

Carry On Corruption

(full version)

A short story by Patrick Mackeown

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Being poor sucks. I've decided that it's better to be rich. Unfortunately there is a difficulty, known as acquisition, which stands between me and my goal. I did telephone Boris Yeltsin to ask him to grant me an oilfield. Then I could buy a football team, like Chelsea. Unfortunately my call was redirected to the Kremlin. Vladimir Putin said three words: "Khodorkovsky, federal jail."

I replied, "I seem to have the wrong number," and terminated my call abruptly.

Foiled, but not deterred, I decided that there must be other ways of getting vast wealth, without working for a living. Swiss banks and off-shore accounts weren't created to make the world look pretty. For homework I set to reading www.beyonddelay.org's report of the US Congress' most corrupt members. You know, I could learn a thing, or two, from these people, I thought. When it comes to barefaced mendacity, and venality, these people have an aptitude which borders on genius.

I'm a thoughtful soul. And, I realised that I'd needed a repository in which to stash my ill-gotten, financial gains. Accordingly I telephoned Saul Robateau, a bank manager, in Belmopan, Belize.

"How much money will you be depositing here in the Caribbean?" the distant financier asked me.

"None, yet," I replied. "I have to steal it first."

"If I can assist in any way," Mr Robateau assured me, "please don't hesitate to ask. In the Garden City, you know, we're perfectly discrete."

I hesitated at that point. I wasn't sure if Robateau was offering to help me purloin the expected cash, or simply to secrete it. And, not being an expert in such matters, I was loath to reveal my ignorance.

"I once had a job working for the UN Oil for Food Programme," I said. "It really ought not to have taken me long to siphon off millions of dollars. The only problem was, that while I was shredding official UN documents, I inadvertently destroyed the project's accounts. Subsequently, I could no longer tell where any of the Iraqi oil money was."

I could hear Saul Robateau sucking his teeth.

"How truly unfortunate," he commiserated. "You ought to have forwarded the funds to Belize, or Switzerland, first, and then shredded the evidence."

"Oh, dear," I wailed. "At this rate I'll never get rich."

"Have you tried fraud?" Robateau suggested.

I was surprised. I've heard of personal service. But, this was very different.

"Fraud?" I said. "Well, actually, no. How would I go about it?"

"It's simple," Robateau explained. "And, it's extraordinarily lucrative. Basically the way it works is: You buy large quantities of technical gizmos and gadgets, in Europe, without paying VAT. And, in order to get rich, you sell them, with VAT added. But, instead of paying the tax to the government, you simply keep it."

**** THE END ****

Post script:

A High Court Judge looked over his bench at me, as I stood handcuffed in his courtroom's dock.

"Have you anything to say before I pass sentence upon you?" he asked.

"No, My Lord," I replied. "Well, except, how did you find out about my crimes?"

"Ah," the recorder replied, shaking his head gently. "Our government offers inducements to foreign bankers who co-operate with tax-fraud investigators. Most democracies tolerate almost any form of villainy. But the one thing none is willing to except is citizens who don't pay their taxes!"

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Mutilation Murders

The torso of a black child has been discovered in London's Kensington Gardens. Detective Chief Inspector Hawthorne and his men quickly discover that the boy was a victim of a ritualistic killing. At Heathrow airport a second child, Jubulani, and his mother disembark from their plane. On his arrival in London Jubulani is kidnapped. A Ju Ju witchdoctor in South London is preparing the new child, Jubulani, to be sacrificed. Hawthorne is racing against time to save the boy.

Midwinter's Children

Georg, a nine-year-old street child, has been captured by human traffickers from Moscow and is about to be sold to a child pornography ring in Amsterdam. Detective Chief Inspector Hawthorne, from Suffolk CID, is on the case...

The Black Daimler

Nexus, a London-based Chinese dissident, learns that his friend was found with an axe embedded in his head. As more of his politically active associates die, he becomes involved in a frantic struggle to understand and defeat the threat to himself and his organisation.

The Expendability Doctrine

Oil tycoon Keith Connors is found dead in the garden of his villa; undoubtedly the work of a pro. His ex-wife flees to Libya, where she is linked to the brutal murder of the White House Trade Representative. In his investigations, Inspector Hawthorne discovers a sinister web of treachery and greed in the international oil business.

The Devil's Brothers

Catherine Bronston, a fifteen-year-old girl, is snatched outside her local swimming pool. The kidnappers, ruthless Albanian mafiosi, issue a ransom demand containing dismembered body parts. Catherine's father fears that the ongoing police investigation could reduce the possibility of her being found alive.

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