

I thank you for this honour, by far the best thing that has happened to any story I've written so far. I say "so far" because this is encouragement to keep going, and writers, just like real people in real jobs, need support and incentive. Please, keep encouraging writers as you have done for many years.

J K Galbraith and I share a Scots heritage, but little else. His forebears were farmers, mine fishermen. He became a world-renowned economist and looked for truth in figures; as a geologist I bashed rocks with a hammer and looked for gold. He wrote books on economics; I write fiction .... And I really think I should stop there.

My story is the first I've written from the point of view of a woman, a strong and rather headstrong woman. I suspect she is my wife in disguise, although my wife May, who is also Scots, would probably disagree by saying something pithy.

### **DADDY'S GIRL – Ken McBeath**

My brother committed suicide on the 20<sup>th</sup> of December, and my first thought wasn't "Why?" It was "Why didn't he wait until the 25<sup>th</sup>?" It would have upset Dad much more to have to identify the body on Christmas Day".

Then I figured out the labyrinthine path my brother's thoughts probably took. He had wanted to make both of us suffer. I was in northern Thailand. It would take at least a day, taking account of the time difference, for the news to get through, and another day for me to reach Bangkok if everything worked as it should. One or two days' travel assuming I could get flights almost immediately, and I would get home on Christmas Eve. Perfect, from the perspective of a manic depressive with a vicious streak.

Dad met me at the airport, and he looked old and grey. He hugged me, then held my shoulders and smiled at me, grubby and bedraggled from travel. "You look wonderful, Anna. Tanned and gorgeous."

I kissed him. "And you look just the same as ever, Dad. You never change." We were both lying, and we both knew it.

I'd almost forgotten how cold and damp it could be at this time of year, and I'd no warm clothes. Dad, ever thoughtful, had brought a spare winter jacket that swamped me, but kept the

wind off in the brief walk to the car park.

I burrowed into the jacket until the car warmed up, then asked him, “When is the funeral?”

“The twenty seventh, the earliest it could be after you got home. Service in the chapel, then the crematorium, and I've arranged with the Colonial Hotel for drinks and sandwiches afterwards”.

Very civilised. Especially the crematorium. That circumvented the need for a graveside service and a headstone with the attendant lies “Much loved son and brother” or “Gone to a Better Place”. I remembered a song bellowed out by some British students at the government guest house after several beers on a warm tropical evening:

“Look at the mourners, bloody great hypocrites,  
Isn't it grand, boys, to be bloody well dead ...”

The Americans in the group had appeared totally bewildered and responded with a faltering rendition of “Row, row, row your boat, gently down the stream ...”

The house was just the same as I'd last seen it nearly three years ago. There was plenty of food, presumably brought in by kind neighbours. Dad had been a favourite target of the local widows and divorcees since Mother died, although my brother's occasional presence had mostly kept them at a wary distance.

We got through the next days of polite and well-meaning callers, and refused several invitations to join families for their Christmas meal. Dad and I talked and read by the fire, comfortable conversations punctuated by long amiable silences. For the first time in many years, the ring of the telephone was not a sound to dread. There was nothing else we needed to do. We walked in the green belt, muffled up in winter clothes, and I told him about Christmas in the hill country near the Burmese border. He talked of his work, some recent cases he had solved and one or two he hadn't, and there was a very brief mention of the difficulty of being a fairly senior detective with a drug-addicted criminal for a son.

Eventually the twenty seventh arrived. The pastor was mercifully brief and had

obviously been warned not to eulogise the departed too lavishly. The coffin rolled away silently and the curtains closed behind it. Despite myself I felt a pang of loss. He'd been the bane of our lives, but he was still family.

As we paused to shake hands with the mourners drifting out of the chapel I could pick out my brother's friends easily. They were reasonably well-dressed, most of them, but their eyes gave them away. They couldn't maintain contact, and the gaze slid away to the side or fastened on my breasts as they mumbled the usual words. There were also a lot of cops - big ones, smaller ones, hard-eyed, gentle, some who might be wonderful companions in different circumstances, and some who looked as dangerous as any criminal.

