



True Stories From A Policeman's Notebook

Turk Parker

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The stories in this book are true, all of them. I wrote down what I saw, and heard. So, for instance, if you want to know if “Ghost Story” is true—it is. I wrote it the way it was told to me, by people who had no reason to lie. But if you want to know if there really was a teacher’s ghost in the window, or if the schoolchildren were just seeing things, you’ll have to make up your own mind. Your opinion on the nature of the actual events is just as good as mine. The only thing I can tell you for sure is that the cops who went there were very, very unsettled by the matter. Some people want to read police stories with a Mickey Spillane theme: a hardened guy with a .38 under his arm and a whiskey glass on his desk, investigating a leggy dame in stiletto heels with a big chest that hides a heart as cold as a pawnbroker’s appraisal. Instead, this book is about the sort of cop who walks through fifty yards of gore and thinks about Socrates while he steps over human body parts. Much of the writing is about philosophy, and theology, and psychology, and such ruminations are there in the hopes of finding some meaning in this ocean of human tears. This book isn’t just about crime. It’s about life. People want to know why I’d write a book like that. How could I? It was easy.

Excerpt from “Black Widow”: She was a mousy-looking dame, with dark brown, stringy hair, about 5 foot 6, and very thin. Chronologically, she was in her mid-thirties, but she looked ten years older. There was nothing about her to make you think that she was either a murderer, a witch, or a sexual predator—but she was in fact all three. She had killed a man during sex, by strangling him. She said it was accidental; some people think that being strangled almost to the point of unconsciousness enhances an orgasm. I am unable to verify that claim. There are certain aspects of sexuality on which I will always have a lack of direct knowledge, and this is one. This strangulation practice has unintentionally resulted in a number of deaths, and this witch’s lover was one. She was convicted of the homicide charge, and had only recently been released from prison. I look at her with astonishment. You would never even notice her if she were passing you by on the street. We took the two young men aside and told them the situation. They hadn’t known the witch had killed someone during sex. The disturbing thing was that they were plainly delighted to hear it. These two guys were not bright boys.

Excerpt from “Aftermath”: One day, my friend was in the bank bathroom, when two robbers came in. They both had guns. They knew the bank had a police teller, but they didn’t know what he looked like. They demanded to know who the cop was. It was their plan to shoot him first, and then rob the bank. But everybody covered for him, and said he wasn’t there. At that moment, my friend emerged from the bathroom, reading a novel, in his civilian clothes indistinguishable from any other customer. He saw the situation, but pretended to be absorbed in his reading, and went out the front door. If you pretend you’re doing something very important, other people take your cues and treat you the way you show them to treat you. It’s as if you’re writing a play, and assigning roles to people—and they spontaneously act as the characters you have assigned to them. In this case, he ignored the robbers, read his novel, and they didn’t stop him as he went out the door. There, he took up a position behind a parked car, and with a huge automatic in his hand, he waited for the robbers. The robbers emerged from the bank and ran across the street. My friend told them to stop. They both shot at him. This was a serious error. Unless you have been practicing, it is very difficult to hit anything with a handgun, except by chance. They missed my friend. But my friend had been practicing, all right, and he shot back

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