

A Frolic of His Own
by
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For Muriel Oxenberg Murphy

*What you seek in vain for, half your life, one day you come full upon, all the family at dinner.
You seek it like a dream, and as soon as you find it you become its prey.
—Thoreau, to Emerson*

Justice? —You get justice in the next world, in this world you have the law.

—Well of course Oscar wants both. I mean the way he talks about order? She drew back her foot from the threat of an old man paddling by in a wheelchair, —that all he's looking for is some kind of order?

—Make the trains run on time, that was the...

—I'm not talking about trains, Harry.

—I'm talking about fascism, that's where this compulsion for order ends up. The rest of it's opera.

—No but do you know what he really wants?

—The ones showing up in court demanding justice, all they've got their eye on's that million dollar price tag.

—It's not simply the money no, what they really want...

—It's the money, Christina, it's always the money. The rest of it's nothing but opera, now look.

—What they really want, your fascists, Oscar, everybody I mean what it's really all about? She tapped a defiant foot against the tinkling marimba rhythms seeping into the waiting room somewhere over near the curtains, where the wheelchair had collided with a radiator and come to rest. Trains? fascism? Because this isn't about any of that, or even 'the opulence of plush velvet seats, brilliant spectacle and glorious singing' unless that's just their way of trying to be taken seriously too —because the money's just a yardstick isn't it. It's the only common reference people have for making other people take them as seriously as they take themselves, I mean that's all they're really asking for isn't it? Think about it, Harry.

—I've thought about it, now look. How long do we have to wait. I've got to be in court in an hour.

—He's been in therapy they said, it shouldn't be long. The nurse said he's in a highly agitated state.

—Ever see him when he wasn't?

—Well my God can you blame him? She was digging deep in the shopping bag on the floor there between them —after all, being run over by a car?

—Looks like he's planning a long stay.

—Well of course he wanted his own robe and pajamas, the rest of it's mail, notes, papers, how he expects to get any work done here.

—Probably as much as he ever gets done anywhere.

—And do you have to start that? I mean that's why I asked you to stop up here and see him isn't it? to show a little family concern for him? Maybe you can even pretend it was your own idea, here... coming up with whatever brightly wrapped, —you can give him this.