

Big Plate Special

Coffee. Hot steaming black coffee, he drank while sitting hunched over the faded and stained linoleum counter top in the Maritime Diner that rainy Tuesday morning. Big men, tall and hefty, usually sat at the table by the window overlooking the bay. The bar stools at the counter are too tall for them, and like the stranger, when they sit there, they end up looking like pine trees in a strong wind--not bent over the earth quite enough to kiss it or eat from it as the analogy might suggest. He sat there anyway.

Black guys were scarce in Pug Wash, Nova Scotia. Few locals had ever met a black Canadian man if we assume our bowed pine tree was black Canadian just because he was dark skinned, and if we refuse to consider that he might be a Jamaican sailing up the coast, or an American on a family vacation from New Jersey but mad at his family because he is not used to spending this much time with them and they are starting to get on his nerves so he got up early and walked but while walking realized how hungry he was and boom! there he was in the Maritime Diner and the antagonist in this story, or that he might be the number one player on the All-Western-Europe Chess Team, originator of the Geneva Neo-Indian Defense who had not lost a tournament in three years but who had never been offered the opportunity to play Kasparov because, he claimed, Kasparov was ducking him, and he might be right because Kasparov after deciding to play a computer was worn down but only defeated one game out of twenty which isn't bad for a computer, but using fatigue from the computer match has an excuse, Kasparov dropped out of the last Grand Prix, and thus, if that was the case, our black guy from unknown origins, who might be the first board on the All-Western-Europe chess team, was ducked, but the origins of our mysterious man of dark pigmented skin who sat at the counter looking like a pine tree in a gale will be the topic of numerous later discussions in this maritime tale. For now,

however, at this early stage of exposition which is out of fashion to do at all but which I, the humble typist of this classic story, in trying to modernize, will attempt to dismiss has simply introductory information instead of case studies of the character's family histories back through three generations which was done by the original writer, but which is of no importance to us, so I am leaving it out although you may research it if you were to go to the Maritime Diner in Pug Wash, Nova Scotia, home of the famous yet little known, Thinkers Conference, and sit at the counter if you're short and at the table by the window if you're a big man and either way order a Big Plate Special with double sausage gravy and ask the guy in the pea coat, he's got the whole history memorized, but like I said be prepared for heaps of exposition because that is what he will give you being a lover of the old ways, an antique collector, a hanger-on, a classicist.

Skip to the rising action, the tension. Let us progress and tread quickly over this introductory stuff and introduce at this relatively early stage of the tale the foreseeable conflict and the other important character, and that, of course, the perceptive reader will have surmised, is the owner-operator of the Maritime Diner in Pug Wash, Nova Scotia whose name will also at this early stage be omitted for the purpose of conflict introduction and exposition reduction, and the owner-operator was thinking that big black guys usually didn't eat in the diner so how was this man to know where big guys usually sat and who was he to tell the big guy who picked the seat with his own free will and not by some god-determined destiny which the owner-operator never believed in anyway, which for us, the tale's audience, is good because we have heard a million times all those old fate dramas and if the owner-operator had heard the fate dramas as many time as we have he would have hated them for the same reason, but lucky for us and for himself, he discovered early on in 9th grade that all that fate stuff was for the birds. So now I have a tale to re-spin that has nothing to do with fate and an owner-operator who I like because, although

we live in different countries, we share a common hatred of fate drama, and since I now have admitted my kinship feelings for my owner-operator and protagonist of this tale, I will announce his name, but do not get your hopes up because it is just a simple name which probably will not thrill you, and had I written the story I would have chosen a flashy modern name to fit in better with our exposition hating culture, but I don't like to lie, although sometimes I have to, but in this case I do not, so the name of the owner-operator, the real name, since the owner-operator is a real person, is Frank Scott. I know, I can hear the moans from my readers but my hands are tied, and you must trust that Frank Scott would not be a character in one of my stories at all if the story was not worth it and this one is, so buckle your seat belts and listen to Frank Scott think that if the big black guy wants to sit at the counter and look like a goof ball, hell, he didn't care.