Not many of my brother's friends elected to join us at the Colonial. Presumably, sharing food and drink with a bunch of cops would curtail their enjoyment of the free booze. A very few brazened it out, and one of them stopped me in the corridor as I returned from the washroom.

“Anna. I was a good friend of your brother.” He wore a suit, was well-scrubbed, and looked solid and strong. His handshake confirmed it, although he tried to be gentle. “I'm Jake Carew. I'd like to talk to you about him some time when you feel up to it”.

“Thank you. But I really don't want to talk about him. He and I had been estranged for quite a few years. I'm really only here to support my father.”

He stared at me. “Yes. He told me about you.” His eyes were cold, and they held mine, didn't slide away. “I still want to talk to you.”

“No. Thank you, but no.” I turned to walk away.

“He owed me money. Quite a lot of money.”

I stopped, briefly. “If I find anything about that when I go through his things, I'll make sure you get what's owing to you.” I rejoined the crowd, and didn't see him again.

Much later, Dad and I had a last drink before bed, and I told him about Carew. “I don't know that name,” he said. “Tomorrow I'll check the videotapes with you at the station, and you can point him out”.

It took a second to register, and then even I was scandalised. “Dad. You didn't film your

own son's funeral, surely?"

"Certainly. One of them could have driven him to commit suicide. If so, I want to get the bastard". He sipped his whisky. "Besides, a collection of mid-range villains like that is too good an opportunity to miss. We can update our rogue's gallery".

"But that can't be legal, surely?"

"Why not? I simply want a record of my son's last day on this earth".

I sat there, silent and a bit stunned. I had always known that he was tough, but this was over the top. It was cold-blooded, not what I would have expected from my wonderful Dad.

He looked at me over the rim of his glass. "Anna, your brother was plain bad, quite apart from the depression. He put me through hell for many years. I tried everything I knew to straighten him, even bent the rules a few times. Nothing worked. I have no illusions about him".

Next morning I spent an hour with my Dad going over the tapes, and pointed out Carew. Dad just shook his head. "No, don't know him, but then I'm not drug squad. Maybe he's new. I'll ask around". And that was all.

Dad had plenty of time owing him, so he took a few days off work and in between long walks we went through my brother's stuff together. There really wasn't much. A little stash of marijuana that Dad threw on the fire, and a notebook with cryptic comments which Dad slipped into his pocket when he thought I wasn't looking. The clothes, the better stuff, went into bags for the Salvation Army until the wardrobe and the tallboy were empty. Then Dad got serious, and I saw the other side of him, the professional side he'd kept from me all these years. He pulled all the drawers out of the tallboy and checked the undersides. He dragged the mattress and pillows into the garage and slit them wide open before bagging them for Dumpmasters. When he had opened all the power sockets and light fixtures in the bedroom and I thought there was nothing left to check, he started on the rest of the house, first the attic, then the cellar, and finally the spare bedrooms.

That's when he found, under a rug in the room I was using, a small section of wooden floor with a little less dust in the cracks than the rest of it. A section of wall trim lifted fairly

easily to show a hole in a floorboard where a screw could be twisted in to make a handle.

The package was fairly solid, carefully wrapped, and it held just over \$90,000 in hundreds and fifties and a few twenties. When we finished counting at the kitchen table, Dad just sat back and reached for his glass of whisky. His eyes were dark and troubled.

“That's what Carew wanted, isn't it?” I asked.

He nodded. “Presumably. Trouble is, it puts me in a difficult position. If I turn it in, your brother's memory is blackened even more, because this pretty well proves that he was dealing, not just using”.

I realised that he was leaving unsaid the personal angle, that he would suffer professionally. His own son dealing drugs, and keeping the proceeds right under Dad's nose. It wouldn't help his career.

“I had a call from Charlie Robinson yesterday”, he said. “Carew is relatively new on the scene here. He takes delivery of batches of hard drugs, then parcels them out to his pushers immediately, so they are never in his possession for long. The mid-level pushers like your brother have a specific time in which to sell the stuff and get the money back to him. If they are late, or hold back, they are punished”. He sipped again, thoughtfully. “He's quite ruthless, but contracts out the punishment to selected thugs. Never gets his hands dirty.”

“Can't you catch him?”

“We're trying, but he's clever as well as ruthless”.

