

Spring 5-1-2003

It Always Comes Around

William Corvo
College of DuPage

Follow this and additional works at: <http://dc.cod.edu/plr>

Recommended Citation

Corvo, William (2003) "It Always Comes Around," *The Prairie Light Review*: Vol. 23 : No. 2 , Article 39.
Available at: <http://dc.cod.edu/plr/vol23/iss2/39>

This Selection is brought to you for free and open access by the College Publications at DigitalCommons@COD. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Prairie Light Review by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@COD. For more information, please contact koteles@cod.edu.

It Always Comes Around

-William Corvo-

Ray Marconi had a plan for retirement, and executed it exquisitely, right down to changing the brand of cigarettes he smoked. "In and out," he'd say mostly to himself, "And vanish into thin air." And that's exactly what Ray did.

After ten years as a contract killer, Ray had done extremely well for himself, and after a new face and new identity, he disappeared. Now he lived in a modest two-bedroom apartment on the north side of Chicago, in and out, with no witnesses.

As he looked up from his bourbon mist into the mirror behind the bar to admire his new face, he noticed a gorgeous, young tan, brunette with high cheekbones, piercing green eyes and full lips, checking him out. A gentle smile seamed her mouth. Ray turned on his stool to smile back, but she was gone. Her face was familiar, he knew her, but from where? Ray kicked a Newport from the pack lying on the bar with his finger and lit up, then stirred his drink and watched the caramel-colored eddy in the glass, looking for an answer. Ray glanced in (the) mirror again and jumped as an icy shiver crawled over his flesh. His blood ran cold. There she was; not the beautiful young model, but the product of what she had become, a withered hag-like creature with deep set black circles under her eyes, wiry gray streaked hair, open brown festering sores etched into hanging flesh over a skeletal frame. She winked and smiled at him. When he turned again she was gone.

He dragged deeply on the cigarette and stirred the bourbon, staring into the mouth of the glass, afraid to look in the mirror; he exhaled slowly and watched the smoke weave its way into the fabric of a thick gray quilt that hung over the bar. Rita Spellman, he remembered, and said in a whisper. "But she's dead, overdosed five years ago, it can't be."

Rita Spellman had been a twenty-year-old beauty from Oklahoma, who had visions of Broadway dancing through her head, and Ray's first job. He started to remember more than he wanted to.

"She's worth more to me alive, strung out and on the street, than dead." Dexter Filch had told Ray. Dex was a shylock that Rita owed big money to. Dexter decided since Rita couldn't pay him back, she'd work it off on the street. "Help her recognize opportunity," Dexter said. So Ray befriended the promising young starlet, took his liberties with her, then filled her veins with heroin, to help her see the future, before he

handed her over to Dexter.

"It can't be...it just can't be," Ray said and gulped down his drink. He put the empty glass down and nudged it to the bartender's side of the bar with his fingers.

"Barkeep, hit me."

"Make that two," a man said sitting two stools to Ray's right. Ray sharply looked over at the man who hadn't been there seconds before' he was an older heavysset man with a round head and short, silver hair jutting straight down from under a gray tweed cap, and wore a black suit with a red carnation in the lapel. The man smiled and raised his drink to Ray; his pinky ring offered a dull glint from the dim house lights. Ray nodded and returned a curious half smile.

Rocco Gianelli, Ray thought, and said in a non-audible voice, "I took him out three years ago, one shot to the head."

The bartender put a glass on a new coaster down on the heavily urethane oak bar in front of Ray and walked back by the television, at the far end of the bar, to watch Saturday afternoon football.

Ray picked up his glass to toast the man on his right, but when he turned to the man he saw a hideous decaying blob with a crusted bullet hole in the center of his forehead, sitting on the stool, smiling back at him. The man was covered with brown flesh-eating beetles. Ray heard the loud eerie, chomping and tearing sound of the man's greenish black flesh being consumed from the bone. Half his face was gone and his right eye hung from a vacant socket, still attached to the optic nerve. The man raised his drink with a bony left hand, and Ray watched the pinky ring jingle on his twig-like little finger. Ray looked away and closed his eyes, when he reopened them and looked back, the man was gone.

"This is crazy, absolutely insane," Ray said in a low tone while he motioned for the bartender to come over.

"Another bourbon mist?" the bartender asked. Ray shook him off while fingering a cigarette he poured from the pack onto the bar. "Did you see that man sitting to my right?" The bartender shook his head.

"What about the girl? You had to see the girl."