The big black guy ordered four fried eggs, three pieces of dried toast, five strips of bacon, and six hotcakes all buried under Frank's special sausage gravy. Before you think this is odd, let me tell you that most guys, big guys anyway, who come into the Maritime Diner in the morning, order this Big Plate Special, only usually with extra sausage gravy which our big black guy did not order; thus, in a Henry James novel, subtly letting us know by this lack of an action that he was not a regular, but I bluntly gave this information away earlier and once again have shown my weakness as a storyteller in that Henry James (of course he made all his stuff up however) would never give away crucial details so easily, but I did it and maybe blew the conflict development but I will continue anyway because I like the story and because a true story is not always as good as fiction, but we can find solace in the fact that at least it is true and not some rambling garbage made up by the depressed mind of some alcoholic suicide-waiting-to-happen, and anyway so what if the man did not order extra sausage gravy, why should he? Maybe he did not really like all that sausage gravy to start with and he was smart enough to order the best deal in the house, subtly

telling us more than James ever did because the Big Plate Special is designed to hold a working man over till lunch, and it is a damn good deal to order it because it does not cost that much and it is good. I will not tell you what Frank Scott charges, that is between me and him, of course you could travel there and see for yourself, but I am not going to take the responsibility of publishing the price and then have the old sly fox lower it to make my story look fictitious, but let us just say that it is a hell of a deal and get on with this story.

Not too many big black guys have ever come into the Maritime Diner, and Frank Scott is not against blacks or anything, they just usually must go somewhere else. He did not know exactly why or where, but typically there were few blacks in Pug Wash to start with, and the reader would not need to know this at all except to let you know that Frank Scott is not a white supremacist owning and operating a KKK restaurant in Pug Wash, Nova Scotia, and that Frank Scott if he ever thought about it really had never thought about blacks as a group because he never cared to think about groups but only about individuals and this particular big black guy caused Frank Scott to think about individuals because somewhere, way back then, he knew this big black guy and he tasted the bitter, acidic taste of his past rising from his gut and filling the back of his throat ready to be vomited onto the mopped floor of the Maritime Diner. But if you are sitting in some United States classroom reading this for Black History Month, raise your hand now and tell your teacher that this ain't no Black history story and that it is just a story that I heard and thought I would pass along, that it has nothing to do with Uncle Tom's Cabin or Huckleberry Finn or invisible men or yelling from mountains or killing caged mocking birds and that it is not because the people involved in the creation of the tale do not care, it's because it's not about that. But most of you are not sitting in a classroom, and good for you, I have been to those classroom and they are remarkably similar to the jail which Frank Scott,

while looking at the big black guy in the Maritime Diner, began to reconstruct in his mind, but this jail will come later first more conflict.

It was on a rainy Tuesday morning when our big black guy entered the Maritime Diner and ordered the Big Plate Special and coffee and sat at the bar and looked goofy being so big and all, and when Frank Scott cooked the meal and put it in front of the big black guy, the guy didn't say anything. He just looked at Frank Scott and then started shoveling the stuff in his mouth like he had not eaten in a week, and before Frank Scott even refilled the other customer's coffee, the big black guy shouted out that he wanted another Big Plate Special. He did not say anything about how it tasted or anything, just that he wanted another Big Plate Special. Frank Scott had nothing against our big black guy at this point, but like any man who comes into the Maritime Diner, black or white mind you, Frank Scott is not likely to serve him a second Big Plate Special till he pays for the first. The Big Plate Special is a hell of a deal and Frank Scott was not running a soup kitchen and maybe can afford a freeloader eating one Big Plate Special, but Frank Scott certainly was not going to keep the doors of the Maritime Diner open if he was expected to give the stuff away because Frank Scott, although he was wifeless and childless, but not girl-friend-less, could afford to take a hit every once in a while, he was not a rich man and the Maritime Diner was not ever going to make him one. So he told the big black guy that if he wanted another Big Plate Special he'd have to pay for the first one, that he has nothing against him but that it's just the policy, but the big black guy did not believe in policy, as a matter of fact, he never had believed in policies, and if you were a big black guy you would probably be leery of policies also because what good have policies ever been for you and even if you are not a big black guy what good have policies ever been for you and like Holden Caulfield said, "Game my ass. Some game. If you get on the side where all the hot-shots are, then it's a game, all right--I'll admit that. But if you get on the other side, where there aren't any hot-shots, then what's a game about it?"

