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**Gargoyle magazine is edited by Richard Peabody & Lucinda Ebersole.**

## Saturne Monsieur

**Des Dillon**

Amateur fortnight. That's what Connie called Christmas and New Year. She was three years sober and I was three months. Worked in the rehab where I detoxed. She figured a holiday would get us away from the violence and mayhem in Scotland and give us a chance to get to know each other.

—Our bad points, she said and laughed.

—You've not got any bad points, I said.

It was Maramis and it looked beautiful. There was a big Marina with yachts and boats that cost millions. And a Bazaar. What I didn't like was all the hasslers trying to drag us into restaurants.

—Breakfast! Full English Breakfast. Come, come eat here so pretty miss.

It was getting me all riled up them tugging and hauling us. I didn't want to make a bad impression on Connie so I smiled and said no thanks.

There was one Hassler I didn't like the look of. He had a ragged scar on his face. I noticed the way he held onto her bare arm. When I stepped out in front of him he gave me a predatory look. I threw him a look back and pulled Connie away. I was glad I hadn't let my jealousy show. Connie's ex-husband hospitalized her once in a fit of jealous rage. She's still got the marks. Once we'd ran the gauntlet the beach was great. Waves were falling on the sand and us on our lie lows reading books about sobriety. What she didn't know about sobriety you could write on the back of a stamp. And Connie was gorgeous. A wee red bikini and she already had a tan from the sunbed in her spare room. Long dark hair and dark eyes. She could've been Turkish in fact. That's when I realized I'd not seen any Turkish women. Except for big fat ones over sixty. I sat up and looked along the beach. It was all Western women in groups or with their men. I wondered where the Turkish women were and asked Connie.

—How—are you fed up with me already?

—No, I was just noticing that we've not seen any.

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That night we walked along the shore to the Bazaar. It was dark and a warm wind was streaming in. The stars were out. You could even see them in the water between the hulls. We looked at all the boats in the Marina and decided what kind we'd get when we made our millions. The lights were on in some and you could see in. These things were like palaces inside. In *Arel* a millionaire with gray hair and a blue shirt said something to two blonde women and they leaned back laughing. Both were dripping in gold.

—How much would one of them change your life? I said.

— It wouldn't change anything.

—What? Sailing about the Med wouldn't change anything? You mad?

—For a while aye, they'd change your life, she said, — But not forever. A boat's not a cure.

She walked away. She had AA answers for everything. If I had a boat like that I'd be fuckin' well cured all right. I watched as she strolled in front of me, her heels clicking in the warm night. Ach—what's a disagreement about boats? I caught up and slipped my arm round her waist.

—Who needs boats? I said, — We don't need boats. Boats don't get you sober.

She squeezed my hand. The tension between us fizzled as we walked over this massive concourse between the Marina and the Bazaar. It was marble. Holidaymakers were gliding across at all angles. Here and there people had set up their wares. Crepes. Chess sets. Spices. Bangles. Little dogs that barked and danced when you walked past. But there was one man who caught my eye. Even from a distance he was something special. He was stood upright beside a telescope and a chair. Standing like a soldier. No not that—like a butler. That's what he was standing like. Like a head butler. He took a silver flask from his pocket and swigged. He was selling something. But there seemed to be no takers.

When we got there he gave a half-bow and swept a white-gloved hand at the telescope. I saw how threadbare his suit was.

—Monsieur Saturne? He said, — Saturne Monsieur.

He could see I was puzzled. He held his white-gloved hands in the sky, framing Saturn for me.

—Saturne? He said, — Saturne Monsieur.

And he pointed to a Turkish coin in his palm to indicate the price. He ushered me into the rickety wooden seat and started fiddling with the telescope. He lined it up.

—Saturne Monsieur, he said and swept his arm like he was opening the curtain at the Moulin Rouge. But a cloud came in and covered the sky. I tried to pay but he refused.

—Non. Non. He said and in French told me to come back when the sky was clear. He stood guard by his telescope looking up waiting for the cloud to pass over. When we reached the Bazaar I turned and he was still in the same position under the weak spotlight of a street lamp.

