

“Noble Encounters”

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by The Delvings

George Delving always marked the stages of his life by the people he met. Whether good or bad, college-educated or schooled at Hard Knock U., ancient or infant, he could gauge the progress of his life by the people he bumped into.

So it was a special day in George's life when he crossed the parking lot outside the building where he worked, maneuvered gingerly up the ice-covered low rise, and passed the dozen or so police cars that spread out like seed spilling out of a bag of corn, just outside the entrance of the shuttered Day's Inn. For the better part of six months now, police officers had been using the soon-to-be-demolished 400-room location for tactical officer training, including using police dogs and officers dressed as 'perpetrators.'

As George negotiated the icy incline, he watched two officers load ammunition into real weapons from the trunk of a squad car, a trunk packed with enough ammo and firearms to keep most hunters happy for a month (most hunters, that is). "Is there an officer in charge here?" George was able to say, as the officers' steely gaze bore down on him.

"Try up at the front," a burly one said, never missing a beat as he popped more 9 mm shells into one of his eight ammo clips.

Trying to appear as casual as his sliding feet would permit, George gained the top of the hill and approached three men, two apparently dressed as 'perps' from the look of their ratty jeans and knit caps.

"Say, I was wondering if one of us lowly civilians can watch what goes on in there," George began. "I'm something of a writer, and an experience like this is much more educational than reruns of 'NYPD Blue.' Probably funnier, too"

"Sorry, chief," the larger of the two 'perps' replied, his face crowned by a wide red nose and his thumbs dug into a belt supporting a belly like W. C. Fields. "We do some pretty sensitive things in there, and we wouldn't want to give away too much to John Public." He added with a perfectly condescending, "You understand."

Before George had time to shoot back with a patented Delving retort, the uniformed officer next to him added, "But you could ask Captain Hiesenberg. He's right in there," he said, pointing with a meaty finger at a man beyond the plate glass entranceway.

"Thanks. I think I will," George said, smiling. The three officers followed as he entered the once elegant lobby, now trashed beyond belief. Standing behind the front desk like an actor from POLICE ACADEMY who wandered by mistake onto the set of DIE HARD IV, a distinguished gentleman with close-cropped hair and the elegant air of a professional oversaw a dozen portable radios and other electronic gear. The only thing that kept him from looking the part of the perfect maitre d' was the Glock .357 strapped to his belt. *I guess you don't yell for room service too loudly at this establishment*, George thought to himself.

After handing him his card and repeating his request, George got a more polite reply from Officer Hiesenberg. "Maybe we can fit you in later today," he said, "though we're really kind of busy today. Lot's of special things we have to take care of. You understand." George wanted to ask what exactly it was in his appearance that made every police officer seem to think that George understood them so well. "But we'll try to call you later." Which, George clearly did understand, was a polite but firm "no."

"Well, thanks anyway," George said as he turned to go. He paused, turned back to the large perp that had first tried to dissuade him and added, "Take this one down hard today."

A wall of laughter rolled out of the lobby as George departed, never once needing to look back at the perp's now crimson face. Of course, they never called, but George considered himself fortunate to meet some of them face-to-face.

Later that day, as George and Kara commuted home up Lima Road (which George continued to pronounce as if it were the bean and not the Peruvian city), cruising at a leisurely 64 with the rest of the SUV crowd, they were passed by a storm of unmarked and marked police cars that literally flew by, doing at least 90. The lead car's driver bore the unmistakable W. C. Fields nose and belly.

"I wonder where they're going in such a hurry?" Kara asked.

"No idea," George replied aloud, then added in a mere whisper, "Good thing they didn't recognize the car."