Nothing. No game,” and that is how policies are, if you are the hot-shot making policy then policies are great, but if you are restricted by them then what good are they? Our big black guy has never had the chance to set policy, but he has had plenty of chances to be set by policy and thus decided to quit following policies all together, and so when Frank Scott asked for payment for the first consumed meal, instead of tossing down a few bills on the counter, our big black guy merely stared at the owner-operator and ran his shirt sleeve across his mouth as if it were a napkin, and Frank Scott knew right then that he had a bigger problem than losing a few bucks, for Frank Scott’s memory-phlegm that had been filling the back of his throat since our antagonist entered the Maritime Diner, became discernible and his past was violently propelled onto the mopped floor, and he knew he had a problem, and that of all things Frank Scott hated, problems were on the top of the list. For problems meant the resurrection of the past and the past was exactly what Frank Scott hoped to keep dead, for if Jesus Christ was a threat to Pilot, the past was a threat to Frank Scott, and both men crucified their threats, only it returned to haunt Pilot, and maybe Frank Scott should have learned his Bible a bit better, for anything once crucified eventually returns and then you’ve got a problem which is exactly what Frank Scott did not want for he now was sure how he knew this big black guy, and he felt sure that this reunion would lead nowhere but down the dirt road to Hell. “Of all the luck,” Frank Scott must have been thinking about this time, “to avoid problems all these years and then to open up your crummy diner for breakfast in Pug Wash on a rainy Tuesday morning and have this particular big black guy come in and steal food for no reason other than his desire to put you under his thumb,” but Frank Scott, all though he knew what was going on, was not about to slide under the big black thumb and be pinched, and he decided instead just to break policy which for Frank Scott was a habit for as has already been stated, Frank Scott hated problems to the extent that he let policies go by the wayside when it was one or the other and therefore for Frank Scott having policies really did

not mean anything, or one could say that Frank Scott's main policy was that all policies will be excepted if the act of doing so will avoid problems, and with aforementioned thought in mind, Frank Scott decided just to give in and make the big black guy another Big Plate Special and just take the hit and hope the big black guy would leave quietly afterwards and never come back which we know will not happen because then why would there even be a story for me to pass on to you, but Frank Scott, at this time, did not know he was part of a story and thus had no way of realizing that the conflict was still developing and not falling to a conclusion and that the showdown over the payment, Visa, Master Card, or cash, for the first Big Plate Special really had nothing to do with the major conflict which Frank Scott now realized, but then how could he have known unless he read this story before it happened, because for then Frank Scott was like you are now, just trying to get through and hoping it will be over soon.

But after Frank Scott made the big black guy a second Big Plate Special, using only three eggs to minimize his loss, he set it down in front of the big black guy, who banged the bottom of his coffee mug on the counter letting Frank Scott know he wanted some more. Well, knowing Frank Scott's policies on policies, what could he do but refill the cup and watch as the big black guy devoured the second Big Plate Special almost as quickly as the first, wipe his mouth on his shirt sleeve, stand up, and stretch. With his arms raised high above, he looked like a bridge support. Frank Scott knew right then that if this big black guy walked out on the bill, he wasn't going to say anything to him at all except maybe have a good day or something polite like that, but Frank Scott figured at least the big black guy couldn't get mad about the bill being figured and set beside the empty Big Plate Special, so he did that, and when the big black guy saw Frank Scott gently lay the bill beside the empty big plate, when he saw the drop of yellow yoke dampen the corner of the green paper, he grabbed it, held it close to his face and studied it for a long time before dropping it to the floor and

laughing a loud and hard laugh that nearly doubled him over and would most certainly have allowed the bridge to fall had he really been a bridge support. Frank Scott did not get the joke, but smiled anyway and hoped the big black guy would leave before too long and only leave Frank Scott out a few bucks, what the hell, but instead of leaving the big black guy stopped laughing, his face became as serious as the Johnstown flood and looking Frank Scott straight in the eye, said to the owner-operator: "You're a funny man giving a bill to me and all." With that said our big black guy, stuffed with more breakfast food than he normally ate over five days, turned and left the Maritime Diner.