The Bazaar was a marvellous labyrinth of arched tunnels going everywhere. A maze where you could get lost. And the racket of people. And music. And color. And smell. There was everything you can imagine and a few things you couldn't. Three times we ended up back at the start and only realized it after a minute or two. I didn't mind being pulled and hauled by hasslers in here. That's what Bazaars were all about. That's what you expected. Wanted even, for an authentic holiday. It was as if we'd walked into another city altogether. And back in time. Except for the CDs, DVDs, Nike sweatshirts, and digital radios that is. We asked the price of a rug and when it was translated into twenty-four thousand pounds we panicked. The bald Turk mistook the look on my face for haggling and dropped to twenty-two thousand pounds. We must've looked like boat owners. We waved no and walked away laughing, feeling like we'd pulled something off.

Connie was trying to buy leather face masks at this stall for some of the punters back at the AA meeting. The guy started talking in what I thought was Turkish. But he came closer and I realized it was English. He was nodding at Connie.

—You sell?

—What?

—You sell wife?

—We're not married.

—You sell beautiful wife—how much?

Me and Connie thought it was funny. He started feeling her shoulders like she was an animal at the market. But he was smiling at me all the time and Connie was taking it in good stead so it was hard for me to say anything. I pretended to be enjoying it and asked how much would he give me.

—Come, come, he said, and went through a green door we hadn't seen. I looked at Connie and she was up for it.

In the back were smaller alleys. Darker and echoing with the low buzz of the Bazaar. And other noises far deep inside. And eerie lights. He wasn't there. But then he appeared with a woman we took to be his wife. Wanted to swap her for Connie. He displayed her by turning her once. Then indicated to feel her arms. So I gave the woman's arms a few feels, pushed my bottom lip out and shook my head. I wiggled my fingers at him as much to say, more. Connie couldn't hold her laughing in.

—More? he asked, as if I'd insulted him.

—More, I said.

He went from angry to insulted to gracious, said OK you wait here, left his wife and disappeared into the gloom. I could hear his footsteps stopping then voices.

—I think he's serious Connie, I said.

—No he's not.

—I'm telling you, I think he's fuckin' serious.

His wife kept staring at the floor. Me and Connie stood pulling faces at each other, now and then our feet scratching in the dust. You could see this woman stiffening up as the man came back. He had a girl this time. About the same age as Connie and pretty. He lifted her hair and let it fall. Wanted to give me these two for Connie. The wife, he managed to tell me, could cook and clean and the young one would be good for all the other things. He winked. Connie thought it was great. That it was all crack. But I felt we'd got ourselves in a position. What could I say? No thank you? How insulting is that? He was inspecting Connie again. Touching her thighs, looking at her breasts and making appreciative noises. I knew he expected me to look over the wife and daughter. It was one of the most embarrassing episodes of my life. They just stood there letting me do it. I felt their arms and patted their backs. They smelled of the East. Cinnamon. I didn't dare go near the thighs. Coriander. He had both hands now on Connie's waist and was smiling at me. Saffron. One of his teeth was gold. I shook my head again. I just wanted out of that place. Back into the safe anonymity of the market.

—Money, he said, you want money too?

He started walking away and I got hold of him.

—No. No money. I have to think.

I tapped my head and he tapped his own back. Maybe that means something different in Turkey, I don't know.

—I have to think about it, I said.

—You have to fuckin' think about it? Connie said, teasing me.

I told him we'd come back the next night with our decision. He shook my hand, sent the women into the darkness, and let us go.

We came out that green door into a cacophony of movement and light and let the Bazaar carry us off. When we were far enough away we burst out laughing. Connie was hitting me with the bag of leather faces.

—You were going to give me away for that old woman and her daughter.

—I think he was serious, I said.

That night the sex was amazing.

Next morning we ran the gauntlet. The scarred hassler tried to grab Connie but I pulled her out of the road. On the beach we had a bit of a laugh about how much Connie was worth. We read, discussed all sorts of twelve step books, and slept in the sun till it was going down. That night we decided to go out for a meal and avoid the Bazaar. There might be some law that obliged us to go through with a deal once it had started. I'd forgot about the Frenchman until he was directly in front of us on the concourse.

—Monsieur Saturne? He said, —Saturne Monsieur.

I was about to say yes when Connie seen the wife-seller in the yellow light at the edge of the Bazaar looking out. He stared over towards us. Then he waved, shouted something, and started walking over.

—Come on, she said, and we ran laughing into the Marina.

