

THE D.Y. STEIN INN

As a detective, I was lately called upon the case of the hotel which is oft-reported by those who come back alive for being hazardous to those who lodge there, yet never fails one health- or safety-code inspection: the D.Y. Stein Inn.

The place is already located in a seedy part of town, where flocks of whores are seen stationed by every street-corner, and drug deals are done on main thoroughfares beneath signs proudly saying "DRUGS 4 SALE — 50% OFF!" So I would have had few hopes for the inn to begin with, had I not even been called there for the bane it poses.

I was accosted by three whores on my way in, whom I had to shoo away like flies to shake off their premium offers. I thought the Buy-One-Lechery-Get-One-Lechery-Free sale was especially egregious.

In the air-conditioned lobby which smelt nevertheless of mildew, the clerk-woman at the counter unblithely wried a smile on her face and said, "Hello. Welcome to da D.Y. Stein Inn. How can I help you?" She lit a cigarette.

"Hi," I said. "I'm looking for a room. Why else would I be here?"

"I don't know," said she in her ever-hoarse voice. "So ya want a room, huh?"

"Yeah."

"Who's askin'?"

"A would-be-customer."

"No feds, right?"

"Right. Why do you ask?"

"Umm... Dey... Well, dey... Dis hotel ain't as luxurious as befits a fed'ral gov'ment agent. Our motto is: Cheap Enough That It's Totally Safe To Lodge In But Not Fancy Enough That A Government Agent Or Detective Should Ever Think About Coming In."

"Interesting slogan. Are you the owner, D.Y. Stein?"

"No, what're ya, a detective, anyway?"

"Oh, does the sports-coat and hat lead you to think so? Common mistake."

"So you can take da key to room 204. Pay upfront, please."

"How much for one night?"

"One hundred dollas."

"Here you go..."

"Here's ya key."

Something was suspicious about the heavy stone that nearly fell on my head as I opened the door to the stairwell, and the dagger on a string that swung down at me while I was setting foot on the first step; but I just jotted it in my note-pad and climbed the stairs

to floor two.

Likewise the little blood droplets that overstrewed some of the steps roused an eerie feeling in me, but I couldn't quite be sure what to make of it.

I unlocked the door to room 204, and took a first stride inside. But it turned out that the door simply opened straight from the outside wall of the building, and I found my right foot dangling above a stark drop overlooking hard concrete.

The automatic door-closer tried to shove me out of the building, and gave much resistance; but I overcame and stepped back into the carpeted hall. Right then the door slammed shut.

I noted all this in my note-pad and went back downstairs, this time through the elevator that free-fell the whole way down to the ground floor. Luckily I jumped at the right time.

"Hey, Miss, the door to room 204 just lets out right outside! I nearly fell!"

"Oh, dat one's been closed for maintenance. Sorry about da inconvenience. I shoulda given you da key for room 205. Here you are."

"Does that one have a real room?"

"Sure."

That time the stairs were kinder to me — only a little, light stone fell on my head — and I reached room 205 on the second floor.

"Finally," I said to myself, "A real room."

When I went to the bathroom to take a leak, I found the toilet safe enough. But I didn't like, and noted in my note-pad, the red acid that flowed out of the faucet instead of water.

Fortunately there was a stock of cups and bottles beside them in the cupboard in the same room as the bed. But they suspiciously weren't water bottles; they were bottles of rat poison. So I chose not to drink.

The bed, for that matter, was no better. Instead of a pillow, like most normal beds, was a bunch of razor-blades. I didn't want to lay my head there.

The portrait on the wall of a woman had cutouts where the eyes ought to have been. And on occasion I saw eyes appear that formerly weren't there, which followed me wherever I would step. Sometimes while the eyes were there I could hear the clerk-lady's coughing from the other side of that thin plaster wall as well.

I was about to brew some of the inn-given coffee, but it turned out that was rat-bane too.

All of this I wrote down, thinking the case against the inn was getting pretty grim. But I still needed one more piece of good, hard evidence that could show the place's guilt.

So I walked over the barbed wire and boards with nails in them that lay on the room's floor, and walked out to the hall. Suddenly there was barbed wire throughout the hall too!

I rushed back to the stair-well to investigate the blood-trail from earlier.

Interestingly, the clerk-lady from the lobby was standing on the other side of the door to the stairs, with a heavy steelen pan in her hand. She thwacked me in the cheek with it, and I fell dizzy to the ground.

"What's the big idea??" I demanded.

"Oh, sorry, I was here catchin' flies dat roam around the inn. I thought you was a fly at first. Didn't mean to beat ya."

She helped me up.

"Well, I'd best get going," she went on. "Sorry for da trouble." She left.

I molded by head back to its usual size again, and looked closely at the droplets of dried blood that were on the stairs. They went up beyond floor two. So I followed.

I had to dodge a few booby-traps on the way up, but at last found the trail leading to the roof-door.

But the patch of floor by the door was really just a canvas painted like a floor, so I fell through to the bottom of the stairs again, and had to do the whole dangerous trek once more.

That time, I turned the knob and opened the door from afar, and leapt over where the fake floor was to the roof's ground. Fortunately the roof wasn't just a painting.

Now at this point I truly wasn't shocked to find the blood-trail lead beyond the air-conditioner unit (which actually was just another painting, oddly enough) to a heap of dead bodies laid out by the roof's corner!

I swiftly snapped a photograph of the evidence, before I hurried to the fire-escape exit, keen not to be added to the heap myself.

But I couldn't last on the beams of the fire-escape long, since curiously right as I got on it, it was electrocuted and I had to head back for the roof, slightly charred.

I heard footsteps rising from the stairs beyond the door, so I went over to the heap of bodies and lay down among them.

Out of the door came the same clerk from before, this time bearing a gun.

While she was looking around for me and turned her back on me, I got up and

walloped her on the head with a spare bloody crow-bar that happened to be near the lich-mound. She fell down onto the floor.

I hied my way out of there through the stairs, jumping over more falling stones and parrying more swinging knives and swords, and almost meeting my doom in sundry other ways. Eventually I got back to the lobby, and booked it out of the D.Y. Stein Inn and over the last row of spikes by the exit.

I didn't plan to go back there, either.

Now weary, I headed to the parking lot, and found that my car had suspiciously fewer tires than when I had left it. But it didn't matter; I just wanted to leave and give my evidence for the case.

Later with the help of my evidence, both the inn's clerk and D.Y. Stein were shot by firing squad, the charges against them were so high.