II

In 1956, Jack Kerouac, drunk on wine, slept sitting down on a gone Denver hobo street, the only separation between his unkempt hair and the brick wall of a two-bit benzedrine whore hotel was what looked on the surface to be an oversized roll of bathroom paper, but if you were there, and I was, and if you had walked up to the wasted beat, and I did, you'd have seen that this oversized roll of bathroom paper was really Teletype crammed with what Truman Capote called typing, and you would have recognized this pillow as *On The Road*, and as I read the rolled words, the guy in the pea coat from the Maritime Diner, far away from that littered Denver street, standing on the shore of a small pond in western Ohio, fishing, noticed a solitary man. This solitary man stood away from a crowd huddled around a picnic table; away from drunk brothers-in-law casting fishing poles full of spinners and weights making plopping sounds as they were cast again and again into the fished-out pond; away from wailing nephews and nieces calling names and messing their pants; away from a crazy mother who inevitably would erupt into a screaming tirade before the day would be over which would, by sheer chance, bury anyone in its way; and as you might have assumed, that solitary man was a big black guy.

Even then, in 1956, he was a big black guy, and though men wear age better than women, few men wear age better than our big black guy who, when he walked into the Maritime Diner at 60, still carried strong tight biceps and on his skull wrinkles only of wisdom. But then it was 1956 and our big black guy was aside from his family's Independence Day picnic, bored and solitary, wearing a cap too small and pants too short with an old burlap and tin hand-crank seeder strapped to his torso. He had found the seeder, full of old seeds, in a depressed, dilapidated barn aflutter with pigeons. And thus, our big black guy sauntered through a weed infested field in a straight line from the barn to the pond, no more than a couple hundred yards, and turning the handle of the seeder as he walked, he watched the seeds spray around in front of him, landing haphazardly wherever they fell and never thinking about planting or farming but simply about passing the time at his family's mundane Independence Day picnic, and had you seen our antagonist walking that day, you might, as the guy in the pea coat did, chuckle a bit and continue fishing, but now we chuckle not, for our big black guy has returned for a second time to the Maritime Diner in Pug Wash, Nova Scotia, and once again has seated himself at the counter where big men usually do not sit. Neither does Frank Scott chuckle, but instead he cowers and begins to count his losses for there is nothing so bad for business as a freeloader and what is Frank Scott to do other than feed the man who is slowly but definitely embedding his thumb print on Frank Scott's head.

It was a burger and fries the big black guy ordered for lunch and it was Frank Scott who cooked and served the meal, back against the wall, stuck between a Sisyphus rolling rock and a Promethean mountain in some wicked twist of unfair fate aimed again at a man who already believed himself victimized more than Jean Valjean and who really might have been if one considers victim to be the word of choice to describe a man who never got a fair shake from the day he was shaken out of the peach tree and landed on his head when he was twelve and didn't even get a peach to

show for it but did get a thump on the skull and a kick in the behind, and if one considers victim to be the word used to describe a man walking happily down the road of life, satisfied, innocent of even the inkling of a thought passing through his head when out of nowhere is gashed by the bloody teeth of a ravenous dog called Life and tossed in the slammer for wearing girls underpants that no one would have ever discovered had the paramedics not cut threw his jeans to get a good look at the vicious canine's damage to Frank Scott's rump at which time one yelled, "FAG!" and the other kicked Frank Scott in the mouth and later blamed the broken jaw on the dog attack while Frank Scott stood in the county jail, his injury preventing him from sitting at first, with no means of getting bail for the crime of perversity against nature which in southern Indiana remained a crime well into the seventh decade of the present century, but the elimination of the crime from the books did not help Frank Scott because by then he was in for five more years after he assaulted a big black guard who thought it fun to assault guys who used to wear girl's underpants under their jeans. And so Frank Scott prepared and served slop to his fellow inmates three times a day, seven days a week and for those long five years. Frank Scoot learned about being a punk and about men in prison before finally being released from jail at which time he had one marketable skill and one marketable skill only – cooking, and he thought about one thing and one thing only – leaving the country, and he did one thing and one thing only – walk to K-Mart, put on a pair of girls underpants in the changing room where he left his dirty prison pair, pull on his jeans to hide them and walk out of the store and out to the highway and into a truck and into another truck and eventually into Canada and into a grill cook's job at a Pug Wash diner called the Maritime and into ownership by default when Phil Giovanni ran off with the octogenarian waitress from nowhere, who, I kid you not, till the day she died at the age of eighty-six, styled her hair in a beehive and wore a double-knit yellow waitress dress complete with white apron no matter what the occasion. You might wonder if a