“What are you going to do with that?” I nodded at the piles of bills.

He started to pack them up again, clamping them tightly together with elastic bands. “I don't know yet. It's got to be handed in, of course. There's no getting away from that. It's dirty money”.

I put my hand on his. “Don't say anything just yet, Dad”. I realised I was pleading, and I didn't like it. “Let's take the weekend to think how we'll do it”.

He looked a bit surprised, but then he nodded agreement, and I realised just how worried he was about this illegal money. “We'll put it back where it was for now. But Monday morning

it goes to the station". He took my hand and kissed it. "Thanks for your support, little one. It makes a big difference, you know".

That was a Wednesday. I had a lot of work to do in the next few days.

Next morning I was up with the lark, made breakfast for both of us, dropped Dad off at the station, and then got down to business with pencil and paper. In between researching and making telephone calls, I tried to remember the names of Craig Gilmour's old friends in The Unit. Johnny Diver was the one I remembered best, only Diver wasn't his real name. What the hell was it? I shelved it to the recesses of my mind where it could germinate, sipped cooling coffee, and drifted off into memories of my best days and nights with Craig.

He'd been dead nearly four years now, I realised with a shock. It didn't seem that long. The memories were still fresh. The memories and the pain. I supposed I should be grateful that Craig had hesitated to marry me, but instead I felt a vague resentment. We could have had a little more time, not much, but at least a honeymoon, and a few more memories to keep me company in the lonely times. But he'd been a hard man in a very hard unit, determined ... Johnny Statler. That was the name I was looking for. Called Johnny Diver because that was his speciality in Craig's Troop. I grabbed the phone book again.

An hour of frustration, and I had him on the line. He was incountry right now and agreed to meet me. Some good luck was coming my way at last. Revived, I tackled my notes and the telephone once more, then headed out in Dad's ancient Volvo for the three hour road trip.

We met that evening in the Forlorn Hope close to the base, and Johnny looked just the same as I remembered from the funeral, only he was in civvies this time. His blond hair was still unruly, he still hardly had to shave, and he looked about eighteen. I caught a few disapproving looks from women who thought I was cradle robbing.

We kissed as old friends do, ordered a dark beer each just as in the old days, and caught up with our lives in the last few years - as far as Johnny was able to tell me, which wasn't much. He was the clown of the unit, but as tight-lipped as any of them where security was concerned, so all I found out was that most of the old crowd were still together. Doug was out on disability,

a casualty of the same cave battle that had killed Craig. Some of the other guys were on courses, but still around. It was like pulling teeth. Johnnie lapsed into silence once more and looked expectantly at me.

I laid my hand lightly over his. "Johnny, do you remember at Craig's funeral you said that if ever I needed help, you'd be there for me?"

His blue eyes sparkled with sudden animation. He looked like a naughty schoolboy. "Who do you want killed?"

I laughed. "Nobody. Really. But I could use use some backup. I have to meet a man who might be quite annoyed with me."

He flipped his hand under mine and caught my finger. "Can I beat him up a little?"

I laughed again. "Only if he threatens me. And don't get caught. You are not to endanger your career."

He was serious for a couple of seconds. "I promise. Tell me what you'd like me to do."

The Last Trump was a coffeehouse with a vaguely Christian theme, popular with serious youngsters who would be horrified to learn that Johnny's unit had sometimes used it for undercover meetings with their more dodgy contacts. There were a couple of back exits handy for a fast getaway if necessary. It had been compromised a few months back, and the unit didn't use it any more. I parked a half kilometre away and walked.

It was nearly empty but Jake Carew was already there, even though I had come early. He was sitting with his back to a wall and had two coffees on the table. He stood politely and shook my hand. I ignored his offer of the spare coffee, and ordered another from a young waitress with soft eyes and a gentle voice.

He smiled. "I haven't added anything to it, you know." The smile didn't reach his eyes.

"My Dad's a cop, remember. He's taught me well." I knew all about the dangers of rohypnol and was taking no chances with this man.

He nodded, acknowledging. We talked until my coffee came, mostly about my brother,

fairly harmless stuff. As the waitress turned away, a man approached our table. He was medium height and wiry, dark haired, with a cross crudely tattooed on the back of his right wrist.