"Look, Pal, there are only four people in this place right now and none of them are women." The bartender picked up Ray's glass and leaned on the bar, "Am I gonna have to cut your off?"

"No," Ray answered. The bartender set the glass back down on the coaster and walked away.

Ray looked over and started watching the game; he thought about taking his drink and moving closer to the T.V., but quickly pushed

the thought away.

Ray glanced up from his drink when he heard the door open, odd he thought, he didn't remember the hinges making any noise when he walked in. But there it was, a loud rusty screech that sounded like somebody murdered a monkey, when two thick black men walked in. They sat down, one on each side of Ray. The door continued to open and scream its blood curdling yelp and more people filed in. Ray started feeling anxious with so many people in the bar now, he wanted to leave, but when he stood up, one of the black men clutched his shoulder and said in a deep baritone voice, "Where do you think you're going?"

Ray pushed the man's hand away, and the two men looked at each other and smiled, "Dexter?" Ray said, furling his brow.

"That's right, Ray baby, old Dex in the flesh."

"No, this isn't happening, it can't be. I threw you out that window myself. You're dead."

The two men looked at the bartender, Ray's eyes followed their gaze, the bartender nodded. "Sol?" Ray said.

"That's right, Ray. Welcome home," the bartender said and laughed an echoing haunting laugh. Ray turned to Dexter, who now grabbed his shoulder for a second time, and watched Dexter's head split open. A river of congealed green slime oozed from the split and vacant orbs in a grinning skull. Worms crawled out of his mouth. Ray twisted from on ghoul's grip only to turn into another. He felt sharp, talon like-bony fingers claw at his clothes and flesh. Ray tried to scream, but his voice had no sound.

Thirty or forty of them now. The bar was full of Ray's handiwork from over the years, and through the sea of skeletons and corpses, Ray heard that murderous squeal of the door hinges as more walked in. He punched and kicked and swung aimlessly, scoring handfuls of rotted flesh and hair, sometimes large pieces of bone. The air was thick with the dank stench of rotting and decaying flesh; Ray began to gag, and felt his gorge climb the back of his throat.

He spun free and slowly moved back. The army of death moved forward, with him. Ray stumbled on the step leading up to the pool table and fell flat on his back. The army of death converged and swarmed him like locust. Ray felt razor sharp bony fingers penetrate his skin. His clothes were ripped to shreds and covered with blood.

Ray's head was full of that eerie munching and chomping sound of teeth gnashing and grinding together. The sound grew louder. He felt a sudden, savage jolt to his abdomen and one of the ghouls held up his intestines. The room exploded in hilarity. Then Rita buried a hypoder-

mic needle in his throat.

Ray's head was filled with that munching sound and it quickly escalated to a maddening level. He felt a sense of weightlessness as he started to plummet and spin down a shaft of eternal darkness. Ray watched the light above get smaller and smaller until it finally disappeared.

* * *

Six months later, a white Cadillac Seville pulled up in front of a red brick boarded-up building. The magnetic sign on the back car door read Waterson Realty. Two well-dressed men climbed out of the car.

"One of the last mob joints in the city. Owned and operated by Jolly Sol Palmetto. Do you remember reading about him?" Waterson said. "The place has been boarded up for two years and finally wrapped up in probate yesterday. We're the first ones through this door since they found old Sol, brains scattered over the bar."

"Didn't the feds suspect Ray Marconi for that one?"

"Among the other couple hundred," Waterson replied.

Waterson keyed the lock and swung open the heavy oak door, with the small square window at eye level. Daylight flooded through, elongating a rectangular swatch on the floor. The two men clicked on their flashlights and stepped inside. A dank stale, musty smell greeted them while rats scampered and squeaked with a frigid eeriness, as if they were saying, "Intruders, intruders, intruders."

Waterson directed his flashlight behind the bar at the cobweb festooned shelves that once held bottles of liquor. A dusty glint flashed back with set of glassy red beady eyes. The other man fanned his light over blistered walls and up around the ceiling, illuminating dark gray swooping cobwebs connecting the light fixtures, until finally settling on a lump near the back of the bar. "Over there," the man said. His beam froze on a clump of rags on the floor, next to a pool table. Waterson's beam followed. The two men hurried over to the pile and stared down at it. It was a skeleton with a tortured, locked-jawed expression on its skull with a needle lying next to it. "Looks like a junkie found a warm place to kill itself. Hey, at least the rats ate well," Waterson said. The other man smiled.