store the size of K-mart would miss one pair of girls underwear, and I will briefly tell you that the answer is yes, and thus, our Frank Scott, ex-con, pervert, and restaurant owner, left the country only after indirectly causing a girl named Susie to be severely reprimanded and accused of having sex with an ex-con in the changing room and allowing him to walk off in new girls underpants thus causing Susie, only seventeen at the time, to become very confused about the connection between sex and underpants and to remain untouched well past her twenty-fifth year, and, when finally giving herself away, could not stop yelling at her thrusting partner, "Dirty prison boy, do me, dirty prison boy, do me like the dirty prison boy's dog bitch that I am!" But do not feel sad for Susie for she is not a character in our tale but simply a road bump along the trail that needed to be traversed and thus has been and will be left for another spinner to carry on to its finale which I will hint is not good but what naturalistic story is?

III

Where in our story is Fantine and Cosette? Where is the honorable and virtuous Monseigneur Bienvenu, Bishop of D----? And what about Frank Scott becoming the mysterious and philanthropic mayor of M---- sur M----? When will the cloistered sisters come into play? And what revisitation would be complete without the mighty Javert, whom we have already met, as if my subtleties of craft have not exposed this, in the form of a big black guy who's name can no longer be denied to you and thus shall be stated in all honesty as Getty Brown, and it was this very same Getty Brown who, if it is recalled, was involved in that situation which lead to Phil Giovanni's elopement with the beehived octogenarian from nowhere, for back at that Independence Day picnic, way way back on that boring day when Getty Brown, with nothing better to do but listen to the siren calls of a dilapidated barn, decided to spread seed, most of it fell into Phil Giovanni's wife, in fact enough of it fell into Phil Giovanni's wife that Nikki Giovanni was conceived, and poor Phil, until the day before he decided to spill his own

seed onto and into our now famous pancake character, the beehived octogenarian from nowhere, believed his daughter to be the apple of his paternal eye, but finally was forced to see the worm in said apple and eat it down along with the brown mushy stuff that nice firm Red Delicious apples eventually develop into, and as the narrator of this story it seems to be my responsibility here to recount the events of Phil's conversation about the brown apple, if you will, which was held late at night after the consumption of several too many beers and a few too many insults from Demi Giovanni concerning what a worthless piece of crap husband would own a worthless piece of crap restaurant in a worthless piece of crap town like Pug Wash, Nova Scotia, and after Phil's reply that the only man who'd do such a thing would also pack up his only real possession, his daughter, and skippy-doodle right out of the fucking town at any fucking time he might fucking feel like it, and at this crude and obscene language, which Demi Giovanni, although used to it by this point, never liked, she told Phil Giovanni that which he never dreamed he would hear, that which no father would ever dream of hearing, that which no one in their right mind would ever say, that his daughter was the milkman's kid and that the milkman was a big black guy currently on his way from Indiana at her invitation to pound his scrawny little ass into the pizza oven and serve him with extra cheese to the clams at the bottom of the Northumberland Strait which by the way is rumored to have the warmest eastern seaboard Atlantic waters north of the Carolinas so that being stuck with a bunch of clams while covered in extra cheese is without a doubt not an enviable position in which to find oneself, at least the water should not be too cold, but the water temperature was the last of Phil Giovanni's thoughts for no one, not even a big black guy was going to pound him into a pizza oven and further, no two-timing-whore-wife was going to get away with screwing over Phil Giovanni, at least not without getting a black eye and a broken rib and beat and bruised and thus Demi Giovanni got these things and lost a shit-head husband to a beehive octogenarian from nowhere, and