“Anna? It is Anna isn't it?” He smiled broadly and I caught a glimpse of a gold tooth just off-centre. How the hell had Johnnie managed that? The dyed hair and the tattoo were easy, but a gold tooth?

“Yes, I'm Anna.” I managed to sound slightly puzzled. He put his hand out, and I shook it.

“John Slater. I was a couple of years behind you at school.” He laughed quietly. “I've changed a bit, I know.”

“Oh, Lord, I'm sorry. I didn't recognise you, John. It's been too many years. By the way, this is Jake Carew.”

Jake stood to shake hands, and I saw him stiffen just a bit. Craig used to say that shaking hands with Johnny was like greeting an oak tree. His hands were like blocks of carved hardwood.

“Won't you join us, John? Jake and I have a couple of minutes of business to discuss, and I'd really like to catch up with your news.”

He shook his head. “No, you go ahead and finish your business, and then we can talk. I'll wait over here.” And he wandered off to a table a few feet away where he could keep watch. If Jake was suspicious of an old school friend turning up at that moment, he didn't show it, and I didn't much care.

“You have strange friends, Anna.” Jake sipped his coffee, his eyes never leaving me. “That looks like a prison tattoo on his wrist.”

“John isn't a friend. Never was. We just knew each other at school. I heard he had got into some trouble, but I don't know what.”

He nodded, seemingly satisfied for the moment. “Let's get down to business.”

This was crunch time. Oddly enough, I wasn't too worried about the next few minutes, not with Johnny nearby. What troubled me far more was the row looming with my father when

he discovered what I had done. He was going to go ballistic, and I'd only seen him really mad a couple of times in my life. It wasn't pretty. But when he calmed down, I'd talk him 'round. I always could. I was Daddy's Girl.

“Before we start, I'd like to know what you do for a living.” I was more interested in the quality of his lies.

“I'm a rep. for a pharmaceutical company,” he said. The sheer impertinence of this took me aback, but I recovered quickly - I hoped.

“I suppose that explains the BMW and the Rolex. You must be good.” I looked him in the eye and toadied with a will. “I do appreciate the understated elegance, the mid-range Beamer, the stainless steel Rolex. I detest ostentation.”

He smiled rather grimly and said nothing.

“You already know that my brother and I didn't get along.” He nodded, and I went on. “He almost destroyed my father's life, and I got the hell out of the country to be away from him. He was a drug addict, and a dealer.”

I watched Carew closely, but he didn't react. “You said he owed you money, but I could find no proof of that.” Carew was about to interrupt, but I held up a hand. “But I did find money, hidden quite well..” He relaxed just a fraction. I lifted my bag from the floor, and he relaxed a touch more.

When he saw the envelope he started to smile, but as he realised that it was far too slim to hold ninety thousand dollars, the smile slipped and his face twisted as the muscles around his jaw knotted.

“What is this? What the f ...”

That was as far as he got before a low growl came from Johnny's direction, a sound of animal savagery. The sweet waitress nearly lost her tray, recovered quickly, and scooted for the kitchen.

“I want you out of my life, and my father's. The money's gone, handed out to a few charities, ones who help people kick addictions, get kids back to their homes, that sort of thing.”

I smiled at him, all innocence. “But I do have something for you. I've probably broken a few laws doing this, and you can complain to the police if you like. I'm sure they would be interested in hearing from you.”

I handed him the envelope. He took it gingerly, as though it might be a summons, then ripped it open. He pawed through the slips of paper, and his puzzlement slowly turned to fury.

I closed my bag and stood. Carew jumped up, then froze as Johnny uncoiled from his chair like a king cobra with prey in its sights. “John,” I said. “Why don't we go somewhere more congenial, and catch up on our news?”

He smiled. “Sure”.

Then he turned to Carew and the menace was visible and audible. “Nice to meet you. Maybe we'll meet again. Somewhere.” Carew obviously did a mental calculation and decided that Johnny was just too tough for him to try his luck. He stayed where he was.

A block away, the reaction set in and I started to shake. Johnny put an arm around my shoulders and asked, “What were those bits of paper he was looking at?”

“Tax receipts, in his name.”

Johnny started to laugh quietly.

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