We got lost among walkways and boats. Decided we couldn't go near the Bazaar again in case one of us was inadvertently sold. We found a secret bay and lay on rocks listening to the sea and looking up to the stars. She was on her back with one leg straight and the other knee up. Her dress had slipped to the top of her thigh and it was turning me on.

—What one is Saturn anyway? She asked.

—Fuck Saturn, I said and jumped on her.

She was giggling and laughing. But we done it right there on that rock. After, we lay back and looked at the stars together. I started to get the feeling that this was the woman I'd spend the rest of my life with.

The next night we were strolling about trying to decide what sort of meal to have. The hassler with the scar grabbed Connie by the arm.

— You eat. You here eat miss. Pretty miss.

His hand on her bare skin. I didn't like it. One from the restaurant across the road got hold of me. Me and Connie were a disconnected tug of war as they swore at each other in Turkish. Connie decided we'd be as well going in the restaurant on her side. We did and left the two hasslers arguing in what sounded like a great language to argue in.

When we were seated I noticed a young Liverpool couple with two kids. His wife was cute and they seemed happy. I hoped I could make Connie happy like that. Then a waiter walked to the Liverpool table. Hovered about smiling. Asking the kids questions so the parents had to respond. You could see they wanted left alone. This waiter he started massaging the woman's shoulders. She kept leaning forward. But he pushed in more. His hands moved onto her neck and back. I could see the decisions on the husband's face. First he was going to attack the Turk. Then he was leaving him alone for the sake of the kids. He looked over at me and I tilted my palms out as if to say— what can you do mate— The waiter got fed up with monosyllabic answers. He went and spoke to the chef and two other waiters. All the time he was looking at holidaymakers and smirking. I knew he was bad-mouthing everybody in that restaurant. Especially the women. I went on about it to Connie but she wasn't interested. She was too busy looking at the menu. And anyway in sobriety it's best to mind your own business.

— You've enough of your own battles to fight, she said.

And I suppose she was right. I lifted the menu and tried to understand what it was all about.

Then.

Up he came.

Connie shivered when he touched her shoulders. The Liverpool guy looked at me. Connie's flesh indented to the pressure of his fingers. Connie's flesh indented.

Flesh.

Indented.

Chaos broke out. I remember my chair scraping on the tiles. The holidaymakers turned. I reached across the table, grabbed his hands and put two wrist locks on him.

—Get your fuckin’ hands off my woman! I shouted.

I flung him into the clatter of an empty table. The chef was first to arrive. He had a blade. I lifted my plate and rammed it into his mouth. It disintegrated into shards and powder. The chef’s feet kept coming but the head went backwards. The knife fell. I stamped and dragged it back. The waiter ran at me. I sprung up and stuck the head right on him. Glasgow kiss. The thud echoed round the place. He curled up whimpering, holding his face.

I heard a siren and thought it might be for me. We left. We didn’t realize another fight had happened outside. We stood to the side to watch the commotion. The cops arrived, and an ambulance. Scarface was being dragged fighting to the cop car. A woman about sixty was on a stretcher; blood running from her head. Her husband was shouting the odds at Scarface. He was going to kill him. What had happened was the two hasslers continued arguing when we went into restaurant. Scarface lifted a rock and flung it. It missed the other hassler and hit an English woman square on the head. She collapsed. I tried to imagine it. Sitting with a spoon halfway to your mouth. Talking to your husband. Relaxed on holiday and bam! A rock sends you onto the floor. It must be what it’s like when a terrorist bomb goes off. When you’re least expecting it. Boom! When you’re relaxed.

I floated out of my dwam and noticed Connie walking away towards the Bazaar. I caught up.

—Don’t go up there, remember the wee guy that wants to buy you, I said.

But there was no answer. I walked beside her. She had her arms folded and her head down so her chin was almost touching her chest. Everybody could see that she’d fell out with me.

—Monsieur Saturne? He said, —Saturne Monsieur.

He guided me to the seat and lined up the telescope. The sky was clear and this time there it was. Saturn. The rings clearly visible. It was beautiful. Floating there in space. It made me feel peaceful.

—Waw! I said, and looked some more. I leaned out from the telescope.

—D’you want a look?

Connie never answered. She kept on staring at the boats. But this time there was something about these boats that made me feel uneasy. The night breeze was blowing the bottom of her dress.



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