when her injuries healed and she was beaten again and when those healed and she was beaten again and when those healed and so on and so forth it became apparent to Phil Giovanni that he and his beehive octogenarian from nowhere were getting nowhere in Pug Wash and so they got the hell out and the hell into a VW microbus and the hell into Maine where they settled and refused to pay federal or state taxes on the measly money they earned raising wild blueberries and selling dead people's retirement Zippos at flea markets and are thus currently under investigation by the IRS but not due to be busted for several more years and therefore will be left alone to eat blueberry pie and blueberry muffins and spill seed and set up flea market tables next to guys with duct taped vans and packs of discount-brand cigarettes in their shirt pockets and talk about whatever flea-market-people talk about other than the weather and how they can't come down quite as much as you would like them too but they will come down, ironically, exactly half of your offer and thus sell you a fifty-cent chair for fifty dollars when they asked seventy-five and you offered twenty-five.

But poor beaten and battered Demi formerly Giovanni and now Demi Ross (which was not her maiden name but a name she thought was O.K. to use as an alias in case this were to become a story for she always believed her family was innocent and wanted above all else to keep them out of it, and I respect the wishes of a dead woman and therefore acquiesce to calling her Ross) was left with the forlorn Maritime Diner and a big black guy named Getty Brown on his way from Indiana with the hopes of finding his long lost lover and spilling some more seed but without the foggiest notion of the results of the seeds he had already spilt, and thus not all that sure why, out of the blue, Demi would call him and why out of the blue he would decide to pack up and forget his apartment and drive to Pug Wash, Nova Scotia for a retirement life with a girl he vaguely remembered as being an average lay and not much more than an average looker. But when one sits in one's apartment, alone and retired, for long enough and stares at the T.V. and reads the daily paper, which never seems to change

after a while, one starts to float away into the land of the dead, and it takes very little to pull one back, just a chance at a change in routine, just a shot in the dark of something different of a maybe-I-can-still-do-something-fun-before-it's-all-over, of that million-dollar check that has been waiting for you all your life, that you've wanted more than anything and that you've convinced yourself that if you waited long enough, put in your time long enough, held out one more day, that your doorbell would ring and you would be the proud winner of the contest, and maybe that is why he went, maybe Getty Brown thought, "Hey my turn. I spent forty years overseeing the scum of the earth, kicking shit-heads and misfits up and down the corridors of the Indiana State Pen, and now maybe I get my turn, my shot," and so with this in mind, and who can blame him, the big black guy known as Getty Brown, retired prison guard, packed his things into the back of a Buick, put his retirement Zippo in his front pocket, and began the trek to Pug Wash, Nova Scotia, to his castle-in-the-sky, to his million-dollar baby who wants him or at least told him so on the phone, and although the trip took much longer than expected for leases had to be broken and money had to be gathered and the Buick had to be repaired, and tolls had to be paid, and seed had to be spilt, and blueberries had to be eaten, and photographs had to be taken, and Getty Brown was in no hurry, if Demi Giovanni waited this long she certainly would wait another few months which she did albeit badly bruised. Traveling is fun, and for a man who had never traveled beyond the border states of Indiana, it was going to be especially fun.

And thus with this revision told and up to date, we, the clever twentieth century readers of fiction begin to realize that stories never begin and never end, that history teachers lack insight, that history does repeat itself in an unending series of continuous feed loops with only the names changing and the situations changing, but the outcomes remaining the same, and here, as you might imagine, I, your humble Dante, leading your mind through this retelling, can force-disguise the similarities no

