. The uniform gave him a second glance, then just waved him through. He began peering upwards as he walked, craning his neck. On his left, the spots were trained upwards - high up on one of the buildings, its face stretching out over the street, in a series of inverted terraces. There was something up there - something fluttering in the wind. He started heading for it.

“Hey!” He halted, turned abruptly and began searching the shadows to his right. “You Callard?” It was another uniform. Callard began nodding, held up his hand as he paced toward the man. “It’s in here, IT Callard,” the uniform said, gesturing to the building behind him. Callard did a double take.

“What about - ” he began to ask, jerking his thumb over his shoulder.

The uniform cut him off, “They’ll tell you up there. Fifteenth floor. They’re already waiting.”

Callard didn’t push it. No point. He’d find out soon enough. He found the chalked pile of splintered timber and shattered glass only feet from the open front doors. Jumper? He scanned the ground. There was no body, no blood, no outline, and no dent in the concrete. Just window remains. He examined the debris for a moment, then flicked a few of the glittering strays back into the general pile. After nearly a minute, he skirted it and moved on inside.

Short elevator ride, a laconic uniform kept him company. Ask no questions, get told no lies.

Much as the elevator had been, old style heavy wood panelling greeted him as he stepped out into the corridor. It was packed, uniforms everywhere. He stood there for a moment, eyeing the chaos, watching the lights, listening to the exchanges.

He found Stamet only after another minute, standing by one of the doors that opened onto the corridor.

“Callard. Where’ve you been?”

Callard only nodded shortly, his eyes already on the floor. Rubbish strewn, together with heavy wood splinters. Callard looked up.

“What’s happening?” he said.

Stamet paused. “Freak show.” Callard made a tired face. “No,” Stamet said. “I mean really - out of the bag.”

“In what way?”

“See for yourself.” They stepped up to the open doorway.

A sledge hammer job, what was left of the door was littered about the floor inside in long, splintered strips. Stamet stepped over the worst of it, then kneeled quickly, began lightly pushing the stuff around with a pen.

“Take a look at this,” he said as he found what he’d been looking for. Callard squatted beside him. “Think it’s a hammer break and enter?” Stamet asked quietly. “It isn’t.” Stamet flipped over the piece. “Check it,” he offered. Callard did so, seeing that the piece was literally covered in blood.

“What’d they use?” he thought out loud. “Their heads?” No mean feat to have done this, even with tools. Then he caught Stamet’s dead-pan expression. “No,” Callard said slowly as he watched him, “you’re not serious.”

“Deadly.”

“Holy sweet,” Callard muttered. “The guys get samples of this?” Stamet answered him with a nod. Callard examined the debris for a few moments longer, then began scanning the rest of the floor.

Thickly carpeted, its basic green was being washed out every few seconds by the flash of a strobe. A sweep camera had been set up, and was clearly about to start its work on the reception area. He’d been lucky, he realised.

They'd called him in to check the place first hand, before it got too screwed up.

Then he caught sight of the second door, his train of thought evaporating. He glanced across at Stamet, caught the nod. "Two perps?" he queried. Had to be. One of them would have torn himself to pieces coming through the first door. Stamet only shrugged.

Callard got up and crossed to the second door. Smashed literally to pieces, he began to get a strange taste in his mouth: fetid metal.

Stepping gingerly, he moved into the next room.

Main office. It was a mess. The desk was overturned, papers everywhere, a steady wind churning the floor as droplets of rain splattered the boards by the window. Callard halted mid step.

The window was virtually gone, it's frame shattered completely. The timber had been torn from its anchors. Quite literally, it had just been pushed out - sash and all. The debris on the street below made sense to him now. It was all that was left of the window. Just a window? There'd been nothing else out there. No body, nothing heavy. So why push a window out? How? He turned, found Stamet watching him.

"What's the story here?" he said.

Stamet's eyebrows lifted momentarily, as if he were about to say something - then he just shrugged. "Office was actually owned by - woman by the name of Theiss," he said as he glanced at his note reader. "Web financier for

several large corps, ran their short term borrowings, and all on her lonesome. Debt management, note taking, all that stuff. Juggled more money per day than your average third-world crap hole would see in a year.”

Callard nodded, waved for him to go on as he continued to search the debris.

“We got the call about a quarter to ten,” Stamet said. “Dispatch read serious disturbance - possible earth quake, actually.” He shook his head. “Couple of people nearly hit by that window.” He nodded toward the gaping hole in the office’s wall.

“Murder or a suicide?” Callard said.

“You’d even be here on a suicide?” he replied sardonically. “But it seems our victim managed to get one shot off before she got hers.”

“She hit anyone?”

“No.” Stamet gestured toward the wall beside him, and the single circled bullet hole that broke its otherwise pristine and bloodless surface.

Callard frowned. “Killed?” he said absently. He looked around pointedly. “We got a corpse?”

Stamet gestured with his chin. “Out the window.”

Callard just looked at him for a moment, then turned to the window. Squad transports, spots, the chalked pile of rubbish he had seen before he came up - but nothing else.

“Where?”

He felt Stamet move up beside him.

“A little further up, Loit,” he said. Callard shot a sideways look at him. “Follow the spots.” Callard frowned again, then did as he was told. Why so obtuse? He shrugged it off, and began scanning the ground again.

At first he was just confused, searching the sidewalk and street, then the base of the building’s wall, following the spots the short distance to the other side of the street, then to the lower floors of the building opposite - then up - and up -

Callard’s eyes locked unseeingly on something.

He didn’t recognise it at first. High up, on the seventh floor at least. The spots picked it out brightly. Directly above it, a man on a line was hovering, lowering himself gently down toward a flag pole that was jutting just below his questing feet, one of a number that lined the front of the building.

Only, this one was different.

Perched on the end of it, the pole’s shaft bent by the weight, was the limp body of what appeared to be a woman - pinned out there like an insect.

CHAPTER 2
WHAT IMMORTAL
HAND OR EYE

*Tiger, tiger burning bright
In the forests of the night
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?*

William Blake.

Callard watched, fascinated by the performance - like watching a fly in a web, horrified and yet drawn. Alone out there, the spiderman on the rope had attached a line to the body, and was trying to drag the corpse off the pole. Stuck fast, he hadn't so much as budged it.