longer and must set down here the naked truth about Frank Scott, our Jean Valjean, our girls underpants wearer, our ex-con, our now peaceful owner of the Maritime Diner and banger of Nikki Giovanni, oh, that's right, but not in a bad way, for she has discovered the thrill of being banged by a guy wearing girls underpants and although she was rigid and frigid to the idea at first and it almost tore them apart, Frank Scott rightly talked her into trying it just once for he knew one shot was all he'd need to convince her that once you get it from a guy wearing girls underpants, you don't look for it anywhere else which is exactly what Nikki Giovanni no longer had to do for before letting Frank Scott bang her, she could tell you about the ceiling in all but six of the seventy-two houses that were within the Pug Wash town limits including three of the houses that belonged to God which is not to imply the omnipotent screw but simply the location of the man in cloth with his pants down around his ankles, singing "Be Not Afraid" and plugging Nikki Giovanni across the altar. But Frank Scott had been in prison, and he had no right to ask for a virgin in Nikki Giovanni, nor did he get one, but he did get a reformed polygamist without the papers who now, although lusted after on every corner and in every church, ignored the men of Pug Wash and for the first time in her life revelled in sexual fulfillment. It must be stated at this point that the men of the town, although separately banging Nikki Giovanni, never doubled up on her and, being respectable men of the town, they never played kiss and tell, and therefore only internally felt jealous of Frank Scott and not outwardly which might have allowed them to organize and run the ex-con out of business which they would have done had they known he was an ex-con, a pervert of nature, and had his Big Plate Special not been so damn good and so damn cheap.

And so Phil Giovanni owned the Maritime Diner and Frank Scott quietly worked the grill, banging who he thought was the owner's daughter and whistling while he worked for his past was gone and his future, although not too promising, at least seemed to hold serenity, for if Frank Scott were to have cracked open a fortune

cookie then, he knew the fortune would have said, “What was bad yesterday can be good today,” or if Frank Scott were then to have gazed into a crystal ball he felt sure the oracle would have revealed sunny skies ahead. Yes, he felt complacently good about his situation and then, with Phil Giovanni leaving the diner to become his through default, he felt even better about his situation and, in fact, on the day a big black guy named Getty Brown walked in and stole two Big Plate Specials and then came back to steal lunch, Frank Scott was practicing his proposal speech, for if our tale were a comedic one it would end in a marriage, and thus Frank Scott, sure everything was fine, believed himself to be the antagonist and the protagonist in a masterfully fun comedy, but comedies avoid death and it is death that I sadly must report to you now for it was death who visited Pug Wash, Nova Scotia between Getty Brown’s two Big Plate Specials and his burger and fries on that rainy Tuesday.

How death? Whose death? The reader wants to know and all I can give are the facts as told by Getty Brown to the Pug Wash police as they watched the white sheeted stretcher being carried out of the Giovanni home and looked at the naked outline of the freshly made and freshly dead Demi (Giovanni) Ross loaded into the ambulance/hearse and driven away to Robinson’s Funeral Home (were I will spare the details of the embalment, showing, and interment for had you cared that much for the poor woman you would have at least sent flowers and inquired into the matter before this point) and with this being done to Demi (Giovanni) Ross’s corpse, Getty Brown gave the following statement: “Yeah I called you guys. No, I didn’t know her. Well, yes, just in from Indiana. No, she invited me into her house. Yes, she wanted to do it. No, I didn’t strangle her. Well, I guess I was too much for her to handle. Some girls just can’t take a man like me. No, she wasn’t into anything kinky. Look, I’m a retired prison guard from Indiana just trying to have a little vacation. O.K., you have a good day too.” But what did Getty Brown really know about the death of Demi

(Giovanni) Ross? What did he know when he walked into the Maritime Diner after he went to Demi's home? And did she tell him about the apple of his blind eye?

If this were a T.V. show, I, your humble tale-spinner, would tell you to tune in next time, but it is a story and that is why books are better than T.V. because you can decide when to continue until next time instead of allowing some executive at NBC to make the call and thus I will not keep you in suspense beyond this point and instead I will tell all and start with the ringing of the doorbell and the naked Demi (Giovanni) Ross who received her big black guy guest with a moist little kiss and without talk, and without reintroductions, pulled him into her room, ripped off his clothes and did him until he was spent and then did him some more until all her anticipation and anger and secrecy and passion and excitement that had been building inside her for the last thirty years was burnt down to smoldering cinders and with his joy now in her, finally said, "It's good to see you, Getty Brown, I've missed you more than you'll ever know. No man has felt right in me since I had you and now it feels right again." To which Getty Brown smiled, and although not really concurring that no woman had been better than Demi (Giovanni) Ross, he told her he did and they both smiled and kissed and napped and freshened themselves and did it again after which they kissed and napped and freshened themselves and Demi Giovanni asked Getty Brown if he was hungry and he said no that he had already eaten at the Maritime Diner and by the way did she know the punk who worked down there named Frank Scott and yes, as a matter of fact she did and why would he ask, well because he knew the punk too, from his prison guard days and he knew why the punk was in prison and he wondered if the punk was still a pervert to which Demi (Giovanni) Ross wondered why would he ask such a silly question and why would he call him a punk, to which Getty Brown responded because he is a punk, a ferry, a queeny, a favorite girlboy in the pen, a cross-dresser, to which Demi (Giovanni) Ross stiffened her entire body and said, Frank Scott's a cross-dresser, to which Getty Brown replied that he probably was

wearing a lacy pair of girls underpants as they spoke, to which Demi (Giovanni) Ross stiffened even further till her entire body was rigid and rigor mortis was already beginning, and right before the last breath had gone out of the poor creature who never really knew the husband of her child, who was beaten and left in Pug Wash, alone, to fend for herself, to finally get back to the man of her dreams only to have him tell her this, screamed, “Our daughter’s fucking a pansy!” and died.

Now reader, you surely can’t hold it against Getty Brown that he did not tell this story to the police. Who would? He was not even sure yet if he understood the part about “our daughter” but with time it all made sense, but cops never give you time and so you lie so they will not mess with you and Getty Brown knew all about cops.

IV

It is time to wrap up this tale of perversity in Pug Wash, Nova Scotia and the best wrap up is the most concise so without further ado, I will list the outcomes of our characters in typical George Eliot *Middlemarch* fashion and why not start with those less important or minor characters who too have a life but simply not an important life to this story but need to be remembered has people like Getty Brown and Frank Scott with stories behind their lives, but stories which you simply have yet to read, but what about Susie Girl? Susie Girl, according to a story I read last December, ended up married to her first who although a conservative dental hygienist from Topeka, Kansas, fell in love with her dirty talk and decided that once you find a girl who dirty talks you ought to keep a hold of the good thing and not let it slip through your fingers and onto the floor to be banged by some other guy who will recognize the value of a dirty talker, but more should be said about Susie Girl and is in this story I read, but it will suffice here to say that she is reasonably happy, still working at K-Mart but now raising three children the youngest of whom is slightly delayed and that her life is

about to be bitten in two by that same ravenous dog that munched into our own Frank Scott.

Phil Giovanni attended the beehived octogenarian's funeral, alone, and walked from her grave side back to his VW Microbus and was never heard from again, although there are rumors of a new diner open in Yellow Knife, but I haven't made it up there to see for myself. If you do go and find a diner run by a guy known as Phil, please let me know, it might make this story a bit more complete.

But what about the major players in the tale? What about Nikki Giovanni? Frank Scott? Getty Brown? All three now pass their days in Pug Wash, Nova Scotia, at the Maritime Diner. Nikki Giovanni is now Nikki Scott and serves food while wearing a yellow double knit waitress dress and white apron and recently decided to wear her hair in a beehive, and Frank Scott still stands at the grill and scrapes off the grease and cooks Big Plate Specials, and Getty Brown still sits in the diner and eats three squares a day for free which Nikki thinks is done out of respect to her mother who Getty Brown was the last to see before she died but in reality is done in some weird form a blackmail for although never spoken, Frank Scott and Getty Brown have an agreement that as long as Getty Brown gets free food, Frank Scott will not be exposed as the pansy that Getty Brown knows him to be, and this, my friends, is where we pull away and look at the big picture and as the shot gets wider and the theme music begins playing and right before the credits begin to roll, we must take a brief moment and ponder the questions of how long a man must pay for his sins, and how long a father-in-law can eat for free at the Maritime Diner.